

**WaveShapeConversion: The Land as Reverent in the Dance Culture  
and Music of Aotearoa**

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## Abstract

This thesis is the result of more than ten years involvement with outdoor dance events in Aotearoa, with a specific focus on Te Wai Pounamu (South Island) and Otautahi (Christchurch). Two symbiotic themes are explored here – that of the significance of the landscape in inspiring a conversion to tribal-based spirituality at the events, and the role of the music in ‘painting’ a picture of Aotearoa in sound, with an emphasis on those musicians heard in the outdoor dance zones. With no major publications or studies specific to Aotearoa to reference, a framework based on global post-rave culture has been included in each chapter so that similarities and differences to Aotearoa dance culture may be established. Using theoretical frameworks that include Hakim Bey’s *TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zone)*, the carnivalesque, and tribalism, the overriding theme to emerge is that of utopia, a concept that in Aotearoa is also central to the Pākehā mythology that often stands in for a hidden violent colonial history, of which te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) has been a source of division since it was signed in 1840. Thus, in the Introduction several well-known local songs have been discussed in relation to both the Pākehā mythology and the history of te Tiriti in order to contextualise the discussion of the importance of Māori and Pākehā integration in the dance zones in the following chapters.

The thesis comprises of two main themes: the events and the music. At the events I took a participatory-observer approach that included working as rubbish crew, which provided a wealth of information about the waste created by the organisers and vendors, and the packaging brought in by the dancers. Thus the utopian visions that were felt on the dancefloor are balanced with descriptions of the dystopian reality that when the dancers and volunteers go home, becomes the responsibility of a strong core of ‘afterparty’ crew.

Musically, the development of a local electronic sound that is influenced by the environmental soundscape, along with the emergence of a live roots reggae scene that promotes both positivity and political engagement, has aided spiritual conversion in the dance zones. Whereas electronic acts and DJ’s were the norm at the Gathering a decade ago, in 2008 the stages at dance events are a mixture of electronic and live acts, along

with DJ's, and most of the performers are local. Influenced by a strong reggae movement in Aotearoa, along with Jamaican/UK dance styles such as dub and drum and bass, local 'roots' musicians are weaving a new philosophy that is based on ancient tribal practices, environmentalism and the aroha (love) principles of outdoor dance culture. The sound of the landscape is in the music, whilst the vocals outline new utopian visions for Aotearoa that acknowledge the many cultures that make up this land. Thus, in Aotearoa dance music lies the kernel of hope that Aotearoa dance culture may yet evolve to fulfil its potential.

**Introduction:**  
**Talking About Our Home, Land and Sea –**  
**Aotearoa History and the Pākehā Utopian Myth**

Information which facilitates informed Treaty debate needs to go into the streets, the suburbs, and the small towns in the rural areas. It needs to occur in business communities, factories, offices and neighbourhoods. It needs to happen in schools, community organisations and rest homes. It needs to take place in sporting facilities, pubs, prisons and places of religious worship. It needs to happen within and among families and hapu. It needs to happen wherever New Zealanders gather. (Robert and Joanna Consedine 226)

And there they're all sated, A Queen Bee, with her company  
 Of worriers, not Warriors Put your people gainst numbers  
 Cos they aint no swords Gainst your empty words  
 For some extra noughts At the end of it.  
 And Oh, Queen Bee should know  
 But she can't see her flowers  
 Through her own Trees  
 Talkin bout our Home, Land and Sea  
 (Trinity Roots "Home Land and Sea" sic.)

The music made in Aotearoa (New Zealand) has long shaped my understanding of our land and culture. Like many of the Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent) generation growing up during the 1970's and 1980's, I feel ambivalence for my home, a love/fear relationship reflected in the music that locates us in our world. After World War II, Aotearoa enjoyed a long period of economic growth, and with high exports and low unemployment, the Government could afford to be generous with the 'model' Welfare State. Based on the experiences of our baby-boomer parents' generation, our generation expected to inherit the free healthcare, education, and generous benefit system that our parents had enjoyed. We were mostly too young to take note of the fiscal crises of the

1970's beyond the actions directly affecting home life, such as 'Carless Days' (a government law implemented to reduce oil consumption during the peak oil crises of the 1970's) and the dreaded 'strike action', which for a young child was often experienced in terms of some sort of deprivation, such as the loss of bread or the interruption of travel plans. The irony of a comic song by comedian John Clarke's Fred Dagg character, "We Don't Know How Lucky We Are", had hinted that all was not well in our 'pastoral paradise' during the 1970's, but as we witnessed the rapid dismantling of our 'social utopia', the 1980's was summed up by a bitterly ironic song by Blam Blam Blam called "There is no depression in New Zealand." Released in April 1981, the song coincided with the South African Springbok Rugby Tour that exploded the 'racial harmony' aspect of Pākehā mythology. The 1981 Springbok Tour was a landmark event that is tied to memories of my first year at high school, and more than any other event in my childhood and adolescence changed the way I felt about the 'nation' where I was born. The alternative Pākehā bands of the 1980's reflected the mood of depression that settled over Aotearoa as the welfare state was replaced by a highly capitalist system that adversely affected most working class New Zealanders. For those struggling their way into adulthood at the time, there was a breaking of the spirit that the music sung to; with lyrics that spoke of the downside of the mythology, the music was our generation's lament for our paradise lost. Yet there was also beauty in this music, a certain spaciousness and raw delicacy that was inspired by the vast open spaces and rugged splendour of our much admired landscape. And it was this aspect of a distinctly Aotearoa sound that can also be heard in our dance music that led me, after situating myself staunchly on the side of 'rock' in the 'rock versus dance' debate, down the (often literally) slippery slope towards the outdoor dancefloor. As discussed in the following chapters, the sense of positivity I feel on the dance floor surrounded by the brutal beauty of our land, whilst hearing music that captures that essence in sound has fuelled my imagination and given me a new vision for utopia in Aotearoa.

But balancing the new-found positivity is the weight of the real history of Aotearoa, and this chapter has been written as a brief outline of my own late discovery of the truth behind the façade. The history of te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) and the colonisation of Aotearoa is a troubled one that involves many groups of people, each with

a different response to and experience of the Treaty, and the various acts that have been carried out under its premise. Yet for many years the mythology, coupled with a lack of history lessons, continued to shape the way we thought about race relations, and the famed contribution of the Maori Battalion in both World Wars contributed to the ‘one nation, one people’ myth. During the post-war years this myth was supported by the economic boom that saw many Maori and Pacific Islanders shift to working class areas, which resulted in greater integration taking place in workplaces and neighbourhoods. But after the collapse of the long boom period in the early 1970’s, unemployment rose (especially amongst Maori and Pacific Islanders) and there was a greater dependency on the welfare state. The economic reforms made by the fourth Labour government in the 1980’s and the National government in the 1990’s further highlighted the social inequality between the rich and the poor, many of whom were Maori and Pacific Islanders. An increase in Maori protest during this time was supported by a ‘renaissance’ in Maori art and culture, of which music would play a significant role.

Running parallel to the original Pākehā rock music of the 1980’s was a reggae scene that was inspired by Bob Marley’s visit in 1979, the Springbok Tour, and the ongoing struggle to have te Tiriti o Waitangi honoured. In recent years, some headway has been made in including Treaty principles in government policy, and returning land to various iwi (tribes), but progress has been slow, and Māori continue to struggle to have their rights under te Tiriti recognised and acted on. It is fitting that reggae should be the soundtrack to Māori protest – Jamaicans sing songs of freedom that lament the lost homeland and encourage the marginalised to resist the State (identified as Babylon) and so do Māori. Thus the rights of Māori are fundamental to the institutionalisation of a non-racist policy that benefits and protects all New Zealanders, but te Tiriti continues to be dishonoured by Government policy, such as the Foreshore and Seabed Act (2004). If te Tiriti o Waitangi were to be honoured as our founding document and the terms agreed to in the Māori version acted upon, then Aotearoa could lead the way towards being a truly multi-cultural society where no one group dominates over the other. In order to heal our past, we must first build a vision of what our future could be.

But if the land continues to be in dispute politically, spiritually the whenua (land) is a source of inspiration that is evident in the music that is the subject of this thesis. The



locally produced music performed live at outdoor dance events is both a celebration of the beauty and spaciousness of Aotearoa, and a repositioning of our mythology, an acknowledgement that paradise is there to be regained, if only we can convert our beliefs. When played in the ‘otherworldly’ spaces of Aotearoa dance parties, the synergy between the locally produced music and the environment is unmistakable, and in turn nourishes the nascent, land-based spirituality growing amongst dance party devotees. These aural reminders of the magnitude of the land in our consciousness anchor us in our place and give us hope that our dream of paradise is not yet impossible. In the music are ecstatic moments that are likewise played out on the dance floors, and it is this sense of *communitas*, *jouissance*, or transcendence that inspires us to dream that one day our image of Aotearoa as a multi-cultural utopia may be achieved.

Conversion is a key aspect to dance culture and, like many who practice communal spirituality, Aotearoa dancers often retain a clear vision of what a more permanently utopian life might look like, although most of us struggle to fully act out our convictions. My first experience of a multi-day, multi-zone dance event was the long-running and legendary Gathering, which as discussed in Chapter Three, is a party that promoted a playful alternative to the ‘same old’ everyday lifestyle to which we had become accustomed. Mythologically, the Gathering was in line with the utopian ideologies of global post-rave cultures, which occupy ‘spaces’ that are a celebration of the present and the future, as demonstrated by the high-tech nature of the events. Yet Aotearoa outdoor gatherings are also representative of a pre-industrial past that is imagined in its supposed simplicity to be more communicative and spiritually fulfilling. Thus, in chapters three to five, discussion of the events has been organised into three global EDMC (electronic dance music culture) frameworks: temporary utopian zones, postmodern carnivals, and neo-tribal villages. Throughout, recurring themes emerge as a longing for utopia is played out in each of the ‘discussion zones’ and is balanced by the binary/binding nature of life outside the parties, and increasingly within them as well. Hence I am wary of suggesting that outdoor dance culture in Aotearoa is a utopian antidote to a dystopian reality, as neither extreme is yet applicable to either the spaces of the parties themselves or our everyday lives.

The thesis has been particularly informed by my role as a participant-observer. When researching UK rave culture, I became aware that dance culture analysis is most effective when the author is more fully engaged with the bodily process of dancing – participation is the key to dance culture. As such I have endeavoured to include a greater sense of the corporeal, felt both on the dancefloor and whilst working as a crew member. I generally tried to avoid becoming involved at an organisational level, but my participant-observer role included attending as a recycling volunteer at many events, and picking up rubbish at virtually all I attended, both during and after the parties. Due to this level of involvement, ethics protocols were not considered necessary, as I was researching the culture as part of the community. This has resulted in a greater focus on the volunteer contribution to dance culture, particularly in relation to waste. This often neglected component of dance culture theory severely problematises the potential of dancers to establish what I refer to as ‘temporary utopian zones’. As such, I became a specialist of the afterparty, looking for and picking up the tiny little pieces of trash that got left behind after the main picks had been done. It became a kind of spiritual practice whereby I walked the land where the party had taken place only hours or days before and prayed for our evolution. Every time I kneeled amongst a nest of rubbish, I imagined the sorts of people who created it. Virtually every piece carried a brand name and from such close inspection I could tell what dancers ate, drank, smoked, what drugs they were taking, and even on occasion, what kind of tampons they used. Here, in the dystopian aftermath of the parties, my belief in the conversion aspects of dance music was severely tested, but overall this aspect is outweighed by the evidence that for many regular participants, Aotearoa dance culture *has* evolved to become a community-based temporary, but regular lifestyle. In keeping with such a participatory approach, although I was open about my research and discussed it with many dancers, I decided not to encumber such conversations (which usually occurred in an informal, ad-hoc style suited to the spontaneity of dance culture) with the presence of recording devices, which I believe resulted in a less-mediated approach to discussions. As someone who is uncomfortable in the presence of video cameras and tape recorders, I believe that had the discussions been recorded, some of the openness of such conversations may have been lost. Thus, particularly memorable observations made during these times have been

included in places where such insights are warranted, but in wishing to respect dancers' privacy, specific quotes have not been used. Such discussions have however been backed up with written accounts by local commentators who have likewise attempted to record the magic of the dancefloors on paper.

The land-based mythology that I grew up with has become almost entirely eroded, but the gap left has been replaced by a hope that is born of the dancefloor and shaped by past utopian thinkers. Yet it is not my belief that the 'highs' of the dancefloor should be sought permanently; our task is to find the middle ground between the two extremes and then go about changing our lives by putting our utopian based politics into practice. The most successful revolutionary movements have something to resist, and one community that demonstrates this principle is Parihaka. In the nineteenth century this Taranaki community promoted community living and passive resistance under the leadership of Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, at a time when the New Zealand Government and European settlers did their utmost to break the spirit of the tangata whenua (local people) who refused to give up their land. The shameful story of Parihaka will be discussed at length in this chapter, for the pā (village) serves as a model of evolutionary protest that dance culture could learn from. It was at the inaugural Parihaka International Peace Festival in 2006, which was held on the original pā site, that I saw in reality the utopian, Māori-led gathering that I had long envisaged on the dancefloor as being crucial to the politicising of Aotearoa dance culture. Since the nineteenth century the monthly hui (gatherings) at Parihaka have galvanised a community desperate to hold onto their land and tribal way of life, and in the tradition of Te Whiti and Tohu, have been open to people from many different cultures. At the Parihaka Festival this tradition is extended to outdoor dance culture, and the opportunity to learn more about the place, the culture, and the teachings of the prophets is embraced by dancers from all over Aotearoa and beyond. The sacred space becomes a multi-cultural community functioning for the greater purpose of re-establishing Parihaka as a wānanga (learning place) of celebration and peaceful protest. It is proof that Aotearoa dance culture retains the potential to fulfil its promise as an alternative lifestyle that merges the past, future and present, and may even yet become more politically active in response to the subtle hints suggested by the roots

reggae bands discussed in Chapter Two. But before we look to the future, we must not only learn from our past, we must learn what our past is not.

### **“We Don’t Know How Lucky We Are” – Of Mythical Homelands and Pastoral Paradises**

As a child it was not the national anthem that stirred a sense of patriotism in me, but the songs of Fred Dagg, comedian John Clarke’s character that parodied a ‘typical Kiwi bloke’. Whilst I failed to remember anything past the first verse of “God Defend New Zealand”, the choruses of “Gumboots” and “We Don’t Know How Lucky” are likely to be forever etched on my musical memory. By the 1970’s, Pākehā culture had evolved from a longing for ‘Mother England’ as the beloved homeland, but had yet to celebrate our Pacific links. The short answer to “what is our culture?” was usually “rugby, racing and beer”, a caricaturised notion of the masculinist mythology that grew out of pioneer culture in the nineteenth century where emigrants who were specialised workmen in Europe found it necessary to become a ‘Jack of all Trades’, as Jock Phillips notes in *A Man’s Country?*: “the common phrase ‘Jack of all trades’ was followed inevitably by the qualifier, ‘but master of none’. In New Zealand the ‘Jack of all trades’ was a term of unqualified approval” (18). Dressed in gumboots, singlet and ill-fitting cotton shorts, Fred Dagg was a parody of this figure. The hardworking settler had devolved into a clichéd rural bloke. Leaning against a fencepost, Dagg was fond of a yarn, but he is best remembered for the songs, which were satires of the attitudes at the heart of the Pākehā myth. In particular, “We Don’t Know How Lucky” deconstructs the utopian mythology, even as it upholds the principles. Of significance is the shift in attitude towards Europe that occurred in the Pākehā psyche at the time, and which is indicated by the line where Europe is described as “a mess”. This aspect of our mythology is discussed by Claudia Bell in *Inventing New Zealand*: “So we ate up our dinner, and vaguely absorbed the messages that told us that almost everywhere else in the world was a political and economic disaster. [. . .] We were lucky: we lived in the world’s only perfect country. England was second best. It rained there a lot, and people couldn’t go to the beach as often as we did” (18). In remembering her childhood inculcation to the mythology, Bell

also notes the cutting of ties that occurred when England reduced her reliance on colonial produce such as butter and looked to Europe for trading partners, which affected farmers such as those parodied by Dagg. Bell also indicates the importance of the beach to the myth, as does the third verse of “We Don’t Know How Lucky”, in which a stock agent continues to visit the place where his wife and children were killed because, “We don’t know how fortunate we are to have that place / We don’t know how propitious are the circumstances Frederick”. The ‘snooty’ interjection suggests that stock-agents and bach-holders are removed socially from the average ‘kiwi’ farmer, yet the two find common ground on the beach, and in the egalitarian myth that “we don’t know how lucky we are, mate”, as the rousing chorus reminds us.

If I sensed that all was not well in our ‘South Seas Utopia’ during these years, one area in which the Pākehā mythology did continue to shape my thinking was in the claim that we have good race relations because we have a treaty. Bell suggests that the founding myth of racial harmony was invented around te Tiriti o Waitangi, which was: “subsequently mythologised as the founding of a harmonious, bicultural New Zealand, despite obvious contrary evidence. Internationally, this has given New Zealand the image of a place of good race relations, a peaceful country” (9). Bell notes that the “bloody land wars” between Māori and Pākehā are not included in European history, and as schoolchildren my classmates and I learned nothing about the circumstances under which te Tiriti was signed and the subsequent injustices committed by the colonial government (see Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*). As a Pākehā child growing up in the very ‘English’ city of Christchurch, the official celebrations on February 6, or ‘New Zealand Day’ (now Waitangi Day) meant little more than a day off school. With virtually no te reo Māori (Māori language) or local history taught at school, Māori culture was not generally understood by Pākehā, and the Māori children with whom we associated either knew as little as we did, or did not discuss it. Our limited and mediated experience is not unusual for Te Wai Pounamu (South Island) Pākehā of my generation, and souvenirs, tourism, and the occasional myth in our school journals were often as close as we got to Māoritanga (Māori culture).

Considine notes that many New Zealanders were not taught “the colonial history of this country or the truth about the Treaty of Waitangi because it has never been

compulsory in schools” (136). At time of writing, te reo Maori is taught in schools and there is a greater respect for tikanga Maori and the cultural needs of other ethnic minorities. Yet history is not a compulsory subject for high school students, and is usually integrated into social studies. In 2000 the Waitangi Associates (of whom Consedine is a leader) surveyed 397 trainee teachers at the Christchurch College of Education as part of the ongoing research and teaching of the relationship between Pākehā and te Tiriti:

Some 88 per cent had never heard of the New Zealand Declaration of Independence (1835); 61 per cent were not familiar with the differences between the Māori and English texts of the Treaty of Waitangi; and 80 per cent had no familiarity with any of New Zealand’s Native Land Legislation. Of the 397 students, 83.5 per cent had left high school in the 1980’s or 1990’s.

This is an extraordinary result in the year 2000. Given this level of ignorance, how are these students placed to participate in informed discussion about the Treaty, let alone teach our children the fundamental ingredients of New Zealand society? (136)

In 2006, Māori groups had further cause for concern over the teaching of te Tiriti o Waitangi in New Zealand schools. In a call for submissions about the draft copy of the Education Curriculum, Converge website authors note that the document makes little mention of te Tiriti: “The main document ‘The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for consultation 2006’ has no reference to the Treaty; the only reference is in the Social Sciences Achievement Outcomes document under Social Studies, Level Five – ‘the Treaty of Waitangi is responded to differently by people in different times and places’” ([www.converge.org.nz/pma/sub1106.htm](http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/sub1106.htm)). Thus the lack of information experienced by students with regards to te Tiriti is ongoing. Culturally however, the myth continues to be exposed, and Maori education initiatives and workplace workshops such as Consedine’s are revealing the facts about our history, and it is proving to be every bit as exciting, bloodthirsty, and shaming as anything we were taught at school about other nation states.

### **“We Have No Racism” – Dystopian Reality in the 1980’s**

In the 1980’s New Zealand would undergo an economic and cultural revolution, and Blam Blam Blam’s “There is No Depression in New Zealand” became an anthem that represented the real state of the ‘nation’. In 1981 the nation physically divided over a race issue centred on a South African rugby tour. The New Zealand Rugby Union’s unwillingness to break rugby ties with South Africa had long been a contentious issue, but at a time of great anti-apartheid feeling globally, this time protestors were galvanised in opposition to the tour. Released in 1981, when the tour was being planned, songwriter Don McGlashan states that “There is No Depression in New Zealand” was written as “an attempt to expose the way New Zealanders build myths around themselves” (qtd. in Davey and Puschmann 20). The lyrics played with the Pākehā mythology in a blatantly sarcastic mode; depression, drug addiction, and racism were as common as sheep were on our farms, and the dirge-like descendant melody was reminiscent of “God Defend New Zealand”, as sung at school. As the song was repeated by student radio stations throughout the decade, the lyrics proved prescient; it resonated with my generation’s ‘dark’ mood during the 1980’s, as the country underwent a reversal of economic policy and ideology brought about by the fourth Labour government who replaced National in July 1984. Thus the Springbok Tour marked the beginning of what was to become one of the most revolutionary decades in Aotearoa society and the decline of Prime Minister Robert Muldoon (National), who refused to intervene in the Rugby Union’s decision to allow the Springbok Tour to go ahead, regardless of violent protests and strong opposition. As the drama played out in newspapers and on radio and television, the racial mythology of the nation underwent severe scrutiny, and New Zealanders found themselves (often violently) divided over rugby, the game that had previously been cited as ‘proof’ that “we have no racism”, as “There is No Depression in New Zealand” facetiously maintained.

As a thirteen year old, I knew little about sanctions and the history of our sporting ties with South Africa, but I ‘knew’ that the 1981 tour was racist, and because New Zealand was not racist, as a nation we should fight it. Bell writes that the invented modern nation: “obliterates or renders powerless pre-existing cultures, such as Maori. [. . .] A dilemma in the idea of nation is the assumption that those comprising ‘nation’ are a

united entity [. . .]. In fact all that might be held in common is territory, and government” (9). In Aotearoa the rugby pitch is the common ground on which Māori and Pākehā meet, the mythologised view of nation expressed on the field standing in for Pākehā knowledge of historical and contemporary grievances. As Aroha Harris notes in *Hīkoi: Forty Years of Māori Protest*: “Rugby, like war, has long been one of New Zealand’s cultural sealants, protecting the myths of nationhood. Māori achievements on battle and rugby fields were historically held up by Pākehā as symbols of the racial accord about which they were so proud” (104). However, as Aotearoa visibly divided over the tour, the good race relations myth was disassembled. Organisations such as Halt All Racist Tours (HART) and Citizens Association for Racial Equality (CARE) were active in unifying anti-tour sentiment and the protests were well attended, with media coverage high. Confronted with mob anger, the newly formed ‘Riot Squad’ police division geared up with batons, shields and protective gear, and advanced on the front line of protestors, driving the batons into the crowd. The protesters, many of whom wore motorcycle helmets, fought back with what they could. Harris notes that for Māori the tour provided an opportunity to challenge Pākehā to “consider not just South Africa’s apartheid, but also the racism that occurred in New Zealand’s own backyard” (106). The division between pro-tour and anti-tour protesters was by no means racially distinct, but the protests simultaneously exposed the racism in Aotearoa, and found solutions in the alliances made between Māori and Pākehā protest groups. Away from the media coverage, heated discussions about the tour and racism took place in homes, workplaces and school yards, and few people were able to avoid taking a stance one way or another. The protestors may have failed in their bid to have the Springbok Tour stopped, but the powerful lens of the overtly racist South Africa had magnified the reality lying behind the ‘no racism’ mythology in Aotearoa.

The fact that protests were not limited to the ‘field battles’ of the marches and the games, but were also played out in the artistic and popular media fields, is of particular relevance to the themes discussed in this thesis. Anti-tour protests were numerous and diverse, and some of the most effective employed a mixture of technology, ‘Do It Yourself’ (DIY), and ingenuity. Harris notes that for Māori the tour provided an opportunity to challenge Pākehā attitudes about racism:



Māori alliances with Pākehā activist organisations had been enduring, but were sometimes uneasy. In 1981 the Patu Squad continued the distinct Māori voice that featured in New Zealand's anti-apartheid movement. Pākehā anti-tour protestors were challenged to consider not just South Africa's apartheid, but also the racism that occurred in New Zealand's own backyard. (106)

For Treaty educator Consedine, the experience of being one of a group of Christchurch protesters who engineered arrest and proceeded with a hunger strike in jail, the lesson was delivered by those most victimised by institutional racism. During his time in prison Consedine noted that it was "overcrowded with Māori prisoners", and for the first time he heard their side of the story: "I was staggered that so many of the stories reflected disconnection from family, unemployment, abuse, violence, low self-esteem, and personal and institutional racism. This was a side of New Zealand that I knew almost nothing about" (19). Thus the 1981 Springbok Tour, although one of our most violent episodes, also performed a healing function in the troubled history of Aotearoa.

In the decade after the tour, Aotearoa underwent major economic upheaval and for many New Zealanders it was a case of 'boom or bust'. If the dole queues were getting longer when McGlashan wrote "There is No Depression in New Zealand", by the end of the decade the "Doledrums" (as the Chills put it in similarly dirge-like song in 1984) was a common state amongst the brown, the young, and the redundant working class. Instigated by the baby-boomer fourth Labour government, the changes were economically successful for the government and industry, but socially and culturally devastating for many New Zealanders (King 488-95). For financial risk takers, the newly deregulated market enabled a new kind of utopian myth to be played out, but for many, "There is No Depression in New Zealand" continued to articulate the stress of high unemployment and increased living costs in a society cutting back heavily on social services. David Lange's reservations in 1988 about the economic and social changes effected by his government came too late, and he was forced to resign when the Labour caucus backed Finance Minister, Roger Douglas (492). By then the 'good life' had undergone a similar shrinkage to Lange, whose stomach-stapling operation and subsequent weight loss was an apt metaphor for the era. With the program of economic

reform continued by the National government who ousted Labour in 1990, the music that captures this period was often bleak in its outlook, the physical darkness of the landscape a metaphor for the mood that persisted at this time amongst the local version of the despondent drifters in Douglas Coupland's novel *Generation X*. Shut out of the property market, our wages were low, education and health was no longer free, and we were informed that we would be expected to pay for the baby-boomers' retirement. The lyrics to other songs such as The Clean's "Getting Older" ("Why don't you do yourself in?") and the Doublehappys' "Anyone Else Would" ("I can't laugh and I can't even be bothered with obsessions and infatuations like self-pity and suicide when the real criminal always gets away"), along with The Skeptics attack on the meat industry, "Affco" (featuring a video filmed at a meatworks) likewise indicate the downside to the consumer myth that had replaced that of the welfare state. But more than any other local song of this period, the blatant sarcasm of "There is no depression in New Zealand" sums up the mood of my generation.

As the poverty gap between Māori and Pākehā widened during this period, culturally there was a greater acknowledgement of the place of Māori culture and tradition in defining Aotearoa as a Pacific Nation. Whilst the economic reforms adversely affected many sectors of society many of the jobs lost to restructuring were those of government employees and industry workers, which had a devastating effect on Māori (who had been encouraged by the government to leave their ancestral marae for factory jobs since World War II) and Pacific Island communities. Consedine notes that Māori employment fell by 25 per cent during the first three years of economic reforms: "If the same level of job losses had been experienced by Pakeha, it is unlikely the reforms would have been allowed to continue" (222). But if Māori had declined in economic welfare by the end of the Labour government's term in office, Jack Vowles and Peter Aimer note in *Voters' Vengeance: The 1990 Election in New Zealand and the Fate of the Fourth Labour Government* that in terms of cultural identity the status of Māori had grown:

Underlying these political dimensions of race relations were the images evoked by the manifestations of low social status, high unemployment and high crime rates. Yet, in contrast and at the same time, there was also what might be called the 'koru dimension', the extent to which the symbols of a

distinctive New Zealand identity were derived from the culture and achievements of the Māori [. . .] Juxtaposed in this way, as they are in reality, the elements of race relations in New Zealand present a complex picture. (171)

The celebration of Māori culture that took hold at this time was to have a profound effect on the way in which the many different cultures that make up Aotearoa express their connection with their home. Many Pākehā welcome the opportunity to learn more about the ancient history of Aotearoa through the rituals and art of tikanga Māori, and in doing so have also learned about the complexities of our history, and are at least making attempts to right some wrongs.

#### **“In the Bonds of Love We Meet” – the Making (Up) of the Pākehā Myth**

The essence of the Pākehā utopian mythology is encapsulated in the words to our ‘national anthem’, the song popularly known as “God Defend New Zealand”. Published in 1875 by “unofficial poet laureate” Thomas Bracken, the song had several designations before it was given equal status with “God Save the Queen” as a national anthem in 1977. James Belich notes in *Paradise Reforged*: “You can hate the tune, which was chosen by three German musicians in Melbourne from a number of New Zealand offerings. You can find in the words ‘the predictable and sentimental cliché’, or the cloying hyper-piety of the day. But you cannot find cringing colonialism” (331). You cannot find apologetic colonialism either. Written in the form of a prayer for the utopian dream to be bestowed by God upon the nation, the words prophesy greatness. New Zealand will be good *and* great, immortally famous for peace, and welcoming of every creed and race. But for all its forward-looking sentiment, the song also suggests that “our country’s spotless name” is because we have always been free from dissension, envy, hate, corruption, dishonour and shame. For Māori the exclusion of their history is absolute, although they are presumably included in the “in the bonds of love we meet”, or the “put our enemies to flight” lines. Around the time that the song was written, Darwinist rumours were rife that Māori would die out, conveniently bequeathing mountains and sea to the colonists. This fatal impact myth was so widely believed that in political and literary terms Māori and

Māoritanga were romanticised by Europeans as the vestiges of a dying race. If they failed to die out as predicted, it was assumed that those left would be fully assimilated into settler culture. Yet Belich notes in *Making Peoples* that whilst population decline may have “‘crippled’ particular Maori communities in particular periods [ . . . ] overall it was not crippling impact, still less fatal impact” (178).

By the time it was my turn to learn “God Defend New Zealand” in the 1970’s, it had been reduced to three verses, of which only the first could be sung with any confidence. In the last decade it has become common for the first verse to be accompanied by a Māori translation which ameliorates some of the more contentious lines, and fits Aotearoa into the final line with more success than the non-rhyming “New Zealand”. Yet, the English version continues as an agent by which we cover up our past. Aside from a few salvageable lines (and dance culture could have subversive fun with the idea of the “nation’s van”), “God Defend New Zealand” is little more than a sham. If it is time to undo the mythology and discard the ‘spotless’ mask behind which the real national psyche is hidden, it also is time we had a new song to inspire us, a distinctly Pacific Aotearoa anthem that acknowledges the past, is honest about the present, and looks toward a sustainable future. It is time that we understood our place in this land and how we got here.

Utopia is a concept that has been applied to Aotearoa since the time it was believed to be the ‘Great Southern Land’ that was supposed to stretch across the Pacific Ocean as Europe did the Atlantic. In *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders*, Belich writes that European New Zealand, “or at least something that incorporated it” was invented in the second century after Christ by the geographer Ptolemy who believed that a Southern Continent must exist to balance the world. The idea took hold and Belich writes that one of Ptolemy’s intellectual heirs, Alexander Dalrymple, “calculated that the Southern Continent had 50 million fair-skinned people and spanned the whole Pacific, which is exactly what some nineteenth-century settlers thought New Zealand would become” (117). The idea of Aotearoa spanning a vast area was not corrected by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman who set out in December 1642 to find the Unknown Southern Continent (‘Terra Australis Incognita’) and the possibility of new trading opportunities such as gold. King writes that: “Heading east from Mauritius, Tasman’s vessels had

managed to miss entirely the southern mainland of Australia”, but discovered what they named Van Diemen’s Land (later Tasmania) before sailing eastwards to Aotearoa where he discovered the West Coast of Te Wai Pounamu which he recorded in a sketch, although he was unable to find a harbour to make landfall (94). Tasman never discovered the Strait of water between te Wai Pounamu and te Ika ā Māui and only mapped a portion of the West Coast of both main islands. Although his cartography would fail to impress contemporaries and historians alike, the map would signify the coastline of what Tasman named Staten Land, believing that it might be connected with its namesake south of Cape Horn. Belich writes that not everyone believed Tasman’s claim and that the name underwent several permutations before being settled as New Zealand:

Unimpressed by this logic, a Dutch mapmaker, probably Johan Blaeu, renamed it Nieuw Zeeland, Zeelandia Nova, to match New Holland, as Australia was then known. Some would now prefer ‘Aotearoa’ to ‘New Zealand’, just as some nineteenth century British settlers would have preferred ‘The Britain of the South’ or its variants. [. . .] Old Zeeland was Holland’s junior partner [. . .]. Its motto is ‘I struggle and emerge.’ (120)

Although the Dutch part of our history is not as privileged as that of England, this motto is fitting to the Euro-centric view of utopia at the time; that if such a paradise was attainable it would be earned through hard work. The traces of such an attitude remain in the image of the ‘typical’ hardworking New Zealander that is still romanticised as a ‘good Kiwi bloke’.

Tasman never completed his map of Aotearoa, and due to a series of misunderstandings with local Māori, never set foot on his discovery. King writes that after tacking north for four days “about two kilometres off Whanganui Inlet, Tasman ‘saw in various places smoke rise where fire was made by inhabitants’. This was the earliest indication that the expedition had been sighted by Maori, who were about to become, for the first time, characters in narratives other than their own stories”. (94-5) The next day the ships rounded Farewell Spit to anchor in Taitapu, a historic place that has also undergone a name change since it was named by the Dutchmen for the violent interaction that took place between the visitors and local iwi Ngati Tumatakokiri: “Sailing away, Tasman called the place Murderers’ Bay. Two hundred years later British

settlers renamed it Golden Bay – not after the beaches on the southern shoreline replete with golden sand, but after an accidental discovery of gold in the area, the very metal Tasman had been instructed to give priority to finding” (King 97). Of the incident for which the Bay was originally named in English, Belich writes that it came about after a series of misunderstandings between the crew and Ngati Tumatakokiri:

Two canoes came out and the natives in them addressed the Dutch, ‘but we could not understand a word they said’. The natives then blew a trumpet-like instrument, and a Dutch trumpeter responded, but musical communication proved no more effective than words. Ngati Tumata Kokiri, the people in the canoes, were equally bewildered. [. . .] Next day they put out again. This time the lead canoe had a high and pointed prow – a war canoe. (119)

Whilst Belich conjectures that Māori attacked the Dutch crew and “very probably ate” one of the murdered Europeans, King notes that historians only have Dutch accounts of the encounter to go on as Ngati Tumatakokiri were “annihilated as an iwi” by North Island tribes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries before Europeans could record their story. He writes that:

it is likely that the locals were asserting their identity and mana and raising their own morale by challenging the visitors to a fight. The Maori convention was to take the offensive in an uncertain situation so as to encourage themselves and discourage an adversary, and thus make their own survival more likely. It was by this time a long-established code of behaviour that would have been comprehensible to other Maori. (96)

Of interest to the arguments of this thesis is the part that music had to play in the first known exchange between Māori and Europeans. Had either had the musical language necessary to understand the other’s signifier, the European history of Aotearoa may have undertaken a very different path.

The first non-violent meeting between Māori and Europeans was largely due to the negotiation skills of Tahitian ariki Tupaia, who accompanied Captain James Cook on his circumnavigation of Aotearoa in 1769. The Dutch fleet had left without ever setting foot on their ‘discovery’, and it was not until December 1769 that the *Endeavour*, captained by James Cook, circumnavigated the islands. On board was botanist Joseph

Banks, who had decided to bring along Tahitian ariki (priest) Tupaia. Anne Salmond notes in *Two Worlds: First meetings between Māori and Europeans 1642-1772* that Banks believed that Tupaia would be a curiosity but that he expected that he would be ‘fully repaid’ by the benefits of having Tupaia on board (125). In fact the visit of the *Endeavour* to Aotearoa could have been altogether different had Tupaia not been part of the expedition. Salmond writes that the Europeans’ first encounter with Māori at Tuuranga-nui on the East Coast of te Ika ā Māui on October 8, 1769, resulted in a similar misunderstanding of ritual challenges between Cook and the local iwi at as that of Tasman and the Ngati Tumatakokiri, resulting in the death of Te Maro who was shot by Cook’s men (125). The next day they set out again, and Cook responded to the challenging haka with the use of European warfare:

A musket was fired across the Tuuranga-nui so that the ball struck the water [. . .], and the haka ended abruptly. Cook’s party retreated a little until the marines had landed and marched with a Union Jack to a small bank about fifty yards from the river. A party of seven, which now included Tupaia [. . .], returned to the river, and this time it was Tupaia who called out in Tahitian to the warriors. They seemed to understand him perfectly, so he told them that the Europeans wanted food and water and offered iron in exchange. [. . .] The warriors responded with bitter complaints about the killing the day before, and demanded to know where the Europeans had come from. (126)

The presence of Tupaia can not be underestimated here, and it is doubtful whether Cook would have had such success in negotiating the rest of the journey had Tupaia not been on board. Often referred to as Cook’s interpreter, the ariki was in fact, the bridge between the two cultures as Belich notes:

From the Māori viewpoint, Tupaia, not Cook or the gentleman-scientist Joseph Banks, was the most important visitor, and they knew the *Endeavour* as ‘Tupia’s Ship’. Most of the information in the Cook and Banks journals that goes beyond the material, easily observable things comes via Tupaia. Regrettably, neither Tupaia’s English nor Banks’s and Cook’s Tahitian were yet very good [. . .]. Tupaia was a good linguist and would soon have

mastered English. Tragically, he died on the return voyage, and his unique knowledge of pre-contact Maoridom went with him. (20)

But if Tupaia's knowledge was lost, Cook's largely accurate map of Aotearoa finally destroyed the myth of a 'Great Southern Land' that New Zealand was hoped to be. Along with the diaries kept by himself and Banks, the map would mark an indelible English stamp upon both the land and the people of these newly discovered islands that would become the dominant culture in Aotearoa for the next two centuries.

If Aotearoa was far from being a large Southern Land, the utopian expectations were not dulled by Cook's own visions for his discovery. Renaming each landmark after British names and places, Cook gazed at the already lush paradise of native bush and dramatic mountain and seascapes and imagined them improved by English cultivation. His image of New Zealand as a utopian version of Britain was echoed a century later by Edward Gibbon Wakefield of colonising organisation the New Zealand Association (which was later changed to New Zealand Company). As Geoff Park notes in *Ngā Uruora*, Wakefield's vision of New Zealand could have been "lifted" from Thomas More's *Utopia*: "No utopian land allowed to go 'to waste'. 'Nature' didn't rate a mention" (304). This vision of utopia was one steeped in Western values, but Aotearoa was far from the 'land of milk and honey' that propaganda campaigns led settlers to believe they would find. When the European pioneers first glimpsed their new home, with its impenetrable bush, impassable mountain ranges, treacherous coastline, and unpredictable weather the downside of the myth began; utopia could be gained but only through application of a Victorian ethos of hard work for modest rewards. As Bell notes: "This was an Arcadia in which nature provided the fertile earth and the good climate; but one in which settlers could have an active role, bettering themselves beyond their dreams through physical application" (4). Such utopianism is necessary when the reality would seem to be the inverse, and Park notes that utopian ideals "were called on time and time again to 'tame nature where she is most unbridled'" (304). Yet this particularly English utopian lens has persisted in Pākehā culture where connection to the land is expressed in colloquialisms such as 'South Seas utopia', 'little England', 'quarter-acre paradise', and 'Godzone', for 'God's Own Country'. More recently, the myth has been assisted by advertising agencies and corporations, and 'kiwiana' (a catch-phrase for the familiar



tropes associated with this mythology) is used to sell everything from tomato sauce to insurance.

Yet the initial European settlement of Aotearoa was by sealers, whalers, and runaway Seamen, some of whom became integrated with Māori culture to the extent that they were known as Pākehā Māori. In the decades after Cook's discovery of Aotearoa in 1769 the first Europeans arrived from Sydney and Hobart, whaling and trading bases that brought ships from Britain, the United States, and France. King writes that first Europeans were seaman who jumped ship, many of whom "appear to have been undischarged convicts on the run" (116). Known as Pakeha Maori, these individuals:

took Maori wives, begat Maori offspring, lived according to Maori customary law and within the kinship network of mutual obligations. In some cases they took Maori moko or tattoo. [. . .] They gave Maori the benefit of whatever expertise they had in the arts of horticulture or animal husbandry, and they were available to act as mediators and interpreters when Maori communities were confronted with would-be traders, explorers or missionaries. (117)

As men with little or no means, and a past they wanted to escape, the first settlers of Aotearoa did not attempt to change Māori. Instead, they changed their own attitudes and lifestyles to become assimilated to the point that they were known as Pākehā Māori. At the time, the term Māori had yet to be applied as a blanket term for the many separate iwi (tribes) that inhabit Aotearoa, and the term Pākehā was used to distinguish the immigrants from Māori, which meant 'ordinary' (see King 168 for explanation of the use of Pākehā). The first European group settlements occurred from 1792 in Dusky Sound, and later around Foveaux Strait and Stewart Island, when sealing crews were dropped off for more than a year at a time. As the sealing and whaling industries grew, the industrial centres that were established around the shoreline had close contact with established Māori hapu and pā, and were able to survive as a result.

Yet these early settlers were an anomaly, and the bulk of European settlement occurred in a more organised, fiscally based manner. In the *Penguin History of New Zealand* Michael King writes that the Wakefield brothers planned to profit from Māori and their land, and build a nation based on Europe's economic principles, "in which English class distinctions were preserved but where industrious artisans and farmers

could more easily work their way towards prosperity and respectability” (172). But as the settlers applied a protestant work ethic to the cultivation of their allotted pieces of land, many found physical security and a stable identity on a level that they could never achieved in Europe, a belief grew that the structured class system of the culture from which they had left had been transcended. That the Pākehā myth, with its slices of a bucolic paradise there for the taking, has been bought at the expense of Māori *and* the environment – both of which required tremendous effort to ‘tame’ – is one of the legacies of colonisation and the implementation of te Tiriti o Waitangi, the treaty that for many years has ratified the myth.

### **Retracing the Path – te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Question of Māori Sovereignty**

In *Te Ara Kī Te Tiriti: the Path to the Treaty of Waitangi*, Paul Moon examines te Tiriti from a perspective different from that usually favoured by historians. Using the archives of the Colonial Office and correspondence between Aotearoa and Britain, Moon finds that prior to 1840, Britain – due to the expense incurred in running colonies such as the Indian subcontinent – was not inclined to assert sovereignty over Māori. He explores the role of the understaffed and underfunded Colonial Office in advising the government when they were reluctant to take on the extra duties that running a colony required. The role of the missionaries in the establishment of te Tiriti o Waitangi has been acknowledged by historians such as King and Belich, with the latter suggesting that the missionaries were one of three “colonial tails” wagging an imperial dog (61). But Moon posits that it was the man on the receiving end of the missionaries’ letters, Permanent Undersecretary of the Colonial Office, Sir James Stephen, who had a central role in the establishment of Aotearoa as a British colony. As the “embodiment of the Mothercountry”, Stephen would influence treaty content and “the character of official British intervention in New Zealand, as well as providing part of the philosophical foundation for his management of the Empire overall” (16-7). Considering the South Pacific to be “little more than ‘a tiresome nuisance’” the British government, as represented by the Colonial Office, was far from enthusiastic over the idea of including New Zealand in the British empire (23). Thus, approval for a treaty to be drawn up was

not given until after the findings of two select committees in 1837 and 1838. Whilst the 1837 House of Commons Select Committee was an occasion for the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to platform on the myths of civilisation and conversion, the House of Lords committee would hear submissions from a wider range of people including missionaries, merchants and medical men, and were questioned “more specifically about the disposition of Maori towards the British” (89). Some witnesses testified that Māori would resist having their rights to govern their country superseded, whilst others “paternalistically conclud[ed] that Maori would be happy to acquiesce to British sovereignty” (90). Arguments from merchants and missionaries that Māori were desirous of British rule were buoyed by the myths of empire that justified colonisation. Also giving evidence was the Reverend Samuel Hinds (representing the New Zealand Association), who drew the “displeasure” of the committee due to his regressive position towards Māori, but whose recommendation for a treaty would become a significant factor in the change of policy on Aotearoa (93). Although the British government rejected the treaty proposed by the Association, the idea was discussed, and ultimately decided upon: “[f]or the “first time in a decade, government approval for a treaty for New Zealand had been tentatively given” (94). The Colonial Office was left to modify its outlook on New Zealand and develop policy in line with the findings of the House of Lords Committee.

The year between the Select Committee’s findings and the signing of te Tiriti o Waitangi saw a turnaround in the thinking of Stephen and the Colonial Office. Moon writes that Stephen’s preference was for the establishment of a ruling body to govern “the Anglo Saxon Race...’ in order to prevent conflict between Europeans and Maori”. In the debate surrounding te Tiriti, Stephen’s recommendations are highly significant, and Moon writes that he was careful to specify that government be: “confined to exercising rule only over Europeans living there. His ideological goals: colonial self-government [. . .], and the avoidance of harm to the indigenous populations [. . .] remained as two vital strands of British policy on New Zealand during the next twelve months” (100). Working within a tight budget Stephen began to build a case for annexation so that Britain could obtain a measure of rule over her own subjects, and reign in the ambitions of the New Zealand Association. The British Treasury consented to: “a slight budget to pay for the appointment of an official to the colony”, but they considered

the cost of ruling over the 100 000 Māori “out of the question” (101). Stephen’s superior, Lord Normanby was likewise in favour of British sovereignty over British subjects as stated in a May 1839 letter to the British Attorney General: “[he] explicitly link[s] the extension of British sovereignty of New Zealand with legislative authority being exercised specifically ‘over the British subjects inhabiting that territory’. The cession of Maori sovereignty would therefore be a surrender only of the Maori right to rule Europeans in the colony” (102). Moon makes his case again and again – the British had no intention of asserting sovereignty over Māori. However, with the New Zealand Association pressuring the Colonial Office, Stephen gave the impression that it was more committed to annexation than it was, which “while not necessarily dishonest, was certainly misleading” (103-4).

Throughout the discussions in the lead-up to the establishment of te Tiriti, Britain remained firm in its intention to rule over British subjects only. Moon writes that in the instructions drafted by Stephen commanding Hobson to go and secure British sovereignty over the colony in New Zealand, “British policy with respect to a treaty with Maori was finally made translucent” (108). Although no “reference was made anywhere to British rule applying to Maori as well”, Māori sovereignty was reluctantly acknowledged, with a view to one day obtaining this through the civilising process. Normanby emphasised that “the Crown would not simply seize New Zealand unless there was full, free and intelligent consent from the native to do so”, but Moon notes that this consent “was indisputably not acquired through the Treaty of Waitangi for the powers the British later claimed they had secured from Maori” (110). Thus the instructions included arguments to be given to Māori chiefs to convince them to sign the treaty, and the directive “that Maori consent be propitiated, if necessary, by ‘...presents or other pecuniary arrangements’” (112). Moon notes that these comments undermine the ideals stated by the government with regards to Māori fully understanding the deal being offered.

At the centre of the Pākehā mythology surrounding te Tiriti is the belief that Māori gave up sovereignty to the British Crown on February 6, 1840. Moon writes that Hobson “explicitly and unambiguously presented the Treaty to Maori as an instrument of protection – a means of allowing the Crown to rule over the settler population in order to regulate European behaviour. He was certainly never open about this rule ever

enveloping Maori as well” (131). After debating the issues raised by the Māori version throughout the night, 45 rangatira (chiefs) signed te Tiriti on the morning of February 6. Having obtained the signatures of the Northern chiefs present, Hobson sent emissaries out to gain more signatures and Moon notes that “[i]n the process, the explanations of what the Treaty actually promised became even more misshapen”, and consent could hardly be said to have been gained freely and intelligently (132-3). Some chiefs were visited by more than one envoy, and others would not sign until they had received the promised enticements. Moon concludes his analysis of the methods used to obtain the signatures of 500 chiefs, by noting how this aspect of the signing has been written out of our history books:

With these, and other accounts of the various degrees of Maori comprehension of the terms of the Treaty, any serious historian would shudder at claims that the Maori knew exactly that they were ceding the right to govern the country, in perpetuity, to the Crown. Still, for 150 years, it was reiterated in mantra-like fashion in histories of New Zealand that Maori ceded all their sovereign powers when signing the Treaty of Waitangi. (159)

A 2001 publication by the Ministry of Māori Development explaining the “Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi as expressed by the Courts and the Waitangi Tribunal”, expresses the ‘official’ view of the government in office at time of writing. The explanation of how British sovereignty came about is ambiguous and shies away from declaring exactly whom sovereignty was meant to include:

Hobson assumed that sovereignty was vested in the Crown at Waitangi and ratified by later signings. [. . .] Hobson accordingly declared sovereignty over the whole of New Zealand [. . .]. Even given the dispute over the language used in the respective texts of the Treaty, and the uncertainty surrounding the events by which British authority was established, it is generally thought that by building on the sovereignty proclaimed in May 1840, Parliament gained full powers to make law for New Zealand. (37)

The language used fails to pinpoint the government’s stance on the “dispute”, making the ‘official view’, although somewhat equivocal, generally supportive of what is “generally thought”. Belich notes that “Pakeha saw the English version as the treaty for 130 years,

but the notion that 500 Maori chiefs woke up one morning brimful of loyalty to Queen Victoria and blithely gave away their authority is, and should always have been, ludicrous” (194).

Once sovereignty over Māori was usurped by the colonisers, the British government had little choice but to shoulder the costs that such a move entailed. Moon writes that in the two years following the signing: “the Treaty’s purpose [was] surreptitiously altered. It began to assume a function for which it was never intended: an invitation to the skeletal British administration in New Zealand for the complete usurpation of Maori sovereignty” (162). Moon is unequivocal in his analysis. Māori did not cede sovereignty or self government to the British Crown because the British government, represented by the Colonial Office, never sought it. That the real history surrounding te Tiriti o Waitangi should prove to be so clearly at odds with what we, the Pākehā ‘nation’, have been led to believe has left me saddened and frustrated our past is not so different from those nations with which we like to favourably compare ourselves – because of te Tiriti. I believe that the way forward is to follow the advice of educators Robert and Joanna Consedine that heads this chapter. As te Tiriti partners, Māori and Pākehā are responsible for distributing the information that contributes to the deconstruction of the utopian myth which persists despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

### **“The Endless Tide is Murmuring His Name” - Parihaka and the Art of Pacific Resistance**

The ongoing history of the ‘dishonouring’ of te Tiriti o Waitangi is beyond the scope of this thesis, but due to the rise of the Parihaka International Peace Festival, the shameful invasion of the Parihaka pā by colonial forces in 1881 is relevant. Nineteenth century Māori pan-iwi resistance was epitomised by the Taranaki community of Parihaka, an example of a pirate state with the resources to host large pan-tribal hui held on the 18-19<sup>th</sup> of each month. Inspired by the philosophy of passive resistance preached by rangatira Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, the community launched protests against the confiscation of their land that were as ingenious as they were ordinary. Consedine writes

that in response to such non-violent actions as the removal of survey pegs, the re-building of fences torn down for roads, and the ploughing of ‘confiscated’ land, the “Crown passed some of the most shameful legislation in New Zealand history to expedite the confiscation of land at Parihaka – ultimately 800,000 hectares” (96). Government intervention began at Parihaka soon after the Taranaki Wars in the 1860’s when the Parihaka block was confiscated as punishment, even though the pā had not been involved. In the introduction to *Parihaka: the Art of Passive Resistance (Parihaka)* Paula Savage writes that: “Parihaka is paradoxically one of the most shameful episodes, and one of the most remarkable and enduring stories in New Zealand’s colonial history. Te Whiti and Tohu sought to maintain peace while upholding the land, cultural integrity and independent authority of iwi in Taranaki, in a world turned upside down by European colonisation” (10). European map-making and confiscation meant nothing to the leaders of Parihaka; their claim to the land was ancestral and spiritual, and it galvanised an ongoing protest movement. From all accounts Parihaka operated as a fully functioning ‘permanent autonomous zone’ (to build on Hakim Bey’s concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone, as discussed in Chapter Three) that offered sanctuary and self sufficiency to a growing number of followers from many different iwi.

Referred to by the people of Parihaka as ‘te rā o te pāhua’ (the day of plunder), the military invasion on November 5, 1881 demonstrates the determination of the government in acquiring Parihaka land for settlement (Riseborough 2001 19). Undeterred by the threat of imprisonment the community at Parihaka grew stronger, and the non-violent protests confounded the government strategy of colonisation, causing them to introduce and legalise draconian methods of punishment. Yet Parihaka continued to send more protesters, and the government, aided by media misrepresentation of Te Whiti and Tohu’s highly metaphorical speeches, and working under the premise that the Parihaka community was a threat to settlers, decided to invade the pā. Operating without the full backing of governor Sir Arthur Gordon, officials waited until he was in Fiji between September and November, 1881 before issuing a proclamation giving Te Whiti fourteen days to accept the government’s decision on Parihaka lands (Walker 158). When the deadline passed, the government acted decisively, and on November 5, Parihaka was invaded by 1,500 settlers’ militia and volunteers. This account from Savage shows the

lengths taken to wipe the community out: “Offering no resistance, Te Whiti, Tohu and hundreds of their followers were arrested. [. . .] A special Act of Parliament, the Māori Prisoners’ Trials Act, suspended habeas corpus to allow the Parihaka prisoners to be detained indefinitely without trial in the most heinous abrogation of civil rights in this country” (11). Over the next few months the soldiers destroyed homes, crops and livestock, and forced out many of those who had escaped arrest. Savage writes that “[i]n a history of denial, Parihaka was virtually wiped out of existence, maps redrawn and history redefined in an attempt to obliterate the memory of Parihaka from the face of the earth” (11). Yet the government was unable to suppress the spirit of the movement, exemplified in the hospitality shown soldiers when invading forces were offered freshly baked bread by children. The welcome was a mixture of generosity, spirituality, and even strategy, as horses shy away from children which slowed down the process of the invasion (Scott 113). Riseborough writes in *Days of Darkness*, that spiritually the gift of kai was an assertion of mana (authority, integrity) over the whenua, it was “the manaaki, the traditional hospitality of host to guest, and by accepting the food the guests accepted the manaaki and acknowledged the mana” (106). Whether or not the soldiers understood the connotations of the gesture, the pā had continued to act out the ritual associated with the arrival of strangers. The Parihaka people had affirmed their mana, and were able to respond peacefully to the violent actions of the intruders.

Yet Parihaka would survive such extermination processes and Te Whiti and Tohu’s teachings have continued to resonate throughout Aotearoa culture. At the pā, the work of the ancestors continues in the monthly hui, held in accordance with Te Whiti’s and Tohu’s teachings on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of each month:

they gather together to observe the rā, welcoming onto their marae with unfailing hospitality visitors from around the world drawn to Parihaka like pilgrims to Mecca or Jerusalem [. . .], in a spiritual quest for self-knowledge, inner peace and harmony. On the marae, the story of Parihaka is passed down through oratory, waiata and poi, printed indelibly on the minds of successive generations, leaving none untouched by grief and injury. (Savage 10)

Sustained by the fire of these hui, the combination of politics and spirituality taught at Parihaka has continued to resonate throughout Aotearoa culture in art, literature, and



music. One of the more popular songs written is Tim Finn's "Parihaka", in which Finn sings that one day the truth will be told, because "They can't pull out the roots". The lyrics to "Parihaka" are discussed in an essay by Gregory O'Brien featured in *Parihaka*, and the author offers some explanations for the continued influence of Parihaka on writers, composers and artists:

Is this because Parihaka represents idealism and consistency in a world of opportunism – or because it melds Māori and Pākehā influences to forge a forward-thinking, innovative society that also holds dear ancient Māori principles? [. . .] The poems, plays and songs of Parihaka, it could further be said, embody a collective effort to relocate the history and spirit of Parihaka at the heart – the 'inside' rather than the 'outside' – of the cultural life of Aotearoa New Zealand. (202)

This quote shows how the collection of work inspired by Parihaka is pan-cultural; just as the Parihaka prophets had brought people of all iwi together and welcomed Pākehā under any circumstances, so does the story of Parihaka continue to resonate with many New Zealanders. As Finn's song reminds us, the truth cannot be hidden, because "The endless tide is murmuring [Te Whiti's] name". Reaching out to a new generation, the people of Parihaka are once again opening up the pā to pilgrims seeking spiritual enlightenment. A hybrid between an outdoor dance party and the political and spiritual hui of Te Whiti and Tohu's time, the Parihaka International Peace Festival represents the merging of dance culture with politics and ancient spirituality, the significance of which will be discussed at length in Chapter Five.

### **"Waitangi" – Singing Redemption Songs**

Māori land alienations continued throughout the twentieth century, but in the 1970's heightened Māori protest resulted in a change of direction with regards to the law. A black arm-band protest by activist group Nga Tamatoa, on Waitangi Day in 1971 resulted in the Labour government seeking the Māori Council's advice on treaty matters. Ranginui Walker writes in *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* that the Council cited fourteen statutes contravening Article 2 of the Treaty, including the Public Works Act, the Mining

Act, the Petroleum Act, the Rating Act, and the Town and Country Planning Act. The council's advice resulted in a modification to the Town and Country Planning Act, "to take cognisance of the culture of the colonised [. . .] to take into account the relationship of the Maori people, their culture and traditions with their ancestral land". In 1975 the Treaty of Waitangi Act was passed and the Waitangi Tribunal was established to hear grievances and inquire into treaty claims. The tribunal could make recommendations to Parliament for settlement, but Walker notes that because the power to make awards remained with Parliament "Maori people were not mollified by a tribunal with no substance" (212).

In 1975 Māori protest coalesced around the Land March, a hīkoi (walk) which spanned the length of Te Ika ā Māui (North Island), and raised awareness of te Tiriti o Waitangi across Aotearoa. Standing out as a landmark twentieth century event, the month-long hīkoi was organised by protest group Te Roopu o te Matakite, and was led by eighty year old community leader Whina Cooper who was to become an iconic personification of the long walk for justice that Māori had been engaged in since te Tiriti's signing. After the hīkoi, land occupations at Bastion Point and Raglan Golf Course also dominated media reports until the early 1980's. In the intervening years, recommendations for changes and settlements made by the Waitangi Tribunal have gone some way towards righting treaty wrongs, but the institution engenders criticism as to its effectiveness, and Waitangi Day continues to be a vehicle for protest against tribunal and governmental decisions. When the mythology is stripped away, the history of te Tiriti o Waitangi is a long and troubled one that looks set to continue well into the twenty-first century.

One vehicle of Māori protest of particular relevance to this thesis is the reggae scene inspired by Bob Marley's Auckland concert in 1979. In *Stranded in Paradise* John Dix describes the event and notes the community atmosphere: "It was a muggy afternoon and the ganja was in abundance. [. . .] Thousands of people of many persuasions singing, laughing, dancing, sharing joints" (260). Dix is somewhat dismissive of the influence of Marley on Māori and Pacific Islanders, noting that most of those wearing dreadlocks were not strictly Rastafarian, but as shown by syncretic religious movements such as Ringatu, Ratana and Pai Mārire (where Māori spiritual beliefs are combined with

Christian principles), Māori spiritual practice is adept at welding religions together, just as Rastafarianism itself is a confluence of African and Christian practices. In Aotearoa, Rastafarianism is both politically and spiritually motivated, and Tony Mitchell notes that after Marley's concert: "reggae music and Rastafarian philosophy was adopted and adapted by Aotearoa and Dread Beat and Blood [. . .]. These groups also used reggae rhythms to express Maori militancy in their lyrics, and Aotearoa's 1985 single *Maranga Ake Ai* (Wake the People) was a plea to young Maori to become politically aware and 'take up the cause'". The history of reggae in Aotearoa deserves its own thesis, but one of the more politically motivated bands to emerge in this era was Dread, Beat and Blood who took their name from revolutionary dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson's debut album. "Maranga Ake Ai" was "banned by local radio stations because of its militant Māori activist content" (63). Recorded in 1985, Dread, Beat and Blood's "Waitangi" is also direct: "The Treaty was a fraud / That we cannot afford to lose [. . .] They give it a big parade / While the big report was made". The song uses the Jamaican lyrical symbol of the "oppressor man" as shorthand for the colonial regime. At the end is the "ka mate ka mate / ka ora ka ora" haka, famous globally for its association with the All Blacks but reclaimed here by Dread Beat and Blood, leaving the listener in no doubt that they are prepared to fight for Māori rights for life and to death. The directness of the song is representative of the protests that had gone before, and sets a course for fellow reggae protestors to follow. Thus Māori reggae music has nourished opposition to te Tiriti o Waitangi since the 1980's.

Since Marley's visit there has been a cultural renaissance that has had a symbiotic relationship with the recognition of te reo Māori as an official Aotearoa language. In the wake of a revival of traditional practices on the marae, tikanga Māori (Māori custom) is promoted in the worlds of art and literature in multi-sensory ways that provoke thought amongst all New Zealanders about life in Aotearoa. Te reo Māori has had a similar revival. For eighty years after the passing of the 1867 Native Schools Act, te reo was forbidden in schools and Māori students were severely punished if caught speaking it. Hana O'Regan notes that: "The aim was assimilation of Māori with the wider community and was fed by the belief that a person's fluency in Māori would be at the cost of their proficiency in English and, therefore, ultimately the success of Māori children in the

Pākehā world” (158). These policies, combined with the isolating effects of the urban drift that occurred during the twentieth century, saw te reo Māori severely diminished as an active language, with the general view being that it “had no place in a modern, global world” (158). In the 1970’s and 1980’s, Māori established their own systems for learning te reo, including bi-lingual schools, adult education, kōhanga reo (language nests), kura kaupapa Māori (immersion primary schools), and te reo radio and television programmes. But when the Waitangi Tribunal was asked in 1985 by Huirangi Waikerepuru and Nga Kaiwhakapumau I te Reo, to consider the status of the language under the principles of te Tiriti, the revival of te reo was assured. Walker notes that the Waitangi Tribunal was asked to consider whether te reo Māori came under the definition of taonga (treasure) which the Crown was obliged to protect: “In this case, the tribunal laid down the principle that the word taonga covered both tangible and intangible matters. Language was essential to culture and was defined as a taonga” (268). The tribunal’s decision saw the Māori Language Act passed in 1987, which accorded te reo Māori the status of an official language of New Zealand, and has seen the introduction of bi-lingual government publications, place names, signage, and parliamentary debate. Radio and television frequencies have been reserved for use by Māori, and in 1993 the Te Māngai Pāho broadcasting funding agency was “established to promote Māori language and culture” (O’Regan 160). Combined, the initiatives have had a significant effect on Aotearoa society as a whole.

### **“So Shut Up I won’t” – Asserting the Place of te Reo Māori in the Language of Aotearoa**

Released in 1988, Upper Hutt Posse’s “E Tu – Stand Proud” was an early example of the mixing up of languages that has occurred over the past two decades. The first locally produced hiphop record in Aotearoa, “E Tu – Stand Proud” was a bi-lingual call to arms for Māori and Pākehā to be honest about our history. Although Upper Hutt Posse were influenced by American hiphop, locality was established by the karanga (call), calling the people to “whakarongo, whakarongo”, to listen, listen. Rapped by the song’s lyricist Dean Hapeta, the lyrics tell the Māori version of Aotearoa’s history, noting famous

warriors and ancestors who had refused to give in to “white rule and injustice”. The song exposes the truth behind the racial façade, shows pride in Māori skill at warfare, and voices the attitude of a new generation of protestors: “We’ve been ripped off man so shut up I won’t”. The video, which appeared regularly on chart music show *Ready to Roll* mixed historical images of the warriors with studio footage of Upper Hutt Posse performing the song. Kerry Buchanan writes how the experience of being called a ‘nigger’ at eight years old has resulted in Hapeta referring to himself as “one bad nigger” in reference to his hardcore politics: “Here lies Hapeta’s strength and, for some, his weakness: the ability to weave Māori culture, language and political demands - from land and fishing rights to economic equality - within the style and context of black American hip-hop” (2). Buchanan notes that Hapeta was not culturally influenced by the middle-class Māori cultural renaissance that had occurred since the 1970’s, but by his “whakapapa (‘the place where one belongs’)” and the songs of Bob Marley: “the songs of resistance rang true in his disadvantaged neighbourhood, where police confrontations were a rite of passage” (2). “E Tu – Stand Proud” was an early signifier of the cultural shift taking place in Aotearoa as te reo began to be used in the public domain. The song’s punchy chorus, “E tu, stand proud, kia kaha say it loud” became a catchphrase for both Māori and Pākehā, and as the song rocketed to the top of the charts, our two languages were merged on radios and stereos throughout Aotearoa. It was an indication of things to come.

The advent of te reo Māori being recognised as one of our official languages has seen a major transformation of both Māori and Aotearoa English, with the two increasingly being heard together in everyday language. The final decades of the twentieth century have seen te reo Māori taught on marae, and in schools, universities and workplaces. But the version being taught as the ‘official’ language is far removed from dialects spoken at time of European contact as O’Regan notes: “[f]or those charged with the responsibility of protecting, preserving and developing the Māori language, the danger of ‘dumbing down’ te reo Māori, and the subsequent level of language spoken by second-language learners and native speakers alike, was a significant one” (165-60). Of late, there has been support for the redevelopment of iwi dialects so that the situation might be remedied. But hybridisation has also occurred between te reo Māori and English

with the result that many Pākehā understand simple Māori words and phrases, whilst some use them as part of their everyday language, resulting in a distinctly Aotearoa idiom forming that uses both languages without emphasising one or the other. This style has also informed this work; in places the Māori term is more fitting than the English, and vice-versa. As a living taonga the relevance of te reo Māori to Aotearoa culture and language is one area where the principles of te Tiriti are at least being acted out in contemporary society, if not fully embraced by all.

But the gradual merging of languages in no way indicates that the Waitangi Tribunal is making real progress in honouring the terms of te Tiriti. That the Tribunal has made an impact on everyday life is undeniable. Māori concerns are more visible and progress has been made in honouring our founding document. Some iwi (including Te Wai Pounamu's Ngai Tahu) have successfully negotiated the Waitangi Tribunal process and have had land returned along with cash settlements, whilst many others are engaged in making claims. But King overstates the effects when he claims that the process could be called a revolution, as the Waitangi Tribunal remains highly contentious to both Māori and Pākehā, although usually for different reasons (487).

### **“Seems Like Nothing is Going to Stop It” – the Desecration Continues**

If the final decades of the twentieth century saw a reversal in the direction of land transfer between Māori and the government, the 2004 Foreshore and Seabed Act demonstrated that land confiscations still occur. The chain of court decisions that led to the Act's passing began in 1997 when Marlborough Māori laid a claim to have their customary ownership of the takutaimoana (foreshore and seabed) determined. Both the Māori Land Court, and in 2003, the Court of Appeal, decided that where the foreshore and seabed were held in accordance with tikanga Māori, the iwi were entitled to present their case to have customary Māori land converted to freehold land (Hingston 107). The Labour Government responded quickly by announcing that it would proceed to assert Crown ownership of all of Aotearoa's foreshore and seabed and pass legislation to ensure that Māori could not claim customary ownership. Harris notes the rupture that occurred in the wake of the decision:

The Government response flabbergasted many people, not just Māori. Its swift reaction seemed ill-conceived, heavy-handed and premature.

Fervent debate followed, and the Pandora's Box that is New Zealand's race relations was opened on the nation's beaches, holding the gaze of media headlines that tried to unravel the myths of national identity and One-New-Zealandism. (147)

In February, 2004 the debate was fuelled by incendiary remarks made by National Party leader, Don Brash, and the months following would see the racial division between Māori and Pākehā exposed over ownership of our most favoured piece of utopian 'land' – the beach.

In terms of apparent egalitarianism, the beach is as sacred a space as the rugby field in upholding the mythology. Given the significance of the beach (both real and imagined) to our national identity, it is not surprising that the nation-wide foreshore and seabed 'debate' centred on the media-driven slogan of 'who owns the beach?', a place encapsulated in the colloquialism that 'no place is far from the sea', meaning that no one is further than 130 kilometres from the coast (Barnett Wolfe 7). Hence, the media lens through which the 'debate' was constructed inflated the perceived threat to that utopian space, should Māori claim rights to it under te Tiriti. As Ken Hingston notes in "Foreshore and Seabed": "the whole anti-Māori campaign was spun on the lie that Māori would deny access to the beaches. The reality in New Zealand is that corporates and non-Māori who own beaches deny the public access" (112). As Hingston indicates the beach myth has never been so far removed from reality for many. Beaches and camping grounds are giving way to large 'holiday homes' and tourist accommodation, and the foreshore itself has become subject to rubbish, pollution (including sewage), and the erosion inevitable when trees have made way for development and a rise in the sea level occurs. In addition, carefree sunbathing has been ousted by the hole in the ozone layer that ensures that summer days come with a burning intensity. Yet for all this, the beach continues to operate as a site of identity and utopian longing in Aotearoa, and thus debate over who should own it has diverted attention away from the commercial and environmental crises facing our most treasured space.

The division between the government and Māori grew as the Foreshore and Seabed Bill was rushed through, culminating in a hīkoi that united both Māori and Pākehā opposed to the Bill. Ignoring the advice of the Court of Appeal, the Waitangi Tribunal, and its own Māori MP's, the government went ahead with the transferral of the foreshore and seabed to Crown ownership. An editorial in the *Sunday Star Times* outlines the significance of the legislation: "The overwhelming fact to emerge [ . . . ] is that once again the government has moved the goalposts on Maori. [ . . . ] Governments of all hues have extinguished Maori property rights for aeons and will, no doubt, continue to do so" (C12). Protest was strong and Hīkoi 2004 was organised to show united Māori opposition to the bill. Having left Cape Reinga in the far North on April 22, 2004 the Hīkoi ended on May 5 when 25 000 people marched on Parliament in Wellington. Harris writes that: "Hīkoi 2004 became a spectacular display of Māori transcending tribal difference to express their shared dissatisfaction with government policy" (10). Arranged with short notice, that the marchers broke with tradition and used vehicles between towns was the subject of media comment, but the merging of technology and tradition (every part of the march was covered by at least one walker) was effective and the Hīkoi was in Wellington in time for the first reading of the bill. Prime Minister Helen Clarke however, refused to meet them, as Hingston notes: "the Prime Minister publicly labelled the thousands of New Zealanders who participated in the Hīkoi against the proposed legislation as 'haters and wreckers'. She went further and stated that she preferred a meeting involving a long wool-ed sheep called Shrek to facing the Hīkoi" (112). The saga of 'Shrek', a sheep that had escaped years of shearing and had been found in the back country of Te Wai Pounamu had distracted media and public attention from the Hīkoi throughout the week. The 'kiwiana' imagery of the Prime Minister attending the shearing reinforced the Pākehā pastoral paradise 'fairytale' that had been bought at the expense of Māori, who, along with a significant number of Pākehā, were at that moment protesting another eradication of their rights under te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Bill was passed in November 2004, but if the Act was designed to quell voter fears, Māori have continued to unite against the Foreshore and Seabed Act, with the United Nations asked to investigate. The UN ruled that the legislation was racially discriminating against Māori and that the New Zealand Government should revisit their decision, but Hingston notes the outcome was



treated with disdain: “I suggest that it is clear that the New Zealand Government intervened in the due process of the law, unjustly confiscated land from Māori, and enacted racially discriminatory legislation that shames us before the United Nations and the world” (108). Just as Hobson and his colonial government went against Imperial orders, so the current New Zealand Government ignores warnings from no less an authority than the United Nations. Yet public opinion is changing, and there are a growing number of New Zealanders who are open to discussing the problems and seeking solutions. It is my belief that if te Tiriti o Waitangi were properly honoured as our founding document Aotearoa could lead the way towards being a truly multi-cultural society where no one group dominates over the others. Our Mixed Member Parliament system (MMP) already offers the possibility of a multi-cultural parliament; te Tiriti o Waitangi holds the legal means by which such a society could function.

So where does dance culture fit on this social and political map? In general, ‘politics’ is not something that Aotearoa outdoor dance culture likes to involve itself in. Yet there is a politics of sorts emerging, one that is summed up by the Trinity Roots’ song “Home Land and Sea”, from which an excerpt was used to open this chapter. Released in 2004, the song appeared at the end of *Home, Land and Sea*, a lament with which to mourn the ongoing loss of land that had culminated in the passing of the Foreshore and Seabed Act. Beginning with a strummed guitar and a cicada, the song conjures images of singalongs on beaches. The opening lyrics refer to the Māori legend that Te Ika ā Māui is a fish, caught by Māui from the waka (canoe) also known as Te Wai Pounamu. Here the fish is being chopped up by “money all round this world”, and the first verse is a tangi, a tearful lament, for the land lost to “a Queen Bee and her company of ‘worriers’, not warriors” who value dollars over people. Yet the soaring chorus is a call to arms, an acknowledgement of the harm done to Aotearoa and continuing to be done in the pursuit of money. The second verse is a challenge, with singer Warren Maxwell injecting restrained anger into the words “But them rules they keep on changing / I’ll be f...d if I’m going to play that game”, giving the second chorus a lift as the warrior spirit underlines the lyrics. Sung in the outdoor spaces of the dance parties, this song was a protest song like no other. It referenced the initial colonisation by Pākehā, but it included Pākehā in the lament for a land that is still being colonised by “money all

round this world.” Perhaps, more than any other anthem discussed in this here, “Home Land and Sea” sings to the grief of those who care about the whenua, the disputed land that we call Aotearoa.

Perhaps due to our inherited ‘she’ll be right’ mentality, along with the increased commercialism of the events, dance culture’s enthusiasm for dancing in idyllic locations has yet to result in concrete political action. MMP enables smaller parties such as the Green Party and the Māori Party to have some influence, but not all dancers choose to exercise their right to vote in elections. However, one of the themes of this thesis is that there is room for greater political engagement. There are factors to life in Aotearoa that make some of our everyday experiences more paradisiacal than most, but they too are being eroded, and now even the ‘clean green’ image that was distilled from the pastoral utopian mythology has been dirtied by pollution of our air, water and land. The fact that we are increasingly less mindful of where we dispose of waste is not only evident on the beaches and other ‘revered’ places of the Pākehā myth, but in the dance zones themselves. Sadly the morning party often reveals a debris laden site that is incongruous with the environment in which we dance, a factor that to my observation is also tied to increased commercialism. But perhaps our nonchalance for the land on which we dance is symptomatic of New Zealanders’ increased tolerance for pollution, as greater consumerism results in its corresponding demons: greater waste and exploitation of our environment. Here, there is room for dance culture to make a difference, at the level of the events at least. As I discuss in Chapter Five, the potential for dancers to become semi-nomadic ‘eco-warriors’ and fight for the protection of Aotearoa is great. The core of dancers who attend events regularly are used to, and prepared for, the isolated nature of the parties; should the same kind of enthusiasm be applied to political protests such as land occupations or hīkoi, the potential to become involved in the future direction for Aotearoa is conceivable, if not likely given the current state of dancer apathy.

That dance culture’s utopian projections remain largely in the disappeared spaces of our parties lends pathos to “Home, Land and Sea”. We “know” and “feel” that the Aotearoa we envisage is increasingly slipping beyond our reach, but we seem unable to stem the tide beyond personal attempts at living less heavily on the land. A true child of my generation, sometimes it really does seem like “nothing known is gonna stop it”, but

the power of dance culture lies in the unknown, and every time we join together in an ecstatic moment on the dancefloor, the dream feels like it could be achieved. Before I can give my dream substance however, I need to reconfigure the way I feel about my turangawaewae (home, standing place) – in short I need a new myth to replace the discarded Pākehā one. I need a myth that honours Māoritanga and is supported by DIY technology, one that of necessity will be a variation of the old mythology of pre-industrial cultures. If we are to heal our past, we must build visions of what our future could be.

So far the utopian based rhetoric associated with Aotearoa dance culture has yet to transcend the parameters of the dancefloor in any tangible sense, and as global dance culture reaches the twentieth anniversary mark, a new generation will be gearing up to celebrate rave's retro potential in the face of increasing international unrest. Yet like other EDMC missives, conversion is a key theme here, and it is often a re-working of ideology and practice that takes place over time. For some converts, the gatherings and the journeys to and from the zones foster an appreciation of the stunning impact of much of our environment, along with greater spiritual connection to the whenua, which results in practical changes being made. Further, as David Young notes in *Our Islands, Our Selves*, "an interest in indigenous nature may lead to an interest in indigenous culture", so there is also the potential for greater understanding of Māori culture (14). There is a small, but strong nucleus of dancers who once converted, incorporate dance culture into their everyday lives, and it is just possible that when what the marketers will surely brand as the 'new wave of rave' hits, we will be in a position to take it to the next level. But what will that level be: rave commercialised beyond all recognition, or dance culture as an alternative lifestyle, one that eschews the trappings of consumerism and operates as a site of change? At the outdoor events there is the potential for the utopian policies of dance party manifestoes to actually be carried out. Aotearoa gatherings celebrate the koru (spiral) that is the past, the present, and the future, merging primitive forms of culture with technology that was once the stuff of space-age television shows but is now commonplace. At a time when media hype would suggest that we are accelerating towards a collision with a dark, seemingly hopeless future created by humans, outdoor gatherings are in a unique position to offer an alternative, if temporary lifestyle that

prepares us to meet the future head on, whatever it holds. Our challenge now is to enable dance culture to reach the next level of evolution.

**Chapter One:**  
**Hearing Waves and Shapes –**  
**the Honouring of Aotearoa in Music**

I've become very aware that the natural sounds of this environment exist in their own right, as do the songs and chants of our Maori tradition, intractable, not to be won easily into any synthesis. And although tapes travel quickly round the globe, carry precise information, need no translation in performance, I'm increasingly aware that the whole medium of electronic sound is no ready-made international language – these technical freedoms don't encourage a common language, but rather a greater profusion of individual styles. (Douglas Lilburn, qtd. in Young *Beginnings* 470)

i write music to be in this world, to find where i am. To find my point of reference, my coordinates in a world that – as David Whyte says – ‘has as much beauty and as much terror as we can take, and more some’.

Noticing the intricacy of nature; the relationships it forms with itself and with the human influence within it. Noticing the many patterns; the many regularities and irregularities. How the details and subtleties reveal themselves more and more as i place my attention on them.

How simple it is, how simple it is.

...another black dot, another black line.

(Leyton in liner notes to Rotor+ *Aileron*)

The landscape is central to the utopian mythology of Aotearoa and many of the less populated areas (such as those where the *Lord of the Rings* was filmed) have become globally recognisable, but Aotearoa also has a distinctive *sound* and *feel*, and the dance music produced here conveys a sense of our environment that avoids banal representations of the ‘natural’ as found in many visual images. Post-rave electronic music styles demonstrate Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notion of the rhizome, with individual genres growing from a number of musics that share roots with hip-hop, dub,

disco, funk and ambient. But Aotearoa dance music is also influenced by a number of local musics, one of which is not generally associated with contemporary dance music, but is audible in the music itself. This is the music of Aotearoa's first electronic composer Douglas Lilburn who is connected to contemporary dance and electronica musicians through his vision for Aotearoa music.

Lilburn sought to express in music Aotearoa's unique sound and 'feel', and it was in the electro-acoustic genre that he came closest to achieving his dream. A successful classical composer, he set up Aotearoa's first electronic music studio at Victoria University in 1964, and by the late 1960's was composing entirely in the electro-acoustic medium, believing that the musical *essence* of Aotearoa could be more faithfully interpreted using environmental recordings, which were then manipulated in the studio. He imagined music that was composed of many voices, including Māori waiata and the myriad sounds produced by the machine, and his electronic works (released for the first time on Compact Disc in 2004), are testament to his vision. He retired in 1989, at a time when a nascent electronic scene was emerging, one that was far removed from the electro-acoustic music of which he was a patron. In his own lifetime, Lilburn felt hampered by the limitations of the machinery, but in the dance zones his vision was played out in the very spaces where he sought refuge, and his death in 2001 coincided with an upsurge in electronic music production in Aotearoa. Lilburn believed in the creation of a music that was distinctly of this land and this thesis would argue that his vision has been realised by contemporary dance music.

Whether uni or multi-zoned, most outdoor dance parties in Aotearoa feature various dance music styles, but in the live/local arenas the various genres are united by their sharing of a common musical language, the sound of this land. In the same way that Detroit techno is the repetitive beat of the assembly line, and London drum and bass the driving multi-rhythm of transport and industry, the dance music of Aotearoa incorporates the aural soundtrack to the journeys taken to and from the parties. Our music is the sound of driving, of leaving urban loci and journeying towards unknown paradisiacal destinations. Here, the rhythms of modernity meet the sounds of the sea, rain, wind, trees, and the many unique songs of native birds that before the discovery of Aotearoa by humans, shared their islands with no mammals other than bats and sea varieties such as seals and

sea lions. With few predators, the birds were able to develop a rich musicality to their song, and the calls of the tui and korimako (bellbird) are familiar features wherever there are sufficient native trees. Like Lilburn, the current wave of electronic musicians are acknowledging the environmental music that exists ‘in its own right’, and making space for it amongst the multilayers of sounds made by man and the machine. In doing so they establish an Aotearoa sound that operates on the Deleuzian/Guattarian principle of de/territorialisation, taking the listeners out of their existing sound environment and placing them within the embrace of the whenua, the land that is the basis for both Māori mythology and Pākehā myth-making.

Whether those not familiar with our islands can discern a distinctive sound in the dance music produced in Aotearoa is difficult to assess. But for the dancers who have sampled familiar environmental tropes played in outdoor zones where the ‘natural’ found sounds already exist within the aural space, there is little doubt that Aotearoa dance music is speaking with our voice. A voice that although multicultural and multidimensional in accent and harmony is both proud of, and concerned for the land that continues to inspire reverence.

### **Rhizomes and Ro/utes – The Origins of Electronic Dance Music**

Music genres are often discussed in terms of their *roots*, but when considering location in electronic dance music, Deleuze and Guattari’s more complex system, the rhizome, provides an effective metaphor. Post-rave dance music has mutated to the point that its multiplicitous subgenres are now impossible to trace in terms of nationality. With new technology allowing musicians and listeners to be connected globally, Nabeel Zuberi writes in *Sounds English* that notions of local and regional “origins” are complicated: “Globalization has intensified the sharing of musical sounds across borders. Simon Reynolds believes that these networks [. . .] make notions of the national redundant” (131). Zuberi also discards the word roots, in favour of routes, in which “the constant movement of culture [. . .] transgresses lines of identity defined by place” (133). Although global dance genres may originate in specific places, they soon intercept and mutate into a proliferation of styles in a manner that also befits Deleuze and Guattari’s

notion of the rhizome, a term that in nature describes the complex reproductive system of the tuber, in which any point can be connected to anything other and “must be”. They write in *A Thousand Plateaus (ATP)*: “This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order. [. . .] not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature: semiotic chains of nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding [. . .]. *Collective assemblages of enunciation* function directly within *machinic assemblages*” (7). They suggest that this rhizomatic assemblage (and by extension, life) should be mapped in terms of how it functions with other assemblages, or bodies without organs, a more humanising term for what is basically the same amorphous concept:

The rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*. Make a map, not a tracing. [. . .] What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. [. . .]. It fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency. (12)

These concepts are reflected in the open-contact spaces of the dance zones (as discussed in the following chapters), but of relevance here is the idea that the vast sphere of global dance culture can be mapped in terms of the metaphorical routes that connect tracks, artists, labels, styles, genres, fans and other sites of convergence.

Where the convergences on a map such as this can be referred to in terms of physical space, the environment in which the music is produced can help create a distinction in sound discernable to the listener. Zuberi asks: “While the national may be put in question, does the issue of location really become irrelevant for the analysis of music?” and finds that the answer is as complex as the tangled nature of black music itself, which is fragmented: “Black Atlantic collective memory is still vital, but it is constructed from various perspectives and *rooted* in particular places cut through with *routes* to and from points elsewhere” (180). Like tubers, such musical assemblages produce their own unique flavour drawn from the environments in which they subsist, as exemplified by Detroit techno. In *Altered State*, Matthew Collin establishes the significance of environmental influences in Juan Atkins’ *Night Drive Thru Babylon*: “a soundtrack to a cruise through the desperate, decaying streets of inner-city Detroit, an



economically devastated landscape” (23). From the city associated with Motown and P-funk emerged a vanguard of recyclers who used the technology and sounds of industry to make dance music: “[they] used what primitive analogue equipment they could lay their hands on – reappropriating industrial detritus – to create sparse, kinetic funk with drums like thunderbolts, yet mournful and deeply, romantic, as if the machines were whispering a lament about what it is like to be young and black in post-industrial America. They called it techno” (23-4).

In his discussion of the drug-influenced fragmentation of dance music that occurred during the 1990’s, Simon Reynolds likewise links genre to place. If house’s 140 bpm (beats per minute), four/four rhythms and soaring vocals sing to the MDMA rush of euphoric ravers, then jungle explores the edgy paranoia produced by vast quantities of ‘skunk’, the particularly strong cannabis with which it is associated. Originating in London in the early 1990’s, jungle would evolve into drum and bass and breakbeat styles. Reynolds locates the 160 bpm multilayers of the drum lines in West African polyrhythmic music, and notes the influence of Jamaican (via London) dub and dancehall in the bass lines which, as jungle evolved, were gradually slowed down until they ran at half-speed to the drums, transforming the music into a two-lane highway: “Like driving on the motorway, you could groove in the slow lane to the skanking B-line, then shift to the fast lane and flail to the drums” (254). As exemplified by reggae and dub, the slow bass line serves the ‘laid back’ effects of cannabis. Reynolds also identifies the influence of place and drugs on gabba (200-250bpm’s), a hardcore genre originating from industrial Belgium and Holland, which was fuelled by amphetamine-based drugs:

Imagine death-swarm synthesizers droning ominously like bombers over Dresden. Imagine a jackhammer beat that pounds as hard as a heart overdosing on adrenaline and steroids. This is gabba, an ultrafast, superaggressive form of hardcore techno developed by the Dutch in the early nineties that has since spread throughout the global rave underground. (284)

Hence, Reynolds, who dismisses the idea of nation as irrelevant, identifies the effect of environment on the music. Thus lines of flight converge and become ro/uted in specific places and timeframes.

### **DIY (Re)Invention – Jamaican Dub and the Recycling Ethos**

Another music style intrinsically linked to ‘place’ is dub. Originating in Jamaica in the 1970’s, dub was unique in that it was initially produced, not by musicians, but by producers exploring the possibilities of instrumental ‘versions’ in the studio. In *Bass Culture: When Reggae was King*, Lloyd Bradley writes that the invention of dub was part of the Jamaicans’ “astonishing capacity for recycling”, and it was not just the equipment being recycled but songs as well (310). Significant too, was the unique relationship between the Jamaican music industry and the outdoor soundsystems, where regulars were always waiting to hear something new. For these audiences, hearing an instrumental dub version played back to back with the original, had the effect of a twelve inch single before it was invented. Bradley writes that dub was unique because it “involved redefining the song in the studio [. . .]. It wasn’t happening anywhere else in the world”. Although he was not the first to start using the mixing desk as another instrument, Bradley notes that it was King Tubby who “went clear from a creative point of view” (313-4). Tubby’s skill and creativity with electrical equipment is legendary and he is credited with introducing reverb to Jamaican dancers. A perfectionist, his studio was always being reinvented as a finely tuned musical instrument, and with the addition of a four-track mixing board he developed his signature style: “As a result of its owner’s professorial expertise in electronic theory, his phenomenal effectiveness with a soldering iron and his uncanny ability to see beyond the music on the tape, King Tubby’s studio [. . .] was a perpetually evolving state of the art”. Adept at ‘bastardizing’ new outboard gear and tinkering with the circuitry, Tubby took a DIY approach to remixing dub versions of Jamaican songs (317). Although he never produced ‘originals’ in the usual sense, his musical contribution has continued to reverberate every time dub is reincarnated in another place and time.

If Tubby is credited as having ‘invented’ dub, it is Lee Scratch Perry who reinvented it for musicians. Perry opened his Black Ark studio in 1974, and by the time he burned it down in 1979, his reputation as a dub master was on par with Tubby’s. Bradley writes that Tubby designed the studio circuitry for Perry, but that, “[u]nlike

Tubby, Scratch didn't mix other people's tunes but worked with his own material, and as he produced the original music he was already hearing the instruments and (very often) the voices with a version or three in mind" (325-6). What Perry did was fuse the technology of the mixing desk with a variety of instruments, and write songs designed to be remixed both 'live' and at the desk. He used a wide range of sound generators to recreate the tunes he heard in his head, and he would employ a number of techniques to embellish the standard Jamaican line-up of bass, drums, guitar, keyboards and horns. Bradley writes that he would cut vocals and several different lead instruments on a single rhythm: "mixing a number of dubs and even combining more than one version on the same cut. Perry would continually sculpt away at his vast stockpile of rhythms and tunes, adding, chipping bits off, echoing, distorting and stirring in just about anything that took his fancy" (326). Bradley quotes musicians who recall the difficulty of trying to reproduce the sounds Perry heard in his head, noting that it often made no sense until they heard it played back. The limits of the studio's four track operation also had an effect; the Black Ark sound was warmer and denser than much of the studio dub because "he was continually having to 'bounce down', combining two tracks on to one in order to free up space for whatever he wanted to add on next" (328). Although Perry's eccentric style seemed chaotic, he sought perfection in the sound, and was not particular about how he got it. It is a DIY ethos that is also found in the music discussed here, much of which has been strongly influenced by dub.

Like the genres discussed above, local variations are not facsimiles of international blueprints, but are influenced by the Aotearoa environment in which they are produced. Similarly, various music styles in Aotearoa have been referred to in terms of the Dunedin or the Wellington 'Sound', and the drugs available in these locations have also had an effect.<sup>1</sup> Whilst the rock and popular genres are largely influenced by American and European styles, in dance music, dub and reggae styles have become a unifying theme. David Toop notes in *Ocean of Sound* that the nature of dub allows for variance: "When you double or dub, you replicate, reinvent, make one of many versions. [. . .] The composition has been decomposed, already, by the technology. Dubbing, at its very best, takes each bit and imbues it with new life, turning a rational order of musical sequences into an ocean of sensation" (115). With the knowledge that there are potential pitfalls

when writing about a cultural form that resists representation in language, and that there are no definitive answers as to what any one music ‘means’, this thesis will argue that the land and soundscape of Aotearoa is a part of the ‘ocean of sensation’ created by local producers. But before I begin to map the routes of Aotearoa dance music, it is necessary to establish the nature of the Aotearoa sound environment.

### **A Melodious Refrain – Identifying the Sound of Aotearoa**

In most parts of Aotearoa natural sounds have yet to be entirely drowned out by industry, and they are a powerful agent in establishing a sense of place. In *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, King uses as his start quote naturalist Joseph Banks’ description of how Aotearoa sounded at the time of European discovery by Cook’s *Endeavour*:

This morn I was awakd by the singing of the birds ashore from whence we are distant not a quarter of a mile, the numbers of them were certainly very great who seemed to strain their throats with emulation . . . [Their] voices were certainly the most melodious wild musick I have ever heard, almost imitating small bells but with the most tuneable silver sound imaginable. (qtd. in King 15)

To Banks the dawn chorus was remarkable for its musicality. Yet, as King notes, the ‘wild musick’ that so impressed Banks, “was a mere echo of what could have been heard four hundred years before, for by 1770 around half of New Zealand’s bird species were already extinct” (15). During the writing of this section I was living in the West Coast town of Granity, in one of a line of houses located between the beach and the main road and railway line, and I became fascinated by the dawn chorus that greeted me each morning, even though – in the wake of greater colonial extinctions and eradications of bush – it was a mere echo of what Banks would have heard. Home to sea-birds, little blue penguins, a number of native forest birds (including tui, korimako, pīwakawaka, ruru and weka), along with the more common introduced species, in Granity, the birds have become acclimatised to the sounds of industrialisation, and at dawn when the road is busy with coal trucks, milk tankers, and a changing shift of miners, they continue to make themselves heard above the sweeping traffic lines and occasional coal train. In between

the random manmade disturbances the birdsong is accompanied by the steady rhythm of the sea, which echoes against the steep bush-covered hills directly behind the railway line. It is these relative moments of quiet that remind me of where I am upon waking long before I open my eyes. In discussing the power of rock as a territorialising agent, Lawrence Grossberg discusses the role of space and place and finds that “[i]t is music that finds place – it is music that affectively locates us in the world [. . .] Everyday life is itself organised by the rhythms of places and spaces” (96). And so it is with the dawn symphony that acts as a powerful orienting tool in the transition between the dream and waking states; while the rhythms of industry locate me in a house in the twenty first century, it is the timeless sounds of the land and its inhabitants that are reminders of exactly *where* that house is, which in this case, was the Northern West Coast of Te Wai Pounamu.

Yet the effect of music on humans is far more complex, because music can also serve to destabilise the listener’s sense of place. Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of the bird refrain to demonstrate how the dual process of what they describe as territorialisation and deterritorialisation occurs:

Is the bird’s refrain necessarily territorial, or is it not already used for very subtle deterritorializations, for selective lines of flight? The difference between noise and sound is definitely not a basis for a definition of music, or even for the distinction between musician birds and nonmusician birds. Rather it is the *labor of the refrain*: Does it remain territorial and territorializing, or is it carried away in a moving block that draws a transversal across all coordinates – and all of the intermediaries between the two? (301-2)

In Aotearoa native birds often emit a particularly musical refrain, and whilst the song of an introduced bird can be appreciated for its virtuosity, it lacks the clear musicality of birds such as the tui (an imitator and originator of a range of melodious calls) and the korimako, whose call is likened to a bell – hence its English name, the ‘bell-bird’. Thus a practical application for Deleuze and Guattari’s de/territorialising process can be applied to an imaginary construct of Banks’ situation upon hearing such birdsong each morning. On waking, the smell of the ship, the wave motion, and the sound of timber creaking would have been familiar sensations that territorialised him within the confines of the

*Endeavour*. But the less familiar refrains of the birds would have a deterritorialising effect, reminding him that close by was unfamiliar and even dangerous territory. Yet a form of reterritorialisation occurs as Banks acclimatises to the sounds of the new land and adjusts his notions of music to include them. As the mapping of Aotearoa continued, Banks – who obviously enjoyed the birdsong – would have had many opportunities to identify familiar refrains and commit them to memory. Thus there is potential for further deterritorialisation as he carries the refrains in ‘his head,’ creating more lines of flight when they recur again – possibly in a mutated form – in a different place and time zone.

The invention of recording and sampling technologies has further complicated the relationship between place and music. One music genre which integrates sound with music is ambient, of which Brian Eno is one of the best known exponents. Toop writes that “an alternative mode of hearing unfolded” for Eno when he was laid up with an injury and was unable to adjust a stereo missing one channel and playing at a low volume: “Rather than standing out from its environment, like a ship on an ocean, the music became part of that ocean [. . .]. So ambient was born [. . .]: music that we hear but don’t hear; sounds which exist to enable us better to hear silence” (*Ocean of Sound* 139-40). In establishing the inherent musicality of so-called environmental ‘noise’, the concept of music becomes something more fluid than rigid Western definitions allow. Ambient music transforms the sounds of everyday life into a musical assemblage that is recognisable, and (mostly) soothing for the listener. The use of recorded environmental sounds serves a deterritorialising function as samples are lifted from one place and time and reproduced as music. With modern technology, that music can then be disseminated amongst listeners, who can choose the environment in which to play it. Hence, any sense of place attached to the music, the listeners, or the reception area is destabilised. From the speakers or headphones comes the music of the original sampled environment, but the listener also hears the integration of sounds from their immediate surroundings, whether they be traffic, industry, nature, or the body’s own hums and rhythms which serve as environmental ‘noise’ when listening through headphones. Any auditory experience is thus the result of a number of assemblages, yet the common use of environmental samples indicates that specifics of place are still important to both music producers and their listeners.

### **A Return to the Bush – Lilburn and the Establishment of an Aotearoa Sound**

In Aotearoa the early electro-acoustic composer Douglas Lilburn established a ‘New Zealandness’ in his sound using environmental recordings, producing works that pre-date the term ‘ambient’ although they could be described as such. Lilburn is most revered in Aotearoa as a classical composer, and his orchestral works represent the emergence of a cultural identity grounded in local, rather than European roots. Throughout his career he sought to establish a sense of place, and although he had some success with the classical format, his frustration with the restrictions of what he would later refer to as a “‘period piece’, a specialised instrument [. . .] now spent as a medium for further original composition”, prompted him to seek out new technology (Lodge 75). In his pioneering work as an electro-acoustic musician, Lilburn filtered environmental, or found sounds through the electronic machinery to create music inspired by the Aotearoa landscape.<sup>1</sup> In a 1984 thesis on the composer, *The Beginnings & Development of a New Zealand Music: The Life & Work (1940-1965) of Douglas Lilburn (Beginnings)* Philip Norman quotes Lilburn: “qualities of colour and line and distance, and the clarity of light that plays over us. . . . the place has its unique character and beauty [. . .] so the music I imagine should develop in this country would amongst other things make us aware of these qualities, and in some way bring us into harmony with them” (619). Lilburn’s electro-acoustic period began in 1963 when he visited a number of European and American studios and composed his first electronic works. On returning, he was commissioned to write a piece for the NZBC (New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation) and he composed “The Return” (1965). There, he met technician Wallace Ryrrie, who helped him set up the Electronic Music Studio at Victoria University (EMS/VUW) which opened in 1966. In the liner notes of the 2004 CD box set, *Complete Electro-Acoustic Works (Complete)*, Lilburn notes how the studio was built with the loan of an Ampex 350 tape recorder from the NZBC and “the choice of whatever junk was on the floor of the NZBC surplus stores shed [. . .] including the metal shell of the original 2YC mixer panel, which refurbished, became the 6-channel mixer-console” (n. pag.). The matter of fact way in which Lilburn describes taking the cast-off technology and reinventing it is typical of DIY enthusiasts. The DVD section of the box set features a film clip of Lilburn in his studio demonstrating how he composed *Dance Sequence-Expo 70* (1970). The laborious process involved in

producing music on basic equipment is testament to his perseverance even though he found the machines frustrating (see Young 470). The studio was the first of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, and in it Lilburn would come closest to achieving his interpretation of a distinctly local sound.

By merging environmental recordings with the array of sounds now able to be produced by the machine, Lilburn sought to establish an indigenous music that acknowledged the Aotearoa soundscape. Norman finds that although the discussion of the ‘New Zealandness’ of Lilburn’s classical compositions is “a matter of conjecture”, he concedes that the exception: “arguably, lies in his electronic music where . . . natural sounds are recorded and used as generating material” (*Beginnings* 628). Norman notes “The Return” (a ‘Sound Image of the poem by Alistair Campbell) and “Soundscape with Lake and River” (1979) in particular, as works where environmental sounds are prominent. As the first and last major electronic pieces by Lilburn, that both are constructed around field recordings shows the importance of the medium to his electronic music. In the liner notes to *Complete*, Lilburn’s notes on the piece are quoted: “Mist, sea, and dark headlands, dominate the scene. I wanted the Polynesian gods, emerging from this scene, to speak ‘an ancient bird-like chatter’ – part bird, part human, perhaps learning to speak their tree-god names, perhaps threatened by some alien presence they never fully perceive”. The scope of Lilburn’s vision is ambitious for a piece made using new technology, and the list of sound referents employed is a prime example of DIY ingenuity: “*Mist* – white noise, BBC filters. *Sea* - field recordings overdubbed and mixed with half speed playback and low white noise. *Headlands* – white noise and BBC filters with piano sounds added to give intensity to the loud peaks. *Maori Voice* – speed changes produced by wrapping cellophane around the Ampex tape recorder drive! *Birds* – bellbirds and tuis three octaves lower with noisy squawks spliced out” (n. pag.). Yet the disparate sound generators work; the words and the music are a timeless tribute to a place where the mist can roll in from the sea and down from the hills in a matter of minutes, enveloping everything in its way. Compared to contemporary speech, Tim Elliott’s rounded BBC vowels stand out now as an anachronism that reminds us of our residual ties to England, but juxtaposed with the poem are the eerie cries of the Māori gods, as spoken by Mahi Potiki and manipulated by Lilburn. The uniqueness of te reo Māori to



Aotearoa is a territorialising trope distinctly of this land. The piece signifies Lilburn's intent for the rest of his career; to 'find' the intrinsic musicality of local sounds and use them to recreate the beauty of Aotearoa in music.

Lilburn viewed music as being made up of many languages, and his views are representative of what Bakhtin refers to as heteroglossia. Although the quote at the head of this chapter suggests that Lilburn sought a "ready-made international language" in the electronic format (Young 470), Norman writes that in fact the musician did not subscribe to the view that music is an international language, and instead believed it to be an assimilation of many languages (619). Thus Lilburn recorded traditional instruments, environmental sounds, waiata, poetry, and other sound sources and fed them through the machine, making a musical example of what Bakhtin refers to in *The Dialogic Imagination* as heteroglossia in the novel: "this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization – this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel" (263). Heteroglossia enables the art form to be representative of an international language without sacrificing the particularities of the place of origin. Using different musical languages, Lilburn created a sound environment that operates in a similar way to the koru in Māori art; the past, present, and future are synthesised in a spiral that symbolises the circular nature of all things.

Although Lilburn would go through a purely electronic phase later in his career, his last recording, "Soundscape with Lake and River" (1979) marks a return to the use of found sounds as generating material. Lilburn notes that the "literal" recordings of lake and river: "are used here as pivots [. . .] making what might seem transitions from afternoon to evening, from night to morning. The work owes something to the spaciousness, the slowly changing horizons, the moods and colours of Lake Taupo" (*Complete* n. pag.). Metaphorically the work is the journey of insects, whose movement throughout the piece is suggested by the high-pitched whine of the machine, the cessation of which allows the watery rhythms of the lake and river segments to flow unimpeded from the speakers, suggesting that these are 'natural' stopping places for the musical carrier.

Lilburn, a collector of Aotearoa art, also sought to capture the non-auditory aspects of the landscape in his music. J. M. Thompson suggests that it was the “shapes, colours and textures” of New Zealand paintings that found embodiment in his music: “He broods over landscapes [. . .] What is that play of light upon a distant range? What are the glacial forces that have so cleaved the earth to create these lakes? Is it of a beneficent nature or does it have a sinister, even malevolent tinge? What is the source of all this primal energy, what is at the heart of the storm?” (97). In “Music, Voice, Language”, Roland Barthes discusses the “metaphoric power” of music and suggests that perhaps the value of music is “to be a good metaphor” (285). In “Sounds and Distances” (1975), Lilburn deploys technology in imitating bird flight, which makes accessible a vast three-dimensional soundscape within which to place his aural brushstrokes. Featuring a recording of the kōkako, and inspired by “the spacious environment of Central Otago [. . .] and in particular the slow arching flight of birds hovering in the summer air”, the piece has a simple, timeless appeal that is demonstrative of Lilburn’s skill as a pioneer in the electronic field (*Complete* n. pag.).

Lilburn felt that he was not naturally a performer or a conductor, and in his later years he metaphorically went “bush”, the literal place in his childhood that had informed his work as a composer. In “Fragments of a Stolen Conversation”, Lilburn told Jack Body that he was “the exact opposite” of someone wanting to present himself on a platform and that in childhood when confronted with visitors “one’s first instinct was to retreat back and disappear into the bush. It was safer there” (22). In the bush Lilburn listened and looked for nature’s rhythms and found the seeds of spiritual fulfilment:

the patterns of our landscape and seacoasts, the changing of our seasons and the flow of light and colour about us [. . .] if we can discover these rhythms of our ways of living and our relations to the environment about us, then we will see the beginning of a music of our own, a music that will to some extent satisfy that spiritual need I think we all have, that sense of belonging somewhere. (qtd. in Norman 622-3)

Lilburn felt as though he belonged in the bush, but seemed less sure around people. If his classical compositions required an orchestra to be brought to life, with his electro-acoustic works he took a solitary approach to making and performing electronic music,

and after his retirement in 1980 he lived as a recluse in Wellington (see Norman *Douglas Lilburn* 356-72). One can only imagine what Lilburn would have thought had he experienced one of the outdoor parties welcoming in 2001, the year in which he died. Perhaps he would have been shocked at the loudness and brightness of the carnivalesque gatherings, but Lilburn's celebration of Māori and Polynesian rituals and hui suggests that he would have enjoyed the tribal rhythms and tropes. As a patron of dance, he may also have been fascinated with the multiplicit body movements of dancers unhindered by any formal restraints. Here too, was a new way of performing, the opportunity for shy musicians to take the whole performance 'bush' and meet others with whom they could collaborate. And after the generators have been switched off and the sounds of the Aotearoa landscape are heard in 'real time', without the intervention of technology, one suspects that Lilburn would have been quietly pleased.

### **Ringling In the Changes – Tinnitus and the Destabilisation of Performance Space**

Also significant to the tracing of Aotearoa electronica is experimental dub collective Tinnitus who explored the possibilities of sound and space from a participatory perspective. With the first performance taking place in Christchurch in 1986, early Tinnitus events were experiments in audience performance with attendees encouraged to play various sound-origimators arranged around the space. Original member Andrew Bancroft notes in "Tinnitus: An Overview" that:

one was encouraged to use any means whatsoever to contribute to the open-ended, enveloping and completely spontaneous "soundscapes" that comprise these events. Akin to "happenings", they were always in interesting and unexpected places, often ritualistic in atmosphere, and far removed from "band venues" and their conventional audience-performer relationships. (1)

One such event was *Mirror of Easter* (April 1987), and music reviewer Alan Chant writes that due to the use of video screens, quadraphonic sound, a mixing desk, and a range of instruments, the event was "the most exciting musical event I've been to in

years” even though it was not well patronised (1). Rave was still a couple of years away from disordering the performer/spectator divide for Aotearoa audiences, but Tinnitus were experimenting with an avant-garde multi-media dynamic and Chant writes that almost everyone found an opportunity to participate on the selection of percussion instruments and “a number of unlikely-looking metal objects were wired for sound amplification, making them very exciting to touch” (1).

Tinnitus also took a non-traditional approach to recording, resulting in albums that were highly original. Preferring to create their own ‘studio’ environments, the group avoided professional recording studios because they would not be conducive to achieving their creative goals. Time restrictions and the incompatibility of a soundproofed studio were the antithesis of the recording environments they preferred: “Large concrete chambers, open spaces and small dead rooms” (Hodgson 1). This unstructured way of recording is evident in one of the Tinnitus releases, *Ring in Your Ear* (1987). A collage of previously unreleased live and studio recordings, there is no track listing identified on the artwork, making individual recordings unimportant within the dynamic of the album. The music ranges from echoing ambient instrumentals to driving industrial tracks, and a wide variety of sound generators are audible, including bird song. In “Worship the Glitch”, Rob Young discusses the rise of glitch, a genre of digital music which “feed[s] off the technical errors and unplanned outcomes of electrified society” (46). He writes that glitch is a literalisation of what Francis Bacon, in his utopian tract *New Atlantis* (1627), called “sound-houses”. In *New Atlantis*, Bacon envisages an imaginary world where European travellers:

step into a kind of Pacific future-parallel universe, the scientific society of Bensalem is found to contain “sound-houses, where we practise and demonstrate all sounds [. . .]. We represent small sounds as great and deep; likewise great sounds extenuate and sharp; we make divers tremblings and warblings of sounds.” Such an approach to sound was the diametric opposite to [. . .] the growth of the symphony and the lionisation of the compositional ego. (53)

The Tinnitus collective’s use of any sound object is likewise representative of Bacon’s prescient vision, the improvisational and participatory approach to music making

ensuring a great diversity of sounds. Yet *Ringling in Your Ear* also invites parallels with the medical condition for which the group and the album are named, and the tape label consists of a photocopied description of the affliction. In places, the music sounds very much like an amplification of the “buzzing, ringing, roaring, whistling, [and] hissing” referred to on the label; as if Bacon’s ‘sound-house’ has found refuge inside ones head (n. pag.). Tinnitus break down the perceived boundaries between the outer and inner sound worlds, so that the overall listening experience is less about identifying with the music as a separate sound object, as it is about opening ones ears to the infinite musical possibilities of the integration of all the sounds occurring: the time and the space of the original recording, the sound environment in which it is replayed, and the inner soundscape of the listener’s own body.

### **Breaking Waves in 2001 – A Deluge of Aotearoa Dance Music**

If Lilburn and Tinnitus were largely marginal to popular music in Aotearoa, by 2001 a ‘wave’ of electronica musicians had claimed the marginal for their own, and were increasingly encroaching on the ‘mainstream’ domain as well. Represented on Loop Magazine’s 2000/1 compilation, *Select Edition Audio (Select)* are a number of artists whose music has become the soundtrack to dance parties, bars, café’s and home listening throughout Aotearoa, including Salmonella Dub, Pitch Black, The Nomad, King Kapisi, Trinity Roots, The Black Seeds, and Rhian Sheehan. Although the influence of international genres is audible on the double CD, there is also a sense of locality emerging as an overall theme, which is indicated on the liner notes: “A cross-section of progressive New Zealand sounds and a reflection of ‘the Wave’ – the most energized and inspirational era in Aotearoa’s audio culture to date. An era of creative evolution, which has seen a fresh sound emerge. A sound focused on fun, vision and change. The pied pipers of the globe” (n. pag.). Loaded with semiotic references – from sound and sine waves to dance movements – ‘The Wave’ also describes the way in which Aotearoa dance music consolidated around this time, as evidenced by the two CD’s. Reggae, dub, breakbeat, hiphop, house, trance, jazz, ska, ambient, and techno are all represented, but they mingle with waiata, traditional Māori instruments, and environmental sounds, the

latter lending the term ‘wave’ its most evocative image. The significance of the beach is acknowledged with opening track “Kaikoura Rim”, an acoustic version of Salmonella Dub’s “For the Love of It”, featuring the tremulous vocals of country singer and Whitecliffs Festival Organiser John Grenell. In contrast to the breakbeat/dub feel of the rest of *Select*, this track is stripped bare, the simplicity of its construction outlined in the liner notes: “Tiki Taane: koauau, John Hore-Grenell: vocal, Kaikoura waves, bellbird, cicadas and seals. Produced and engineered [. . .] at the seal colony south of Kaikoura and [. . .] Beach Road, Kaikoura” (n. pag.). The locality of production is established in a manner that recalls Lilburn’s vision. Inspired by, but ultimately free from UK and US influences, this was an electronic music wave coming straight from the Pacific.

### **A Landscape of Meaning – Music that Reveres the Land**

One artist featured on *Select* who identifies the role of nature in his work is .leyton who produces music as epsilon-blue (dancefloor), son.sine (techno) and rotor+ (ambient).<sup>2</sup> Previously involved with a number of Christchurch bands, by the mid 1990’s .leyton had begun producing electronic music and playing at outdoor events as rotor+ and epsilon-blue. In the television documentary *Radar Goes to the Gathering*, .leyton is interviewed by Radar (now Te Radar) whilst ‘performing’ a set as rotor+ in the ambient zone. Playing his music through the laptop, but manipulating it in real time, .leyton relaxes with the audience, many of whom are drowsing in the shaded area. When asked about influences .leyton describes how driving around in vans has influenced his music and explains how he converts the visuals of the road, power lines, cows, and red sheds into various aspects of the music. The quote that heads this chapter is taken from the booklet designed by Fiona Jack that accompanies the rotor+ debut *Aileron* (2000), and it demonstrates the significance of the environment on his work: “Noticing the intricacy of nature; the relationships it forms with itself and with the human influence within it”. *Aileron* begins with a recording of the first public broadcast in Aotearoa by Professor Robert Jack using a small radio transmitter from Otago University in December, 1921. In contrast to Jack’s clipped tones, what follows is a spoken love poem where the land is the metaphor: “I’d tell you about groves / that feel like our friendship / where the love of mountains / is

windsong for dreamers”. The words are echoing, barely discernible within the delay effects used, their purpose musical, the repeated line “I’m climbing for the joy of falling” leading into a melodic ambient piece. From there the album is a journey through soundscapes, a range of musical techniques used to create the spacious landscape within which *Aileron* is set. Included in the booklet is a piece written by Charles Douglas, Director of The Radiophonics Trading Company of New Zealand, explaining how he first heard the music of rotor+ when attending a conference in Japan regarding the development of super-sensitive three-dimensional space: “much talk was centered on the identification of repeating acoustical patterns that could be used as aspects of a complete algorithm for the way in which we hear space”. Douglas writes that the discussion continued over dinner, where a rotor+ mini-disc was played. Describing the discovery as “a series of beautiful coincidences”, Douglas had to wait two years before he received the DAT tape, written manuscript, photos and films that would become *Aileron*, music that “frames space and the landscapes that inspired them”. In the sense of spaciousness and synchronicity created, the music shares similarities with that of Lilburn, but .leyton also uses uplifting keyboard melodies to create a sense of beauty in his music, a reminder that (as he notes in the booklet) “This paradise that we live in is to be cherished. / I hope that we find the time” (n. pag.).

Although similar to *Aileron*, the 2004 release *Map Key Window (Map)* contains darker musical imagery. Like *Aileron*, *Map* is a multi-media release, and in the accompanying booklet are mysterious hand drawn maps and scientific, coded drawings. On one page is a real postage stamp, in this case a 2d 1940 Centennial edition featuring “Tasman’s Discovery of New Zealand 1642”. On the opposite page the word ‘withdrawn’ is stamped. In the booklet, Douglas writes that the music of rotor+:

entwines memory and documentary as it evolves, sometimes fostering and sometimes precluding narrative and compositional comprehension. Perhaps it is a map, perhaps it is a key, perhaps it is a window? For the listener sounds may develop themselves as major character elements of the audio-environment through their repetition and relationship. Inevitably though, they may transgress or cease, leaving our ears waiting for evidence of their potential return. (n. pag.)

Douglas's description of the music resonates with the themes discussed throughout this chapter. With repeated listening, certain components of the three suites become fixed on the memory. But as Douglas notes, the music sometimes defies comprehension, and whereas Aileron was a gentle journey, the "Middle" section here features sound referents that are mildly disturbing, but which are ameliorated by the territorialising effects of insects and birds. With a similar theme progression to Lilburn's "Soundscape with Lake and River", towards the end "Middle" features the buzz of a trapped fly. There is a sense of mystery to *Map*; a feeling that somewhere there is a code for the placement of the various 'sound images', but until such time as it is found the disparate sounds are appreciable for their musicality alone.

The influence of the landscape is also audible in .leyton's more dancefloor oriented music, and the 1998 epsilon-blue album, *Waterland* was one of the first local techno/trance recordings by an Aotearoa musician. The album engenders a sense of movement that was described on the Loops and Samples website as a "Dawn to Dusk journey from the wild complexity of a city to the vast spaciousness of the coastal horizons" (n. pag.). Of my own experiences, *Waterland* was the first local electronica release to inspire a connection similar to how I responded to local rock; a sense that the Aotearoa environment had found its way into the music. The first track – a snippet of found sound capturing the sirens and traffic noises associated with a city is followed by the stomping "Bytes", which the first time I heard it had the effect of 'reterritorialising' me to the Gathering, which I had attended a few weeks previously. "Seed" continued the journey, the momentary breaks in the pattern of interweaving rhythms suggestive of motorway driving. The influence of the landscape on *Waterland* became fully apparent during a road trip to Wanaka for the Rippon Festival; as we drove through Central Otago I became fascinated by the interplay between the music and the lunaresque landscape of the Lindis Pass. By the time *Waterland*, and Pitch Black's *Futureproof* (1998) had finished playing, the seeds of this thesis had been planted. On *Waterland* the 'journey' metaphor represents both the drive from city to the beach suggested by the title, and the trip taken by the head when the body is engaged in its own frenetic dancing rhythm. At the end of the album "Two as One" fades into the closing 'Dissolving', the sound of the sea coming in with a force. Played at full volume, the ambience of the surf is enveloping;



it is the ocean as womb that Toop identifies in *Ocean of Sound*: “On our watery planet, we return to the sea for a diagnosis of our current condition. Submersion into deep and mysterious pools represents an intensely romantic desire for dispersion into nature, the unconscious, the womb, the chaotic stuff of which life is made”. But on “Dissolving” the environmental sounds give way to the “amorphous ocean crooning” of the machines, a component of ambient music that Toop acknowledges with a quote from Kevin Kelly: “Postmodern humans swim in a third transparent medium now materialising. Every fact that can be digitized, is” (270). One of the binaries that dance culture seeks to dissolve is that of nature versus machine, and at the end of *Waterland*, the two are integrated so as to redefine our notions of what is and what is not music.

If *Waterland* leaned towards the trance zone, the following epsilon-blue album, *We Have a Responsibility to Our Shareholders* (2002 – *We Have*) was representative of the various styles now evolving within the outdoor dance parties. With trance music the head is taken on a journey, the body stomping to the metronomic beat whilst the mind explores the ‘flightlines’ of the (often) high-pitched interlacing melodies. In an interview for *New Zealand Musician (NZM)* magazine, .leyton explains that he wanted his second album to be more body oriented and describes some of the new tracks as “oonsty”: “This time I wanted it to be more about the body. The first one was quite mind-orientated. [. . .] That sense of movement brings it back to a dance angle. It’s about moving” (McLennan 5). In the outdoor zones movement is not inhibited by space restrictions, and this influence is evident from the opening “We B Movin’”. In a *Rip It Up* interview, “Body and Mind in Motion” (“BMM”), .leyton, on being asked if he goes out dancing, identifies dancing as being an essential component to his performance, but prefers dancing outside during the daytime: “sound just sounds so much better outside. [. . .] As a DJ type person I find it really important and helpful to dance before/during and after playing. I like to feel it brings me into, and holds me in that space – connects me” (24). The second track continues the outdoor theme, the gradual integration of separate rhythm lines similar to that of a drumming circle, and complemented by a strummed guitar. If “We B Movin’” was a sunrise track, “What to Honour if Not the Planet We Live On” encapsulates the mystery of the tribal zone, a place that often contains a hint of menace in the bodily release of individual rhythms forming a primitive and tran(ce)forming whole. Dancing

allows the body to reproduce rhythms and melodies as movement, an assemblage that forms a rhizome with the music playing through the speakers. Thus rhythms worked out on the dancefloor may be taken by the dancer and re/territorialised elsewhere; the music ‘heard’ a variation on that experienced in a different time and space.

Although the second album is more body oriented than *Waterland* .leyton acknowledges the role of the head, and suggests that it can also be effective in engendering a concern for the environment. When asked whether he thinks other musicians “give as much thought about the mind, as well as the body” as he does .leyton responds that although he started out writing body music, he found that the head had something to say after all: “I started thinking about the body and [ . . . ] this body of earth flying through space that we call our planet earth”. When he heard a CEO describing on radio how he had a responsibility to his shareholders .leyton began to think about:

how much this line was used by those who see money as the only valuable bottom line [ . . . ] how it can discharge them of any responsibility to our shared environment, community, spirit and basic rights. Then I thought how we (humans/animals/plants etc) are all shareholders in one giant planet called earth, in a big dance called life and how we have a responsibility to those shareholders. (qtd. in “BMM” 24)

This kind of philosophy is one that fits in with the utopian projections of dance culture; and it is in the dance zones that dancers often discover the earth as an entity far removed from corporations and civilisation. But although .leyton makes his political viewpoints explicit in interviews, his music is more subtle in ‘converting’ dancers to an environmental cause. Aside from “What to Honour...” there is nothing overtly political in the track names, yet .leyton goes on to explain that he thinks everything is political, and that DJing is about engaging in a conversation, or dialogue rather than a monologue (24). One of the ways in which .leyton engages in ‘conversation’ with the dancer is through moments of ‘transcendence’ that occur in the music. In a *Real Groove (RG)* article, Gavin Bertram writes that some epsilon-blue sets “have taken on an almost mythical dimension” but that .leyton deflects the credit to group consciousness because moments of transcendence are created by the conditions being set up for it to happen. Yet .leyton acknowledges that these moments do not always happen, and that sometimes “the

moment just passes”. One track that encapsulates these transcendent moments is “Being”. Here, .leyton creates a musical experience that operates on each of the levels that he considers the essence of dancing: “I think dancing can be a cerebral experience, I think it can operate on lots of different levels. You can bring the mind, body, emotion and soul all into it”. This principle is expressed in the middle of “Being”, when a quiet period is followed by a simple melody that represents the soul of just “being”. From there the album winds down in an arc that .leyton explains is intrinsic to the experience: “You get on at the beginning and go up up up until you reach the kind of crescendo or the orgasmic peak, before coming down down down, then cruise cruise cruise, then cushion, cushion cushion” (qtd. in “Epsilon-Blue” 21). With a similar function to “Dissolving”, the final track, “Transcendental Object at the End of Time” is an amorphous slice of white noise, a sound that hints at nothing and everything, going on for several minutes before stopping abruptly. Building on the title, one metaphorical possibility is that the track represents the termination associated with collective imaginings of the end of time.

### **The Earth is Electric – Pitch Black and the Merging of Technology and Nature**

Pitch Black are an Auckland electronic act that renegotiate the live performance space, and destabilise traditional notions of ‘liveness’ within the dance spectrum. Formed in 1996 by Paddy Free and original Tinnitus member Michael Hodgson, David Eggleton notes that Pitch Black are one of Aotearoa’s top live electronic acts: “Their subtle sonic morphing creates ecto-plasmically sensual soundscapes that take their audiences on a wild ride through intense experiential moments” (188). Pitch Black’s first live performance was at the Gathering in 1997, and the types of experiences that Eggleton describes are a result of the performance dynamic within the music. In an interview for *Remix* magazine, Free is asked how the live sets ‘work’: “We have a series of patterns for each song which we can alter on the fly and also play more sounds into. All the different sounds are on their own outputs on the mixer. By adding effects and mixing sounds in and out we are improvising and re mixing our own material live on stage” (“Black as Pitch – Pitch Black!” 20). Dance music has been criticized as not being a ‘live’ music style and therefore ‘inauthentic’ in a performance space, but humans have long employed

technology (sticks and skins for instance) to make music. In their discussion of these debates Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson find that because studio recording has “shattered forever the auratic integrity of the musical moment”, the ‘live-ness’ of music recorded on any medium is in doubt, but at the same time many musics have sought to cling on to a narrative of authenticity that is hardly borne out by practice” (114). Whilst such debates contribute to the creating of new performance techniques, for Aotearoa dancers, the measure of an electronica act’s *liveness* is more likely to be judged by the dancers’ ability to transcend the moment, to access the state of ecstasy that dance culture ultimately craves. When a live act such as Pitch Black has a greater range of musical responses available with which to ‘engineer’ the dancefloor, this state can be maintained throughout the set. That the role of dancers is important in breaking down the divide between performer and spectator, and creating the ‘right’ energy is borne out by Hodgson, who as performer once had an outer body experience during a set at the Gathering after not having slept for over two days:

“In one hour, because the creativity was so special and amazing, there was this packed audience, they were screaming, jumping up and down and carrying on [. . .] I wasn’t even at the gig, I was somewhere else having a sleep [. . .], and I woke up at the end of the gig completely refreshed [. . .]. It was amazing, special, exciting”. (qtd. in Steel 19)

Anyone who has attended a Pitch Black set has witnessed the engagement of the duo with their instruments, Hodgson with hands at the mixing desk, and Free switching between keyboards and percussion. That Hodgson was no doubt also fully engaged with this particular set demonstrates the magical-realist nature of such occurrences. That such moments are also experienced by musicians indicates the role of live music in engendering these transcendent states.

During Pitch Black live sets the bass is used as a sensory trigger that resonates through the ground of the outdoor zones. Gilbert and Pearson note that bass is particularly relevant to the dance experience because it is ‘*felt*’ as much as it is heard: “it is precisely the bass end of the frequency spectrum – comprising of the slowest vibrating sound waves – that provides listeners and dancers with the most *material*, most directly *corporeal*, types of experience” (46). When Pitch Black play outdoors, the bass becomes

an enveloping heartbeat, a tiny earthquake without the trauma, a reminder that all things can move. In his discussion of the meaning of dance music Reynolds writes that because it is devoid of text it is better understood using metaphors borrowed from the visual arts, such as soundscape, aural décor, and audio-sculpture, but that not even these metaphors are that helpful because they “tend toward the static” when dance music: “attempts to abolish a sense of temporality by trancing you out, dance music happens over time (it *moves*) and it’s kinaesthetic (it makes *you* move). Dance tracks are less about ‘communication’ in the rock sense and more like engines for ‘the programming of sensations’ (Susan Sontag)” (51-2). One Pitch Black set that is particularly memorable for its “programming of sensations” is the 2003 Kaikoura Roots Festival, where they played a dawn ambient set in the smaller zone facing the Pacific Ocean and the sunrise. Far removed from their usual stomping night-time performances, the ambience was reinforced by the sight of the duo sitting down behind the mixing desk and keyboards. As the sun rose over the sea behind the carved entranceway framing the stage, the dawn chorus was audible in the mix, and the music was timed to peak with the sun’s rays cutting across the ocean and onto the dance zone. However, few were dancing; most lay around on blankets, enjoying the sunrise and the feel of the bass vibrating through the ground.

There are a number of music styles audible in the music of Pitch Black, but dub is the unifying theme. In “Future Proofers”, Hodgson explains their sound as something of a multi-limbed creature with “one foot” each in trance, drum and bass, ambient, cinema, live, and studio (qtd. in Steel 18). With the tracks developed in the live arenas, *Futureproof* is the result of two years of performance, recorded in five weeks, and described by Free as “a snapshot of where the songs ended up after gestation. It’s a sort of hybrid half way between live and studio”. The dub element is evident on “Speech”, where random samples of distorted speech echo through the track. Hodgson acknowledges the role that dub plays: “there’s not a second where there isn’t a delay or a studio dub technique utilised. Dub is inherently live by its very nature. A lot of electronic acts do not play live, and when they do it’s off CDs. For me, live has always fed the studio” (18). That the dub properties of space and time are also recurring themes in Pitch Black’s music is suggested by the album title. In “The Solar Myth Approach” Ken

Hollings notes that the future has long been an important concept for early electronic experimenters:

for two of the most advanced musical minds on the planet – Sun Ra and Karlheinz Stockhausen – it had become a complex, living, glittering entity. [. . .] At the start of the 1960’s, both were using electronics to connect their audiences with the future, in other words, with space – which is also the past, when measured in light-years. (101)

By the end of the twentieth century, notions of future and space as envisaged in the 1950’s and 60’s had drawn nearer, and with the advent of instantaneous communications technology, humans may yet evolve to suit the demands of the machines, as suggested by the multi-armed man featured on the cover of *Futureproof*. The breaking down of Western concepts of time is something that is integral to dance music production, and “Soliton” (a quantum physics term meaning a pulse-like wave that can exist in non-linear systems) is an example of what Deleuze and Guattari describe in *ATP* as “the adventure of the refrain: “the way music [. . .] lays hold of the refrain, makes it more and more sober, reduced to a few notes, then takes it down a creative line that is so much richer, no origin or end of which is in sight” (302). On “Soliton” the refrain is the keyboard melody that floats over the watery introduction and which drops away before a multi-rhythmic build-up that culminates in a chopping keyboard line. This plateau is maintained with frenetic breakbeat rhythms and flight sounds, the intensity building until a quiet period makes space for the reintroduction of the original melody. As the other sounds fall away the melody returns to the gentle lullaby of the intro, completing the circle of the refrain. Here, the refrain signifies the circularity of all nature; it collapses our notion of time and space and motion as it returns again and again, altered, but the same.

It is the spaciousness of Pitch Black’s music that prompts comparisons with the Aotearoa landscape, and there is sense of geography particularly evident on *Electronomicon* (2000). In 2002, Russell Brown for *RG* magazine surveyed the current state of the New Zealand music industry and noted the rise of electronica, and its relationship to previous local sounding groups. It is noted that when the magazine started in 1992 there were doubts as to whether Aotearoa electronic music could achieve “a real New Zealand identity”, but that “you’d be hard-pressed to make that argument now”.

With rock acts becoming increasingly generic to meet the needs of commercial radio, Brown notes that: “it’s homegrown electronica that carries the indigenous flag. In the way they hint at geography in their music, Pitch Black and Epsilon-blue are effectively the successors to the Clean and Bailer Space” (26). But whereas the Clean and Bailer Space were still ‘vocal’ bands in the rock sense, there are no formal vocals on *Electronomicon* and the few vocal samples used build on the suggestion of the songs’ titles. Recorded over five months, that *Electronomicon* is a more cohesive album than *Futureproof* is noted by *NZM* reviewer Daddy Dainjah, who also notes a connection to the ‘natural’: “A flawless electro journey of thudding bass and drifting soundscapes [. . .] The songs slowly unfold [. . .] writhing towards you like a living organism made of dark sounds. For the uninitiated, these deliver a 100% unique sounds that encompass natural beauty but is delivered with a high-tech frame of mind” (26-7). Dainjah’s use of the word ‘writhing’ is suggestive of the opening track, “Reptile Room”, where a sci-fi voice intones “can see them down there, coiling and wriggling and sticking their pretty tongues out”. The sample lends identity to the pulsing percussion lines that snake their way through the song and the overriding keyboard refrain, a short melody that is repeated as the outro to the track. The following “Electric Earth Pt1 [and] Pt2” is a day/night journey through the phases of the earth’s rotation, and includes a vocal sample about ‘rhythms and mutations’. In the middle of the album, “Data Diviner” also uses a vocal sample, but this time it appears as a faint echo, the meaning lost in what George Kay describes as a “busy, fidgety technological world” (*RG* 37). On “Urbanoia” there is a dual sense of time, as if part of the music is occurring in slow-motion, and which contrasts with the comparatively hyperactive “The 48 Skanks”, whilst on the final track, “Unadrumma” a distinctive refrain is used to tie together the various rhythms and sounds that are suggestive of the complex nature of modern life.

The third album, *Ape to Angel* (2004) was influenced by Pitch Black’s international experience, but was recorded in a number of local locations. In “Pitch Black Angels”, Stephen Jewell notes that whilst *Electronomicon* was recorded in a windowless Auckland studio, *Ape to Angel* “was produced on the road over [. . .] two years in Coromandel, Piha and Wellington” (3). Drifting into the listener’s consciousness quietly, the introductory title track continues the instrumental theme from *Electronomicon*. Here, melodies overlap

above a circular bass refrain, with the layers falling away until the song is reduced to a melodic keyboard refrain that has hovered at places throughout the track. Left in solitude for an ephemeral moment, the echoing flight patterns suggest that this is the angel of the title, the perfect state that human consciousness ultimately craves. The refrain returns towards the end, reassuring the listener of its existence, before leading them gently out of the song. But although “Ape to Angel” is an instrumental track, the following “Freefall” is the first of two to feature vocalist Sandy Mills, and the track would sound at home on an international dancefloor. In their discussion of dance music’s eschewal of traditional song structures, Gilbert and Pearson ask why vocal music remains so dominant in popular music: “Indeed, why has the popularization and mass marketing of a dance genre invariably involved a shift in its production values, away from an emphasis on bass and drums towards an emphasis on treble, melody, vocals? The answer, in part, is that these remain the dominant musical values of our culture” (71). Hence, a connection must be made between Pitch Black’s expansion into international markets and their shift towards the popular spectrum with the use of vocals, something that they had previously defended when questioned as to why they remained instrumental.<sup>3</sup> A looped sample taken from a Latvian phone conversation is the dominant trope on “Lost in Translation”, but lifted from their original context, the meaning of the words is ‘lost’, the voice valued musically for its cadence and rhythm. But although *Ape to Angel* is more commercially oriented than previous albums, it is still representative of what is emerging as an Aotearoa dance genre, as Mitsubishi Tim notes in his review for on-line magazine *Amplifier*:

If you were looking to compare “Ape to Angel” to any recent overseas offerings, Underworld’s “A hundred days off” comes to mind, but in reality, this is music that in its own way is as quintessentially NZ as Dave Dobbyn. It evokes the NZ landscape, and the slightly dark and brooding (ok, contemplative) kiwi character. Listen to it on a South Island lake in the rain, listen to it in your car, listen to it on a smoky subterranean dance floor in K Road or Courtenay Place. (1)

Mitsubishi Tim compares Pitch Black to an overseas act, but makes explicit the influence of the landscape. “Elements Turn” is the other track featuring Mills, and although the lyric lends universality by emphasising the circular nature of all things, the music is



informed by natural sounds familiar in Aotearoa. *NZM* reviewer Jacob Connor also notes the influence of outdoor dance culture on *Ape to Angel* when he describes the “subliminal dreamscapes” as having been “tattooed on the DNA” of dancers: “Some tracks are so comfortably dub it feels like floating peacefully in the womb.[. . .]The manipulation of sound elements and stereo imaging is so deft you get a sense of your own emancipation from a ground-bound ape into a state of transcendence. [. . .] This had me seeing stars and fire-poi” (48). Featuring a chorus of bell-bird like refrains, the womb analogy is most apt on the quiet closing track, “Empty Spaces Missing Units”, a gentle immersion in sound that leaves you feeling that as long as such beauty continues, hope will always exist.

### **Hooked on Sunvalley – The Open House Sound of Subware**

*Subware* (2002), the eponymous debut of Auckland house producers/DJ’s Joost Langeveld and Jason ‘Rockpig’ Hall is another album where the influence of the environment is clearly audible. Released on Reliable Recordings, the cover features a stylised graphic of a tractor, and it is a rural icon that represents the sound within; this is house with its walls down, music that merges the international influences with the view outside. Nick Farrands, who visited the Subware studio in West Auckland, notes that “Through the window of Langeveld’s basement studio, a natural amphitheatre of lush New Zealand foliage has clearly melted into the sound” (“Chasing the Sub” 53). One such track is “Sunvalley Dub (Hooked On Your Love)”, named after a placard at the end of Langeveld’s street (Jewell, “Sounds Like ‘Sun Valley’” 10). Featuring Langeveld on bass and keyboards, with warm tribal drumming samples and vocalist Jessica Meffin crooning in the background, “If you bring, if you bring me lovin’”, the track fades out to chirruping cicadas as a final ‘expression’ of the place that inspired it. Deleuze and Guattari write that the expression of art is not limited to human beings: “Messiaen is right in saying that many birds are not only virtuosos but artists, above all in their territorial songs [. . .]. The refrain is rhythm and melody that have been territorialized because they have become expressive – and have become expressive because they are territorializing” (317). In the audio arts the refrain is as much an expression of place as the native tree is to the visual arts, but like paintings, the sound may not always appear in a realistic,

instantly recognisable form. In *Ocean of Sound*, Toop quotes 1960's electronic musician Richard Maxfield who noticed that the electronically generated sounds he produced were "identical in feeling to those made by birds and insects on summer nights". After this discovery he used a portion of the material which he "had made into a multi-channel composition intended to evoke this antiphonal chirping of birds and insects on a summer night" (181). A similar process is recognisable in "Little Genie"; in the delicate hovering melody are the ululations of the bush at sunrise and sunset, a familiar sound that is recalled and fused with the 'feeling' produced by the music. As the other instruments fade away it is this hovering refrain that remains until the end of the track.

Yet these familiar strains occur as part of a vast rhizome of influences audible in Subware's music; they are an *accent* in the 'international language' of house. Like Pitch Black, Subware's musical interests are diverse, with Hall's metal influences giving the sound a harder edge, whilst Langeveld's 80's background in alternative electronic and funk warms up the trademark house rhythms. Farrands writes that: "Despite this, the aim of creating original music, rather than merely replicating influences, means Subware don't have difficulties in terms of direction" (53). The samples used re-route the music through a number of house destinations, including Detroit, Chicago, New York, Germany, and UK, places familiar to Langeveld in particular. Genre-wise, funk, dub and disco are represented, as are less common rock influences that indicate Hall's background, although he: "'wouldn't go as far as naming them.'" Joost adds: "Our influences are only just that" (qtd. in Farrands 53). Toop writes that "Sampling is the most extreme contemporary example of a music which absorbs itself into the music which surrounds it", which further complicates the relevance of 'place' in music (261). But if *Subware* is the tuber that is the result of a vast conurbation of musical routes, its flavour is mixed, the samples occasionally sounding over-familiar. *RG* reviewer Gavin Bertram notes that although the "use of live instrumentation to augment the rigid, over-quantised beats does add a new dimension, as do the vocals", he is left feeling that "some of their ideas can't sustain a whole album". (38). Several years after the release Bertram's criticism holds; in places the music sounds dated and representative of Auckland's super club heyday. But elsewhere, the house clichés disappear and the essence of the album

shines through. The essence that is rooted in the place where the album was produced – Sun Valley, West Auckland.

### **“This Place is Here” – Driving the Techno Highway**

Nurture is an Auckland dance label that distributes Aotearoa techno out of the UK. Started by techno producer/DJ Simon Flower, from the beginning Europe was the focus for the Nurture label, and until the release of *Nurture* (2001), the six vinyl European releases had only been available in Aotearoa on import. Thus, unlike the other artists discussed here, the Nurture label was built on an international audience, and in 2001 *Remix* magazine note that whilst internationally Nurture are “making waves”, locally they remained relatively unknown – thus the compilation CD of vinyl-only releases” (109). The cover of *Nurture* depicts the view from an aircraft, the tip of a white wing stretching out above the clouds and ocean, an image of travel suggesting the drift of New Zealanders between Europe and Aotearoa, a process familiar to Flower, who, as Peak:Shift provides four of the nine tracks. *RIP IT UP* write that the “particular techno style represented by Nurture is angled more to home listening than the dance floor” (14). The word *home* has a complicated set of connotations in Aotearoa – until the mid twentieth century ‘home’ for Pākehā often referred to the British Isles. In the modern usage, ‘home’ is usually associated with Aotearoa, and to ex-pat New Zealanders it may connote the remembered/imagined utopia against which overseas experience is measured. But were I to take an overseas trip, and wish to carry the ‘sound of home’ with me, *Nurture* would be included as a CD that is deeply reminiscent of the spaciousness and unfolding beauty of certain parts of Aotearoa.

Techno evolved out of Germany and Detroit auto-culture, and the tracks on *Nurture* represent a techno style suited to Aotearoa roads. When the Detroit producers unleashed the thunderings of the car city on the world’s dancefloors, they acknowledged the influence of German musicians such as Kraftwerk who had likewise been inspired by the automobile. In “The Autobahn goes on forever: Kings of the road: the Motorik Pulse of Kraftwerk and Neu!”, Biba Kopf discusses the significance of Kraftwerk’s “Autobahn”:

As empty as the open road stretching out before it, its most remarkable characteristic is its blankness, its neutrality. The piece is as functional as the Autobahns it describes; as accurate a summary of the joys of driving there is. The territory traversed becomes a blur, a land of velocity crisscrossed with the communications network connecting its distant points. (144-5)

The music was informed by the freedom of the autobahn, and Kopf writes that Neu! also depicted a desire for speed. In the next decade, the techno music to emerge from Detroit offered no such freedom; this was the dense sound of multi-lanes of cars moving uniformly along the freeway and factories spewing out even more machines. San Francisco distributor TRC notes these influences on the *Nurture* artists: “Music for the soul as well as the head, deeper territories are explored with a small nod to Detroit and a small nod to Berlin” (qtd. in “Nurture” 109) . With neither the intensity of American freeways, or the speed-limitless freedom of the autobahn, driving in Aotearoa can be a soul-affirming experience. Multi-lane motorways barely exist beyond city satellite towns, and whilst the 100kph speed limit is often broken, there are few places where driving at high speeds can be sustained safely for long periods. And, with state highways cutting along coastlines and through mountain passes, the vista from the vehicle is often in a state of flux, with turns in the road opening up to landscapes in which the nature of the landscape can sometimes be a shock to the senses. This is the soulful experience that the music of *Nurture* evokes.

A compilation rather than a mix album, the tracks on *Nurture* are organised so as to make the transition largely seamless. With no one artist showcased, the collection of tracks is designed to be listened to as an album, as Simon Kong notes in a review on the Obscure website: “nice synths, warm bass, interesting percussion, minimal techno with personality basically; I love it. [. . .]The tracks by son.sine, peak:shift, micronism, clone, and newcomer cyrus facciano sit together really well as a long-player” (n. pag.). Featuring tracks from Nurture releases 01 to 05, *Nurture* begins with .leyton as son.sine, and “Upeka” is a gentle introduction to the album, a gradual shift through the gears before a hovering melody drops in, and the trip proper begins. Phasing in and out, the melody is never far away and is like the soaring flight of hawks that haunt the roads. The use of melody to denote landscape within a ‘driving’ song is discussed by Kopf in

relation to Neu! member, Michael Rother's solo work: "The melodies recall those elevated Autobahns crossing valleys and clinging to the sides of mountains in Bavaria or the Black Forest. The rhythm is regulated by the pattern of sunlight flickering through the trees onto the windscreen" (148). Simon Flower takes the wheel as Peak:Shift for the next three tracks, and borrowing from Kopf's imagery, "Strange Summer" is suggestive of a drive over the Haast Pass after rain, a canopy of dripping native bush and waterfalls, the tight corners requiring you to slow down and take in the view. The pace picks up on "South Exit", with layers of rhythm merging in and out, before the flight metaphor returns on Micronism's "Inside a Quiet Mind". "Behavioural Contrast" by Matton is singled out by Kong as a 'brilliant' example of early local techno, but "Mist" by Clone is noted for interrupting the flow of the album: "The only track that differs from the prevailing atmosphere [ . . . ] is 'mist' which sounds a bit hyperactive in comparison, as if it was remastered while on +8 or something" (n. pag.). Appearing near the end of the album, perhaps "Mist" is meant to be representative of the shock of the city after driving on open roads, a reterritorialisation that gives way to a cruise through leafy suburbs on Cyrus Facciano's "This Place: Is Here", which marks the end of the *Nurture* journey.

### **Connected in Space – Exploring the Universe of Rhian Sheehan**

With a background in composition, Wellington musician Rhian Sheehan makes electro-acoustic music that explores themes of inner and outer space. Sheehan writes, arranges, and programs the music, as well as playing piano, synthesizers, guitar, bass and percussive instruments on the albums. Having studied composition at the University of Canterbury "before being 'kicked out for not performing'", on *Paradigm Shift* (2001) and *Tiny Blue Biosphere* (2004) Sheehan utilises these skills to make music that blends the acoustic with the electronic to create a sense of space, resulting in Sheehan being compared to Brian Eno, Mike Oldfield and Jean Michel Jarre (Jewell "Global Watch" 53). The space theme is set out on the "Intro" to *Paradigm Shift*, which features a vocal sample of a man describing the sonic boom made by a meteor landing on earth. The otherworldly sounds created by a mix of orchestral instruments and electronic machines are carried through to "She Walks Into Mine", which plays with the famous Humphrey

Bogart line from *Casablanca*: “of all the gin joints [. . .] in all the universe, she walks into mine”. The following “Waiting”, features Lotus Hartley singing “does this play on your conscience, as it does mine?”, a lyric that is applicable to the overall tone of the album as *NZM* reviewer Shaun Chait notes: “‘Paradigm Shift’ isn’t white hot, simmering away at the subconscious instead. It stays clear of the euphoria of the dancefloor in favour of an afternoon-after cure” (44). Although the mellow tones of Sheehan’s albums can be ‘beefed up’ to work on a night-time dance floor (as evidenced by his performance with Module at Splore 2006) on album the music works at a quieter, less intrusive level. In *The Magic of Tone and the Art of Music*, Dane Rudhyar ends his chapter on the transforming and deconditioning properties of music by noting that: “The one essential need of humanity today is the renewal of the mind as it resonates to the release of a new cosmic and planetary spirit” (126). In the liner notes to *Paradigm Shift* Sheehan sets out a similar intention: “We need to appreciate that we are intimately connected to the universe. [. . .] We are the universe looking back at itself and pondering” (n. pag.). Throughout the album, tracks such as “Synthetic City”, “An Afternoon on the Moon”, and “Existing Alone” suggest such a wide-reaching response, the latter a chaotic track that ends on a more ambient note with the sounds of ticking clocks, a storm and a ponderous voice musing on man’s folly. Hollings notes in “The Solar Myth Approach” that Stockhausen was talking about “space age music” in 1968: “in which familiar forms become isolated and subsequently transformed when set against the infinite expanse of the universe. ‘That space I have described,’ he observed, ‘is the space of a direct physical experience, and by going through this experience, we arrive at a new inner space’” (106). *Paradigm Shift* is a microcosm of this theory, and Sheehan’s compositional skills are most evident on “The Paradigm Shift” – where he creates an electro-choral atmosphere that has the majestic uplift suggested by such a title – and on the closing “Connected” which links recorded environmental samples, programmed beats, various percussive rhythms, crooning vocals, random voice samples and other sounds to demonstrate how all things are connected. The album finishes with the sound of footsteps and birdsong, a fitting grounding note with which to end a composition concerned with notions of inner and outer space.

Earth's relationship with the universe is also explored on *Tiny Blue Biosphere*, the title of which is a reference to a photo of earth taken from space. In "Global Watch", Sheehan notes that the album title was inspired by a photograph taken by a Voyager spacecraft from beyond the orbit of Jupiter: "Earth was a tiny speck in an ocean of darkness. It just hit me how fragile we are. But most of us are oblivious to it. I do have a strong interest in science and cosmology [. . .]. I'm always trying to convey a sense of space and distance in my music" (53). *Tiny Blue Biosphere* begins with "Traveller", a simple introductory piece that evokes the sense of space that Sheehan wishes to convey, before the spoken vocal on "Boundaries" sets the exploratory theme of the album: "How did the universe arise? [. . .] Might there have been no beginning? / Can the universe be infinitely old?" Contemplations on the state of the universe are, by reflection, contemplations on the state of the earth, and bird song can be heard near the end of "Boundaries", one of a number of environmental sounds that are evident throughout the album. On "Phobos", they are accompanied by the gentle beat of a hand drum, the crisp tones of another vocal sample on the state of the universe juxtaposed against the harmonic tones of a background choir. "Somewhere Within" begins with a storm, the string arrangement creating the 'lines of flight' that reach out to both inner and outer space. Although he acknowledges that no one can be certain for sure, Toop writes in "Frames of Freedom" that: "Finding inspiration in natural phenomena may be as old as music itself [. . .] a wealth of documentation over centuries shows that animals and meteorological phenomena have always represented otherness, the mystery of communication that holds its meaning at a tantalising remove from human understanding" (241). "Pattern in Time" is also representative of this theory. Mixing eerie electronic sounds with tui song and insect sounds, the track revolves around a sampled conversation discussing the nature of time: "when it comes to time we are prisoners". The use of found sounds is only one of many themes in Sheehan's work that tie him to Lilburn, and the final two tracks are suggestive of Lilburn's vision for music, as quoted at the start of this chapter: "I've become very aware that the natural sounds of this environment exist in their own right, as do the songs and chants of our Maori tradition, intractable, not to be won easily into any synthesis" (qtd. in Young *Beginnings* 470). But whereas Lilburn's electronic compositions were removed from the orchestral

arrangements that he previously composed, Sheehan uses classical arrangements to create an otherworldly space within the music. Featuring deep resonating machine sounds, Kirsten Johnstone and Hummel on koauau, along with the watery, birdsong sounds of the bush, the introduction to “Te Karanga” is reminiscent of Lilburn’s “The Return”, but here a string arrangement underscores Anika Moa’s call for listeners to honour the past: “Stick to your ground / keep to your ways / the artillery’s coming / stick to our culture [. . .] to move around the land”. Sung in English, the “Te Karanga” of the title and chorus refers to the call and response exchange between kuia, the female elders who are responsible for the first part of the pōwhiri ceremony to welcome visitors onto a marae. After the lush arrangement of “Te Karanga”, “The Furthest Place” sounds a darker note, the strings mournful and the “synthesizers and noises” subterranean (*Tiny Blue Biosphere* n. pag.). There is something of the lament about it, as if the strings are mourning the current course of a biosphere hurtling towards an uncertain future.

### **Immersion in the Unknown – Watery Dub in Golden Bay**

The beach is often a site of utopian imaginings in Aotearoa, and Golden Bay, the home of Golden Bay Records and Bluey, is one such site. Long a favourite destination for family bach and camping ground holidays, Golden Bay is also a popular tourist destination. But the area also has a well-established ‘alternative lifestyle’ culture that has fostered a strong dance party scene, resulting in the Bay’s hosting landmark events Entrain, The Gathering, Visionz, and Stardust, all of which have made this destination a particular site of convergence and mythmaking to dancers. To the artists from Golden Bay Records, the area is an ever-present inspiration, and the label was established in 2000 by Bluey and Max Maxwell, who had been two thirds of pioneering trance act Matipo Pyramid, who played locally produced techno at the first Gathering. The first Golden Bay Records releases were solo albums from the founders, and whilst Max Maxwell explores the territory between electronica and guitar music, Bluey’s *Ocean Unknown* (2000), is deeply representative of the aquatic nature of Golden Bay. The cardboard cover is awash with ocean graphics, whilst the track listing evokes childhood memories of the beach. In the absence of vocals, titles such as “Skip and Swing”, “Something Happened”, “Just One



More”, “All The Time in the World”, and “Wispering Mist”, hint at the themes but leave the music to conjure the images. *CANTA* reviewer, Ian Henderson establishes the importance of place and musical routes to *Ocean Unknown* and notes that the music works as something to play “when you want to be at Golden Bay but aren’t actually there”:

This album could only have come from Golden Bay. The scenery, the atmosphere, the all-over sunstruck vibe of the place is infused in every track, giving it the feel of a summertime rave [. . .]. Bluey has created an album that bounces along on a dub groove rather than a trance sound. It is more of a gentle throb than an all-out “throw-your-hands-in-the-air” feel. (23)

The review demonstrates the de/reterritorialising function of music in recreating a space in the listener’s mind that although physically absent is experienced as a break from the everyday. *Ocean Unknown* begins with the title track, an offshore exploration that reflects the feeling of being able to lounge around in warm shallow water for hours. The album is described by Grant Smithies as “a warm, watery womb of sound that leaves you feeling naked and newborn, further from the grave than you’ve felt in years. Again, it relies on the dislocating properties of dub to give a sense of strangeness and space and makes all the right ambient moves” (“Rewind” D6). Yet the album is not all balmy days and gentle tides; “Ricochet” captures the breakbeat sound of rain that can be heavy and long-lasting. The uneasiness of this track is in line with what Toop describes as ‘ocean crooning’: “Floating amorphous ocean crooning [. . .] seems to mirror the feeling of non-specific dread that many people now feel when they think about life, the world, the future, yet it expresses a feeling of bliss. [. . .] So disquiet hovers in balance with the act of escapism or liberation” (*Ocean of Sound* 89). This ambivalence is a recurring theme in Aotearoa music that mirrors the ‘this could be heaven or this could be hell’ nature of our environment, particularly evident in the underlying force of the ocean.

### **Dawn Treading – Walking the Land with Alparhythm**

The debut album from Dunedin’s Alparhythm (Sam Cummings) is another instrumental album that captures a sense of the spaciousness of the Aotearoa landscape. Having heard

Alpharhythm play a number of times at outdoor events, it was not until a dawn set at the 2003 Massive Summer Soulstice at Little River that I really connected with the music in a way that has continued to inspire a spiritual connection to the land. On his website Alpharhythm's "customary morning sets" are described as "providing the perfect aural tonic to combat a hard night's partying" and it is this appreciation for the need for more gentle music in the morning that has made Alpharhythm sets a highlight at events (<http://www.alpharhythm.net/biography.html>). Cummings describes his sound as "deep, spaced-out techno with elements of house, dub & breaks, with the occasional melodic flourish", but this hardly captures the essence of the debut album, *Sentient Beings* (2006). On the Frisbeedog label website, the influence of the environment on the music is noted in the album's press release:

All these influences have simmered amongst the primordial landscape of New Zealand's South Island [. . .] its huge skies, windswept moors, craggy ranges, pristine lakes & fiords have been an undeniable influence on the creation of this album. Several of the pieces were created specifically with these landscapes in mind as a backdrop for their performance" (n. pag.).

As a regular performer and dancer, Cummings is familiar with the outdoor dance party environment, and he is successful in creating music particularly suited to these spaces. But he is also an avid trumper and if some of the music discussed previously can be called 'driving' music, the tracks on *Sentient Beings* are better described as 'tramping music'. When walking through vast tracts of bush (such as those in the National Parks), the sounds of industry often disappear entirely and the walker becomes aware of the rhythmic sounds of their own body against the aural backdrop of the natural sounds of the bush. In "The Jerrybuilt Future" Christoph Cox quotes avant garde pianist Frederic Rzewski who remarked in 1969 that with machines having become a dominant part of the environment:

we are beginning to become aware of the need for rediscovering our bodies, which have become atrophied by dependence on machines and from which machines have alienated us. Our music has to be a demonstration of something simple, physical, universal, and liberating. Machines, electronics, and fancy technology get in the way of this demonstration. (43)

Yet the machines have evolved so that they can be used to create liberating, universal music, as *Sentient Beings* shows. Exploring a number of territories within dance music (dub, trance, breakbeat), all of the tracks on *Sentient Beings* capture something of the sense of freedom associated with being outdoors, and away from industry. On “Less is More” there is a bird-call refrain that does not appear until well over halfway through, and which is set against a simple, unstructured beat. In the “Becoming-Animal” section of *ATP*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the ways in which “music takes as its content a becoming-animal”. They write that birds find expression in “appoggiaturas, staccato notes that transform them into so many souls. [. . .] The human musician is deterritorialized in the bird, but it is a bird that is itself deterritorialized, ‘transfigured’, a celestial bird” (304). The ‘celestial’ bird sound in “Less is More” is the missing component, but on first hearing the track, the listener may not be aware that it is missing, until it appears. Once heard however, it is not easily forgotten, and with each subsequent listen it is missed. Here, the listener attempts to ‘become’ the bird, as the brain tries to fill in the refrain that has not yet appeared in the music, making the event when it happens even sweeter for its melodiousness. On the closing track, “Gravity”, it is the darker, eerier sounds of the bush that are explored. A lush ambient piece, with just a hint of menace in its stark beauty, “Gravity” captures the sense of staying close to the earth that walking in the bush evokes.

### **Wave Shape Conversion – Music as Spiritual Guide**

Music has long been integral to spiritual conversion, and the music discussed here has been chosen for its ability to convert pessimists to optimists, consumers to environmentalists, and cynics to believers. Whilst some dancers may experience ‘born again’ moments in the dance zones, for most conversion takes place by degrees, and the sense of landscape that pervades the dance music of Aotearoa, along with lyrics not afraid to be both political and emotional (to be discussed in Chapter Two), are slowly affecting change. For those of us raised with the pessimism of broken utopian promises, such music is a welcome relief that enables us to re-envisage our beloved Aotearoa as the utopian paradise that it really could be, were we to reverse direction and follow a

pathway steeped in ancient tribal traditions and practices, where sustainable living was the only choice. As will be shown over the next few chapters, Aotearoa dance culture has the potential to create a different pathway – one that is grounded in positivity, but which understands that the messages must be lived as much as they are talked about. In the meantime there remains the hope encapsulated in the music of this land.

**Chapter Two:**  
**Singing the Onus of Colonisation –**  
**the Uprising of Aotearoa Roots Music**

The hybrid contemporary popular forms of Maori and Polynesian music could be regarded as an important aspect of biculturalism in Aotearoa [. . .]. Given the implausibility of entertaining strict notions of authenticity and purity in relation to Maori cultural traditions (or to any contemporary indigenous musical forms), the combination of traditional *waiata* and Anglo-American popular musical forms could be seen as part of a cultural project of self-assertion and self-preservation which links itself with a global diaspora of expressions of indigenous and black struggles through music. (Tony Mitchell “He Waiata Na Aotearoa” 57-8)

And so we pass this onus on. (Little Busman “Onus”)

In the outdoor dance zones a roots reggae style has developed that envisages Aotearoa as a multi-cultural society that takes ownership of the onus of colonisation. Described as ‘flax roots’, the music is steeped in the traditions of both Jamaican and Māori reggae musics, and is performed at the parties, where there is already evidence that a multicultural society can operate harmoniously on a temporary, autonomous basis. Performed by Māori, Polynesian and Pākehā musicians, this music is both political and spiritual and I would argue that it envisages Aotearoa as moving beyond the bicultural model of society intended by the *real* version of te Tiriti o Waitangi. This is music that merges the Jamaican with the Pacific, and like that discussed in Chapter One, is influenced by the landscape. But if the previous artists discussed were mostly content to let the music do the ‘speaking’ for them, here the space is created for the representation of Māori and Polynesian voices, resulting in a (sepia-toned) sound picture of the *real* story of Aotearoa.

The music discussed in this chapter is linked by the predominance of roots reggae lyrical forms, which reference the landscape in ways that are also politically challenging. In Te Wai Pounamu, Salmonella Dub, the Nomad, and Shapeshifter were at the forefront of a dub/drum and bass hybrid that was instrumental in introducing a song-based element to outdoor events, with live performances usually including several Māori and Polynesian vocalists who air opinions, grievances and hopes on stage. Whilst these bands are predominantly made up of Pākehā musicians, recently Tiki Taane (a former member of Salmonella Dub) released *Past, Present, Future*, an album that amalgamates Māori music forms with a range of reggae derived musics. Featuring a number of collaborators, including his father and grandmother, the songs are an honest account of Tiki's past that acknowledge his tīpuna as an inseparable part of himself, and thus represent both the Māori and Pākehā sides to his identity. In Te Ika ā Māui the inheritors of a reggae tradition that included the bands that formed after Bob Marley's Western Springs concert are inserting a Pacific sound within the global roots rhizome. But whilst the local reggae bands of the 1980's and 90's are significant to the music discussed here, because I do not have the mana to write the history of a culture that I have had little exposure to, I have not provided a detailed background. At the outdoor events however, I have witnessed the often transcendent sets of Cornerstone Roots, Kora, Fat Freddy's Drop, Trinity Roots, and Little Bushman and have chosen to write about these bands as being particularly pertinent to the themes of this thesis. By honouring the traditions of Māori waiata, and using their music as a vehicle for both social protest and spiritual consciousness these groups balance out the incriminating and suspicious nature of a number of media and political representations of Māori and Pacific Island peoples. Weaving together the themes discussed in previous chapters, these 'flax roots' bands have created a music that is unique to Aotearoa, and which calls for action over environmental, political, and social concerns.

The land is central to both Māori and Pākehā mythology, and the music discussed here envisages a utopia that respects the atua who inhabit our islands, so that we might live in accordance with nature and reverse the damage done by a history of bloodshed and burning. This is music that carries the hopes of generations of Māori who have wept for the disrespect shown by Pākehā to their tīpuna, and it includes Pacific and Pākehā

voices in the group tangi for Aotearoa – a land that dancers continue to profess love for even as they dishonour it with their refuse. But this music has the power to convert, and if the artists discussed in Chapter One inspired a spiritual connection to the land, the bands discussed here have converted me politically to a cause specific to Aotearoa. This music has led me to our history, to discover how Aotearoa became such a broken nation, and to form my own position on te Tiriti o Waitangi. Such knowledge has left me determined to acknowledge the rights of Māori to tino rangatiratanga, under the conditions of the Māori version of our founding document. That this music has also broken down the barriers of mainstream radio and attracted a fan base that reaches further than the outdoor zones into the homes of many culturally diverse New Zealanders, may well be Aotearoa outdoor dance culture’s greatest political achievement thus far.

### **Indicating Roots – a Brief History of Māori Music in Aotearoa**

Music is a significant component of Māoritanga, and the exploitation of traditional Māori music forms occurred along with colonisation, with the result that Māori have formed hybrid musics that allow greater cross-cultural expression. Margaret Orbell notes in the introduction to *Waiata: Maori Songs in History* that “In traditional Māori society there was singing, in everyday situations as well as on special occasions. The choice of song depended upon the circumstances” (1). Such traditions continue to be carried out on the marae, amongst whānau, and in school and community kapa haka groups who often perform in large pan-iwi competitions. Most early recorded Māori music however tended to be sanitised for the tourist market, and famous waiata such as “Pōkarekare Ana” and “Hine e Hine” – often sung by girl’s choirs, or young female singers – were palatable enough to be consumed by the average tourist or curious Pākehā. Whilst retaining authentic musical art forms on the marae (where karanga, haka and waiata distinctive to individual iwi are an essential part of protocol), in the twentieth century a number of Māori music styles emerged that were hybrids of international genres and Māori waiata. Inspired by Italian-American matinee idols, Māori show bands such as the Māori Volcanics, the Māori Hi Fives, and the Howard Morrison Quartet rose to prominence in the 1950’s. Eggleton notes that the impassioned personas, trendy vocals and jazz or pop

arias of tenors and baritones such as Mario Lanza, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Tony Bennett: “appealed immediately to a whole host of Maori performers, who also admired the black doo-wop groups such as the Platters [. . .] Soaking up styles and adding their own flair, the Maori showbands quickly established a reputation [. . .] as versatile entertainers, willing to smile and clown around as well as wow the crowds with song” (11). There is the hint of a suggestion here that these artists were willing to be ‘Uncle Tom’ characters, but physical humour is common in the Māori oral arts and these show bands continue to play to both Māori and Pākehā audiences. In the 1960’s and 1970’s guitarist Billy Tekahika (Billy TK) was an icon of psychedelic rock. Described as the Māori version of Jimi Hendrix, he is still popular as a performer nationally, and was a highlight of the Parihaka Peace Festival.

During the 1980’s Māori music became highly politicised within a reggae context, and bands such as Dread, Beat and Blood, Aotearoa, Herbs, Twelve Tribes of Israel, Katchafire, Unity Pacific, and David Grace and Injustice have had a significant influence on both Aotearoa hiphop and the roots-reggae discussed here. In his discussion of Māori music Tony Mitchell notes that the appropriation of black American, Jamaican and British musical forms by Māori musicians represented:

a parallel musical culture to that of Pakeha musicians, who [. . .] unlike the Maori, lack an indigenous musical tradition to draw on and combine with imported idioms. This parallel culture, in which the movement towards Maori self-determination and self-celebration is continually strengthening, reflects a binarism of Maori and Pakeha culture which is becoming more predominant within Aotearoa. (68)

This was published in 1994, and three years later Mitchell would claim in “New Zealand Music on the Internet” that the “New Zealand music scene is very definitely polarised by race” (86).

In the decade since Mitchell’s observations there has been an integration of this binarism in the outdoor dance zones, with the result that the music is becoming increasingly multi-cultural in nature. Bands and artists such as Rhombus, Wicked Draw, Mighty Asterix, Dubwise Soundsystem, Zuvuya, Black Seeds, Onelung, Irie Eyes and others draw on a range of influences to create multi-cultural music that is indebted to the



music of Jamaica and the philosophies associated with Rastafarianism. Bradley notes in *Bass Culture* that self-esteem is one of the tenets of Rastafarianism, and that: “in this altogether worldly situation believers each became the embodiment of their god, thus Rastafari could offer a personal redemption. Which, after four hundred years of dehumanizing years of slavery and colonization, was a very attractive proposition” (76-77). Bradley notes that as a religion that grew out of colonial oppression, if there had not been any oppressed black people, there would have been no need for Rastafarianism, which makes it a philosophy also relevant to Māori. In dance culture, there are a number of dancers who adopt the symbolism and the philosophy to varying degrees, but Pākehā Rastafarians run the risk of being labelled “fashion dreads” if they merely adopt the look, and do not live the creed.<sup>4</sup> But whilst most of the musicians discussed here would hesitate to refer to themselves as Rastafarians, musically the uplifting and political messages are steeped in a hybrid of Rastafarian ideology and Māori spirituality. It is one that sits well with dance culture’s utopian principles, but also challenges dancers to move beyond the hedonistic, drug-induced ecstasy currently being acted out at events into a more spiritually *and* politically enlightened realm.

### **Uplifting the Dub Plates – The Emergence of Southern Dub**

One of the earliest live dub bands to become regular performers at outdoor events was Salmonella Dub, and their contribution to Aotearoa roots music is evident in the band’s role in hosting the Kaikoura Roots Festival. Salmonella Dub were originally a Pākehā band who formed in Christchurch in 1992 and built a solid fan base through frequent touring, releasing their eponymous debut independently in 1994. The band would coalesce as Dave Deakins (drums/vocals), Mark Tyler (bass), Andrew Penman (guitar/keyboards) and Conan Wilcox (horns, percussion), but later they were joined by their sound engineer Tiki Taane as a guitarist and vocalist.<sup>5</sup> In 1999 Salmonella Dub broke through to mainstream radio with Tiki’s song “For the Love of It”, a reggae track about the joy of making music, the chorus “Version, we do it for the love of it”, summing up the mood of the local music industry at a time when there was little financial reward. The video featured footage from the Gathering, and the dreadlocked and tattooed Tiki

became a distinctive face in Aotearoa music, with Salmonella Dub breaking into both national and international markets with a series of albums that appealed to a wide range of fans. Committed to promoting other Aotearoa acts, in 2001 Salmonella Dub set out on the ambitious Outdoor Styles tour with Pitch Black and King Kapisi, but the weather worked against them, and the tour was a financial disaster. Determined to succeed in creating a showcase for roots music, the following year they hosted the first Kaikoura Roots festival, which for five years would become a major Te Wai Pounamu event for the bands discussed here.

Like the musicians discussed in Chapter One, for Salmonella Dub, the landscape is also significant, and when asked to name his influences in an article for *Inside the Dub Plates* (2001), Penman acknowledges the local environment as inspiration: “traffic, waves, trains, earthquakes, birdsongs” (“Dub Your Ways” 67). Named for Te Wai Pounamu’s tectonic mountain ranges, Penman explains in “Mental Notes” that the influence of his home in Kaikōura was a main theme: “Sometimes it all just makes you want to head for the hills and go bush. [. . .] The main geographical influence for me living here is the Southern Alps and Kaikoura Ranges [. . .] two tectonic plates rubbing together and causing these great uplifting of mountains” (Russell 29). The statement echoes those of Lilburn, and on *Inside Salmonella Dub* capture something of the beauty and terror evoked by the violent uplifting of these plates. The album is book-ended by songs that tap into a sense of local pride; “Love Your Ways” is a reggae love song to Aotearoa, featuring Taane singing “And every time I see her face, a warm smile spreads across her face”, whilst “Tui Dub” is built around a tui call, a soundmark so familiar in Aotearoa that one version of it has become a popular cell-phone ring tone. But the album also boasts the more urban “Tha Bromley East Roller”, named for the working class suburb in Christchurch where some band members and collaborators lived, and indicating the drum and bass influence that permeated the city at the time. Far removed from the pristine landscape imagery featured on the Salmonella Dub website, Christchurch’s swampy influence is evident in the more hectic, darker songs. Russell notes that: “*Inside the Dub Plates* is Salmonella Dub taking a massive step toward the *heavy*, mind-warping, one hundred percent dub album that exists in their collective belly. It finds them making

minimal, if any, concessions to external dictates, instead producing a disc that's darkness makes your spine tingle" (28).

*Inside the Dub Plates* was followed by *Outside the Dub Plates* (2002), a remix album that demonstrates the international 'lines of flight' being forged by the band. Deleuze and Guattari write that we are composed by bundles of lines, of which the lines of flight are the most "difficult" because not all groups or individuals will have them and so they must be invented: "Individual or group, we are traversed by lines, meridians, geodesics, tropics, and zones marching to different beats and differing in nature. [. . .] some of these lines are imposed on us from outside [. . .]. Others can be invented, drawn, without a model and without chance" (202). The two album covers are visual representations of this process, and sound wise, the distorted mirror analogy also applies – whereas the original maintains a local flavour, on *Outside the Dub Plates* the lines are stretched to connect to international breakbeat styles. Keeping the track listing the same, the songs are reworked by ten remixers, each connected to a map of 'lines' of their own, which influence the sound. Discussing the routes of jungle and drum and bass, Gilbert and Pearson write that it is often seen as being:

produced at a number of intersections between hardcore, hiphop and reggae. 'Ragga' or 'jungle' techno were among the names given to forms of hardcore/breakbeat to which its creators added elements from Jamaican dance-hall and reggae musics. The tempos [. . .] allowed the addition of dub derived bass-lines, reggae samples and toasting. (79)

These last three components are distinctive features of Salmonella Dub's music, and the horns also feature prominently, a connection that extends back to Jamaican mento styles. Vocals are shared, and toasting is performed by Tiki, who also goes under the name, MC Rizzla. On the remix album these trademark sounds are the pivots around which the remixers create new tracks, and in the hands of DJ Digital and Spirit the somewhat clunky "Tha Bromley East Roller" becomes a night drive around the edges of Bromley – the deserted industrial area giving way to the sanitation ponds, transformed at night into a glittering mirror of the arterial road and surrounding hills. By connecting the points on the global rhizome, on "Outside the Dub Plates", Salmonella Dub continue to push

through to new territories, establishing fan bases for Aotearoa-produced dub in Australia, Europe, and the Middle East.

### **Movement in Time – The Musical Wanderings of the Nomad**

The Nomad is another artist working within the roots spectrum that incorporates a sense of the elemental in his music. Daimon Schwalger began his first forays into sound production in Dunedin during the 1980's, and became a hiphop DJ, before forming live drum and bass duo, Locuste in Christchurch with vocalist Pearl Runga in 1995. In 1998, Schwalger released *Movement*, his debut CD as the Nomad, a title that is a play on his first name and also describes his childhood (Kara "The Nomad" 18). One of the first drum and bass albums produced in Aotearoa, *Movement's* challenging rhythms and confrontational lyrics now sound dated, but the title track stands out. The song begins with a storm, a sample of distant thunder and a background 'ssshhhhh' an eerie slice of found sound that precedes a smooth breakbeat that (to paraphrase the Hone Tuwhare poem "Rain") makes tightly patterned holes in the melody, a three note refrain carrying the listener to the peak moment when the 'rain track' falls away to showcase Runga singing "movement, movement in time".<sup>6</sup> Rudhyar writes that: "Human beings are confronted with two basic kinds of natural sounds, elemental and animal. Because these natural sounds convey a potential or actual message, they are truly *tones*. They have magical potency. By resonating to them, human beings come to learn the Name of particular animals or elemental powers – the power of wind, storms, heavy rain, a raging river, and so on" (*sic.* 18). Thus the 'movement' of natural phenomena reminds humans that we can never fully control our worlds. Rudhyar writes that according to both ancient and scientific interpretation of natural phenomena, "motion exists everywhere, but the speed of the movement – that is, the frequency of a complete oscillation (or period) of the movement – can vary immensely" (7). The various rhythm and melody lines seem to move at different paces but in accordance to a unifying whole, making the title track stand out amongst the more industrial sounds of the rest of the album, but the inclusion of another version of "Movement" at the end indicates the direction in which the Nomad was to continue his career.

The Nomad went on to refine his sound into a dub/hiphop hybrid that includes a number of vocalists, including long-time collaborator MC Antsman (of Pacific Underground). That dub should be a binding theme in Aotearoa is in line with the role that cannabis (the drug commonly associated with Jamaican derived musics) plays in Aotearoa society, and in an interview with Kara, Schwalger notes the influence of the drug: “[Schwalger’s] not condoning getting out of it for everybody but it suits his way of life and his music making methods. ‘You’ve got to get in the mood and basically with reggae and dub it’s a real eerie feel and it’s kind of spiritual, it’s like passing the peace pipe and smoking the weed’” (18). The Nomad’s first two albums were made while he was living in Christchurch, and the availability of cannabis in the area has resulted in a number of artists producing Jamaican derived musics. The Nomad and his various vocalists are regular performers at dance parties, and the messages in the songs are often in line with dance music’s use of simple aphorisms to create positive or revolutionary thought, such as on “Where Are You?” from *Second Selection*: “All you have to do is be you, and I’ll find you”. On other tracks, MC Antsman creates short memorable messages that leave the space for a greater political emphasis during live performances: “You better stand up ‘cause you get a better flow” (“Betta Stand Up!”) “Don’t you all realise time is running out” (“Time Is Running Out”). Worldwide change begins with individuals realising they are part of a greater entity, and these short universalisms are effective in engendering a sense of connection. Connection of people, places, and music is explored throughout the Nomad’s work, and on *Step 4<sup>th</sup>* (2003) connection to the landscape is a strong theme. Named after the Te Wai Pounamu event, instrumental track “Destination” features undulating layers of melody and rhythm that showcase a refrain that stands out for its clarity and beauty. On “Waves” the multi-meanings of the title are explored using various sound referents – an eerie machine whine redolent of sine waves, a recorded sample of the beach, and the vocals of Brazilian singer Alda Rezende, whom Schwalger met in Wellington: “When she came back [to the studio] and looked out the window at the view she saw the water and started freestyling in Portuguese about waves – hence the name of the track. I wanted her to sing in her own language to use the voice more as a sound rather than as words you can pick up on” (qtd. in Thorne 53). By connecting the different interpretations of and responses to ‘waves’, The Nomad explores the ways in

which the environment can be referenced, and contributes to the sense of ‘place’ found in his music.

### **Playing it in Real Time – Shapeshifter and Live Drum and Bass**

A number of leading producers emerged from the drum and bass scene that evolved in Christchurch in the 1990’s (including Bulletproof, Kaps, Confucius and Mysterious D, along with a number of artists under the Fabel label of which Pylonz is head) but of most relevance here is Shapeshifter, a band that play live drum and bass. Shapeshifter formed after jazz school students Redford Grenell (drums) and Devon Abrams (keyboards, saxophone) saw Grooverider play in April 1999, and decided they would like to try making the music live. They jammed with bass player Nick Robinson and then asked Sam Trevethick to join on guitar, samples and percussion (Jewell “Groovin’ on Top” 20). At the time the general view with regards to live drum and bass followed Gilbert and Pearson’s assertion that:

despite frequently made aesthetic and formal connections with jazz, drum and bass is painstakingly and minutely constructed using computer sequencers – it cannot be improvised in ‘real time’, and when played live by a real drummer ironically its materiality ebbs. Live drum and bass drumming becomes an organic approximation, shored up by our prior knowledge of the rigorous syntax of formerly programmed beats (117).

Prior to seeing Shapeshifter play at one of their earliest gigs in a band competition (where they lost out on points designated to vocals), I too believed that drum and bass was ‘computer music’, but quickly found that this opinion required reassessment. Close your eyes, and the sound – although warmer and ‘rougher around the edges’ – was not dissimilar to one of the English DJ’s who played regularly in Christchurch. Keep them open however, and you could watch Grenell do the seemingly impossible by producing the beats in ‘real time’. If there was any loss of materiality in the sound it was made up for by the excitement of engaging with a live band playing drum and bass that you could also *really* dance to. In an article for *Rip It Up* magazine, Daniel Rutledge quotes Trevethick and notes his own reaction to the live element: ““Right from the start we said

we're not going to play a track live the same way twice. [. . .] Things aren't set in structure, we do things manually on the spot.' I explain to Sam that every time I've seen Shapeshifter perform I spend half the time dancing and the other half [. . .] standing still, open-mouthed staring at what they're actually doing" (58). This aspect of the music was emphasised by the band when they named the first album *Real Time* (2001).

On *Real Time* Shapeshifter explore a number of different territories within drum and bass. The cover features two photographs of Canterbury skylines, one in golden hues and the other in dark blues and lilac, and the influence of the environment is evident from the opening "Atmospheres", which, as *NZM* reviewer Dainjah notes, signifies dawn: "While most local d'n'b is from the harder side of the fence, here Shapeshifter mix mellow, jazzier touches with those harder, scientific 'raw' styles [. . .]. Opener Atmospheres begins with a touch of jazz and ambience, slowly gliding towards the inevitable beat – the sound of the sun rising" (42). The following "Move With Me" features Ladi 6 (Karoline Tamati) singing "Here I am, take my hand, lead me to the promised land, I'll take you there if you're ready", over a backing track that captures the utopianism associated with summer dancing. But if the first two tracks are 'sunny' tracks, what Dainjah refers to as the "hard centre of this album, songs that no doubt go off live", explores a darker territory that better reflects the intensity of a live drum and bass set when the night is cold, and occasionally, wet (42). Chris Long writes in *Rip It Up* that *Real Time* is "a beautiful, brutal, full spectrum journey through musical styles, drum'n'bass, and otherwise" (87). But whilst the "beautiful" sounds represent the spaciousness of the Aotearoa rural landscape, in the more "brutal" tracks is the celebration of the transient uniqueness of each moment in time. In his discussion of the digital '(Re)productive' aspects of dance music, Zuberi suggests that Paul Théberge:

could be describing the typical house, techno, rap, or drum'n'bass tune when he writes: "When confronted with such a work, the listener is immediately struck by a feeling of fluctuating, multiple temporality; a difference in the perceived relationship between past and present; [and] the nature of one's own subject position as a listener [. . .]. (148)

That drum and bass can be confrontational is borne out by some of Shapeshifter's more complex tracks; here the listener is suspended in a perpetual present; each beat of the

music linked with the multiples of looped rhythms that take place within the track. When immersed in the multifarious beats of “Bubble and Crisp” and “Rawstyles” the body is engaged in the immediate moment, and how it responds to the next is of little importance. As each explosive beat is instantly replaced by another, the collective body celebrates the unfinished process of renewal that represents the cyclical, infinite nature of time. For all its mid-album fury however, *Real Time* ends with two tracks that Dainjah also describes as ‘beautiful’: “Inertia is about as beautiful as spacious, jazzy breaks come. I’m sorry, did I say Inertia was beautiful? Well it’s positively plain Jane compared to the album’s closer Tapestry” (43). With these tracks Shapeshifter capture the sense of spaciousness and beauty evoked by the images on the album cover.

Following on from the local success of *Real Time*, Shapeshifter based themselves in Melbourne, returning regularly for live tours and releasing the *Riddim Wise LP* in 2004. Whilst the debut album was book-ended by ambient tracks, a harder edge is established from the outset on *Riddim Wise*, and distorted vocals are used as an instrument on both “Shakedown” and “Phenomenon”. In an interview with Jewell for *NZM*, Trevethick says of the album: “We just wanted punchier beats and something with a bit more bite, although a lot of it is still on the lighter side”. One of the lighter tracks is “When I Return”, which was written with Ladi 6 in mind who “jammed” over it in the studio (“Drum and Bass” 2). The lyric stands out amongst the universal aphorisms of most dance vocals, because it is relationship based, with Ladi 6 asking that a lit candle be left burning until she returns. Featuring Joe Dukie (Dallas Tamaira), “Long White Cloud” is also a love song, but can be interpreted within the wider context of Aotearoa. With a backing track like a driving rain beat, the lyrics are an ode to the “land of the long white cloud”, being the English translation of Aotearoa: “it seems I’m forever in this place of love and light, light and love / I feel the rain on my face and it reminds me of you / so delicate and open”. Such a track can be a powerful orienting agent when dancing in the pouring rain, the dancer often discovering that discomfort aside, the experience can be enhanced by the deluge. The final track is another love song, “As of Lately”, featuring Sunshine Soundsystem singer and MC P. Digsss (Paora Apera) who also jammed over the backing track, and Trevethick notes that the first take was used: “His voice was all croaky from the night before and he just made it up but it seemed more natural” (3). P.



Digsss' presence at live shows brought a new 'conversational' element to Shapeshifter's sound and by the time *Riddim Wise* was released he had become a permanent member of the band.

On the third Shapeshifter album, *Soulstice* (2006) the vocals are at the foreground of the tracks, reflecting the soul music inflections suggested by the title, but also political in their intent. In their discussion of the use of vocals in dance music, Gilbert and Pearson write that instrumental dance music can be liberating in its eschewal of popular music's reliance on vocals to put across a message, but that:

Deconstructing received notions of meaning, truth and identity can often be liberating but can just as often be completely disempowering; without meaning, how do we think? Without identity, how do we act? The ecstatic experience towards such music and its attendant dancing can lead us, where we literally lose ourselves in an oblivious obliteration of self, can be a liberating and challenging experience. It can also be terrifying, disempowering, or a literally mindless escape from problems which we might need to deal with. (71)

Dance music in Aotearoa has notably become more song oriented during the course of this research, but perhaps the trend reflects the natural progression of dancers, who once liberated from the need to find meaning in vocals alone, can then take pleasure in the integration of complex backing tracks and uplifting, or even challenging lyrics. With the addition of P. Digsss, on *Soulstice* a more environmentally political slant is evident from the first track, "Like a New Day Comes" which pulls together the utopian sloganism of dance culture to issue a challenge: "now you see there is a bigger picture / put it all together and call it evolution [. . .] everything you do is like cause and effect". The theme is repeated on "Earth", an ode to Papatuanuku: "Do you not see that the tears that are falling down burn her skin / Do we not heed the call / Do we not hear her cries [. . .] Will we be the death of her?" On this track the music emphasises the mournful sentiment, but in contrast, "Bring Change" is exhilarating in its build up, the vocals imbuing a sense of positivism in the imploring "We got to bring about change", the simple lyric repeated over and over, the beats underscoring the challenge. On "Electric Dream" the machines are to the fore, the music more electro than other tracks. In "Automating the Beat" Peter

Shapiro notes that the “ultimate triumph of machine music has been achieved in genres concerned with shaking butts and moving booty”. Discussing Theodor Adorno’s view of machine music, he writes that the German philosopher does raise a salient point: “why have we entrusted to machines that which makes us most human – moving in time to sound? Perhaps it is the logical outcome of music’s often expressed desire for the perfect beat, which is rooted in the drum’s historical role as an instrument of war” (132). Here however, the music is humanised by Redford’s drumming, along with P Digsss vocals working with the machines to drive the message home that “Even on the darkest night, you shine so bright”. With most tracks featuring a vocal, the evolution from instrumental drum and bass band to a more song oriented approach mirrors the greater use of vocals in Aotearoa dance music as a whole, but on “Summer Haze” the atmospheric instrumentalism of “Atmospheres” is re-explored, and includes the familiar sound of ocean surf and bird chatter – ‘found sounds’ that are a subtle reminder of the reason for Shapeshifter’s new emphasis on raising awareness of ecological concerns.

### **Dancing the Haka – Synthesising Cultures with Tiki Taane**

In 2007 Tiki Taane released *Past, Present, Future*, a debut album that is representative of his Māori and Pākehā whakapapa (ancestry). A sound engineer from the age of fifteen, Tiki has worked with all the artists discussed above and some of them feature on his solo album, which was recorded in Woodhill on the outskirts of Auckland after he quietly left Salmonella Dub on New Year’s Eve, 2006. In an article for *NZM* Tiki describes the circumstances that produced the album: “I left Sal Dub, left Wellington, left my girlfriend [of] five years, stopped taking drugs, moved into the middle of nowhere [ . . . ] to write this album. So it was a real soul-searching time. All of a sudden I was faced with depression and anxiety and panic attacks” (2). The album begins with a breath, the life force of the koauau and the pūtātara, played by Tiki and Inia Taylor. The traditional instruments act as the guide into “Whakapuaki An Awakening”, a karakia performed by Tiki’s father, Uekaha Taanetinorau. Sung only in Māori, the English translation is printed in the liner notes, the words a prayer for balance and interconnectedness, the music the calm before the storm that is “Tangaroa”. Written after the Indian Ocean Tsunami in December 2004,

here the merging of the traditional and the technological is spine-tingling, the drums a tribal stomp for drum and bass fans, the sinewy female voice a counterpoint to Uekaha and Tiki's mighty haka honouring Tangaroa, the god of the sea. But whilst I can appreciate the track for its passion, as a non-te reo speaking listener and a Pākehā there is a sense, not of exclusion, but of 'non-belonging' – I feel deeply connected to the haka because it could only have come from Aotearoa, but I cannot fully comprehend its meaning. Avril Bell writes in "We're Just New Zealanders" that prior to contact neither Māori or Pākehā identified themselves as one group, but rather as separate iwi or nationalities – hence both identities were established in relation to each other. She writes that: "in this instance, Pakeha is the discursive Other. The dominant culture is the Other, rather than the reverse. 'Maori', prior to colonisation, meant a 'normal, mortal' person in contrast to the 'atua' [. . .]. Pakeha, whatever its original meaning, is the Other to Maori's normality" (153-4). And so it is upon hearing "Tangaroa" that I am aware of standing apart from Māori culture, but wishing that I had access to that sense of belonging, that mana. In a reversal that destabilises my Pākehā identity I become the other, and thus gain a sense – if only for the time of the song – of what it feels like to be marginalised from a discourse that in this context is dominant.

Incorporating waiata, drum and bass, hiphop, dub and reggae, *Past, Present, Future* is Tiki's mihi (greeting) to Aotearoa dance culture. Throughout the album there is a blending of styles, with traditional Māori sounds incorporated into the tracks. On the Spare Room website, reviewer Steven writes that "It's three tracks in before we wrap our ears around some more contemporary-sounding songs. "Now This Is It" is a synth-driven hip hop song where Tiki really announces his arrival and confirms his readiness as a solo artist" (4). Whilst I would argue that the merging of tradition and technology makes "Tangaroa" more "contemporary-sounding" than "Now This Is It" (a song based on familiar global forms), this categorisation of tracks into the contemporary (perhaps connoting Pākehā?) and traditional is representative of the destabilisation of identity discussed above, and is ironically referenced on the album with a vocal sample of a 'snooty' command to "now sit down you savages", which marks the transition between the two songs. "Now This Is It" is an MC battle cry with Tiki proudly proclaiming, "now this is it, my turn to bring the new shit". The song's bravado is in keeping with the black

music cultures that have influenced the album, yet Tiki also makes reference to moments he is less proud of (“I got caught up in the money, became a hypocrite / Forgot that I wrote we do it for the love of it”), and humility is a lyrical theme throughout the album. As Tiki lays bare his past and acknowledges his mistakes there is a sense of the ‘artist as a young man’ coming to terms with both his identity and talent, and in “Beyond the Dub Plates”, he acknowledges the difficulties presented by growing up Māori in a predominantly Pākehā suburb of Christchurch: “I kind of walk between two worlds, but I don’t really belong to either of them” (1). On the title track, the past is literally represented with the use of a vocal sample of Inuwai Taanetinorau, Tiki’s grandmother, who died over fifteen years ago. The sample is taken from a cassette tape of her singing a baby to sleep, and the waiata is her own composition. The integration of past, present and future is also a theme on the closing “Tainui Waka”, which pays tribute to the waka that carried Tiki’s ancestors from Hawaiiki. The track begins with a sample of a storm at sea, the faraway chant a prequel for Tiki’s quiet guitar, until other voices join in and the journey begins, the rhythm lines building slowly. Drawing both on his Tainui ancestry and the influences of his dance music whānau, the track weaves the traditional with the dub styles of the music discussed in Chapter One: “It’s a respectful, poignant bookend to an album that’s full of self-aware, soul-searching lyrics. But it’s also eight and a half minutes of squelchy dub, best listened to outside, in the environment it reflects – one of sea winds and hot sun” (Steven 5). *Past, Present, Future* is the sound of Tiki growing into a man, his father and his grandmother anchoring the album to his whakapapa (genealogy), yet leaving him free to explore his own musical pathways.

### **Soul Evolution – the Weaving of Flax Roots Reggae**

In Te Ika a Maui roots reggae music is also influenced by Māori cultural tradition and the term ‘flax roots’ describes not only the Pacific nature of the music, but the way in which the many different strands of Aotearoa culture are woven together. Of particular relevance to themes discussed here is Whaingaroa reggae band Cornerstone Roots who sing songs about Babylon that are also spiritually challenging. Originating as a three-piece in 2001, Cornerstone Roots are Brian Ruawai (vocals, guitar, songwriting), his

partner, Naomi Tuau (bass), Tutongo (drums) and Aaron Bush (percussion), and are based at Whaingaroa, where the Raglan Soundsplash Eco Reggae Festival takes place. Fronted by dreadsman Ruawai, the connection to Rastafarian ideology is evident on *Soul Revolution* (2003) which begins with “Lovers”, featuring the chorus “Mash it up in Babylon, smash it down till its gone”. With stabbing horns and a jazzy instrumental as an outro, the song sets Cornerstone Roots’ Rastafarian influences and political agenda from the start. In *Reggae Bloodlines* Stephen Davis writes that “Rastas think of themselves as the lost tribes of Israel sold into the slavery of a Caribbean Babylon, and when the children of Israel fly away home to Zion at last, the throne of Babylon – colonial Jamaica and the whole of white civilization – will tumble down in a hail of blood and brimstone” (72-3). On the following “Miracles” there is an emphasis on new age religiosity, the line “Every day I confront addiction” suggesting that the song has been written with addicts in mind, and that references to a “higher power”, “spirit of conviction”, and “loving light” are deliberately familiar. “Soul Revolution” is critical of consumerism: “Shocking education / Shopping mall dread / Citizen, Citizen / Consumers instead”. In his discussion of Te Ika ā Māui group the Twelve Tribes, Mitchell writes that “the group’s reggae becomes an expression in an international idiom of social harmony which positions indigenous Maori concerns in a wider global context” (“He Waiata” 57). Cornerstone Roots are engaged in a similar process and throughout the album there is an ecological message that is global, as on the simple “Lyrical”: “Lyrical / Spiritual / Ecological / Warriors here to save you / Yeah”. “Panic” is critical of the methamphetamine or “P” (Pure) trade without explicitly referring to the drug, but in the final stanza Ruawai sings “Pharmaceutical stronghold, they capitalise on hysteria, panic”. This line is suggestive that responsibility for the P ‘epidemic’ should be placed with the pharmaceutical companies who profit from the illegal drug trade because they make the influenza and cold medicines that are the substance’s main ingredient. Musically, “Visions” and “Light” are suggestive of the Aotearoa landscape in the sense discussed in Chapter One, the latter an acoustic karakia which ends the album with the call to “Let the loving light lead us to your dawning”. As the voice and instruments fade away the tribal rhythms of drumming are left, a sound that is a reminder of all the tribes of colonised

people victimised by global expansion, yet maintaining hope for a world-wide conversion of ideology.

The second Cornerstone Roots album, *Free Yourself* (2007) has a sharper political edge that is balanced by songs calling for spiritual freedom and whānau responsibility. The political intent is evident from the first track, a classic reggae song with America the first lyrical target: “war on terror America leads the way”. At the end of the album is a quartet of songs that are also politically explicit, and “Civilisation” is a critique of Western values and the suppression of history: “Civilisation rise and they fall they conquer they rule they starve and they war unfortunately the real story of my history is buried with my family” [sic]. Evan Poata-Smith writes that “true liberation for Maori will not occur without a fundamental transformation of capitalist society” and notes that it: “is not necessary to actually experience a particular form of oppression in order to fight against it [ . . . ]. All those struggling for a better society can learn to recognise and identify with those facing particular oppressions and can be enlisted as common allies in the struggle” (116). On “Mankiller” Cornerstone Roots turn their attention to Genetic Engineering, described as “Gaia fornication citizen suicide”, and they target specific companies. Halfway through the song the tempo changes for a roll call of nations allowing the “Mankiller virus of the future” to be released, and Aotearoa is included in the line-up. One of the most politically challenging songs discussed in this chapter, “Mankiller” takes a wider political issue and localises it, joining the widespread and ongoing protest against GE crops and research, in particular the lifting of a moratorium by the Labour coalition government in 2001 allowing field trials of GE crops in Aotearoa. At the end of the track, the IMF, One World Bank, and Monsanto, are named and shamed as the institutions supporting this pollution of food. Although less challenging, the following “Wake Up” also challenges the listener to “Wake up and smell the poverty an alcoholic society”. The song also makes reference to “flax roots”, a phrase used on the biography for Cornerstone Roots on the *Muzic.net.nz* website where they are described as:

an integral part of an exciting roots movement that has been gaining momentum in New Zealand [ . . . ] music that is message orientated, soul induced, & bass driven.

Cornerstone Roots focus at a flax roots level constantly taking their own unique brand of conscious original roots music to the people [. . .]. Their performances are strong and powerful and their message of peace is easily accessible to any audience. (n. pag.)

Yet there can be no peace without knowing “your enemy right from the core of your philosophy”, as Ruawai sings on “War”, and Cornerstone Roots’ commitment to criticising Babylon is also representative of Māori waiata. Orbell notes that waiata were often laments or complaints sung publicly: “to express the poet’s feelings, convey a message and sway the listeners’ emotions. Their language is often elaborate, with specialised expressions and complex allusions” (1).

But in between these politically focused tracks are those that make reference to a spirituality based around whānau connections. Cornerstone Roots’ whānau-based philosophy has been literally evident during some of their live sets, when their children are given seats on stage, and a number of instruments to choose from should they wish to join in. On *Free Yourself*, the song “Home” speaks of ‘home’ both in the family context and as a spiritual grounding place: “I take a piece of home with me woven around my neck close to my chest a piece of land and sea”. The piece of land and sea is most likely pounamu, or greenstone, the jade worn by most Māori and many Pākehā as a signifier of place (see Chapter Five). Kara notes the local flavour of the song in a review for the *New Zealand Herald*: “in typical Kiwi style, *Home*, the catchiest track, does have the barbecue reggae bounce of New Zealand acts like the Black Seeds, but Cornerstone Roots are more traditional and stripped back” (n. pag.). Like “Visions” from *Soul Revolution*, “Freedom” features lyrics that tie in well with the politics of dance culture (“Got to free your soul from yourself”) which are set to a beat suggestive of the relaxed atmosphere of an afternoon dancefloor, a timeframe particularly suited to a Cornerstone Roots set. But if there is one song that most evokes a sense of the area in which it was produced, it is “Steppers”, an instrumental that is like a musical journey around the back roads of Raglan, a place that like Kaikōura has become a site of convergence for flax roots culture in Aotearoa.

### **Burning the Man – Questioning the Myth-Makers with Kora**

Another whānau based band is Kora, whose dynamic blend of roots and rock have made them live favourites in the outdoor arenas. Originally from Whakatane on the Coromandel Peninsular, Kora are brothers Laughton (guitar, keyboards), Francis (bass, vocals), Stuart (guitar, vocals) and Bradley Kora (drums), along with “close friend” Dan McGruer (bass, keys). At time of writing Kora had yet to release their debut album, but an EP and memorable live performances have seen them build up a large fan base. In an article for *NZM*, Stephanie Gray notes the musical background of the Kora brothers: “[they] have been in a band since their father Tait dished out drumsticks, picks, and amps [. . .]. Sporty Francis was roped into playing the bass and singing and says music was pretty much compulsory in the Kora home” (56). On stage, the band blends together a range of musical styles including funk, rock and metal, and have developed a signature move of stopping mid track and standing as still as statues for minutes on end before seemingly telepathically picking up the song where they left off. Whilst Kora have been described as a dub/reggae band Laughton explains in an interview with Vicki Anderson for *The Press* that they prefer not to be defined by genre: “Man, it’s not reggae. We’re all metallers at heart. Glamour rock rocks, man. Our music’s full of it – it’s just slowed right down” (D1). That Kora’s music is also political, is shown by the debut EP, *Volume* (2004), which begins with “Burning”, a bass heavy track featuring what Gray refers to as Laughton’s “jungle lungs” singing “I’ve been burning, burning, burning, all these bad ways I’ve been learning / I’ve been earning, earning, earning, oh how that tide’s been turning / Give me an inch and I’ll make it a mile” (56). The meaning of the lyrics can be interpreted on several levels, including the smoking of cannabis. But within a wider Aotearoa context, the word burning holds great weight, especially from a conservationist point of view. Both Māori and Pākehā burned native bush for cultivation, but in *Our Islands, Our Selves*, David Young notes that the “greatest losses occurred between 1882 and 1909, when the forests are estimated to have been diminished by almost 40 per cent from their original 11.4 million hectares: little combustible forest within reach of settlement remained at risk” (99-100). The result of European colonisation, Young notes that by 1900 the prognosis for native plants and animals was “grim” (99). A century on, the effects of deforestation on places such as Northland, Tauranga and Taranaki have



resulted in flooding and slips occurring on an increasingly regular basis. In this context, the turning tide is both literal and metaphorical, as people wake up to the fact that deforestation has been a major cause of global warming, and that the growing of trees is one of the ways in which its effects can be reversed.

Also on *Volume* is “Politician”, a song that was written about cannabis laws, but is non-specific enough to be applied to any political cause. In “New Zealand Music on the Internet” Mitchell notes that Māori bands had difficulty getting radio airplay especially when the song’s content was deemed to be too political. He quotes Russell Brown who notes of Dam Native’s “Horrorified One” that “it won’t be a hit because its title and the name of the group makes the dorks who run commercial radio pee in their pants” (86). A decade later Māori music is being played more regularly on commercial radio stations, and Kora are no exceptions. But unlike Dam Native, on “Politician” Kora are less direct in their protest, which makes the song more palatable to a wider audience even though it was inspired by Green MP and Rastafarian Nandor Tanczos’ efforts to have cannabis decriminalised, as Anderson notes. Yet Laughton explains that the song has been deliberately kept open: “We didn’t want [cannabis] legalised, but decriminalised. It’s got a bad rap but it’s still not as bad as alcohol. I don’t think it’s good, particularly for Maori youth. I have a huge thing for our youth, thinking about where our generation is going. . . so we kept the song deliberately open”. Featuring the lines “Poli-Poli-Politician / Have you made the right decision for all of us? [. . .] You can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk / Or will you bring us comfort?”, he notes that at first people thought it was about the war [on Iraq] but that “every time we play it, it seems to have a different meaning” (Anderson D1). The song is simple and repetitive and is welcomed as a sing-along protest at the outdoor events, where hearing a mass of voices asking for responsibility from politicians can be an uplifting experience. In 2004, when the debut EP was released, the political decision that concerned many New Zealanders was who had legal rights to the foreshore and seabed of our islands; hence “Politician” was also applicable to Māori politics. Whilst the interpretation of lyrics is a subjective experience for individual listeners, through the phrasing and strength of Kora’s performance, such songs catch on, so that a more politically aware edge is inserted at events.

### **Scaling the Mountain – the Omnipresence of Fat Freddy’s Drop**

Fat Freddy’s Drop is a Wellington roots band that has had a major impact on the Aotearoa music industry. Fat Freddy’s Drop evolved out of Bongmaster (singer Dallas Tamaira, DJ ‘Mu’ Faiumu and trumpet player Toby Laing), who were featured on Loop’s *Select Edition Audio* compilation, with the song “Ground My Ego”. Playing regular gigs in Wellington, the group attracted other musicians and soon the line up would also include Warren Maxwell (saxophone), Iain Gordon (Korg Trident) and Tehimana Kerr (guitar). Faiumu notes in an interview with Adam Bennett that “People just kept on showing up, coming back to the jams”, and in keeping with this atmosphere the first release was recorded live at Wellington’s Matterhorn venue on a Sunday afternoon (E8). Released independently, *Live at the Matterhorn* (2001) is a four-track album that captures the essence of the early live shows with slow-moving jams where refrains give way to several minutes of unmapped improvisation that eventually return to the original melody. With tracks up to twenty minutes long, the songs are spacious and Tamaira’s quiet vocalising is integrated into the music. The opening “Runnin’” is a track that is emotional in a way that resists the staunchness associated with masculinity in Aotearoa; around the line, “Run to the place you know is home” Tamaira freestyles “I am afraid of many things, I have to fight the fear [ . . . ] sometimes I am afraid to talk to people / Fall apart, fall apart sometimes I need to”. The candid lines are emphasised by Maxwell’s saxophone solo, the lyrics replayed as a jazz improvisation, before Tamaira returns with the devastating appeal “Would you fall apart for me?”. On the following “Rain”, the imagery is cloaked in greenery, the anchoring line, “When the rain comes down tell me where will you be?”. Lyrically, there is an association with the utopian politics discussed in the previous chapters: the sun will shine again, crops and flowers will bloom, we will find “shelter”, and a similar theme is found on “No Parking”, where Tamaira conveys a sense of despair over the proliferation of “no parking zones”. Although not explicitly referred to, the anti-city/pro-rural message here also contains oblique reference to te Tiriti o Waitangi and the urbanisation of Māori and Pacific Islanders that occurred during the twentieth century.

More song-oriented than the live album, tracks about whānau and love made *Based on a True Story (BOATS)* an independent success with vast cultural significance.

Released in 2005, in the four years between releases Fat Freddy's Drop had become a sought after live act on both the festival and club circuits. Unlike the improvisational focus of *Live at Matterhorn*, *BOATS* (released on the band's label The Drop) is a studio album, and despite it being released without a marketing plan it won four NZ Music Awards in 2005, going on to sell over 100,000 copies, and breaking records for the longest a local release has spent on the sales charts. Faiumu told Bennett that he wasn't expecting such success so quickly: "We definitely thought the album had some legs, but we thought things would transpire over a longer period of time" (E8). As each of the singles was added to play lists across the radio spectrum, Fat Freddy's Drop became popular on a level achieved by few Aotearoa acts, let alone a culturally hybridised group. In "Pacifik/NZ Frontiers" Pearson notes in 2004 that: "Despite its enthusiasm for Pacific symbolism, Pākehā New Zealand has been slow to claim Pacific peoples as 'New Zealanders' in the thirty years since the dawn raids" (referring to Prime Minister Rob Muldoon's policy of arresting illegal Pacific Island immigrants in the 1970's and 80's by raiding houses early in the morning) (58). But if New Zealanders are slow to acknowledge Pacific Islanders as a component of our cultural landscape, there are no such qualms where Fat Freddy's Drop are concerned and two years after its release *BOATS* is still on the charts. In recent years however, dub music has become the new 'easy listening', receiving exposure on radio and television shows and the success of *BOATS* is no doubt due to its being one of the most palatable forms of this music produced in Aotearoa. There is nothing overtly political or 'in your face' about the music or the lyrics, but the group are significant politically because they convey a positive lyrical message that is far removed from the consumer and saccharine romantic obsessions of much of the popular music played on mainstream radio and television.

If *Matterhorn* was testament to the improvisation skills of Fat Freddy's Drop, then *BOATS* is an approximation of the power of their live sets, but the songs emphasise the sort of positive values not often found on commercial radio, framed within music influenced by dance culture. In "Hook, Line & Singer", Karen Neill discusses the criteria for radio programmers in selecting singles and notes the importance of the song hook, which was rated the second most important criterion after gut instinct. She writes that one possible reason why Programme Directors (PDs) consider the song hook as an "integral

part” of the song is because “radio is instantaneous, and the PD [. . .] needs to be assured that the audience will be ‘hooked’ instantly”. Any PD listening to “Ernie” (the first single from *BOATS*) and expecting the hook to appear in the first ten seconds (as Neill notes is common), would have been severely disappointed (64). In keeping with the build-ups common to dance music, the hook does not appear until after the four minute mark, with the first proper lyric being (appropriately), “I’d step out of the rush for you”. As Scott Kara notes of the album opener, the “golden” voice of Tamaira: “takes an age to appear, and even then it’s just a vocal echo. Then, bang, Dukie is brought to life with that classic Freddy’s skank.” He goes on to describe the album as “soothing, pounding, jazzy, phat and funky; sometimes trippy, sometimes gospel, yet always skanking”, and notes the band’s ability to merge a number of genres whilst maintaining cohesion overall (*NZH* n. pag.). And this is the strength of *BOATS*; as an album it is a solid group of tracks with messages that emphasise the bonds of whānau, and compassion for humanity. As singles, the songs are short enough for radio, but long enough to catch on, and their getting played in a large number of homes and businesses in Aotearoa is culturally significant in a society where Māori and Pacific Islanders are marginalised and often denigrated. With long intros and lush backing tracks, songs such as “This Room” (“I want to love, I don’t want to fight”), the 70’s funk influenced “Ray Ray” (“Tell me what’s the world with no soul [. . .] Blood is blood and thicker than water”), and the gentle “Dark Days” (“When will we learn that it’s hate that breeds hate [. . .] If we choose to do nothing then we take all the blame”) have a simple, community message that is an antidote to one of the highest domestic violence rates in the world, where (although committed across Aotearoa society) crimes are often presented in the media as being particular to non-Pākehā ethnic groups.<sup>7</sup>

But if *BOATS* is more oriented towards the domestic, the influence of outdoor dance culture is also evident. Fat Freddy’s Drop were regulars at the Kaikoura Roots Festival and “Cay’s Crays” is a song that celebrates the area. Named by Tamaira (who grew up in Kaikōura) for his auntie’s iconic crayfish caravan north of the township, “Cay’s Crays” celebrates the sense of profound connection felt when standing at the “base of your mountain high”, which in this case is the Kaikōura ranges that line the coastline. For festival regulars, lyrics such as “I see the rain come down while the sun is

shining / I see them dance into the night” are a reminder of what it is like to hear Fat Freddy’s Drop play live in these spaces. This sense of community is also evident on “Roady”, which features P. Digsss and Ladi 6, who often join the band on stage when playing outdoor festivals. Set to an upbeat reggae tune “Roady” celebrates the Aotearoa music scene with the line “We do it for the love of music”, which continues the theme started by Salmonella Dub with “For the Love of It”. The final track is “Hope”, a new version of the single discussed in Chapter Five. Here, the shimmering samples and spacious instrumentation showcase the vocals, an upright bass, rhythmic keyboards, and horns underlining the soulful voices of Tamaira and Hollie Smith crying “You know that I can’t get enough of that hope”. At the end Tamaira reprises the chorus from the original, his gentle “hope for a generation” the final lyric in an album filled with positive messages. Having reached the widest Aotearoa audience for a local act, more than any other band discussed here Fat Freddy’s Drop has instilled a sense of the positivism associated with dance culture into mainstream Aotearoa society.

### **Honouring Aotearoa – Trinity Roots and the Reverence of Home, Land and Sea**

One of the most significant bands to the charting of an Aotearoa sound is Trinity Roots, a (now disbanded) Wellington group that sweeten challenging lyrics with improvised dubscaapes, incorporating roots and blues within a jazz perspective. Trinity Roots came about in 1998 when jazz school graduates Warren Maxwell (guitar, vocals) Rio Hemopo (bass, vocals) and Riki Gooch (drums vocals) formed Trinity, and Sean Chait writes that a week after forming they played in the Victoria University’s *Operation Music Storm* band competition and won, the prize being recording time at the Inca Studios (“True to their Roots” 2).<sup>8</sup> Featuring two versions of the title track, the resulting EP *Little Things* (2000) was a snapshot of the band’s early experiments with breakbeat styles, and in an interview with Chait for *Rip It Up*, Maxwell notes the influence of dance culture: “We are trying to portray an acoustic instrumental version of what big house parties are doing. It’s big sounds but acoustically it’s actually playing guitar, bass and drums” (29). Gaining live experience during a European tour and on the outdoor festival circuit in Aotearoa, in between the EP and the debut album *True* (2002), Trinity Roots’ sound evolved from the

mash of genres on *Little Things* to an improvisational roots style that drew on a number of influences. In “True to Their Roots” Maxwell explains why they prefer to record in non-studio environments:

Jazz made us aware of elements outside the pop genre [. . .]. Music is about sharing and communicating. We found that spirit through roots and dub. [. . .] With the pop genre songs are three and a half minutes. With our stuff, we appeal to the whole spontaneity of music – what happens in the moment. Recording in the studio conflicts with our whole approach [. . .]. (4)

By setting up their own studio in the billiards room of an uninhabited Takapau mansion (Hawke’s Bay) Trinity Roots created the space for spontaneity in the recording of *True*, and members were able to take a whānau oriented approach to recording. Recorded with one-time fourth member Darren Mathiassen, Chait notes that the band immersed themselves into the environment which included “having big cook ups, playing outside, and making music” (3). But what was recorded at Takapau was “ruthlessly” stripped back by Maxwell in post production, leaving an album that was ‘true’ to the Trinity Roots vision.

Trinity Roots’ live performances had a spiritual quality that was embedded in the environment, and the band was able to reproduce some of this effect on the albums. Whereas many groups discussed here have been able to elicit emotions such as ecstasy, despair and hope in their live performances, Trinity Roots sets were often an intensely emotional experience as Maxwell notes in “True to their Roots”: “It’s about creating a wave-length and relating to the music. Many times I’ve been crying [. . .] We form a bubble on stage. I shut my eyes and when I open them to see a wave of people in the same zone, a wave of emotion on a large scale [. . .] I get shivers down my spine. After a gig I feel in an elevated state”. The audience did not need Maxwell to communicate with them as is usual for a band; sitting down, and with eyes closed throughout the set, his connection to the dancers went far beyond words, the music having the ability to engender a group tangi for the state of Aotearoa, and impart hope for how we could change our future. Whilst nothing could compare to the immediacy of such a performance, the two albums nevertheless capture something of the transcendent quality of the music and Chait writes that “the music of Trinity Roots is like the earth beneath us;

lay the seeds, let the roots grow, and nurture it into your dreams” (2). Careful to distinguish that they are spiritual in the way they play their music but “not in a religious sense”, Maxwell describes it as “playing a beautiful groove – it’s a way to get in touch, to cleanse yourself” and notes that the first track on *True* is designed to take “you out of your everyday world to Takapau, to forget your woes” (3). A grounding song that evokes summer memories of guitars on porches, “True” captures the environmental music of Takapau, and sets the scene for the rest of the album. The following “Sense and Cents” is a twelve minute dub workout that shifts through several musical ‘zones’ before returning to the original song, the lyrics all the more potent for the spacious instrumentation before them: “Have you the strength to go the distance? / Have you the strength to speak your mind?”. A similar lyrical theme is present on “Call to You”, which calls for an end to hypocrisy, and includes a background choir singing “Mana maranga”, meaning ‘rise up’, or ‘wake up’. Possessing the personal mana to call on his listeners to “Make a difference in some small way”, Maxwell’s vocals are almost plaintive, his “I’m begging with you” lending urgency to his plea, the final “Water wash over me” lyric sung with a gospel intensity. “Egos” is an attack on “egotistic men with egotistic ways / Think yourself a better man / Not for you to say / Me I am a simplistic / Praise Jah each day”. Spiritually – with its reference to Jah – the song taps into a roots reggae consciousness inherited from Rastafarianism, the lesson sweetened by the gentle blues arrangement.

But if such songs call out for worldwide change, there is also a focus on changing the smaller picture within whānau relationships. In “Music, a Realistic Art”, Michel Butor discusses the relationship between music and art and notes how the word ‘colour’ has been used to describe the effects of various tones within music. Under the subheading “Functional Colors”, Butor discusses the way in which cultural factors affect how people hear colours in the music, and notes that musical instruments generally have a specialised use within various societies:

some are reserved for religious ceremonies, other for war, other for dancing. The timbres are therefore associated with circumstances or areas of life which are not necessarily the same for two different societies.

[. . .] all the elements of musical discourse, are inevitably colored by the use that is made of them; it is only by learning these customary uses that we can

perceive the adaptation of an exotic music to its speech, can understand it as do those for whom it was composed. (289-90)

Whilst Trinity Roots do not write exclusively for Māori, their albums are imbued with a sense of the past sung from a Māori perspective. Thus the ‘colour’ of *True* is reflected in the sepia tones of artwork suggestive of early photographs that are a legacy of colonisation, the Māori subject regarded by Pākehā ethnologists and artists as an exotic and endangered species. Such displays are a common trope amongst white peoples for whom the ways of other cultures are considered as ‘other’, and are “reserved for picturesque display and consumption in the context of leisure activity and tourism only” (Avril Bell 149). Here, Trinity Roots reclaim such imagery, a watery moko projected onto each of their faces, their whakapapa tying them to the whenua and the tīpuna that inspire their music. In keeping with such artwork, the album also calls for change at a domestic level, and on “Beautiful People” the music is reduced to just guitar and bass, showcasing Maxwell’s quiet plea to establish strength within the family: “Mother, call to your children / Bring them inside / Father, teach well your children / Fill them with pride”. A capella vocal track “Just Like You” is similarly themed, calling for tolerance for our neighbours. Maxwell’s decision to strip the album back to its roots is noted by *NZM* reviewer Dominic Blaazer, who writes that the band were “true to themselves”, and that what was left after the process was “a spacious amalgam of waiata, reggae, funk, dub, electronica and soul, creating, in that process, a different picture” (38). In “Passion”, lyrics that include a verse about suicide are paired with sultry vocals by Stephanie Hearfield and Maxwell. A song about finding your passion for life, the chemistry between the vocalists gives the track a domestic feel and reinforces the emphasis on the home as catalyst for change. The final track is another version of “Little Things” and it is integrated into the rest of the album with a simple arrangement that underlines the song’s message that “it’s the little things that really matter”, the addition of a violin and cello towards the end adding tones that are both a lament and a plea, and ending the album on a note of sepia-toned, quiet contemplation.

On *Home, Land and Sea* (2004) the influence of Aotearoa was acknowledged more specifically. Opening with “Aotearoa”, the band build on the sense of place suggested by the album title with a waiata inspired by Nina Simone’s “Baltimore”:



Oh oh oh...Aotearoa  
 Ain't it hard to believe...  
 You're so beautiful...  
 Aotearoa, ain't it hard to leave  
 Hard to leave...

Both a lament and a song of thanksgiving, the lyrics capture something of the sense of connection felt by many dancers to Aotearoa, whilst on “The Dream” the sounds of a domestic scene at the beginning and end orient the song within the whānau sense of home. In “Listening” Roland Barthes writes that for the human being: “the appropriation of space is also a matter of sound: domestic space, that of the house [. . .] is a space of familiar, *recognized* noises whose ensemble forms a kind of household symphony: differentiated slamming of doors, raised voices, kitchen noises, gurgle of pipes, murmurs from outdoors” (246). Whilst Barthes’ door slamming and raised voices suggest a disquietening symphony, on “The Dream” the voices are raised in laughter. In an interview for *RG*, Maxwell notes that *Home, Land and Sea* has two main themes, one of which is political: “this ties back to a love for New Zealand and a real concern of the extremes we feel would happen if things went horribly wrong. These subjects affect us now and they’ll affect our kids and grandkids in the years ahead. I’ve just started becoming aware of what’s going on and the hypocrisy within politics”. Included on the album is another version of “Egos” where a harsher musical arrangement emphasises the critical intent. But Maxwell notes that the other theme is “our love for friends and family, which is a spiritual thing for us” (Reese 24). On “Angelsong” he sings from the perspective of one who’s missed his chance with a soul mate, and in a society where emotional reticence is expected of men, the ‘torch song’ lyrics open up this dimension for both sexes. Orbell notes that songs “mainly concerned with the expression of love and sorrow, and [which] often took the form of a personal communication” were common to Māori, and emotional honesty is also the subject of “Way I Feel”, which features all three band members acknowledging that it is okay to feel intense emotions (1).

But the track that had the greatest spiritual effect on dancers was “Home Land & Sea” which engendered particularly strong emotions during their last Te Wai Pounamu show at Kaikoura Roots. That Trinity Roots produced a sound that is tangibly of

Aotearoa is noted by reviewer Sian Bennett who writes that Trinity Roots “delve deep into the magical soil of this country. [. . .] ‘Home, Land and Sea’ succeeds in capturing an essence of that which is unique to Aotearoa” (46). The political significance of this song has been discussed in the Introduction, but what is of note here is that the song’s gospel arrangement and soaring vocals (featuring Maxwell and Hollie Smith) are instrumental in the conversion of the listener to the ideology of the lyrics. Avril Bell notes that in a situation where New Zealand must be represented through song, costume, or dance, Pākehā turn to Māori culture: “Pākehā culture may be the national culture in terms of providing the pervasive, commonsense underpinnings for the ordering of social life, but Māori culture is the national culture when distinctiveness and ethnic exoticism is called for” (149). Thus there is a risk that Pākehā dancers’ adoption of “Home, Land & Sea” as an anthem that criticises the current ‘buy up’ of Aotearoa land by foreign investors becomes yet another example of this kind of appropriation. But unlike many songs adopted for exotic cultural display, “Home, Land & Sea” also references the Pākehā appropriation of Aotearoa (as represented by “a queen bee with her company of worriers, not warriors”) which complicates such a reading. That the song had an emotional effect on dancers was evidenced by Trinity Roots’ last Te Wai Pounamu performance at the Kaikoura Roots Festival in 2005. The band’s decision to concentrate on raising their young families had been greeted with sorrow by fans, who nevertheless were accepting of their motives.<sup>9</sup> When they played “Home, Land and Sea” a number of dancers were reduced to tears, as Maxwell voiced the concerns of a generation raised on the belief that Aotearoa is precious, but who nevertheless bear witness to the mounting destruction that is the detritus of ongoing exploitation. Although Trinity Roots would only release two albums, politically, culturally, and spiritually, the music remains highly significant to the charting of a distinctive Aotearoa sound.

### **Beautiful Souls – In Respect of Home and Whānau**

After Trinity Roots disbanded Warren Maxwell went on to form the Little Bushman, where he moved away from the dub influences of dance culture into the realm of 1960’s and 70’s progressive rock, creating a sound that has also been embraced by dancers.

Little Bushman are Maxwell (Fender Rhodes, Vocals), Tom Callwood (Double Bass), Joe Callwood (Guitar) and Rick Cranson (Drums), and their difference to Maxwell's former band was evident from the beginning. In contrast to Trinity Roots (who I only ever heard play in Te Wai Pounamu), the three times that I have heard the Little Bushman play was in Te Ika ā Māui, and on the first encounter at Splore '06 I did not immediately identify Maxwell as the singer, but merely thought from my skewed view of the stage that it was someone trying to look and sound like him. When I finally realised my mistake I enjoyed hearing something completely different from both Trinity Roots and Fat Freddy's Drop. Since then I have heard Little Bushman play at Parihaka in 2006 and 2007; at an event with a greater proportion of Māori and a wider range of ages represented, such a music – influenced by artists such as Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, the Cream, the Doors and Led Zeppelin – is warmly received. For all the international influences, however the music is also steeped in their Aotearoa equivalents as Bollinger notes in a review for the *Listener*: “And you may also hear echoes of the expansive, exploratory music that was played [. . .] in the early 70s by Kiwi pioneers like Space Farm, Mammal, Highway and Billy TK's Powerhouse; music made for its own sake that, for the most part, never even made it onto disc. Little Bushman could be their 21st-century cousins” (48). When *RG* editor John Russell took issue with dance magazine *Re:mix* in 2000 for featuring a cover with the slogan “R.I.P. Rock: Danced to Death”, he noted that the ‘rock verses dance’ issue is: “a phoney debate created and maintained by the mainstream music media [. . .]. There's no ‘battle’, there's no ‘competition’, and for music lovers [. . .], nothing has changed; it's all just music, and the only division is whether it's good or whether it's bad” (6). At times brutal, at other times caressing, the music of Little Bushman strikes a chord with Māori and Pākehā, young and old, dancers and rock fans, and demonstrates dance culture's ability to negotiate the space between the (artificial) binaries that help keep humans divided.

Released in 2006, the debut album *The Onus of Sand* blends the influences of progressive rock with distinctive Aotearoa ‘found sounds’ and the traditions of Māori waiata. That the album is far removed from what Trinity Roots fans might expect is acknowledged by Maxwell in an interview with Scott Kara: “the thing I really like about this [album] is that it's not safe. It's not safe at all. It's not really a background record.

You can't put it on in the cafe because you'll scare half your customers away" (n. pag.). Both Trinity Roots and Fat Freddy's Drop remain on high rotate in cafés, but Maxwell is right – the type of dynamics inherent in the music of Little Bushman is not conducive to creating a 'safe' atmosphere. Featuring a recording of footsteps approaching the beach and the sound of breaking waves underscored by the band's instrumentation, the one minute long "Introduction" replicates the build ups of progressive and psychedelic rock. After a moment's silence it segues into "Where We Get Born", which crashes in with Maxwell's vocals and a guitar riff suggestive of "Money" by Pink Floyd. The lyrics combine the dogged belief that Aotearoa *is* the promised land with the intimacy of home in the whānau sense: "Where I got Born / The South Pacific / A Place called Home / The Promised Land / The grass so green / The green of jade / That's where my bed got made". In the second verse Maxwell compares the people of the world who "Care more 'bout money" with the people "down here" who know a "a lot about love / Called Aroha ...yeah" (n. pag.). Whilst such ideology cannot be said of all New Zealanders, Maxwell is referring to his own experiences and is appealing for a universal shift towards such simple pleasures. In a *Listener* review Nick Bollinger notes the sense of Aotearoa that pervades the album and balances the global influences:

With its prog-rock flourishes, the occasional cello and for a few daring moments a classical female soprano, it could almost be out of Europe.

Listen closer, though, and the whole thing, with its sonic peaks and valleys, begins to describe a familiar landscape, dotted with recognisable markers. There is the gorgeous massed vocal humming [. . .] suggesting a Polynesian choir, and the hint of a haka that emerges from and then fades back into the mists of "Jimi", a 12-minute sonic journey that might be Hendrix's "1983" recast on a South Pacific shore. (48)

Featuring the line "What a Beautiful Soul" as a lynch pin, "Jimi" is an epic song that showcases guitarist Joe Callwood's skills and culminates with a chant paying respect to Hendrix that is sung in both te reo Māori and English, the cadence of the words territorialising the song in a way that is recognisable to many New Zealanders. Orbell notes that such a tribute is common in Māori culture: "As well as paying tribute to those who were gone, the singing of laments reinforced the ties that bound the living and

provided a link with the past” (2). In contrast to the intensity of “Jimi”, “Onus” is mostly instrumental, the only lyric being a single line sung by Maxwell, Dee Jamieson and Lisa Preston at the end of the track: “And so we pass this onus on”. In contrast to a song such as “Home, Land and Sea” there is nothing overtly political here, but the album cover suggests that responsibility for te Tiriti o Waitangi is what is being called for. Against the iconic image (that appears on every page) of the faded, rat eaten and water damaged treaty signed by Māori chiefs in 1840, “And so we pass this onus on” is printed in Italics on the back page. It is a phrase that carries the weight of colonisation and challenges the listener to accept the onus for the travesty that te Tiriti o Waitangi has become.

But Little Bushman are also important to the tracing of an Aotearoa sound because they take the aroha of dance culture and contextualise it within the bounds of close whānau relationships, something that is often found lacking in local cultural expression. When artist Colin McCahon named one of his paintings *A Landscape With Too Few Lovers*, he was commenting on the lack of literature and artworks that celebrate and reinforce the importance of intimate relationships in Pākehā culture. A result of the masculinist mythology, in the popular music sphere this reluctance to admit emotional attachment to a woman is exemplified by Chris Knox’s “Not Given Lightly” (1988), a love song that is sung from the context of the lover as mother: “This is a love song for John and Liesha’s mother / It isn’t easy she might not get another / But it’s you that I love...”. The discomfort that Knox feels is expressed; he wants to honour his lover, but does not find it easy. In contrast, Little Bushman’s “Baby” is openly celebratory of love relationships. The song begins quietly, a strummed guitar and Maxwell singing “Baby says she loves me / That’s all I need to know / A greenstone honoured string / Shining in my Sun / I could be a thousand miles away / And still see her reflection”. In this first verse Maxwell expresses how he perceives the home that he will always return to. It is home as land *and* lover, the gifter of greenstone and the woman who in the image of Papatuanuku, is both lover and mother, the goddess to whom Ranginui clung so tightly. But Papa and Rangi were eventually separated and the song also recognises the importance of space within a relationship: “So when I leave she makes it better to come home”. Yet for all the emotional honesty expressed here, reviewers are reluctant to discuss the subject matter, which suggests that admissions of love in such candid

overtones are still uncharted territory for a lot of Aotearoa men. Steven for website Spare Room makes no mention of the lyrics but notes that “‘Baby’ starts out quiet and soulful, before the Rhodes and cymbals crash in and give it a jazzy vibe” (n. pag.). Bollinger admits that Maxwell is “tearing out his heart” on “Baby” but quickly moves on to discuss the lack of the “distinctly New Zealand identity” that Trinity Roots were known for: “Although the songs return to Maxwell’s traditional themes of nature, community and responsibility, there is nothing that speaks as directly as the iconic “Home, Land and Sea” (48). Bollinger makes a salient point. There is nothing as distinctly ‘Aotearoa sounding’ as the songs that Maxwell wrote with Trinity Roots, but there is a sense that Little Bushman are reaching out to a whole new audience with this album. For rock fans *The Onus of Sand* makes Maxwell’s ideology of love and responsibility accessible – and the best way of converting new believers is to start with the familiar, which in this case is home in the sense of family. “Baby” speaks directly of the transforming properties of love.

At the end of *The Onus of Sand* are “Little Bird” and “Little Bird Reprise”, and here this familiar icon of the Aotearoa landscape is used as a metaphor for the ‘broken-ness’ that lies within Aotearoa culture overall. Avril Bell writes that “New Zealand is a creation that arises out of violence, a fact that anyone with even a passing understanding of the history of colonisation could not dispute” (151). The flipside to the utopian mythology, Aotearoa is a culture rife with depression, violence and dependency operating across cultures, generations and class distinctions, and on “Little Bird”, there is an implication that responsibility must be taken for one’s actions, no matter how ‘broken’ the perpetrator. The track begins with a sound similar to Lilburn’s machinic interpretation of bird flight, and is followed by a crescendo of instrumentation that culminates in an uneasy cacophony of sound that is the ‘crashing bird’. From here there is a Doors connection, and a marching bass line builds momentum for Maxwell’s vocals: “Oh Little Bird / Hit your window pane / And you fall to the ground / With your broken wing / And your broken heart / But it’s never you to blame”. At the end of the verse Maxwell’s call for accountability is underscored by Lisa Tomlins theatrical ‘siren’ vocalisations. Over thirteen minutes long, the track fades out to a gentle outro that is relief after the uneasy awakening of the verses. Blending into “Little Bird Reprise”, *The Onus of Sand* ends on a

thoughtful note where the soulful tones of the Fender Rhodes are joined by bluesy guitar, and Maxwell and Tomlin's sad, but accepting vocalisation: "Oh Little Bird got caught / In Life's little web / He thought he'd be fine / And everybody round him / Did it all for him / And now...". The song is a call for listeners to take responsibility for their own lives and to step up to whānau responsibilities. The lyric resonates with wider Aotearoa society, including the microcosm that is Aotearoa dance culture, which has much to learn from an ideology calling for self-responsibility. Until we find practical solutions to reverse the damage that is the outcome of a society based on broken promises, Aotearoa will shift further away from our utopian imaginings.

For Aotearoa dance culture the music discussed in this chapter suggests that there is the potential to challenge the political, social and environmental injustices that are rife in Aotearoa, and accept the weight of the onus that has been passed on. The following chapters will assess the outdoor events at which these bands perform and discuss how such a potential might be fulfilled.

**Chapter Three:**  
**We Want to Get Outside –**  
**Disappearing Spaces and the Politics of Change**

Raves are timeless places, removed social spaces where utopias are both imagined and lived: ‘With its dazzling psychotropic lights, its sonic pulses, rave culture is arguably a form of *collective autism*. The rave is utopia in its original etymological sense: a nowhere/nowhen wonderland’. (Tim Olaveson 94)

I want to get outside of my head  
 Escape from what I cannot leave  
 I want to live from what others give  
 I want to be more than me.  
 (The Upbeats “More than Me”)

Utopianism is a central theme in the ideology of outdoor dance culture, and in Aotearoa, it underlies the notion that dancing outside can engender change within the culture as a whole. Rave culture in the United Kingdom in the late 1980’s was a youth culture in which members seemingly regressed to the level of a pre-verbal toddler. Yet, it was the playground nature of the raves, often combined with the effects of the drug MDMA (ecstasy) that caused the raver to experience an ecstatic state similar to that felt intensely by the pre-verbal child prior to their fall into subjectivity. The state of ecstasy sometimes felt by people gathered together for religious, political, or festive reasons is central to a number of theories on the political effect of a mass gathering. At raves, the feelings of ecstatic unity felt by the mass body have the power to project an alternative lifestyle that could exist outside the locus of capitalist power. Tim Olaveson writes that because dance parties both imagine and live out utopia they are examples of Hakim Bey’s “temporary autonomous zones” (TAZ), spaces that operate as sites of resistance and offer an alternative mode of living (95-6).



With many tracts of uninhabited land, Aotearoa is immensely suited to a culture that does not proclaim its youthful rebellion on the streets but prefers to hide away in locations outside of urban loci. Few of the gatherings discussed here have been visible from main roads; a passing motorist may hear the syncopated thunder of a massive sound system and wonder at the flashes of light colouring the night sky, but the actual spaces where the festivities take place are usually hidden from view. The cities rarely see this culture *en masse* (subdued daytime events are sometimes held in city parks and other public spaces), but a number of provincial towns have been inundated with the exodus after an event when cars, vans, station wagons, and house buses disgorge grimy, often dazed dancers looking for fuel, food and flushing toilets. The locals are usually friendly and remarkably patient, but many must wonder what exactly it is that these people have been doing to end up in such a state; they pass through on their way to the event, disappear for a few days and return, visibly changed. What happens in the time and space between their descending on the area and their departure? What is it that their disappearance hides?

In searching for the meaning behind the intense moments of epiphany associated with *jouissance* and the *ex-static* state, dance culture theorists have borrowed from an established framework of ideology in an attempt to understand the political potential of outdoor dance culture that persists despite legislative opposition in the United Kingdom, and the increased commercialisation of the events. But because outdoor dance parties celebrate pre-industrial modes of culture at the same time that they enjoy and exploit the trappings of technology, they are not easily pinned down, not least because as Olaveson notes, they are an example of a utopian space, which exists, if only for the briefest of periods, in the lives of those who seek them out. Once thought of as a drug-based end of the twentieth century party, global dance culture has danced and laughed its way through the millennium and beyond the post theories, its hydra-headed form revealing itself to be a culture of disappearance that has the potential to be so much more than the sum of its parts. As outdoor dance culture in Aotearoa expands and proliferates, it too displays the various marks and scars that have been associated with its global counterparts; affiliations in which the brightness of the utopian and hedonistic impulses fosters an environmental and political potential that lies nascent in the womb-like spaces of the dance zones. Is this

just drug-fuelled collective disappearance? Or is it the nurturing of an alternative paradigm in which to live?

### **The Politics of (E)motion: Dancing and the Mass Body**

Emerging in the late 1980's, UK rave culture was a youth culture as different from punk, as punk was from the hippies. Whereas punk had at least engendered a certain anarchist politics loudly displayed in urban centres, rave took place, not in pubs and on street corners, but in the marginal spaces of the UK. Many of the parties were held outdoors in remote farmers' fields, whilst other entrepreneurs found new uses for the abandoned warehouses that lined the outskirts of cities. Like hiphop, rave was an example of a postmodern culture. Musically it drew on the influences of Chicago and New York house, Detroit techno, Balearic disco and Jamaican dub. Closer to home, the culture also bore traces of Northern Soul and the underground sound systems that had operated in South London since the mass immigration of Jamaicans in the 1950s and 60's. Culturally, the raves resembled a kind of high tech hippie festival, albeit one where the politics of peace and love for the world, had been internalised as a hedonistic peace and love 'right here, right now.' The music driving the culture was dubbed *acid house*, a misleading label because it was not LSD fuelling the happening this time, but MDMA, which due to its 'loved up' effects, quickly became known as ecstasy or E. Eschewing pubs and discos in favour of dancing all night with thousands of strangers in locations far removed from urban neighbourhoods, for the generation famously labelled 'X' by author Douglas Coupland ('X' is also the street name given ecstasy in the Unites States), illegal raves soon became established as the weekend venue of choice. At the time, the UK press "found it impossible to believe 'that people would want to travel many miles in secret to dance in fields or warehouses,' and suggested that some acts were 'beyond the grasp of reason'" (Gilbert and Pearson 16).

Had the journalists undertaken a little field research they may have understood that being 'beyond the grasp of reason' – a state not governed by the 'seat of reason' or head – was exactly what was desired. If reason dictated that Britain's adolescents follow the expected trajectory of school, job, marriage, and children that had become the 'norm' in

the post-war Western world, then the combination of high unemployment, increased divorce rates and decreasing state services suggested that reason had failed them. Unable to find displayed amongst ravers any of the political signs that punk loudly wore, Angela McRobbie, commenting on her daughter's involvement with the culture, suggests that rave culture is a culture of collective avoidance and abandonment:

Rave contains nothing like the aggressive political culture found in punk music. It is as though young ravers simply cannot bear the burden of the responsibility they are being expected to carry. There are so many dangers [. . .], so many social and political issues which have a direct bearing on their lives and so many demands being made of them (to be fully responsible in their sexual activity, to become good citizens, to find a job and earn a living, and find a partner and have a family in a world where marriage has become a 'temporary contract') that rave turns away from this heavy load headlong into a culture of avoidance and almost pure abandonment. (84)

In addition to the 'heavy load' McRobbie outlines, the rave generation had been heavily exposed to the image-saturated dream factory that is utopia as envisaged by Hollywood. With childhoods fuelled by the imaginary worlds of MTV and videos – as desirable as they were unobtainable – the young adults discovered that reality was far removed, and so they recreated the techno-magic worlds of their childhoods at the raves. Hence, rave culture did represent a collective disappearance: physically in the literal exodus out of town, mentally in the abandonment of developmental expectations that they make the transition from child to adult, and emotionally in the ecstatic state that the combination of repetitive beats, disorienting lights and drug effects produced.

The childlike atmosphere of the raves, combined with the effects of MDMA, produced in the ravers a hedonistic feeling that replicated a pre-subjective 'ignorance is bliss' state. With practical origins in the need to stay warm or strip off as the evening dictated, at the early outdoor and warehouse raves the dancers wore a ubiquitous outfit of baggy trousers, trainers, singlets and hoodies, taking on a toddler-like appearance. In the early 1990's, many ravers also adopted childhood effects and props such as dummies and lollypops which were used to intensify or ease the effects of ecstasy, as Nabeel Zuberi notes:

Rave girls dance in shorts and halter tops with pacifiers in their mouths and whistles around their necks. [. . .] boys as well as girls displaying small robots and dolls on their bodies, particularly during a period of so-called Toytown rave, which featured many tracks that sampled children's television shows. [. . .] They often used products such as Vicks VapoRub [. . .] to intensify the effects of Ecstasy. (113-4)

Ecstasy was also known for its regressive effects. Collin writes that MDMA was synthesised in 1912 in Germany and was “tested by the military for potential use during the Cold War” (25). Prior to rave culture MDMA had most commonly been used by American and European psycho-therapists for the empathetic effects produced in patients (28). In this state, the patient was able to “get into the body and out of the head” and thus become closer to the therapist and other patients in order to access the source of their anxiety (Dr. Bloch, qtd. in Saunders 67). In *Discographies*, Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson link the feeling of ecstasy felt at the raves to *jouissance*, a psychoanalytical term that describes the extraordinary sensations felt by the pre-subjective child. They note that the concept of *jouissance* is central to Lacanian psychoanalysis and the poststructuralist work of Barthes and Kristeva, and that although the term takes on slightly different meanings, “in all cases it designates a type of extraordinary sensation which derives from the moment before the human child leaves its state of comfortable bliss”. At the moment that the child falls from this state they enter “into the symbolic order of social relationships, gendered identity and language. [. . .] Its loss is the price we pay for becoming human. [. . .] *Jouissance* is the name given to this pleasure [. . .] a pleasure which operates particularly at the level of the body's materiality”. Although this state can never be recovered, or even adequately described because it is pre-linguistic, an approximation of it is attainable in “situations in which our normal relation to the symbolic order is disrupted” (64-5).<sup>10</sup> Dressed in baggy, asexual clothing, sucking on dummies, and grouped within the womblike space of a sound system pumping out ceaseless repetitive beats, the ravers were returned to a simulated state of *jouissance* for as long as the rave or the drug effects lasted. Whereas the punks' rebellious, insolent attitude had signified a refusal to move beyond adolescence, rave made the regression to

a childhood state a weekend ritual, which given McRobbie's catalogue of dangers and expectations of what the future held for ravers, could be considered a fair response.

Yet a return to a pre-verbal 'state of bliss' signifies more than just a desire for avoidance and pure abandonment; by entering a child-like state the ravers are open to new bodily experiences, which are effective in changing the way they understand the world. If the childhood aspects of rave are considered not so much as an avoidance of social challenges, but rather as a means of returning to the pre-socialised state in order to be reborn as 'critically aware' toddlers, then the culture has greater political potential than can be attributed to its escapist aspects. Having posited that rave is "a culture of avoidance and almost pure abandonment", McRobbie asks what "is the extent to which a subcultural aesthetic that asks its fans to 'shut up and dance' produces in the haze of pleasure and enjoyment a cultural politics of any sort" (84). Commenting mainly on club culture, McRobbie finds political value in the alternative modes of femininity that it offers young women, but although her essay is called "Shut Up and Dance" she fails to recognise that it is precisely in the *dance* that so much of the culture's political effect takes place. For McRobbie "the tension in rave for girls comes, it seems, from remaining in control, and at the same time losing themselves in dance and music" (81). What she misses (probably because she is commenting as an observer of her daughter's involvement with the culture), is that by abandoning themselves to dance both the girls *and* the boys are undoing four hundred years of rhetoric based on individual subjectivity and identity, and are instead embracing a collective reordering of body, mind and spirit. In her discussion of the regressive nature of house music, Rietveld quotes Herbert Marcuse who argues that regression can be seen as progressive in the context of a repressive society (197). Thus non-dancing theorists miss that rave culture's political significance is located in the freedom of movement associated with rave dancing. Writing as a participant-observer with experience of the production side of dance culture, Rietveld offers a different take on the regressive nature of rave:

the loss of that structured sense of self, however temporary, can shake a static sense of identity and awaken different manners of perceiving the world, as though it were all new, as though one looked upon it again as when one were a toddler and ask that question so many children ask: 'why'? In this sense, by

finding 'lost times', a critical awareness of the surrounding world, as well as a feeling of bewilderment, could, in principle, be triggered. (198)

By abandoning themselves to the music, dancers free themselves of the bodily tenets of Western culture, where discipline is a function of life, from the woman hunched over her machine in a corporate sweatshop to the middle-class ballet dancer who undergoes a daily regime of exercise in order to be seen to dance effortlessly on stage. By freeing their bodies to the ecstatic rhythms of the music the ravers were discovering new ways of seeing and feeling their world.

Sarah Thornton is also unable to grasp the full extent of how dancing disorders individual bodily perceptions. Based on a doctoral thesis, Thornton's informative and influential work *Club Cultures* contributed much to the debate about the authenticity of dance music practices. Her study of night club cultures in the UK also resulted in the development of subcultural capital theory (based on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital). However, as Thornton acknowledges, her status as an outsider looking in is problematic:

One complication in my fieldwork resulted from the fact that the two methods that make up ethnography – participation and observation – are not necessarily complementary. In fact they often conflict. As a participating insider, one adopts the group's views of its social world by privileging what it *says*. As an observing outsider, one gives credence to what one *sees*. (105)

Hence, Thornton – perhaps because she is thinking only in Western terms of *saying* and *seeing* – also misses the significance of dancing, the cog around which the whole culture is organised. Under the sub-heading "A Night of Research", Thornton outlines how she contacts and meets up with an avid clubber who has promised to show her "how to have fun" and then describes a trip to the toilets where they share a tab of ecstasy (89). Her documentation of the night takes the form of a linear narrative of who they met and where they went, all of which befits Thornton's subcultural capital theory, rather than offering any insight into what happens when the combined effects of the music, the dancing and the ecstasy take hold. In the introduction to *Discographies*, Gilbert and Pearson discuss Thornton's observations and note that she is reluctant to comment on the effects of the MDMA and that "there is no mention of her *dancing*". The observations she

makes are mainly about the people that she meets and their varying levels of subcultural capital. They note that: “On those few occasions when Thornton is present within the narrative in the first person, her I/eye is actively observing” (18-9). Thornton does make reference to the effects of the drug later in the chapter when she writes that: “Sometime after 4am – time seems to be standing still [. . .]. Ecstasy turns banal thoughts into epiphanies” (91). Such thoughts remain unrecorded however, and the rest of the chapter is taken up with an academic discourse that focuses on the increasing enculturation of dance music into the mainstream. Elsewhere, Thornton discusses how many clubbers, “feel that they fit in, that they are integral to the group. The experience is not of conformity but of spontaneous affinity. ‘Good’ clubs are full of familiar strangers who complement that ‘well developed leisure activity, the discovery of self’” (111). It is this discovery of the self and its relationship to all the other newly discovered selves dancing around it that makes dancing such a significant experience.

Other UK commentators have been more forthcoming as to the non-visual sensory effects of the culture. Having discussed Thornton’s critical observer role, Gilbert and Pearson are keenly aware of their unstable position as commentators on a subject that seems to resist discourse, and occupies “a critical space beyond the grasp of reason” (6). They write that any attempt to describe “an alogogenic culture such as dance is fraught with difficulty. [. . .] In many ways the academic accounts of social dance practices [. . .] fail to capture the transient and fluid complexities of the dancer, and through abstraction achieve only reduction” (13). Having established the inherent difficulties of applying academic discourse to a dance culture that is far removed from exercises and floor plans, they nevertheless attempt to elucidate the allure of rave. They note that the merging of dance music and drugs produces in the raver a certain kind of ecstasy:

waves of undifferentiated physical and emotional pleasure [. . .] wherein the parameters of one’s individuality are broken down by the shared throbbing of the bass drum; an acute experience of music in all its sensuality [. . .]; the bodily irresistibility of funk; the inspirational smiles of strangers, the awesome familiarity of friends; the child-like feeling of perfect safety at the edge of oblivion; a delicious surrender to cliché. (64)

In their awareness that they have resorted to cliché in order to describe the indescribable sensation of how it feels to lose yourself into the other, Gilbert and Pearson exonerate all the other commentators who have read back their own recollections of that pure moment of ecstasy and cringed at the hyperbole. Collin, in the prologue of *Altered State*, also gushes over his initiation into dance culture, writing of the transformation of a blank warehouse into a “wonderland designed just for us, glistening with a mystic iridescence [. . .] A huge, glowing magical YES” (3). In the time that I worked as a music reviewer, the two most difficult articles to write were those on Takaka dance party the Gathering, and I have vivid recollections of spending hours after the events trying to piece together a review (publishable in the local conservative newspaper) from fragments of notes that in the harsh light of *everyday* made little sense, but which I recognised as hastily scrawled epiphanies from the *other* world of which I was now attempting to comment on as an observer.

One way of relating the political effect of this ecstatic state is to correlate it to Deleuze and Guattari’s *desiring machine*. In “Collective Bodies: Raving and the Politics of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari”, Tim Jordan outlines the French theorists’ notion of desiring production: “the principle of desire is to be productive in the sense that it creates differences or something new. For Deleuze and Guattari desire is neither good or bad, sexual or non-sexual, but creative” (127). The desiring machine is what happens when desiring production is made concrete – when the desire translates into reality – which requires an “assemblage” in order to take place. Jordan writes that: “for there to be assemblages there must be something that connects the product (the assemblage) and production (desiring production), something that is also non-productive because it is the space where production occurs [. . .] the Body without Organs or BwO” (128). In relation to rave the BwO is representative of the dancefloor; the collective body where the organs around which individuality is organised (in particular the brain) are submerged in the sea of limbs as individual bodies are broken down and reorganised as a corporeal mass. In *Generation Ecstasy*, Reynolds gives a candid account of his first experience of the ecstasy/music synergy and identifies how the desiring machine or the BwO occurs:

This time, fully E’d up, I finally grasped viscerally why the music was made the way it was; how certain tingly textures goosepimpled your skin and



particular oscillator riffs triggered the E rush; the way the gaseous diva vocals mirrored your own gushing emotions. [. . .] the agitation of bodies broken down into separate components, then reintegrated at the level of the dance floor as a whole. Each subindividual part [. . .] was a cog in a collective “desiring machine”, interlocking with the sound system’s bass throbs and sequencer riffs. (5)

In the synthesizing of serious comment and the unadulterated excitement that being a part of the ‘desiring machine’ engenders, these recollections are an attempt to document the significance of the disappearance of self into the mass whole that occurs on the dancefloor. But as each of the participant-observers is acutely aware, things felt so intently by all the bodily senses are not easily corralled into structured, written form.

### **Ecstatic Connections – Finding Meaning in the Dance**

Whereas the ingestion of a range of drugs enables the collective abandonment that takes place at raves, the largely indescribable feelings that outdoor dance parties engender are common to most participants, because with or without drugs, the *ecstasy* is produced in the dance itself. Regardless of the wide range of drug effects likely to be found at raves and dance parties (which include those dancers for whom drug taking is not essential), that the dance zone can engender similar overarching feelings of the merging of individual identity demonstrates the communicative effect that dancing produces. In *Generation Ecstasy* Reynolds questions the role of MDMA to rave’s ‘meaning’ and asks whether the meaning of rave can be reduced to drugs: “Does this music make sense only when the listener is under the influence? I don’t believe that for a second, [. . .] by itself, the music *drugs* the listener” (8). That it is possible to be drugged by the music and the overall aura of these events without ingesting chemicals is borne out by Paul Spencer’s comments in the introduction to *Society and the Dance*. Outlining the importance of dance to Victor Turner’s concept of *communitas* (to be discussed in Chapter Five), he writes that the act of dancing can cause dancers to experience a transcendent state: “It contrasts with normal everyday life, taking the dancers out of their structured routine and into a realm of timeless charm. In their *ecstasy* they literally *stand outside*”. He also notes

that dance can frequently engender a “higher association with spiritual beings” and that “such beliefs provide vital clues as metaphorical expressions of the inexpressible” (28). Published in 1985, Spencer is writing several years prior to the emergence of rave culture, and his observation that dance produces in the dancer a feeling of ecstasy is highly relevant to the argument that dancing alone can enable the ecstatic state. But regardless of how such a state is achieved, is the pursuit of ecstasy purely an exercise in group hedonism with no political affect? Reynolds’ analysis demonstrates the two sides to this debate and questions whether rave is “simply about the dissipation of utopian energies into the void” or whether “the idealism it catalyzes spill over into and transform ordinary life?” He asks: “Can the oceanic ‘only connect’ feelings experienced on the dance floor be integrated into everyday struggles to be ‘better at being human’? Learning to ‘lose yourself’ can be an enlightenment, but it can also be quite selfish, involving a sort of greed for intense, ravishing experiences” (10). In a sense Reynolds’ hypothesises as to the effects of such hedonism on the dancer are both correct, but could be better posed from a different perspective. The raver might very well set out selfishly with the objective of having as many ravishing experiences as the time and drug effects will allow, but does this objective change over time? What happens when the dancer realises that even greater experiences are to be had when you share the feelings with your neighbours? This connection is expressed in the song by Wellington band the Upbeats, quoted at the head of this chapter: “I want to live from what others give / I want to be more than me” (“More Than Me”). The singer wants more than just to get outside of her head – a common drug analogy – she wants to connect to others and become more than a single identity. If raving enables you to ‘step outside’ and experience your body as an entity that is connected to every one around you – if only for the time of the rave – then the hedonistic impulses of rave signify a far greater political potential than simply getting out of the individual head.

In *The Time of the Tribes*, Michel Maffesoli posits that the *ex-static* state is highly relevant to the political power of a revolutionary mass. Maffesoli locates the *ex-static* experience in the exteriorization of the self that occurs when people are amassed in common purpose (43). Hence, this state is the underlying emotion that holds together the community’s political efficacy:

every single person is melded into a whole with its own autonomy and specific dynamic. [. . .] all underline the existence, in the narrowest sense of the term, of an ‘ex-static’ experience at the core of this being-together in motion which is a revolutionary or political mass. [. . .] Thus, appearances to the contrary, [. . .] *puissance*, which is both cause and effect of the societal symbolism, can be termed a sort of *underground centrality* which we find constantly in individual histories and communal life. (58)

*Puissance* is used by Maffesoli as an alternative to the term power, which is problematic when applied to marginal groups struggling to claim power outside of centralised structures. For Maffesoli, “*Power can and must deal with the management of life; puissance must assume the mantle of survival*” (63). In the United Kingdom, rave culture was perhaps at its most *puissant* when forced to literally fight for its survival, during the years leading up to the passing of the 1994 Criminal Justice Act. Effectively outlawing raves, this act allowed the British authorities to literally box the renegade culture into urban nightclubs, from which it could be more easily surveyed and controlled, and perhaps more importantly, taxed.

### **Freedom Fighting – the Outlawing of UK Rave**

As a commodity culture, UK rave’s rapid growth was an example of successful entrepreneurship in the 1980’s high-capitalist mould. As more recent UK commentators have noted, the ‘innocent’ tropes of childhood hid a core of organisers who were not so naive. Susan Luckman notes that at the organisational end of rave culture was a growing group of “exemplary entrepreneurs in the classic mould of self-motivated Thatcherite economics”, who were unable to get a foothold in the legal ‘free market’ (“What Are They” 50). The underground status of rave provided the perfect opportunity for any one armed with the 1980’s status symbols of a cellular phone and computer, and the know-how to use them. Flyers, providing only a phone number for details, were circulated in the clubs playing dance music. Using recorded messages and cell phones the organisers gave out enough details to raise interest before releasing the actual location of the rave on the day. The element of mystery and surprise added to the illicit, hedonistic nature of the

events, and before long the number of raves and ravers had escalated to unforeseen heights. Named after hippie culture's peak in 1969, rave's high point was the 'second summer of love' in 1989. Collin recalls the cultural shift that took place at the time, and reveals both the universal and commodified aspects of rave:

Whereas last summer's scene had been about dark clubs and dank warehouses, meeting places for a secret society [. . .] this year, out in the countryside on the communal mystery trip, it seemed more open, freer, less uptight and exclusive. Anyone could join in for the price of a ticket and a pill; £30 would buy you a journey into the unknown and an opening into a phantasmagorical world of sound and light. (93)

By midsummer of 1989 the numbers attending a single rave swelled to up to 11 000 as youth turned their backs on pub culture and opted to partake in the communal 'illegal high' that dance culture offered (Collin 95).

It was not long, however, before rave culture came to the attention of the authorities. Due to its secretive nature, ravers had a head start on Britain's media, but by midsummer the parties were too big to hide, and at the Sunrise Midsummer Night's event a number of tabloid reporters attended as ticket holders. Collin reports that on the Monday morning *The Sun* led the charge against the new youth culture with a "grim story about fucked-up, spaced-out girls, 'some as young as twelve', rubbing shoulders with sinister dealers while drug-crazed youths writhed to alien rhythms, tearing heads off pigeons in their frenzy while six policemen looked on helplessly." Other newspapers avoided the tired drug metaphors of the rock world, but nevertheless called for something to be done about "those responsible for this gigantic exercise in hooking our youth on drugs" (96). What ensued was a battle between organisers and police as rave culture came under attack, with the authorities countering the organisers' technical know-how with a high tech arsenal of their own as they went about putting a stop to the parties on the grounds that they were "environmental offences" (107). Yet the organisers persisted, using legal loopholes to thwart the police, such as selling tickets as membership cards which in effect made the party a private one, and outside the domain of police interference (103). If 1989 marked the high point of rave culture, by 1991 "raves became integrated into the infrastructure of the entertainment establishment; shepherded back into

licensed premises, contained and commodified if not eradicated” (119). Within a few short years, the first wave of rave culture was contained within the existing structures of commodification.

When rave culture met the new age travellers the authorities were even more concerned. Since the 1970's the UK had its own hippie movement, in the form of travelling groups of “disaffected middle-class dropouts choosing to live an itinerant existence in buses and caravans” who identified both with the United States hippies and European gypsy cultures. Originally known as the Peace Convoy, in the 1980's numbers were doubling yearly, and in June 1984 a travellers' festival at Stonehenge was attended by fifty thousand; with numbers augmented by curious visitors from the city (Collin 185). The event was to be the last People's Free Festival held at the monument, because the following year police set up roadblocks to stop it from taking place. By 1986 a Public Order Act prevented convoys from massing, in what was “the first of many attempts by government agencies over the following decade to make an itinerant existence impossible” (186). With the advent of rave culture, the ‘travellers’ recognised an opportunity to swell their numbers and have some fun at the same time. Collin writes that in 1990 an alliance between the two cultures began to take shape: “The travellers had the sites and the know-how to staff and run an event that would last for days rather than hours; the ravers had the electronic sounds and the seductive new synthetic, Ecstasy” (194). What emerged was a number of outdoor ‘free parties’ in which high-tech, commodity-based rave culture met a pagan-influenced movement that was even more of a threat to the establishment than the early raves. Whereas the early entrepreneurs still relied on a capitalist system of ‘user pays’ to finance the raves (and profit from them), with the involvement of the travellers and their free parties, record numbers of dancers were being educated in alternative lifestyles that threatened the status quo.

With the advent of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill both ravers and travellers were motivated to rebellion when their right to party came under attack from authorities. When thirteen members of traveller collective the Spiral Tribe were arrested in 1992 for putting on a free party at Castlemorton, the high profile court case resulted in the proposal of the bill, even though the Spiral Tribe defendants were acquitted of the conspiracy charges in January of the same year (Collin 224). The environmental politics

of the Spiral Tribe and other travellers will be discussed in Chapter Five, but the Bill had the effect of politicising UK rave culture overall. Large scale protests were organised (with some accounts reporting numbers of up to 100,000) but the bill became law on November 3, 1994, effectively giving the police the power to disperse any more than a gathering of ten, if suspected of setting up a rave, or merely waiting for one to begin.<sup>11</sup> Many youth cultures in the UK had been met with hostility by the parent culture, but this was the first time one had actually been legislated against. In the lexicon of rave the act signified the ultimate ‘comedown’, but that the *puissance* of the rave mass proved to be so feared by the established power structures, suggests that a culture of disappearance and avoidance can be a threat to the political establishment.

### **From Class A Highs to Party Pill Comedowns – Aotearoa Dance Culture and Polydrug Use**

Although the focus of this thesis is the landscape, it is necessary to acknowledge the role that drugs play before proceeding to discuss the culture as a whole. Because rave culture grew out of a synergy between electronic music and MDMA, most UK commentators’ work has been informed by the large role that ecstasy played, but ecstasy was generally unavailable at the first outdoor gatherings in Aotearoa in the early 1990’s, and no one drug can be seen to be driving the culture as a whole. Unlike the UK, where dance culture mutated every time a new drug became widely available (Reynolds *Generation Ecstasy*), in Aotearoa it has often been a case of taking whatever is available or affordable. So unless there has been a large influx into the area of any one drug, there is likely to be a range of substances being used from Class A drugs such as ecstasy, speed, and LSD (most of which are imported and are therefore expensive compared to Europe, Australia and the United States), to the more easily procured ‘organic’ drugs such as cannabis (which is in wide use across Aotearoa) and ‘magic mushrooms’ (found in the South Island in winter). In some cases the influence of a particular drug is associated with the music; for example, trance parties are more likely to have a higher use of LSD. More recently, drugs of all varieties have become more widely available and are subsequently consumed in greater amounts at the events, whilst the wider use of methamphetamine

(Pure, or P), along with the consumption of legal party pills, or 'herbal highs' have all had an effect on the 'vibe' of a party. But in general, the overall effect of drugs at any one party is spread across the range of the different substances available.

One 'legal' drug that became so popular over the course of this research that it has since been banned is nitrous oxide, the consumption of which was high at Te Wai Pounamu events. Known as 'laughing gas' or 'nos', the bulbs used as aerators for cream and soda dispensers can be discharged into an empty dispenser so that the gas can be inhaled, inducing a brief, but intense high. Once only available to hospitality staff, during the course of this research, the bulbs became available in specialist 'funk' stores (selling pipes, legal drugs, party toys etc.), and the demand created grew to the point that they became available in dairies and other retail outlets. Specialist 'nos dens' (twenty four hour 'lounges' where people could buy relax on couches, whilst sucking on balloons filled with the gas) also became popular in the cities. At the outdoor events stalls sold balloons filled from a large canister of the gas for \$5 a shot, whilst a number of dancers stocked up on bulbs prior to the event. Nitrous oxide proved to be one of the most popular drugs at Aotearoa events as evidenced by the amount of empty metal canisters and balloons littering the sites. Of all the events researched the one where this disregard proved to be the most problematic was Phat Outdoors (2003), where torrential rain turned the dancefloor to mud so that the bulbs were buried up to several inches below the surface. That the ground was cleared by some dancers the next morning – who incorporated a co-operative effort of digging out the bulbs and transferring them to rubbish bins into their dance movements – proved that dance culture can have a positive effect on some, if not all dancers. Although a recycling scheme has been implemented by original 'funk' store Cosmic Corner, the problems with rubbish associated with the bulbs have mainly been alleviated by the intervention of the government, when in the face of growing fears over possible long term effects, and the logistical problem of what to do with the hundreds of metal cylinders piling up in the city centres, sales of nitrous oxide were restricted in 2005, making it illegal to sell unless for legitimate purposes.<sup>12</sup> Nitrous oxide has since dropped in consumption at the events and the problems with rubbish associated with the bulbs have virtually disappeared.

Party pills or ‘herbal highs’ are other legal substances that are popular at outdoor events, but which have recently been legislated against. Like nitrous oxide the increased use of the benzylpiperazine (BZP) based ‘party pills’ or ‘herbal highs’ was notable at outdoor events by the increase of stalls selling the various branded products and the resulting rubbish – in this case plastic containers and clear plastic bags with stickered branding. Marketed under various guises, the pills are one of the main lines sold by Cosmic Corner, a store that originally opened in Christchurch as a small corner pipe and accessories store, but has since grown into a national chain. Although a plethora of similar shops was to open in Christchurch, Cosmic Corner in High Street was the first to develop a twenty-four hour operation where customers could buy party pills and nitrous oxide bulbs through a ‘hole in the wall’ service operating in the weekends. Once again the demand for such substances has resulted in them currently being available in local dairies and suburban specialist stores, whilst Cosmic Corner has gone on to develop their own brand which is marketed in their on-line newsletter as being “Proudly New Zealand Made” (3). Unlike nitrous oxide, the herbal highs produce a longer ‘buzz’, and the BZP and caffeine-based products are designed to replicate the effects of speed or ecstasy. Lacking a ‘mind-expanding’ psychedelic element, the pills produce an effect that shares some of the characteristics of those produced by the illegal drugs they supposedly replicate, but the capsules also come with side effects, including heart palpitations and seizures.<sup>13</sup> Warnings about not exceeding the stated dosage, and not using them with alcohol, or other medicine and drugs are printed on the containers, and Cosmic Corner publishes marketing leaflets that include advice about possible side effects which may include an “elevated heart rate and short term insomnia”. If adhering to the recommended dosage of one “social tonic” per week, and not mixing with other substances the products may have a relatively benign affect, but that they also produce a notable comedown period is acknowledged by Cosmic Corner in the “Product Info” pamphlet: “What comes up must come down”. To combat this side effect, the store promotes Reload, for “smooth comedowns”, a product that is ranked as the number one seller (n. pag.). The effect of these products in the dance zones is noted by Kong in an online posting to the Dancecult discussion list, where he notes his own adverse reaction to the substances, before writing: “as a result the dance floor is full of teeth grinding zombies, where the process of beat



beat music and drugs has been reduced to the simplest of conditions. [ . . . ] This is the complete and successful commercialization of dance culture to its most basic form” (“Social Tonics Association of New Zealand”). However, in the wake of a number of hospital admissions associated with the party pills the government has decided to ban the substances, and BZP and trifluoromethylphenylpiperazine (TFMPP) based products are to be classified as a Class C1 drug (the same as cannabis). Tara Ross for *The Press* writes that: “Rules are also being drawn up to make party-pill manufacturers prove their products are safe to stop the rolling out of new psychoactive substances to replace BZP. Most manufacturers have already developed second-generation, non-BZP pills, but are not releasing them until the new rules are decided”. In the article, Ross quotes party pill vendors from the Hempstore, the Lab, and Herbal Heaven who all suggest that the ban will induce their customers to seek out illicit drugs to replace the pills. Chris Fowlie, manager of the Hempstore says: “Nine in 10 of his customers had said they would resort to illegal drugs, 10 per cent would drink more alcohol” (A3). Given the vested interest of the vendors, such predictions must be treated with caution, and the outcome of the banning of the pills will only be known once the legislation comes into effect.

Despite the popularity of party pills however, illegal drugs are still the substances of choice for many at these events. During the course of this research there has been a noted increase in the availability and use of Class A drugs, and if ten years ago there was a sense of occasion attached to drug taking at events such as the Gathering, for many it is now commonplace, with such substances being used on a weekly basis.<sup>14</sup> Thus drug use is common in Aotearoa dance culture, both in urban clubs and at outdoor events, and would seem to be increasing, but one recent drug trend may yet prove to unbalance the mix of substances being taken. Methamphetamine is produced from a number of ingredients in specially designed laboratories (‘labs’) and is known to be highly addictive and to produce violent behaviour. A “Methamphetamine Action Plan” written by the Ministerial Action Group on Drugs in 2003 notes that two of the precursor chemicals for the manufacturing of methamphetamine are ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, the latter of which is “contained in common cold/cough medicines” (10). Under the health effects section they note that in extreme cases of methamphetamine use: “overt psychosis may be discernible for several days and cause symptoms lasting several weeks. Erratic and

violent behaviour, delusions and paranoia are characteristic of this condition [. . .]. Symptomatically this can be indistinguishable from schizophrenia” (11). Whilst the plan is comprehensive and makes various suggestions (including education, better health services, greater police resources, and restriction of sales of the pseudoephedrine products) in 2007 methamphetamine is in wide use across Aotearoa. But although it is one of the drugs in use at Te Wai Pounamu outdoor dance parties, so far any negative effects associated with it have yet to overshadow the combined effects of all the different ‘highs’ being experienced at any given time.

### **An (Unknown) Precedent – Aotearoa Rock Festivals and a Return to Nature**

Although Aotearoa outdoor dance culture has mainly been influenced by global rave culture, there has also been a precedent set by local hippie culture. During the 1970’s and 80’s large outdoor rock festivals such as Nambassa (1978-1981), Sweetwaters (1980-84), and in Te Wai Pounamu, the Whitecliffs Folk Festival were noted for their freedom of expression and ‘return to nature’ values. Run by a trust, the Nambassa festival is particularly relevant to the themes discussed in this thesis. Fifteen thousand people attended the first Nambassa in 1978, and after the 1979 three-day festival, where an estimated 65 000 attended (far greater than the expected 20 000) organisers published a book about the experience (Dix 253). *Nambassa: A New Direction* covers a range of subjects including musicians, theatre groups, the festival history, healing arts and the group’s objectives in setting up a sustainable community with profits from the festival. In “Beginnings” it is noted that the festival attracted people of all ages and cultures, and one of the attendees is quoted: “Then there were the people who didn’t think that wearing clothes was necessary, and the spiritual people, the earthy types, [. . .] the ‘head buzz’ freaks, the ponderous types, the bikie boys [. . .] it was a visual circus enriched with a multitude of expressions, voices and laughter” (24). Although the name Nambassa was unknown to me prior to this research, the descriptions of the festival and the accompanying photographs resonate with all of the events discussed here. That such a precedent for Aotearoa dance culture remains largely unknown to dancers is confirmed by Kong in “Generation Dance”. Discussing hippie culture as described in Tom Wolfe’s

*The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test*, Kong writes that when he first read the book he was “heavily” into raving and was surprised to discover that the hippie generation had travelled the same path: “Part of me is upset that WE did not discover raving and all those freaky little things that happen when you dance all night to a pulsating beat. A bigger part of me is actually relived that rave, dance, trance and all the processes of social reality that surrounds dance culture is not something new at all” (sic. n. pag.). Reading *Nambassa* has the same effect, but what is disturbing is that the universal dreams of the writers are even further away from materialising than they were in 1979. In “Conception”, the writers outline what the Nambassa community is trying to achieve. Disillusioned with living in cities, the group advocate a return to nature and sustainable living and note the reason this is necessary is because our natural resources are not going to last forever: “we are abusing the planet woefully; Mother Earth will not tolerate this continued rape. [. . .] The existing resources of oil may last only another five to ten years [. . .]. There is also a great waste of our dwindling resources – do we really need plastic ducks to float in our baths?” (6). If the writers were concerned about plastic ducks, it is difficult to imagine their horror at modern consumerism, where whole malls are filled with useless, energy-consuming objects. Almost thirty years later, we still await the ‘immanent’ end of oil, whilst the added concerns of climate change and greater pollution make reversal of the threat to Mother Earth a dream that seems impossible to achieve.

One area in which Aotearoa dance culture is similar to Nambassa is in the tension between dreaming the dream and achieving the reality. In “Exodus Impact” the writers give a balanced view of the impact of the festival which outlines the difficulty of maintaining their utopian vision whilst weighed down by the sense of responsibility felt when dealing with the problems associated in hosting such an event. A range of opinions about the festival are quoted, and one in particular encapsulates the tension of such spaces, where the sensory overload can have an unbalancing effect: “These three days have been like a life-time condensed. It is too much – far too strong an influence for those susceptible to change. They lose their sense of balance” (126). One could argue that this is not necessarily a bad thing, but the festival-goer must return to the everyday world, and this is where such life changing experiences can be problematic. A quote from a Māori woman also suggests that one area where the festival was unbalanced was biculturally:

“Nambassa has been so white, so American . . . it could have been the great marae for the young in heart and free in spirit, for all New Zealanders, Polynesian or Pākehā, with aroha” (126). If outdoor dance culture in Aotearoa was also racially imbalanced to begin with, this has been addressed with the involvement of roots reggae groups attracting a larger proportion of Māori and Polynesian dancers, and in Te Ika ā Māui (where there is a greater population of Māori and Polynesian), the mix of brown to white faces at events such as Raglan Soundsplash, Splore and the Parihaka festival is far more balanced. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are signs of a politics forming in Aotearoa dance culture that is environmental, with musicians and organisers openly voicing their concerns for the land, but that the message has yet to get through to all dancers is one of the tensions that emerges in this research. That Nambassa also experienced similar problems is noted. The authors note that although there was a distinct lack of violence, “there were stories of people cutting polythene water pipes to save walking to the taps, of raiding farmers’ orchards, of smashing wire fences with tow bars to gain an exit, of disregarding signs, of cars siphoned of petrol and stripped of accessories, of careless driving and generally thoughtless behaviour”. Most dance party organisers and crew would have similar stories of stupidity and disregard for property, and whilst there is not generally a sinister motive, disregarding of signs and careless driving are common. There have also been a number of less innocent incidents that I can recall such as the lighting of fires in areas prone to bush-fire, the throwing of a full nitrous bulb onto a fire so that it exploded (fortunately no one was hurt), and the theft of speakers from an installation at an event. Yet as Nambassa note, for every such act, are others of consideration: “One bunch of campers, finding themselves last to leave from their particular paddock, cleaned the whole area before departing” (127). It is not uncommon to see such acts also undertaken by dancers but as will be discussed throughout the next chapters, there is greater imbalance occurring as outdoor dance culture becomes more commercialised and drug-oriented. Kong notes that Wolfe’s book reminded him that dancing is old: “As old as time itself. And it is a relief to know this because it means that no matter what people do to the dance, like: sponsor it with multi national corporations [ . . . ] you just can't change the fundamentals” (n. pag.). So long as dancing has the ability to adjust one’s perception of the world it carries the potential to effect change on an environmental, and even a political level. As the

Nambassa writers note: “how can one estimate where seeds may have been sown at a sub-conscious level which will sprout and grow and flower at some much later date (127).<sup>15</sup>

### **From OE to Gathering – Aotearoa Dance Culture as Community Playground**

As a technology-based culture, UK rave was exported swiftly and effectively around the Western world, and the first raves took place in Aotearoa in the late 1980's. Although the numbers attending the early outdoor or warehouse events were relatively small, and the amount of Class A drugs imbibed far fewer than in the UK, the sense of freedom experienced by the early ravers was enough to galvanise a community eager to insert a local flavour into the culture. In the 1980's and 1990's cheap international travel saw an increasing number of New Zealanders living in the UK on their ‘Big OE’, a colloquial term for overseas experience, an Australasian rite of passage based on the colonial notion that young people should ‘return’ to the UK to gain first-hand experience of the ‘mother culture’. In the 1990's rave fans returned with the music, fashion, drugs and *experience* of raves and before long there was a clutch of DJ's, promoters, visual experts, producers, performers and drug dealers keen to establish a dance scene in Aotearoa. Boosted by air freighted records, the community grew and events began to get larger, as a steady influx of returning OEers, eager to attend events similar to those experienced in the UK, sought out a local counterpart.

If any one place stands out for its legendary status in Aotearoa dance culture, it is Canaan Downs, home of the first Entrain parties, and later the Gathering, a New Year's event that attracted dancers from all over Aotearoa. Canaan Downs is a farm set within the Abel Tasman National Park on Takaka Hill (Te Wai Pounamu), an area popular for the network of caves, tunnels and sinkholes that give the hill an underground ‘honeycomb’ effect, and close by is the spectacular Harwood's Hole, a deep opening in the rocks that is popular with abseilers and cavers. The first New Year's Eve event to take place on the native beech lined paddocks was in 1993. Run by a Nelson-based collective, the Entrain parties drew on the influences of both rave and the established hippie culture long active in the Nelson, Motueka and Golden Bay areas. In “The Heart

of Discovery”, Kong notes that “Entrain was a spiritual fizz bomb, a cultural kick-start for a burgeoning scene. [. . .] The Entrain parties launched us on a spiral course, where we swam like cosmic babes towards a burning flame of consciousness. In this social soup we arrived together to dance in the centre of our very own universe” (n. pag.). In an article that documents the Gathering from its inception as the Entrain parties until its demise in 2002, Perry Williams writes that after two small, but successful events, the 1995/6 Entrain event “attracted 3000 people and highlighted the huge interest developing in dance music” (2). A year later the party was taken over by a Nelson collective (Murray Kingi, Mel Rutherford-Dower, Tim Owens, Grant Smithies and Jose Cachemaille) and was renamed the Gathering, an event which featured dance music from across the global spectrum along with the sounds beginning to emerge from Aotearoa. For many dancers the Gathering would be their first introduction to a large-scale party and perhaps more than any other event it can be credited with having changed the way in which Aotearoa dancers perceive their world.

The Gathering was an example of a return to the types of unmediated childhood experiences attributed to UK rave culture. My first encounter of the Gathering was at the 1998/99 event when I attended as a journalist for *The Press* and the experience set the course for my conversion to dance music and culture. One of my first impressions was of being a child let loose in a fun, but safe environment. The Gathering, I wrote, was: “a huge adventure playground for big kids. All necessities and safety arrangements are taken care of by the wonderful Gathering crew and their security team (who take an older-sibling role, rather than a heavy parental one) so that all Gatherers need to do is kick back and enjoy” (2). That my ‘return to childhood’ experiences were one of the objectives that the Gathering hoped to achieve is backed by a Gathering manifesto, “From our mind to yours...”, written by Tim Owen and published on the event’s website:

We’re doing this for the dance, not politics, religion, drugs, or any other agenda. This is pleasure, not business. [. . .] If there is any single answer to the question “why?” we do this, it is that we must, to provide an alternative to the same old same old. Holding faith in our future we deny despair. We look at the world perpetually through the unjaded eyes of the child. Aspiring to the

infinite playtime; in the dance we embody the ecstasy of unfiltered communion.

Whilst avoiding an overtly political stance, that the Gathering nevertheless sought to insert a more 'grown-up' agenda within the principles of childhood pleasure is suggested by Owen: "We believe that while doing this, we are teaching ourselves to make a society of and for the future, a non 'school' school where we can evolve our potential as a community, and as unashamed individuals" (n. pag.). Although not threatened politically in the manner of legislative acts, underneath the innocent childlike tropes the Gathering yet harboured political aspirations in its envisaging of a utopian future.

Aotearoa dance culture experienced neither the extremes of ecstasy use nor political repression that its UK counterpart had faced, but the Gathering was political in its own way. Unlike the free parties held in the UK, the Gathering was held legally and charged an entrance fee. Perhaps recognising the mistakes made by UK rave culture, the organisers used privately owned land, gained permission from authorities, and made the event alcohol-free so that the festivals remained free from harassment from police, authorities, and the violence which often accompanies drunken revelry. Yet, although the Gathering (like all Aotearoa events) was first and foremost a giant playground, that its organisers believed it could achieve political effect is suggested by Owen in the hope that it will educate dancers, which as early-childhood experts acknowledge is best done through play. At the level of the event at least, in many ways the Gathering achieved its objectives. In "The Unravelling" Williams acknowledges the sense of community maintained: "There was an incredible sense of calm and peace over the entire tent site. No arrests were made, a feat organisers put down to the alcohol ban. Joints were passed around like cigarettes and it became obvious the freedom to experiment with drugs far away from the city was a massive lure" (3). Free from outside social pressures, and basking in the atmosphere of community and play, the Gatherers had a unique opportunity to learn the rudiments of a culture where the needs and potential of the community are as valued as those of the individual. Thus the latent political significance of the 're-birthing' of dancers is in line with global dance culture.

But what is there to rail against in Aotearoa – the 'same old same old' that the Gathering hopes to provide an alternative to? At the most basic level the Gathering

furnished an alternative to the traditional New Year's Eve celebrations (see Chapter Four), yet the aspirations of the manifesto suggest that what was learned could have an effect on the ideology of the participants overall. Olaveson, in his study of Canadian raves found "that the urge for sociopolitical change and the drive toward utopian social models [ . . . ] is closely linked with personal transformation at rave events. For example, several informants made a causal connection between epiphanic experiences at rave events and new perspectives on wider social issues and their own culture" (96). For dancers, these epiphanic experiences are part of the return to the *unfiltered communion* of childhood, from which they are often inspired to begin resisting the 'same old' ideologies of individualism and consumerism that had come to symbolise Western life in the second half of the twentieth century. Whether the Gathering was successful in achieving its objectives is difficult to assess, but after my first experience on Takaka Hill I felt as if my head had undergone a paradigm shift, and informal discussions with others suggests that after attending such an event, aspects of the utopian lifestyle begin to creep into everyday lives, until over the course of several years of dancing, some of the manifesto's aspirations are realised. That some Gatherers really did evolve is shown by the nucleus of Aotearoa dance culture where a small, but significant community has stopped railing 'Why? Why? Why?' at the parental culture and have begun trying to find their own solutions.

### **Can't See the Sunrise For the Rain – The Gathering and Millennium Fever**

If UK rave culture had draconian laws to test its *puissance* then Aotearoa dance culture had the millennium Gathering, often referred to as 'the rainy Gathering'. In the hysteria that took hold in the latter part of 1999 – compounded by the supposed Y2K virus and Aotearoa's status as the first country to see the dawn – the Gathering became subject to media exposure and speculative rumours. In the midst of the build-up, reports began to circulate that a large group of skinheads had buried weapons above Canaan Downs and were planning 'to take the hippies out' when the new year turned over.<sup>16</sup> Yet, would-be Gatherers were not put off and after 8500 genuine tickets sold out quickly an estimated 4000 people obtained forged tickets. Organisers warned that the fake tickets would be



seized at the gate and their holders turned away, but due to unexpected circumstances security teams had no choice but to admit them. Williams recounts that adding to the confusion at the gate was a directive from local police that every car in the eight-hour traffic jam winding up the narrow Takaka hill must be allowed in regardless of whether they had tickets: “The Gathering was now hosting a party with no idea of how many people to expect. The number of attendees, many first-time ‘Gatherers’, had dramatically swelled at the last possible moment. Then the rain set in” (7). Final numbers were estimated at 15 000, and within twenty-four hours the site was swamped – by people and water. Some, coming in later, had little alternative but to camp on the nearest available site, and there were tents pitched in hollows that quickly became flooded as the three days of steady, and at times, torrential rain set in. Many first time Gatherers had come with only a bank card and summer clothing, and the queues for money, food, clothing and every other available commodity were long. The irony of having celebrated the much-hyped date in such extreme conditions informed the article that I wrote for *The Press* that year, but that the event had also reinforced a sense of environment and spirituality is also in evidence:

When the music stopped shortly after midnight [. . .] I initially wondered, if in a truly perverse fashion, the Gathering people had decided to celebrate the moment with a minute’s silence, but the real reason soon became clear. [. . .] The promised midnight surprise was a beautifully performed karakia and waiata broadcast through all the speakers.

The poignancy was tangible – here in the midst of one of the most beautiful areas in the country at the most talked-about moment of time for decades (past and future) was a reminder of the importance of the land. (6)

Had I stayed until the final morning however, I may have experienced something of the euphoria expressed in having survived the weekend, as the dancers celebrated Papatuanuku in all her muddy glory. And the group that suffered least (on a physical level, at least) were the ones that would look most out of place in urban night clubs. The travellers and alternative lifestylers, with their house buses, caravans and vans were well stocked with survivalist gear. For them it was a way of life.

The 2000 Gathering was the last of the events to be held at Canaan Downs, and in many ways it symbolised a watershed for the culture. For many the ‘rainy Gathering’ experience had provided the *puissance* that strengthened the culture as a whole. Maffesoli writes that: “It is in rediscovering the virtues of Mother Nature that a feeling of wholeness is restored. There is a reversibility at play [. . .] which allows us to claim that all those groups for whom nature is seen as a partner are alternative forces. These groups signal at once a decline in a certain type of society as well as an irresistible renaissance” (35). The culture’s growth around this time was apparent. A number of smaller localised events, such as those celebrated on the solstices and equinoxes had begun to take place regularly around the South Island, and by the time the Gathering was last held at Cobb Valley in 2002, Visionz and Alpine Unity were competing for the New Year’s market. Maffesoli believes that the *puissance* of the tribal experience can effect social evolution, especially in cultures that are located outside of mainstream society. That the political significance of these cultures has largely gone unnoticed by ‘experts’ is due to their being marginal or underground movements, the whereabouts and marks of which are not easily detected by the radar of outside commentators:

there is a specific order to the underground sociality, an internal order that occasionally blossoms at times of fracturing, disturbance or effervescence [. . .]. Thus, there are times during which the supposedly unimportant, the unobserved, considered marginal, is both a place of real investment for the protagonists, as well as being consequential for social evolution. (159)

Like our UK counterparts, initially outdoor dancing in Aotearoa may well have been about disappearance and avoidance of everyday life, but with familiarity and repetition, the culture is using the spaces of the dance zones to learn a new way of living – one that is more fully integrating the binaries of nature and technology that have come to define it.

### **Reclaimed by ‘Reality’ – The Gathering Incorporated**

That Aotearoa outdoor dance culture is still at risk of incorporation by mainstream culture is shown by the rise and fall of the Gathering itself. At its height the Gathering inspired a vision of an alternative to the same old way of living; but it had evolved from

the community-based Entrain events into a large commercial operation, and eventually it declined into bankruptcy. The Gathering had grown quickly, with numbers doubling from the 4000 who attended the inaugural event in 1996/97 to 8000 in its second year. Although it was originally organised as a trust, Williams writes that “after the first event Kingi, Smithies, Cachemaille and Owens decided the event could not abide by the constitution of the trust. [. . .] The four formed a company but left the younger Rutherford-Dower out on a group decision” (4). The following year’s event made a small profit, but in 1998 there was another change in personnel with Smithies and Cachemaille leaving “because they could see the potential consequences of working with friends”, and being replaced by Greg Shaw, who became the third co-organiser, along with promoter Alison Green who became a minor shareholder (5). For the 1998/9 event the budget had increased tenfold from \$90 000 to \$900 000 in two years, but numbers remained static at 8000, and the event incurred a \$60 000 loss (4). Relying heavily on volunteer crew, the continuation of the Gathering was due to the sense of community that the event inspired, as Williams notes: “a big difference between dance culture and guitar culture was participation. Hundreds of people realized The Gathering was the sum of its parts. Hence the volunteer ethic where hundreds of people worked to earn the price of a coveted ticket. More often than not the joy these people got from this behind the scenes work was well worth it” (6). But if the 1999/2000 Gathering was a learning curve for crew and dancers, financially the event was a disaster. What was to have been a landmark final event that would clear the debts incurred from previous losses, failed due to a number of factors. Because of the number of events celebrating the millennium, demand on equipment meant that hiring costs rose up to 250 per cent, with the result that ticket prices were increased from \$65 to \$105. This time the event failed to break even by \$7500 and Williams writes that: “it came as no surprise when organisers announced in August 2000 that the Gathering would move to a new site at Cobb Valley, Golden Bay citing environmental and safety reasons” (8).

The Gathering continued at the new site for two more years but the event had lost much of what attracted the first wave of Gatherers. Williams writes that the sense of community was weakened when the failure of the millennium event to make a profit alienated many of the original crew. In addition, for the 2000/1 event, the Gathering had

competition from the nearby Visionz Festival, a psy-trance event that began in 1998/99, but which attracted a number of Gatherers who opted out of the new site. More financial pressures were incurred when Kingi, under the impression that 12 000 tickets had been sold, spent the 'extra money' hiring more equipment, only to discover after the event that the number was only 9000 (8-9). Having resigned as promoter in September 2000, Alison Green attended as a ticket holder, but found that the atmosphere at the event had changed: "you can't create magic forever and in my view the event lost its magic" (qtd. in Williams 8). Although Kingi was now \$300 000 in debt creditors resolved to let the company attempt to recoup losses with another New Year's Eve event (10). For the 2001/2 event, Kingi secured the services of 'superstar DJ' John Digweed, but this time, the Gathering had further competition in the form of Alpine Unity, which was only an hour's drive from Christchurch. Despite Digweed attracting a large number of 'clubbers' to the event, the effects of Visionz attracting 2000 dancers and Alpine Unity, 3000 resulted in the Gathering attracting only half of the desired 12 000. Williams describes the atmosphere amongst the crew after the event and notes that although many had remained loyal to the Gathering this time "the magic faded as quickly as the party was dismantled. No-one would be paid". Many crew were outraged at the \$75 000 fee paid to Digweed for a four hour set and "saw it as the ultimate betrayal of the party's commitment to New Zealand DJs and producers" (10). The sense of community engendered evaporated after the event and Williams writes that many of the Gathering's remaining possessions were picked over and stolen by crew, leaving the event with an estimated \$684,513 of liabilities when it was placed into liquidation in July 2002 (11). Yet, as tragic as the financial demise of the Gathering is, it should not be judged on economic standards of failure. The Gathering was a technological space in which the leisure activities on offer were so far removed from those usually associated with Aotearoa drinking culture, that many dancers experienced the event as 'magic'. It started an evolution that has seen the growth of dance culture expand to its current state, and its height was the peak of the first wave of Aotearoa dance culture. As Kong notes: "For many of us the spiral spun out [ . . . ] as the Gathering burned into financial ashes and ruin. In comedic hindsight, it was like the rise and fall of empires mapped into the glorious real-time theatre of raving? It was one great ride!" ("The Heart of Discovery" n. pag.).

Yet, given the expense of hosting a party in a country where the population of four million people is scattered across a land mass similar in size to Great Britain, a certain amount of commodification is necessary for the event to survive and for musicians, organisers and crew to be paid. The hire and transport of Portaloos, generators, PA's and marquees can be expensive and organisers must find a way for costs to be covered without pricing tickets so high that they further reduce their market. For the larger events, one method of minimising the risk of fiscal failure is through the use of a graded ticketing system, where a certain amount of tickets are released at a discounted price, with prices increasing closer to the date. Any tickets still available on the gate are usually increased again; in this way, organisers not only have some idea of numbers before the event, they also have the equity to fund it. This system also acts as an incentive for dancers to take advantage of the cheaper option and plan to attend regardless of weather conditions. Increasingly, events are also finding other ways to supplement their incomes, including grant applications, sponsorship deals, CD and record releases, and a greater degree of commercialism at the sites (including the sale of alcohol). But much of the difficulty associated with remaining fiscally viable is in keeping the balance between commercialism and maintaining an alternative to the status quo. The core market of Aotearoa dance culture is the growing group of people who can be relied upon to turn up whatever the conditions or line-up. Yet these are the people for whom the commercialism of dance culture is the least attractive aspect; and if given the option of events to choose from, will gladly switch allegiances if they feel that tickets are too expensive, or that the party has 'lost its magic', as was shown in the final years of both the Gathering and Alpine Unity.

### **Dancing in the Mountains – the Rise and Fall of Alpine Unity**

Alpine Unity – which began as a New Year's event in 2001/2 – grew out of the popular Unity Easter club nights in Christchurch. One of the biggest club nights of the year, at Unity dancers bought one ticket that gained them entrance to themed dance clubs on a night when most venues were required by law to close by midnight. For Alpine Unity however, the venue shifted to a beautiful alpine location, complete with a lake and

mountain backdrop, and six music zones. The magnificence of the setting is described by the Illuminati-Nz lighting team on the production pages of [www.lighting-association.com](http://www.lighting-association.com): “After the first site survey, Illuminati-Nz realized they were facing quite a production challenge. With the sheer size of the valley and surrounding slopes, over two thousand feet of rock fall, and the brightness from a full moon shining clear as day, they knew that club lighting was not going to cut it”. The lighting was effective in highlighting the site’s natural wonder, yet the club influence and tourist lodge setting meant that from the outset Alpine Unity was held along commercial lines, as is confirmed by Illuminati-Nz when they describe the output of equipment that enabled them to project advertising onto mountains: “We had logos up to four kilometers away and over a hundred meters high on surrounding slopes” (n. pag.). In its first year Alpine Unity competed for the New Year’s market with the Gathering, Visionz, and smaller Nelson-based party Stardust (all held in the Takaka/Golden Bay region). Setting their event in a different time frame (December 30 to January 1), Alpine Unity booked musicians eager to play at more than one event, and attracted 3000 dancers.

For the 2002/3 event, Alpine Unity shifted its timeslot to the Gathering’s usual dates of December 31 to January 2. That year the event also had a monopoly on the best Aotearoa electronica acts including Pitch Black, epsilon-blue, the Nomad, Shapeshifter, Trinity Roots and Fat Freddie’s Drop. In addition to tourist cabin accommodation, the musicians, DJ’s, and VJ’s also benefited from a well-organised tech team. For the ticket-holders, luxuries included a bar and restaurant (with flushing toilets), along with a range of stalls. And when the use of toilets and showers in the cabins drained the reservoir of water during the hot afternoon, the security guards handed out bottled water. For this event the outdoor zone had been shifted from the top of a hill to a large, easily accessible, tree-lined paddock, and the daytime slots were well attended, with most choosing to lounge in the shade. A particular highlight was Pitch Black’s dawn set (accompanied by a crescent moon rising over the mountains), followed by epsilon-blue, whose set accompanied the arrival of the sun on the dancefloor. Yet the event was ‘slicker’ than the previous year, and the greater level of consumerism seemed out of place in the rugged location. There was also a notable increase in the use of drugs, herbal highs, and nitrous oxide, the debris of which littered the site’s paddocks and Portaloos. Alpine Unity was

one of the first events, at which I became acutely aware of the correlation between consumerism and rubbish, which stood out against the stark, majestic backdrop of mountains and lake.

For the 2003/4 New Year's, Alpine Unity secured a number of headlining, national acts, but with the arrest of three of the directors in November 2003 on drugs charges the event lost much of its appeal. In what the police referred to as Operation Syrup eight people were arrested in November 2003 on a range of drug-related charges including importing and conspiring to import LSD, supplying LSD, cocaine, methamphetamine, ecstasy, cannabis and its products, and money laundering ("Eight Appear In Court On 'Party Drug' Charges" n. pag.). With two of the event's directors arrested, it was established that Alpine Unity had been used as a legal business through which to launder the drug money, which not only explains the event's commercial success, but also confirms that Class A drug taking was likely to be higher at Alpine Unity than at other events at that time. The event was taken over by NZ Entertainment Services Limited and went ahead as Alpine NYE. A press release printed on the Obscure website quotes event coordinator Paul Moss: "Huge national support, quick action, and sheer passion assures 'ALPINE' continues on its original track to being the biggest and most comprehensive event in New Zealand this New Years Eve" (n. pag.). The press release is optimistic, but when several booked musicians withdrew (including Sola Rosa and epsilon-blue), attendance was well under the 7000 estimated. The rise of Alpine Unity had been swift, and the drug charges would mark its downfall. Yet like all events, Alpine Unity had its share of 'magic' moments, and it is significant in that it exposed a generation of Christchurch clubbers to the joys of dancing in the mountains.

### **Dancing on the Beach – Utopian Principles Meets Dystopian Practices at Splore 06**

Held at the idyllic Tapapakanga Park, a place of spiritual significance to Māori, Splore 06 took place right on the beach, a site that, as noted previously, is central to Pākehā identity formation and utopian myth making. Splore began as a New Year's Eve event in 1998/9, but has since shifted to a February date and is held every two years. Featuring an art trail,

workshops, film, theatre, themed camps and the best in Aotearoa and international music, Splore has an excellent reputation and I was excited about attending the festival as part of this research. Tapapakanga Park (South East of Auckland) was as an appropriate paradisiacal space as one could wish for; facing the Coromandel Peninsular, the main zone looked north towards the Hauraki Gulf, and the 5000 attendees could dance in front of the stage, relax under shady pōhutukawa trees or even chill in the sea as they watched the main acts. Further down the beach was a fresh-water lagoon that became a relaxation zone and bathing area. Operating a 'Zero Waste' policy, the road in to the festival was lined with hand-painted recycling signs and plastic bags and film canisters were given out to campers for rubbish and cigarette butts.<sup>17</sup> The themed camping was particularly effective in the family and house truck areas, and the recycling area was clearly visible from the campsites. The festival area itself was beautifully decorated, and the art trail enhanced the natural wonder of the site. Spectacular lighting and ornate tents contributed to the festive feel, whilst the sea shimmered in the background. The performance aspect was also inspiring. Alouis Woodhouse, for Victoria University magazine *Salient* writes:

The most remarkable part of Splore for me was seeing the 'Vivid' dance performance artists in their Neon light- suits. These four lighted figures came over the hill and spread themselves out in a line [ . . . ]. They turned off their light suits and then one of them turned on and danced and threw his or her light to the next one in the line and then they danced and threw the light to the next one. They were neon dance 'power rangers' juggling light energy. (2006)

Rachel Russell for the Television New Zealand website was also impressed with the Vivid dancers, and favourably compares the festival and the music to the Gathering, noting the change in music styles that has occurred since the earlier event: "The Fat Freddy's Drop crowd-pleaser followed an afternoon of excellent performances by local acts Hollie Smith, Sola Rosa and Kora. The bands looked like they were enjoying themselves as much as we were. Why wouldn't they appreciate being on a stage overlooking blue water, green grass and a cluster of happy campers?" (n. pag.). In the ten years between the start of the Gathering, and Splore 06, outdoor dance events have evolved from hedonistic raves into family oriented music festivals, where dancers have more choice as to how they want to experience the event. The strength of the roots reggae



scene has also shifted the emphasis from electronic-based acts to bands, bringing dance culture more in line with Māori, whose ancestors had first populated the areas in which events such as Splore are held.

Underneath Splore 06's sparkly surface however, was a sea of packaging, which a small volunteer crew was unable to clear from the site during the event. Much of the rubbish that accumulated was brought in by the vendors, and with only one stall using biodegradable potato plates, the food packaging was the first to build up. At some market stalls, items were sold with unnecessary plastic and cardboard packaging, which were dropped on the ground as buyers put on the clothing or sunglasses, whilst in the bar, Heineken was sold in glass bottles, which went against Splore's own 'no glass' policy. Although recycling areas were signposted and numerable, within hours of starting, the rubbish had begun to accumulate, and by the end of the event, it was ankle-deep in some areas, the two paid recycling crew members unable to staunch the flow when short of volunteers. Whereas most volunteer systems operate under a free ticketing scheme, at Splore 06 volunteers had to buy a ticket and then reclaim it after their shifts, and given the amount of rubbish visible before the end of the first night, it would not be surprising if recycling 'volunteers' chose to forgo the refund. Although not an official volunteer, I stayed after the event and earned my ticket money back by helping the ten (or thereabouts) gate crew who stayed to help the recycling crew undertake what had become a massive clean-up job. Besides feeling a sense of fulfilment after putting in a couple of days 'hard labour' on ground cover, the experience provided an invaluable 'fly on the wall' view of after-event dynamics. Of my own observations, there was a notable division of labour between technical and structural crew and the 'trash crew', with the latter choosing to eat in the less well-provided for recycling area. Whilst the reviewers above rightfully acknowledge Splore 06 as a success, in terms of 'zero waste' the event had been a failure, with dancers and stall-holders leaving behind a vast array of packaging (one café stall left over 100 unwashed plastic milk bottles in a ditch) that had to be removed from the festival site in trailer loads, before being sorted in the recycling area. The situation is testament to what can happen when the amount of rubbish generated is greater than can be shifted by the available volunteers, and from all accounts, previous to 2006, Splore had operated a functional recycling scheme, which suggests that

the problems will be sorted for Splore 08. But, for all the earnestness and hard work of the recycling crew, of all the events attended, Splore 06 was at the same time one of the most beautiful and ugly that I have witnessed.<sup>18</sup> That Splore organisers are aware that the Zero Waste scheme could have been better implemented is suggested in the “About Us” section of the website where the significance of Tapapakanga Park is acknowledged:

The venue is steeped in cultural history with strong links to tangata whenua and the many cultures of Manukau City where the festival boundaries lie within.

Splore’s vision has evolved since 2006 to include a more focused and holistic approach with regards to sustainable practices and a deeper connection with the Tapapakanga site. The latter comes from our increasing knowledge of the site and its stories as well as from the positive relationship built up with Ngati Paoa and Ngati Whanaunga and Auckland Regional Council. (n. pag.)

The suggestion here is that for the 2008 festival there will be an improvement in this area. Perhaps organisers felt as I did after Splore 06, when on the day that I left, I felt spiritually moved to tangi (cry) as I took my final swim at the site. This was tapu (sacred) land, and it felt desecrated by our greed, a factor that dancers and critics sometimes fall short in acknowledging as one of the dystopian outcomes of dance culture.

### **Shifting Autonomous Spaces – Dance Culture and the TAZ**

But are utopias ever meant to be fully realised? Practical utopias rarely subsist outside of temporary timeframes; the weight of the state eventually restores the imbalance of power as the fallouts from the 1969 and 1989 “summers of love” attest. In Aotearoa the trial alternative lifestyle communities such as those initiated under the 1970’s Ohu scheme (a Labour Government scheme where alternative communities were allocated blocks of land on which to set up viable working communities), also failed. In an article entitled “Viable Alternatives”, published in *Nambassa*, it is suggested that the failure of these communities was due to a lack of arable land, a lack of finance (in which to set up the systems required), and a lack of experience on the part of the inhabitants, many of whom

were brought up in cities (7). In addition, the trials of living in close confines with other adults when one has been brought up in a ‘nuclear’ environment also take their toll on these communities, and the strive towards utopian ideals is problematic when the imagined paradise is the vision of one group of people only. But dance parties are examples of temporary utopias, and as noted by Olaveson in the quote that heads this chapter, they are both imagined and real (95). In its original sense, utopia is a “nowhere/nowhen wonderland”, a place that exists so that humankind might always reach for a better society, and outdoor dance culture projects our visions of utopia into real times and spaces, so that for a brief period of time we can lose our individual selves amongst the interplay of technology, dancing and the environment.

In his influential essay, *T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, Bey suggests that far from being nowhere places, utopias can and do exist, whether they be cyber or earth-based. Using the pirate utopias of the eighteenth century as an example, Bey’s vision of autonomy is to stand on a piece of land ruled only by freedom, as the pirates did (98). But pirate utopias are no longer feasible in a world in which it is increasingly difficult to disappear, for if modernity’s penchant for mapping placed a grid of control over every last free territory, then modern surveillance technology has cast a finely woven net over the gaps, making the kind of *autonomy* that the pirate utopias possessed, “a romantic dream”. Hence, Bey writes that the best way to revolt “at a universe so cruel as to visit such injustices on *our* generation alone of humankind” is to create *temporary autonomous zones* – utopian islands that operate outside of state jurisdiction (98). With history showing that revolutions are usually just that – a revolution of the existing order – Bey suggests that we not only give up waiting for “the Revolution” but that we also give up *wanting* it, and instead engage in an ‘uprising’, a boot-straps operation in which “the best and most radical tactic will be to refuse to engage in spectacular violence, to *withdraw* from the area of simulation, to disappear” (101-2). Olaveson notes how the utopian impulses of rave have been linked to Bey’s ideology by a number of dance theorists. He writes that the TAZ: “occupies the ‘cracks and vacancies’ left by the state [. . .]. As manifestations of the TAZ, raves are utopian social formations temporarily convened [. . .] in the margins of society” (96). Here Olaveson notes that the formations

are social rather than political, but in an individual-based society, community-based social formations are political because they demonstrate an alternative mode of living.

One of the first considerations of those who would engender the TAZ is to find the spaces to disappear into. Bey suggests looking for the places and spaces that have escaped the State's attention – the gaps in the grid – and utilising them as temporary utopias, that like nomadic communities are ready to pack up and leave when threatened by outside forces:

The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to form elsewhere / elsewhere, *before* the State can crush it. Because the State is concerned primarily with Simulation rather than substance, the TAZ can “occupy” these areas clandestinely and carry on its festal purposes for quite a while in relative peace. (101)

Whilst Aotearoa dance culture is by no means a clandestine culture (the parties are often reported in local newspapers), that its activities remain largely unnoticed is partly due to the nature of the landscape and the high ratio of land to people. It is easy to disappear when the only ones to be seriously disturbed by your presence is the farming family who leased you the land. The vast spaces of the Aotearoa landscape provide many sites in which festivities can be carried on for several days with little or no state interference.

For a TAZ to be politically effective it should project a positive image of society in its place, and if Aotearoa dance culture is to achieve its objectives, it must do likewise. Bey writes that disappearance is a logical and radical option for our time but suggests that each “negative gesture” towards the Establishment be replaced with a “positive tactic to replace rather than merely refuse the despised institution” (128-9). The various manifestos of outdoor dance parties suggest that ideologically at least, this tactic is being practiced, but dance culture in Aotearoa is still heavily reliant on consumerism, and as such, the positive tactics that may follow from a negative gesture towards capitalism have yet to effect a change overall. If outdoor dance culture is to effect community-based evolution, and yet survive in financial terms, it must maintain a balance between making the parties financially viable, and setting the scene for alternative experiences to take place. The challenge is for events to shine as an example of a temporary utopia, which

exists – if only for the briefest of times – in gloriously accessible places. By cutting loose into the imaginary realm, we can experience utopia as a living possibility.

### **A Temporary Ecological Zone – Realising the Vision at Visionz**

The Te Wai Pounamu event most active in engendering a positive tactic was Visionz, a New Year’s festival run by an environmental collective from the Golden Bay area. The Visionz Trust is a Takaka-based charitable trust, and proceeds from the festival went towards funding local and national projects that further the Visionz aim “to promote a sustainable future for this planet through the principles of organics, permaculture and co-operation” (“Welcome”). The Visionz festival began in 1998/9 and ran annually for four days and three nights from December 30 to January 2, until the last one in 2003/4, when the trust decided not to do any more. The festival helped raise funds and the trust’s profile, and was an important educational tool, as the website “Welcome” suggests:

There is no separation in nature

Therefore no separation in ourselves

This is our purpose and intent:

The unity of all the children of Rangi and Papa [ . . . ]

That people stand up and create a change [ . . . ]

Let us return to the ways of the ancient world

That have been passed down to us by all our ancestors (n. pag.)

At the 2003/4 festival, sustainable ecological practices were trialled and taught, whilst a well-organised volunteer system maintained the Zero Waste scheme. For the ticket-holders, Visionz was the longest event over the New Year’s season, and at \$80-\$120 offered value for money. With children admitted free, it was more family oriented than other events, and there was a number of workshops, including holistic healing, worm farming, yoga, and stilt-walking. For those party-goers who did not attend the workshops, education occurred at the most basic of levels, with volunteers standing at waste stations ensuring that the recycling principles be carried out. Even in the toilets a change of practice occurred as ‘DIY’ style pit toilets taught users the biological benefits of

squatting. Of all the events researched, environmentally, Visionz 2003/4 went the furthest towards realising Aotearoa dance culture's utopian vision.

At Visionz there were many signs that the trust's projection of an environmentally sustainable, community-based society is possible. As a non-profitable organisation, the Visionz trust not only talks specifics, it puts its ideals into practice. Included on the website are extensive analyses of some of the practices that have been trialled at the event, along with advice to the prospective party-goer as to how they can contribute to the Visionz aim:

we encourage everyone to help us by reducing the waste they create. Some practical ways to do this are: bring your own cup, spoon and plate to use at cafes, use our recycling bins intelligently so that the waste-stream can be reduced, and cut down on products that create waste through packaging. Vision aims to be more than just another music party: it's a conscious demonstration of our will to change the way we live. ("Welcome")

With workshops well utilised and the Zero Waste scheme reducing the amount of landfill dramatically, in many ways the Visionz aim to educate through play was realised. Featuring a live zone overlooking the sweep of Golden Bay, and a trance zone tucked into a clearing next to native bush and a river, Visionz catered to all the senses, with bands such as Trinity Roots driving the message home lyrically, whilst the techno/trance and tribal zones replicated the earth's heartbeat as music. With temperatures soaring during the day the nearby bush became a sheltered haven, and a walk down the river to the waterfall and swimming hole was an ecstatic experience in itself. That this beauty was not despoiled by unsightly packaging was due to the vision and vigilance of the Visionz Trust.

Yet the Visionz organisers were aware that these signs are only indicators that a change is possible. The 2002/3 report on the Zero Waste scheme indicates both the progress made and the ways in which Visionz is in line with other events in this regard:

In general there was inspiringly little litter [. . .]. The main areas for waste were found to be trance zone with plastic water bottles and Nitrous Oxide canisters and balloons in the morning. These were picked up and sorted when the music stopped (around 10am every day), General picks were carried out

through the 3 days to act as an incentive to the public to keep such a beautiful site free from waste. It was considered very important to keep on top of any litter since once it appears it seems to attract more (sic.). (“Zero Waste”)

Organisers were pleased to find that in general most party-goers made the effort to sort their refuse and place it in the appropriate bins, but were disappointed at how many plastic bags of unsorted rubbish were simply dumped in the bins marked ‘landfill’, which defeated the purpose of the scheme, and created extra work for the recycling volunteers. For the 2003/4 festival, the decision was made that rather than removing refuse off-site during the event, that once sorted it would be left at the gate as evidence of the waste generated. It is befitting to the Zero Waste aim that the party-goers last ‘vision’ from the festival should be stacks of unsightly waste against an otherwise picture-perfect backdrop – a poignant welcome back to reality. The 2003/4 festival would be the last Visionz, but for five years this community-based event went the furthest towards realising the environmental dreams of Aotearoa dance culture.

### **Evolving Beyond Hedonism – the Potential of Aotearoa Dance Culture**

Most events are viable because there is a mixture of consumerism and volunteering, with the commercial side funding the events, and the workers ensuring that it goes ahead. The value of volunteers cannot be underestimated, and Visionz had success with their Zero Waste scheme because their volunteers were respected, well looked after and educated in the ecological aims of the trust, and the vendors were required to use only recyclable packaging. It was thus a good example of how dance culture can achieve success in these areas when there is balance between commercial and community responsibility. Yet volunteering is often its own reward, and over the course of the research undertaken here, one of the most valuable and edifying aspects of the participant-observer role was as a volunteer (especially with the clean-up), whether I had paid for my ticket or not. St. John notes in “Liberation and the Rave Imaginary” how rewarding such an experience can be for ravers:

The *in situ* sacrifice – of self to the party – generates a sense of fulfilment and fraternity, or reward, unlikely to be achieved simply by turning up and

dropping an E. [. . .] The widely held view from those who contribute to the planning, websites, logistics, décor, altars, performances, community safety, first aid, clean-up and so on of free parties [. . .] is that such participation confers an experience differentiated markedly from the ‘consensus trance’ of event-consumption predominant in the commercial party environment. (38)

St. John is careful to make the distinction between free parties and commercial events, and notes how volunteers get more out of the events because of their contribution. More vendors create more waste and infrastructure, most of which is carried out by unpaid workers, so the less commercial an event, the less volunteers are likely to have to work.

The utopian projections of Aotearoa dance culture may be some way from being realised, but in the temporarily liberated spaces of the parties an alternative to the ‘same old same old’ is at least being played out. The Gathering opened up the possibility of replacing the old system with a new paradigm, and offered a hedonistic projection of what that might be. It was a vision of utopia that continues to be played out at the many events that now operate regularly throughout the year. In the final chapter of *Discographies*, Gilbert and Pearson suggest that the politics of dance culture cannot be discussed in binary terms:

The question would therefore not be how likely dance culture is to bring down capitalism or patriarchy, but at what precise points it succeeds or fails in negotiating new spaces. In particular, it is not a simple question of dance culture being ‘for’ or ‘against’ the dominant culture, but of how far its articulations with other discourses and cultures (dominant or otherwise) result in democratizations of the cultural field, how far they successfully break down existing concentrations of power, and how far they fail to do so. (160)

Whilst dance culture in Aotearoa is split along genre lines such as trance, dub, drum and bass, house and hardcore, in the outdoor dance zones a democratising process takes place, and most events feature a range of different music styles. At events with more than one zone the music is often genre-grouped, as in roots, dub and drum and bass, or techno, house and hardcore. Whilst the fans of the various subgenres bear the global markings associated with each (such as dreadlocks and colourful clothing for dub, and short hair and dark hooded jackets for drum and bass) in these temporary autonomous zones the



tribes co-exist happily, both on the dancefloor/s and in the wider community of the event, thus negotiating a new space, and forming a mini-model for a future society.

Aotearoa outdoor dance culture shares many similarities with Australian ‘bush doof’ culture (a local colloquialism for outdoor parties), but has been less active in engaging directly with the ‘State’. The two cultures are similar in that they make the most of an abundance of ‘empty’ space, and combine the camping and outdoor aspects of antipodean culture with the latest music technologies. In “The Avant-Garde and their Utopia: Doof and the Quest for Transcendent Community”, Susan Luckman writes that the political potency of doof culture is found both in the transcendence of the dancefloor and in the temporality and regularity of the events: “At a doof [. . .] participants seek to transcend their quotidian lives. Despite critiques to the contrary, ideally at least this is not just a one-off escape but hopefully participants return recharged and reborn, the communities they form being sustained not just at but also between events too (even if the groups’ focus lies mainly on organising the next get-together)” (23-4). In Australia the *puissance* of these events has resulted in direct political action in the form of the Reclaim the Streets parties and political protests, along with a greater implementation of DIY environmentalism, including the use of solar, wind, and bicycle-powered generators, and the use of used cooking oil to fuel transportation (see *Free NRG*). Australia however, has had nation-wide issues such as uranium mining, nuclear power plants, Aboriginal and refugee rights, along with a strong international military presence, to galvanise political activity. In contrast, Aotearoa dance culture is not generally concerned with such politics, and in the 1990’s there seemed to be little to protest – the protests of the 1980’s had resulted in a nation-wide nuclear-free policy, and, aside from Auckland perhaps, gridlocked streets were not a common occurrence. Whilst Māori land rights are an ongoing political concern, activism is usually left to Māori. In recent years however, there has been a resurgence in protest, and dancers have become involved in a number of causes, some of which are represented at the events. The law changes favouring the release of Genetically Engineered crops into the environment galvanised widespread objection, and information was distributed at the events. At the onset of the USA’s war on Iraq the Christchurch Massive crew set up a soundsystem after an anti-war march in Cathedral Square, and protestors were invited to bring favourite peace songs. Of late the

‘Save Happy Valley’ campaign has attracted protesters to an occupation of the proposed Solid Energy West Coast coal mine site that will destroy the habitats of endangered kiwi and the rare Powelliphanta Augustus giant snail, and there have been spectacular protests in Christchurch that have been aimed at Solid Energy and gained media coverage ([www.savehappyvalley.org.nz](http://www.savehappyvalley.org.nz)). Whilst individual dancers are involved in these protests, along with others concerning racism and police behaviour, in general, political protests are not staged by dance culture groups as a whole.

Whether the ideology of outdoor dance culture in Aotearoa will translate into the wider context of a community-based politics, and thus effect notable societal change, is yet to be established. Whilst many who attend dance events still rubbish the sites, for those already sympathetic to environmental concerns dance parties provide an arena in which the earth mother is seen, heard and felt at a much higher ‘vibration’ than in everyday life. Once people realise that *anything* that is left will have to be cleaned up by *somebody*, or else bury itself into the earth, many begin to take responsibility for themselves and others; therefore it is not unreasonable to assume that this behaviour may carry over into everyday life. For others the pilgrimages to the events have become an integral part of their lives, and in the outdoor dance zones DIYism is practically a necessity that soon spills over into everyday lifestyles. In the introduction to *Rave and Religion* St. John writes that: “Yet, while with acid house ‘a whole subculture attempts to vanish’ (Melechi 1993:38), others rupture this logic of disappearance, desiring to inject the ‘meme’ into the parent culture, to share the conspiracy, converting, through various channels, the ‘hundredth monkey’” (3). Based on Ken Keyes Jr.’s book *The Hundredth Monkey*, the theory is that when a certain number of people are converted to new age ideology and practices, the species as a whole will begin to follow it. But before we can convert society as a whole, the challenge for Aotearoa dancers is to make the community-mindedness felt in the dance zones a reality for the time of the party at least. Dance culture has the potential to effect self-sufficiency as a positive tactic against mindless consumerism, and therefore effect environmental change, but that potential is a long way from being realised. Yet, as we play out the fantasy again and again in the utopian spaces of the events, the lines between reality and desire become blurred. Our playgrounds may

not be the new paradigm that dance culture ultimately hopes for, but at least in these zones utopia is being envisaged as a temporary possibility.

**Chapter Four**  
**It's What's Down Low –**  
**Aotearoa Dance Culture and the Carnavalesque**

The kind of time peculiar to carnival is the release from time, a respite from the relatively closed and rigid historical patterns that dominant ideologies impose on time's flux. [. . .] The physical experience of carnival expresses not just a negative escapism but has a positive aspect as well. Carnival is not time wasted but time filled with profound and rich experience. (Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist 302)

Show me hell / it's what's down low that counts. (Baitercell and Schumacher "What's Down Low")

Aotearoa dance culture shares many similarities with historical carnivals, which were believed to be examples of 'concrete' utopian spaces that occurred in real times and places (Gardiner). In *Rabelais and His World*, Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that because carnivals threatened the power of the Church and State, they were subjected to a process of marginalisation, and that François Rabelais, who celebrated the language and practices of the unofficial life of the public square, was likewise marginalised from the literary canon (1). Since the publication of *Rabelais* in English in 1965, opinion has been divided as to whether carnival is merely a *safety valve* tolerated and controlled by Church and State, or whether the festivals operate as a brief realisation of utopia, more politically threatening than their hedonistic impulses might suggest. As a temporary 'world upside down', carnival threatened a permanent upheaval of state, and as such it came under attack from authorities and was marginalised from the centre of village life. Whereas carnival had been a regular part of life in Europe since the Middle Ages, in modern times it became subject to a process of commodification that saw festive life pushed to the edges, with holiday destinations such as Brighton and Blackpool becoming a consumer-based substitute for regular carnivals. Emerging from the marginal spaces, early UK rave culture was one of the most authentic forms of carnival to be found in the

twentieth century, and as such it was threatening in a manner not foreseen by the State. As a *weekly* release from rigid everyday life, the drug-based culture threatened to become deeply entrenched in the day to day habits of a large proportion of British youth, and authorities were swift in implementing the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) in order to control it.

In Aotearoa, outdoor dance parties are also an example of modern carnival. By the time the settlers left Europe in the nineteenth century, carnival had already been suppressed by puritanism and commercialised by industrialisation, which reduced carnival practices to consumer/spectator oriented experiences. Hence, carnival in Pākehā popular culture has been present only in its weakest forms: as church and industries fairs, race days, pageants, and the celebration of Guy Fawkes. The carnivalesque – in its participatory sense at least – can still be found in the New Year’s celebrations that have traditionally formed a ‘rite of passage’ for the nation’s youth. Occurring during the summer holidays, these festivities have evolved from holiday community celebrations to large gatherings of teenagers whose crapulent behaviour is in line with Bakhtin’s theory of the *grotesque* body, as outlined in *Rabelais* (303-67). Yet it was at the Gathering, that a real carnivalesque party was to emerge as an alternative to the traditional alcohol-based New Year’s celebrations, exposing Aotearoa dancers to a temporary second life, in which participation was an essential component.

In the topsy-turvy worlds of Aotearoa dance parties the carnivalesque is commonplace. Midnight celebrations are flooded with the flames of fire poi, whilst stilt walkers garbed in iridescent colours weave through the shifting mass in the dance zones. The sense of community is pervasive as dancers forget differences of taste, ethnicity, background, and ideology and free themselves to the carnival spirit. And, as people surrender to the liberating pull of the rhythm, they increasingly resemble Bakhtin’s grotesque open body, a body that gradually becomes used to ‘pissing’ outdoors and ‘shitting’ in Portaloos. In these spaces, the sun and the moon eclipse clock time, so that the significance of the land and its cycles of renewal become more apparent, reminding the dancers of their immortality as a collective. For those living in an unbalanced world, the carnivalesque reorganises the polarities of body/head, animal/human, female/male, nature/industry, and other/self that have come to represent Western thought. The sense of

inversion felt on the dance floor is made explicit in “What’s Down Low”, the drum and bass song that heads this chapter, and which suggests that the underworld should be embraced, rather than feared. Whether or not Aotearoa dance culture will fulfil its potential to transcend its hedonistic impulses, and channel resistance in practical forms, the dance parties are effective in temporarily destabilising the balance of power currently loaded in favour of the status quo.

### **Resurrecting Carnival - Rabelais, Bakhtin and the Significance of Popular Culture**

Bakhtin’s carnivalesque theory enabled post-war cultural critics to assert pop culture’s significance to everyday lives. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Western notions of culture had increasingly privileged ‘high’ culture: the canonical literature, music and art that prior to mass production technology had only been accessible to a small elite. When Bakhtin’s *Rabelais* was published in English in 1965, it provided the template for a body of theory that privileged ‘low’ or popular culture as a site of political resistance. Bakhtin chose sixteenth-century French author Rabelais for his 1930’s doctoral dissertation because he believed that of all the great writers Rabelais was “the least popular, the least understood and appreciated” (1). Bakhtin suggests that because Rabelais wrote about a culture that inverted the *official* political, societal, and cultural paradigms, his book was not considered worthy to be included in the canon of European literature.

Influenced by the irreverent humour of the market-places and carnivals of medieval European society, Rabelais’s world stood in opposition to the closed and intellectualised cultures of ‘official life’. In the introduction to the millennial edition of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Terence Cave establishes that Rabelais’s work is informed by a familiarity with both the ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultures of the Renaissance. Educated in the monastic and medical disciplines, Rabelais was familiar “with virtually every strand in High Renaissance intellectual culture”, yet was immersed in the less erudite activities of the everyday world (xx). Cave writes that Rabelais borrows from: “oral culture, from old legends of giants and monsters and stories of tricksters and fools, from carnival, drama and the other forms of public entertainment. [. . .] What is unique is Rabelais’s ability to

marshal such diverse elements, to turn this virtuoso concoction into an imaginative encyclopedia of his world” (xxix). Written during the Reformation, Rabelais’s work provides a colourful, comic sketch of public life during what Cave describes as “a critical period of change in the religious and political ideologies of Europe” (xvi-xvii). Saturated in the language and imagery of the marketplace and carnivals, this world mocked the official high culture of the Renaissance. Bakhtin suggests that the marketplace, or ‘billingsgate’ elements of Rabelais’s language were, from the seventeenth century on, “a stumbling block for his admirers and readers” and quotes La Bruyère and Voltaire who considered this aspect of Rabelais’s work respectively to be “filthy depravation” and “impertinence” (145). Yet it is because Rabelais’s writing sits outside the official political and religious spheres of Renaissance culture that his images have what Bakhtin describes as a certain indestructible nonofficial nature: “No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow-minded seriousness can coexist with Rabelaisian images; these images are opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready-made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook” (3). For Bakhtin and his followers, the transgressive nature of Rabelais’s world was to have far-reaching application.

### **World Upside Down? Or licensed Release? – the Polarisation of Carnival’s Political Potential**

Carnivals in medieval Europe were a celebration in which everyone participated in mocking the official social structures. A festival of dancing, eating, drinking, sex, laughter, and even excrement, carnivals were the inverse of the official feasts in which the exalted heads of state participated while the excluded public watched. Bakhtin writes that during carnival time public participation was the essence of the festival: “[Carnival] is the people as a whole, but organized *in their own way*, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the carnival” (255). In the unfettered space of the carnival, the crowd (free from religious, social and moral censure) mocked the official state feasts from which they were excluded. During carnival time, men and

women paraded in each others' clothing, while fools and beggars were crowned carnival kings and queens to provide laughter at the banquet (5). Caryl Emerson writes:

As a communication model, carnival dynamics has much to recommend it. The suspension of everyday anxieties during “holiday time” and “carnival space” – the specific locus being the vulnerable, yet superbly shame-free, grotesque body – rids both me and my most proximate neighbor of the excessive self-consciousness that keeps both of us lonely, our words insipid, and our outreaching gestures timid. (163)

In the open and sensuous mass of the carnival crowd, the body is felt to be connected. As such, carnivals provide a site in which the participants achieve a level of agency denied them in their everyday lives.

Carnivals provided a site in which the world, for a brief period of time, was turned ‘upside down’. Writing at a time when “the narrow, vertical, extratemporal model of the world, with its absolute top and bottom, its system of ascents and descents, was in the process of reconstruction”, Rabelais not only depicted the binary aspects of the medieval world, but also showed how that world could be turned on its head (Bakhtin 403). While the lower stratum was subjugated in virtually every sphere of official life, during the time when the rules of carnival were in effect, the underworld presided over the high, and as the people, freed of bodily restraint, revelled outdoors in the market square, day gave way to night and the world became its inverse. Here, the head – considered by the religious and state hierarchies to be the seat of reason – became an object of parody. Debate over the political effect of such a world has established what Peter Stallybrass and Allon White refer to as a “growing body of research devoted to the topic of hierarchy inversion, of ‘world upside down’” (4). That such a world, self-organised and privileging the ‘embarrassments’ of the mass body over the sanctity of the heads of state, was permitted to operate (however briefly) with little or no interference from authorities, suggests that carnival had the potential to be politically threatening in greater ways than its playful nature would suggest.

The degree of political effect that the upside down world of carnival wielded in medieval times was nevertheless tempered by the authority of church and state which was reinstated as soon as carnival was officially over. Although operating independently to



church and state, carnivals were usually tied to their customs and culture (carnivals of the Caribbean and South America are still celebrated as a pre-Lenten feast that ends on Ash Wednesday). Stallybrass and White note that the “carnival never took place very far from the steps of the church, and to the degree that the temporary rule of carnival was a cyclical event ‘timetabled’ by ecclesiastical time and the Church calendar, the latter always re-established itself and shadowed the former” (54). Hence, carnivals were tolerated as a necessary ‘safety valve’: “plays, fairs and festivals were interchangeable as safety valves: as Henry Wotton commented on the Venetian carnival in 1622, public festivals were necessary because ‘the estrained passions [are] indeed the most dangerous’” (72). By offering a specific time and space in which the tenets of church and state can be transgressed with little risk of punitive action from the authorities, the desire for serious insurrection is repressed. Although carnivals invert the dominant ideology, the established order is righted and the lower stratum returns to the underworld, an aspect of carnival that is noted by Stallybrass and White, who quote Terry Eagleton: “carnival is so vivaciously celebrated that the necessary political criticism is almost too obvious to make. Carnival, after all, is a *licensed* affair [. . .], a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art” (13). Carnivals may have offered the people an opportunity to laugh at, and invert the everyday world, but as Linda Hutcheon stresses: “recognition of the inverted world still requires a knowledge of the order of the world which it inverts and, in a sense, incorporates [. . .].the second life of the carnival has meaning only in relation to the official first life” (99). Upside down the world may have been, but it was still the same world, seen for a brief period of time from its inverse angle: “although [inversion] re-orders the terms of a binary pair, it cannot alter the terms themselves” (Stallybrass and White 56). And yet the carnival must have been threatening on some level, because during industrialisation it would undergo a process of marginalisation and containment.

### **Nowhere and Everywhere – Carnival as Postmodern Spectacle**

Rabelais is significant to the history of popular culture because he documents a festive life that, from the Renaissance on, was subjected to a process of suppression. Stallybrass

and White note that “in the long-term history from the seventeenth to the twentieth century [. . .] there were literally thousands of acts of legislation introduced which attempted to eliminate carnival and popular festivity from European life” (176). The rise of Protestant religions was also a factor; the strict dogma encouraged a Lenten lifestyle all year round, which left little room for carnival’s excesses. Yet carnival continued in various guises, including the eighteenth-century masquerades, where identities were masked, enabling the cross-dressing and co-mingling of men, women, servants, aristocracy and even animals. In *Masquerade and Civilisation*, Terry Castle writes that in the masquerades established in the 1720’s, the underworld reigned supreme. Hence, they were a threat to the ‘heads’ of society struggling to maintain hierarchy in an increasingly hybridised world: “With its inevitable affirmation of childhood over adulthood, libido over constraint, duplicity over sincerity, and ‘promiscuity’ over sexual, social and metaphysical bureaucratization, the masquerade was a profound affront to modern life and its rigorous programs” (101). The masquerades did not survive the century, and Castle writes that their disappearance is a symptom of the reform of popular culture that took place in Europe: “The work of moral reformers across Europe was given impetus in the late eighteenth century by new and powerful impersonal forces: industrialization and the growth of towns, capitalist expansion, increasing literacy, the fragmentation of traditional communities, the gradual rise of class consciousness” (100). The masquerades privileged the lower bodily stratum, but unlike carnival, they were largely exclusive. By the time they disappeared the type of carnivals where full participation was expected of the whole town had been relegated to history and literature.

With no public outlet, the grotesque carnival body was internalised and refigured as a shadowy ‘other’, and has continued to take on various guises since the suppression of carnival. Stallybrass and White note that after the suppression of the eighteenth-century masquerades carnival became increasingly internalised:

The grotesque body of carnival was being re-territorialized, it was being appropriated, sublimated and individualized to code refined identity [. . .]. [The masks and symbols] were being systematically *severed* from their anchorage in the annual calendar of contemporary festive life [. . .] and they

were being discursively reformed and redistributed to supply most powerful symbolic repertoires for the expression of individual body/subjects. (104)

Hence, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this carnivalised body was to appear in a number of forms, including erotica, pornography, orientalism, and gothic literature, and was even named as a source of hysteria in Freud's female subjects.<sup>19</sup> The grotesque body held both fear and fascination for the Western bourgeoisie precisely because it represented that which had been repressed, and which they measured themselves against in terms of civilisation. Stallybrass and White believe that: "carnival did not simply disappear. At least four different processes were involved in its ostensible break-up: fragmentation, marginalisation, sublimation, and repression" (178). By the twentieth century carnival had been disseminated to the point that led Bakhtin to remark that "we were entering a non-carnival era" (qtd. by Turbin in Emerson 174). Stallybrass and White however, believe that the 'disappearance' of carnival was far more problematised than such black and white classifications would allow. They write that due to the transformation of symbolic activity in Europe, "carnival was now everywhere and nowhere" (177).

As part of the postmodern terrain, carnival's omnipresent status makes it more difficult to detect and control. While the family-friendly side of carnival emerges in comic Halloween costumes and multi-media extravaganzas celebrating everything from the Olympic Games to Christmas, in modern times the carnivalesque is available anywhere that the tentacles of technology can reach. With carnivalesque tropes sidelined to church and council fairs, the grotesque body has re-emerged as a giant technological animal, obliterating the propaganda lines once under the control of the official view. Here nothing is sacred: literary works such as *Treasure Island* and *1984* have become the inspiration for reality television producers, who create circuses out of the public's need for participation in something, even if it is just phoning in a vote. As the participants line up for their fifteen minutes of fame, they are forced to confront their own grotesque body, as screens beam their semi-naked, crying, sweating, swearing, and occasionally defecating and fornicating bodies around the world. To the Western viewer the 'shocking' is now so commonplace that footage of people dying is regular news time viewing. But if television networks are still subject to broadcasting standards, the internet

is beyond policing, and is rife with images of the body at its most grotesque. Attempts are sometimes made to control this unruly carnival spirit, but it has infiltrated virtually every aspect of life, and can be found in cultural practices as diverse as hiphop, snuff movies, DIY pornography, and – in a watered down participatory sense – the techno-fantasy world of video games. Even if it is just drunken students trying *Back of the Y* or *Jackass*-type stunts on street corners, where there are performers, there is usually an audience. It is from this hodgepodge mix of global, postmodern carnival practices that rave and dance culture offer an alternative; here symbolic representation displaces the images circulated by corporate media. By shifting the boundaries between spectator and participant that have come to define modern carnival practices, dance culture is significant in societies where carnival, in the Bakhtinian sense, has virtually ceased to exist.

### **Juggling Worlds – the Re-emergence of Carnival as Pagan Teknival**

When rave culture emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1980's, it was an example of the carnivalesque in action. Since the Renaissance the individualist model of thinking had largely replaced community based social practice, and by the late twentieth century, many of the work, family and neighbourhood networks of English social tradition revolved around the local drinking establishment. Under this sort of 'village' scrutiny, it was not surprising that Britain's youth should hanker for the kind of anonymity and complete release from daily responsibility that carnival once offered: "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. [ . . . ] It has a universal spirit; [ . . . ] of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants" (Bakhtin 7). With very little available in the way of cheap participatory entertainment, the early entrepreneurs of rave went about creating their own *unlicensed* release in the form of high-tech carnivals organised around the synergy between MDMA and the music. In *Altered State*, Matthew Collin writes his recollections of a large party held in 1989, at the height of rave culture:

it was a thrill without equal enhanced by the knowledge that this was forbidden fruit. [ . . . ] so many people, fired up with excitement and chemicals,

garbed in all the colours of the rainbow, all joined in common purpose. The very dynamic of the rave itself felt so liberating – democratic rather than hierarchical. The dancers’ focus was not on the stage, but on each other. The hegemony of the performer was usurped; the energy was coming from the participants themselves. [. . .] And at the far edges of the crowd, dancing alone under the glittering sky, you could feel yourself cutting loose into the fantasy. (104)

Unlike the circuses and side-shows where the divide between performer and spectator was well demarcated, these carnivals were participatory in the Bakhtinian sense, albeit for a price. But cost aside (and for many the price of a ticket and a pill was still cheaper than a night at the pub), the primary reason for going to a rave was to dance, and anyone not dancing was noticeably out of place. Thus participants are released from their everyday roles for the time of the party, and participation becomes the essence of the celebration. As such, dance culture is an example of the revival of the carnival spirit.

But like carnival, the political value of rave is problematic. Just as carnivals were subject to time frames determined by seasonal or religious calendars, raves are usually organised around the industrial working week, with most taking place in the weekends, or on public holidays. In *This Is Our House*, Rietveld suggests that the political value of rave culture was in the loss of a structured sense of self, but she is wary of the temporary nature of this state and acknowledges that this is one of the areas in which raves reaffirm the status quo: “if a person escapes mentally in such an intense manner during the weekend in order to re-enter the same routine, this type of subjectivity would have a conservative effect. An event which requires a lot of human energy in order to facilitate a temporary escape, allows people to let off steam without affecting the overall hierarchical structures of society” (199). Yet, the early raves were held on private land, often without the owners’ consent, and were therefore unlicensed events, and soon raves were being held every weekend at secret locations around the United Kingdom. Rave may have been a safety valve, but it was one that operated without the sanction of the state. This was an ‘escape’ accessible every weekend to a growing youth culture with the means to pay for the privilege.

When ravers joined with traveller culture, the result was a new hybridised culture – which for a brief period was termed ‘zippie’. With their relaxed attitude to Class A drugs, both ravers and Britain’s large nomadic class of ‘travellers’ were already a source of moral panic to conservative UK, and as such had been victim of police harassment. Teamed up, the hybrid culture was an even greater menace, and as each group learned off the other they became known in the 1990’s lexicon of acronyms, as ‘zippies’, or Zen Inspired Professional Pagans (Rietveld 242). When ravers and travellers danced on common ground, a process took place in which the ravers were immersed in the earthbound beliefs and practices of the marginal cultures that informed the travellers’ creed, whilst the travellers benefited from the expertise of the young, techno-savvy ravers. In his article entitled “Zippies!” Jules Marshall quotes *Encyclopedia Psychedelica* editor Fraser Clark who describes a zippie as:

someone who has balanced their hemispheres to achieve a fusion of the technological and the spiritual. The techno-person understands that rationality, organization, long-term planning, consistency and single-mindedness are necessary to achieve anything solid on the material level. The hippie understands that vision, individuality, spontaneity, flexibility and open-mindedness are crucial to realize anything on the spiritual scale. (par. 3)

The zippies understood the importance of balancing the two hemispheres. Their aim was to fuse technical know-how with spiritual knowledge and create an alternative nomadic-carnival lifestyle that was in sharp contrast with city-based capitalism.

The zippies evolved into the techno-travellers, a nomadic tribe of dancers that did not fit into the British utopian ideal. The tribe that formed when rave teamed up with Britain’s nomadic ‘travellers’ in the early 1990’s was far removed from the pastoral utopia that John Major envisaged for Britain: “Fifty years from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs [. . .] and, as George Orwell once said, ‘old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist’ . . . Britain will remain unamendable in all essentials” (qtd. in Collin 225). Whereas gypsies were tolerated as a colourful component of the mythical English countryside, there was nothing quaint and quintessentially English about the travellers, or ‘crusties’ as they were often referred to. With their relentless pounding beats and the

open use of drugs the teknivals brought the heart of darkness into Britain's own backyard. And although their ideology was based on hippie philosophy, from the outside perspective there was very little peace or love about these collectives. Whereas the hippies wore flowers in their hair, the travellers sported matted dreadlocks, shaven heads and scalp piercings. Dressed in military styles and with their motley assortment of vehicles there was something of a *Mad Max* element to this carnivalesque tribe whose greatest weapon was their techno war dance, the relentlessness and volume of which was summed up in the Spiral Tribe's war cry: "make some fucking noise" (Collin 199).

With thousands of British youth initiated into the 'teknival' scene, suppression of the parties seemed vital, and the techno travellers became victim to the CJA (see Chapter Three). With one faction taking the traveller sound system to Europe, another going underground and "throwing smaller, less spectacularly annoying parties, with the tacit tolerance of the police," and another choosing to establish licensed 'festi-clubs', the culture was effectively split up (Reynolds 172-4). When rave was located on the rural margins, outside the jurisdiction of large metropolitan law and enforcement bodies, it threatened the established order, and the CJA succeeded in de-marginalising the culture by breaking it up and boxing it into central city nightclubs, where it was more easily policed and controlled. As such, rave culture underwent a similar process of suppression and dissemination as other carnivalesque movements before it, and the political efficacy of a self-sufficient community able to exist temporarily on the margins of society was lost, as the movement became fragmented along lines of class, ethnicity, musical and drug preferences. That there is such a thing as the CJA suggests that these cultures were more politically threatening to the status quo than can be attributed to the safety valve view of carnivalesque practices.

### **Removing the Stopper – Aotearoa and the Carnivalesque**

The commodification of popular culture in Aotearoa has seen participatory carnival eclipsed by modern spectacle. By the time Europeans began embarking on their journey to the new colony, carnival consisted of what was left over from the process of suppression and incorporation that had occurred since the Renaissance. Removed from

the Catholic calendar, carnival was imported to Aotearoa with a focus on consumption, under the guise of charity-raising events (such as church and school fairs) or industries fairs and rural show days, which doubled as stock sales. Hence, carnival activity in Aotearoa is usually organised along commercial lines with European carnivalesque practices and tropes such as rides, sideshows and candyfloss found in these arenas. By the 1980's these annual events resembled Graeme Thompson's description of the 'impulse leisure' consumables on offer at Blackpool's Pleasure Beach: "holiday treats of ice creams, rock, nuts and fruit, but many other goods as well. These may be as ephemeral as printed jokes and horoscopes. [. . .] A number of shops and stalls [. . .] specialise in fluffy dolls and animals and rather garish items in 'Nottingham Lace'" (129). At church and school fairs there was usually a greater proliferation of craft stalls, but they still offered much the same fare, albeit on a smaller scale. More recently, large modern spectacles such as visiting international circuses, along with Council-organised busker and comedy festivals, and large-scale Guy Fawkes celebrations, further promote spectatorship over participation, meaning that most carnivalesque activity in Aotearoa reaffirms the dominant capitalist ideology.

In Aotearoa, one of the best examples of the carnivalesque in its renegade, participatory and grotesque form, is in traditional New Year's Eve beach celebrations. Aotearoa culture is often acutely aware of its geographical, seasonal, and temporal opposition to Europe, and New Year's Eve offers a unique opportunity to celebrate as a world upside down. Whereas Christmas has traditionally been marked with wintry trappings imported from Europe, including fake snow and a heavy dinner of roast lamb, turkey, or ham, the New Year falls in the middle of the summer holiday period, and is traditionally celebrated at beaches and camping grounds. Bakhtin wrote that "carnival is the only feast the people offer to themselves" and in this regard the observance of New Year's Eve in public outdoor areas resembles the traditional carnivals, including the celebration of the grotesque that excessive drinking encourages (249). Traditionally, these celebrations brought the holiday communities together in camping grounds and bach hamlets, but with working hours no longer adhering to set time frames (in which businesses used to close for the 'Christmas holidays'), annual leave during the Christmas and New Year's period is not always available. The sale of baches (encouraged by a



sudden increase in property values) has seen the remote holiday spots increasingly marketed as tourist and retirement destinations, removing the family atmosphere that once reigned in these resorts. But although family-oriented New Year's celebrations are disappearing, many adolescents still choose to celebrate the event at beach locations. Freed from parental supervision, each year thousands of young people descend on quiet seaside resorts, ready literally to tear up the town, so that by New Year's Day, newspapers and bulletins are filled with 'shock horror' reports of violence, rioting, and general mayhem caused by drunken youth. In 2006, one such story entitled "Police Urge End to Youth Drinking After Tough New Year's Eve" quotes police Sergeant Aaron Nicholson who links the New Year's Eve behaviour to "Kiwi booze culture": "Young people really struggle to find constructive ways of doing things without getting [drunk]. Drink and drugs is just part of their lifestyle" (1). In recent years local councils have attempted to restrict these instances of grotesque carnival activity by introducing temporary, time-specific bans on the consumption of alcohol in public places, and inserting a greater police presence at favoured locations. This has given rise to a situation that resembles the secretive nature of early UK rave culture as groups of youth try to outwit police by picking a 'secret' destination. Aided by the speed and ease of text messaging, every year youth cultures – especially those organised around cars – attempt to stay one step ahead of the authorities, as the police try to guess the locations and quell the activity before it erupts into a (media-fuelled) insurrection. Whilst these New Year's celebrations may be cited as an instance of politicised carnival in Aotearoa, the participants are united mainly in their 'right to party', and are less likely to threaten the status quo beyond the drunken revelry that has long been a part of traditional New Year's celebrations.

Like carnival, the transgressive nature of Aotearoa dance culture is problematised by its status as a 'licensed release.' Although the traditional teenage beach parties affirm the privileged status that alcohol holds in the popular domain, and are in many ways regarded as a rite of passage that initiates teenagers into the 'rugby, (car)racing and beer' tradition, they are not always regarded as a safety valve by the police or politicians. In contrast, outdoor dance events (which often officially ban alcohol and glass) attract little police or media attention, as is shown by Perry Williams' recollections of the first

Gathering: “[t]o their credit police remained at arm’s length recognizing they were likely to have more trouble from alcohol-fuelled youth at traditional haunts like Tahunanui Beach Holiday Park” (3). The contrast between cultures is also evident in a 2004 article on the Maitai Valley Camping Ground in *The Nelson Mail*. After outlining the security measures taken at the camp to which teenage groups were directed by the Nelson City Council during this time, the author finishes by mentioning the Phat Outdoors 2003 dance event (which took place further up the valley), at which there were “no health and safety, medical or intoxication problems” (“Happy campers party on”). Stallybrass and White balance out the view that carnival is a form of social control of the low by the high by quoting Roger Sales who favours a more ambivalent interpretation, which suggests that the carnival spirit could be both a vehicle for social protest, and the method for disciplining that protest:

There were two reasons why the fizzy, dizzy carnival spirit did not necessarily undermine authority. First of all, it was licensed or sanctioned by the authorities themselves. They removed the stopper to stop the bottle being smashed altogether. The release of emotions and grievances made them easier to police in the long term. (13)

The use of the bottle analogy here holds relevance with regard to Aotearoa’s New Year’s Eve culture. As police and authorities increase their efforts to contain and centralise the ‘unlicensed’ carnivalesque practices taking place at beaches, during which the bottles are literally smashed, dance culture operates as a site of resistance in which carnivalesque practices of a more traditional, and more resistant nature take place.

When dance parties operate on-site bars however, there is a greater incidence of alcohol-induced grotesque behaviour that also results in a greater build-up of refuse. At ‘non-alcohol’ events, some alcohol is usually tolerated (gate staff are likely to confiscate large amounts, or high-alcohol spirits), but not encouraged. Because gate checks tend to target alcohol in glass vessels, there is usually a lesser incidence of glass debris at such events, and most alcohol is consumed within the campsite, or transferred to plastic drink bottles. Alpine Unity was one of the first parties to feature an on-site bar, but it was contained in a separate area far removed from the other zones, so that most of the detritus of alcohol consumption was at least contained in one area. At Phat Outdoors 2003, the

bar was separated from the dancefloor by a six foot high fence, which had the curious effect of creating a zoo-like division between the areas, with drinkers/spectators on one side, and dancers/participants on the other. At Kaikoura Roots Festival, the sale of alcohol in disposable, non-recyclable cups contributed greatly to the amount of refuse produced overall (see Chapter Five). Another area in which the sale of alcohol has an effect is in the increased use of Portaloos and queues at licensed events are often notably longer. Whilst the sale of alcohol may ensure commercial viability, it also results in greater incidents of drunkenness and slovenly behaviour, which further contributes to the overall spread of debris. Finally, such events risk putting off dancers who were attracted to dance culture in the first place because it provides an alternative to mainstream drinking culture in Aotearoa.

### **Left to Our Own Devices – Aotearoa Dance Culture and the Carnavalesque**

For Aotearoa dancers, the Gathering offered a carnivalesque experience in a form not found elsewhere in local cultural practices. As discussed previously, the Gathering became the New Year's celebration of choice for many New Zealanders seeking an alternative to the traditional alcohol-fuelled celebrations taking place in crowded city bars, or at local beach hangouts. The remote outdoor venue meant that overcrowding was not a problem, whilst the reduced incidence of drunkenness (due to the official alcohol ban) ensured that the event was safe for those who used drugs of a chemical or herbal variety. That the Gathering also incorporated many carnivalesque tropes into the 'playground' atmosphere is noted by Williams, who writes of his first glimpse of the Canaan Downs site in 1995: "Thousands of tents create a stunning carnival atmosphere around the fringes of trees. Huge dance tents and bizarre, colourful artistic installations dotted the main arena" (1). As this account of the 1998/9 event shows, I was likewise taken by the carnival atmosphere of the Gathering long before I knew of Bakhtin and the carnivalesque:

performers [ . . . ] circulate continuously, putting on displays of stilt walking, juggling, mime and fire poi. Sometimes these weird and wonderful looking individuals are organised into groups (a stunning fire-juggling display was one

of the midnight New Year celebrations), but they are just as likely to turn up when you least expect them. The lines between imagination and reality are blurred when a mime artist “hauls” in the line made by a light cutting across the dark, or an iridescent frog squats realistically at the entrance to one of the dance zones. (2)

One of the more significant carnivalesque activities outlined here is the fire display that marked the passing of one year to the next. In *The Spirit of Carnival*, David Danow writes that the all-consuming presence of fire was “designed to swallow the old in preparing the way for the new”. He quotes Bakhtin: “The heart of the matter is the ambivalent combination of abuse and praise, of the wish for death and the wish for life, projected in the atmosphere of the festival of fire, that is, of burning and rebirth” (30). Hence, the midnight fire display signified a desire for burning and renewal beyond that of the immediate swallowing of the old year by the new; it was a carnivalesque trope that acknowledges the circularity of all things.

The Gathering’s dream of creating a utopian society that privileges self-expression and community over repressed individuality has come to symbolise the political potential of Aotearoa outdoor dance culture as a whole. For three days and nights the event proved that an alternative existence can and does exist; like the carnivals of old it shook up the existing world order. Bakhtin believed that new beginnings were preceded by what he describes as the carnival spirit: “It frees human consciousness, thought, and imagination for new potentialities. For this reason great changes, even in the field of science, are always preceded by a certain carnival consciousness that prepares the way” (49). Despite its decline, the technologically-created space of the Gathering was of value politically because for the time of the event dancers lived in a realm that was imaginative, symbolic, experiential, and far removed from leisure activities that support the status quo. For the many gatherers who attended the event over the years that it operated, the Gathering offered a glimpse of utopia in action. And it was an experience of a lifetime that many wanted to repeat.

Although dance culture in Aotearoa can be regarded as a safety valve, it is in line with carnival in that the ‘licensed release’ can be politically effective. Bakhtin believed that the medieval carnivals of Rabelais’s world: “offered a completely different,

nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom” (6). A celebration of freedom, the second life of dance culture contrasts sharply with the regulations of the hierarchized, state-led, religious and corporate systems that structure our ‘official’ everyday lives. In “The Postmodern Prometheus: Collective Experience and the Carnavalesque”, Leanne McRae stresses the transgressive aspects of Bakhtin’s carnival which celebrate “otherness”: “[a] “world upside-down” in which the rules *are* broken, alternative truths are visualised and difference is embraced” (5). Dance parties may not change the rules or the hierarchies of official life, but, as Castle observes: “A vision of the un-natural makes explicit our unconscious assumptions about the natural” (87). Here, participation is the key. Unlike other technology-based carnivalesque cultures, at outdoor parties public participation is not filtered through a spectatorial lens, it is felt by the whole body. In the dance zone, the connections between dancers are made eye to eye, the only mediation being the drugs, music and ambience, which rather than orchestrating the experience, create a platform from which it spontaneously happens. In general, these things take place away from media interference; cameras and cell phones are present, but their tiny screens cannot capture the essence of the moment, which is felt and heard as much as it is seen. For dancers, the events become the second life, where skills are practiced outside the omnipresent media glare of the first, official life.

### **Free Your Arse - Bodily Freedom in the Dance Zone**

One of the ways in which outdoor dance parties transgress the status quo is that there is a more relaxed attitude towards the grotesque bodily functions. In *Subversive Pleasures*, Robert Stam outlines the importance of the *base* products of the human body to Bakhtin’s analysis: “Bakhtin’s vision exalts the “base” products of the body: feces, urine, sperm, menstrual flow – in sum, all that has been banned from respectable representation because official decorum remains chained to a Manichean notion of the body’s fundamental uncleanness” (158). Whilst it is an overstatement to suggest that dance culture “exalts” the various bodily secretions mentioned here, they are certainly more visible at outdoor events than they are in the city where waste products are neatly flushed

away from view. In a *Remix* magazine article, written prior to the 1998/99 Gathering, Jen Ferguson warns would-be gatherers of what to expect regarding Portaloo use: “Within hours of kick-off, the Portalooos will be unpleasant at best, so conduct a breeze test and avoid pitching your tent downwind. If you need to use the facilities, best to make a mad dash at 6am when the truck comes to empty them out” (11). For some, the lack of plumbed sanitation can present a difficult transition to make, but for others it becomes a freeing experience, and many celebrate the grotesque elements of bodily excretions as one of the ‘back to nature’ aspects of the culture. It is unlikely that outdoor dance culture will privilege excrement to the extent that it is thrown in celebration (as took place in medieval carnivals), but at least one dancer has earned a related nick-name for defecating publicly at events. At Visionz, the purpose-built wooden and polyurethane pit toilets featured white-painted messages extolling the squatter to celebrate the act of pissing and shitting. In contrast, signs were placed at fence lines, requesting that the native bush be respected and that toilets be used instead. By acknowledging the products of the body in a way that is more open, communicative, and humorous than is usually expressed in contemporary society, outdoor dance parties join their historical counterparts in exposing a universal truth: that no matter how much the individual body is subjected to sanitisation, the process that each must undergo in order to expel waste products can never be fully disguised.

For Bakhtin this privileging of the lower body is crucial to constructing a “dual” body, in which the polarities of head and body have been balanced, and the individual is aware of themselves as a separate identity at the same time that they understand their ephemeral place in the ongoing cycle of life. Finding that the dominant bourgeois individualist conception of the body is based upon the closed, beautiful ‘classical’ representation, Stallybrass and White refer to Bakhtin’s differentiation between ‘classical’ and ‘grotesque’ representations of the body, and set out the binary oppositions between the two: “The grotesque body is emphasized as a mobile, split, multiple self, a subject of pleasure in processes of exchange; and it is never closed off from either its social or ecosystemic context. The classical body on the other hand keeps its distance” (22). As modern Rabelaisian carnivals, dance parties reinstate corporeal duality, and in doing so reconnect the dancers to each other. In *Sounds English*, Nabeel Zuberi gives a

personal account of how rave dancing enabled him to “know and feel” his body differently:

By putting myself out there on the dance floor on my own, haltingly at first, I felt my way into the music’s ebbs, flows, and spaces, moving arms, feet, knees, hip and head, watching other dancers, until I perceived a shape to my own movements within the music. [. . .] Sometimes on the dance floor, all consciousness of my mind and body felt in flux in moments of oblivion, bliss, yes, even *jouissance*. (112)

With this sort of dancing, the body is never a classical body; the very nature of the dance demands that it must be loose and able to transgress disciplined limits. Examine closely a photograph of a dancefloor and in the ‘freeze-framed’ image individual dancers appear in grotesque forms, with limbs flung out in asymmetrical abandonment, mouths agape and eyes closed. Yet these movements are part of the polyrhythmic nature of the dance. Watch these same dancers as they really appear in the mobile, collective space of the dance zone and the uncoordinated movements recorded by a photograph become part of a unified process as dancers take pleasure in their own (and others’) bodily freedom. The act of dancing requires the dancers to plug into the multiple rhythms of the music, and in doing so they discover what Zuberi describes as a “new body consciousness and confidence”, also experienced as freedom from the restrictive regimes of the head (112). It is in the act of dancing that the weighted oppositions between head and body are broken down and reintegrated, and as such post-rave culture is a re-enactment of the sensual carnival crowd.

### **One in a Million: the Individual and Participation in the Mass Zone**

But is the freedom experienced in the dance zones enough for Aotearoa dance culture to meet Bakhtin’s criteria of carnival participation? Bakhtin writes that in carnival the people “have no sanctimonious regard for anyone. They are the hosts and are only hosts for there are no guests, no spectators, only participants” (249-50). Whilst the majority at an outdoor event are there to dance, that they have paid to do so and therefore expect to be entertained by their hosts somewhat equivocates the participatory nature of dance

events. That the entertainment takes the form of DJ's and live acts who are there because of their 'draw card' status further problematises the communal participatory aspects of dance culture. Thus Bakhtin's statement that "carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators" does not apply in this case (7). That DJ's are important to outdoor dance culture is demonstrated by a clip from *Radar Goes to the Gathering*, a television documentary fronted by comedian Radar that was filmed at the final Gathering in 2001. Here an interview with John Digweed is introduced with a montage of interviewees telling Radar that they are there to see the headlining UK act. "John Digweed", "John Digweed", "John Digweed", each of the interviewees chirps. What is significant – especially in terms of the music being produced by Aotearoa artists – is what the clip leaves out: what were the other names that dancers wanted to hear?<sup>20</sup> Due to the synergetic relationship between the music and the culture, it is unlikely that the footlights will ever disappear, but as set lists are increasingly made up of Aotearoa live acts and DJ's, the spotlight is being directed away from the international 'stars' and at local artists, who often attend as dancers as well. And there is still a high ratio of entertainment provided by performers in return for free entry. Emerging musicians and carnivalesque performers usually contribute in this way, so that the divide between spectator and performer is further blurred, as is shown by a 'fairy' called Rosebud who turned up in full costume at the gate of Visionz (2004) and offered to entertain the children in return for a ticket. In such ways Aotearoa dance culture moves closer to a carnivalesque-type celebration which is of, and by the community.

Yet the participatory, carnivalesque aspect of dance culture is further problematised by the authority wielded by promoters. Bakhtin noted that the "signal announcing the beginning of the festival" was the cue for seriousness and austerity to be put aside for the duration of the carnival, and a similar trope can be seen to be operating where an official opening signals the beginning of a dance party (249). This transition is shown in *Radar* when the Gathering organiser Murray Kingi is interviewed while driving a four wheel drive behind which the Gatherers walk to the official start of the festival; as Kingi manoeuvres the vehicle aside, there is a rush at the entranceway. Organisers exercise a certain amount of control at dance events, with security ensuring that those rules that do



exist (which are usually based on safety issues) are enforced but in general people are expected to comply to the requests that “they be nice humans” (the Gathering qtd. in McIver 2) or leave “troubles and egos at the gate” (Destination Booklet 2002). In the main, the role of the promoters or organisers of dance events is to provide entertainment and a safe area for dancers to ‘play’ in; in this regard they can be regarded as responsible hosts rather than authority figures, and most organisers find time to participate by joining the dance floor during the event.

Individual dancers can decide on what level of participation or spectatorship they wish to partake for any one party, but in a world becoming increasingly spectator-oriented, that they have the opportunity to more fully integrate this duality is important. The organisers and crews provide a safe space and a wide range of options, but the level of *pleasure* to be gained at these events is greater when participation is at its height. Rietveld links the merging of the spectator and the participant that occurs on the dance floor to carnivalesque festivals: “the place of the observer, who used to be part of the audience in search of social and perhaps sexual partners, becomes that of the outsider. [. . .] The meaning of the spectacle, seemingly so ‘obvious’ to the observer, changed within the perception of its participants, since at the height of the night spectator and spectacle became one” (166). Those who treat dance events as a spectacle never fully experience the carnivalesque pleasure of participation. On the dance floor the inhibitions produced by the strictures of society are broken down so that participation is encouraged without risk of criticism or censure. And, in an atmosphere where you stand out for not participating, some embrace the opportunity to become involved, to the extent that they may help with the clean-up and pack-down. In this regard, dance culture, despite the ticket-prices, the authority held by the promoters, and the spotlights accorded the entertainers, provides a space in which participation is not only encouraged, but is factored into the experience.

It is in the dance zone that the merging of the individual body into a unified carnivalesque mass is most apparent. Terry Castle’s description of the crowd at eighteenth-century English masquerade balls as a “shifting, disorienting, visual mass” is one that also fits the outdoor dance floor (5). At night, flashes of lights offer random images and it is easy to lose sight of the individual amongst the hundreds of dancers

moving with a lack of restraint and uniformity. In cold or rainy weather, the wearing of scarves, hats and hoods creates a literal masking effect, whilst the play of lights on driving rain further renders the individual anonymous amongst the visual patterns created by the merging of technology and nature. With anonymity comes the shedding of inhibitions, and the dancefloor represents Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque crowd: "Even the pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies, acquires a certain meaning. The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people's mass body. [ . . . ] At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community" (255). Bakhtin's definition of the sense of collectivity felt by the carnival crowd is echoed by the various manifestos of Aotearoa dance events. "In the dance we embody the ecstasy of unfiltered communion", wrote Owen in "From Our Mind to Yours". The Gathering also inspired Kong to write, "[The Gathering] is the dream that our differences can bring us together instead of pushing us apart" ("Persona"), whilst the Destination booklet asked dancers to "Remember to Dance Communicate Evolve and Enjoy" (2004). Due to their ability to obliterate perceived/received individual differences and unite people in a celebration of the mass body, both carnival and dance culture demonstrate how collectivity can incite political potential within a popular culture.

### **Polarstreaming – Refiguring the Binary World**

At Aotearoa events, the convergence of technology and nature promotes a greater awareness of earth-based principles. That integrating the environment and the music is important in these spaces, is noted by Susan Luckman in "Going Bush and Finding One's 'Tribe'". She quotes Earthcore (Australia) organiser Spiro Boursine, who notes that the music is organised so as to fit into 'earth' time:

for the middle of the night when it's *freezing*, [ . . . ] the last thing you want to be listening to is fluffy music. You want something that is [ . . . ] really intense and pump[s] the blood into your system. [ . . . ] But at sunrise for example, where things start to warm up, you need something a bit more uplifting to

signify that feeling. And then it's all connected to the feeling of what your body processes are going through; what your senses are experiencing. (320)

When operated in tandem with environmental tangibles the technological can thus be seen (or heard) to enhance nature, as in many events in which the use of the natural as inspiration for the live music feed has been integral to the party. Thus a dawn set by Dunedin artist Alpharhythm can be the soundtrack to a frosty night melting into pale light as the sun finally rises above the surrounding hill line (Dunedin Winter Solstice, Buckland's Crossing). Bakhtin relates the festive laughter associated with carnival practice to the changing of the seasons, "to the phases of the sun and moon, to the death and renewal of vegetation" (81), and dance culture likewise celebrates these 'everyday' occurrences even as it seeks to integrate the technological within the experience.

The integration of binary thought that occurs at Aotearoa dance events opens up the space for the culture to become ordered along less vertical lines. Bakhtin believed carnival to be organised in a more horizontal way than the binary, 'world upside down' model would suggest. He wrote that Rabelais "made the top and the bottom change places, intentionally mixed the hierarchical levels in order to discover the core of the object's concrete reality to free it from its shell and to show its material bodily aspect – the real being outside all hierarchical norms and values" (403). At carnival time, participants were generally free to choose how they transgressed their everyday life, with the possible exception of the 'fools' and 'clowns' expected to invert the hegemonic and ecclesiastical roles of the higher stratum. If Stam's view that Bakhtin's "leveling undoes binarisms and overturns hierarchies" is correct, then the suggestion that carnival is little more than a safety valve needs evaluation (159). In assessing the political efficacy of Bakhtin's argument, Clark and Holquist compare it with the modern carnivalesque practice of Halloween which inverts the hierarchies. In contrast, Bakhtin: "postulates the carnival spirit and carnival world as models for a superior world order that is organized horizontally rather than vertically. In the carnival, he contends, all are considered equal and brotherhood is universal" (309-10). In the modern teknivals of Aotearoa dance culture, individual dancers choose and occupy roles within the time-space of the events. In the dance zone they may be the clown, in the healing tent the nurse, in the camping zone the chronic giggler. And whilst they may choose to try on a number of identities for

a particular event, they are not locked into the same roles next time round. Thus the dance zones are not merely an inversion of hierarchies; as each dancer makes horizontal shifts between personas and persons, the space is open for disruption to occur. As such, it is possible that when the world has been returned to its right side up position, some shift has occurred in the twin processes of disruption and returning order.

### **A Dream, an Idea, Knowledge – Dance Culture and Utopian Spaces**

Michael Gardiner supports Bakhtin's claims as to the political value of carnival when he suggests that the utopian elements of *Rabelais* should be read as an example of a *critical utopia*. In "Bakhtin's Carnival: Utopia as Critique" Gardiner finds that much of utopian theory is of a totalising nature that is limited in its political scope. In particular, he defends Bakhtin against Emerson and Morson's assertion that "the utopia of carnival 'ultimately proved a dead end'" (21), and instead places Bakhtin within a framework based on Tom Moylan's 'critical' utopian theory: "Here, then, critical utopian discourse becomes a seditious expression of social change and popular sovereignty carried on in a permanently open process of envisioning what is not yet" (26-7).<sup>21</sup> Gardiner believes the oppositional examples of carnival to be critical utopias which envisage a life lived outside of the state's control. He writes that unlike utopian ideology, which mirrors the existing social order, a critical utopia "aims at the dissolution of this order through projecting a vision of an alternative existence" (30). This distinction can be shown to be operating in Aotearoa. Whereas the Pākehā utopian ideology discussed in the Introduction supports imperialism and colonisation, the utopia envisaged in the dance zones is valid because it suggests that there is an alternative to the existing social order. Such a vision is the inspiration for discourses such as Kong's "Persona" where he writes that the Gathering is a dream, an idea, the knowledge "that all these things can exist". Here, Kong identifies the political value of utopias such as the Gathering as being proof that they do exist, no matter how short lived. Perhaps one of the greatest political achievements of dance parties is that they do not just project a vision of an alternative existence, they provide its participants, if only for a few days, knowledge of what it feels like to *live* in this utopian ideal. As Kong notes, "The Gathering is a place where we all

meet, it is a place we have the room to stand on our own feet and have our own fun for a while. Just because we can!” (n. pag.). At the core of Aotearoa dance culture, lies this knowledge, which is renewed each time the dancer chooses to live their carnivalesque second life.

### **Living a Second Life – Participation in the Massive Collective**

For the smaller, more regular events such as those put on by Christchurch’s Massive and White Elephant crews, the ‘second life’ of the dance parties inevitably creeps into the first. Bakhtin wrote that “carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people” (7). This principle is evident for the volunteers who crew the events, especially those smaller regular parties held throughout the year. Part of this research has entailed an involvement with the Massive collective, who have consistently put on several events a year since 1996 (which in recent years have included zones by the White Elephant Trust, aimed at the empowerment of youth), and the observations made here are informed by my participation as an on-site crew member. At the core of the equinox and solstice parties is a whānau-like crew who camp together for up to several days at the site, and meet regularly to organise the quarterly events. The openness of the community is shown by an invitation in weekly gig guide *The Package*, advertising and upcoming event: “The party goes from 9pm to 8am, but you’re free to come help out during the day” (19-25 September 2002). This openness towards dancer participation means that the core Massive crew come from a variety of backgrounds, yet bond together over the hosting of events that are often undertaken in extreme weather conditions. Here, the grotesque body that has sweated over pack-outs and pack-ins, found freedom on the dancefloor and in the Portaloos, and even snored through the morning set, is celebrated as part of the reality of putting on events. Thus like carnival, dance culture discloses “the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life” (Bakhtin 48). The second life of the events exposes what is missing in the existing order, and so we return again and again to balance out our everyday existences with the setting up of small alternative

worlds, which as the dancers mature have increasingly included the attendance of children.

But it is the failure of this utopian potentiality to be realised beyond the time of the party that makes the political value of such a life difficult to assess. The types of events put on by crews such as Massive may offer a quarterly escape from the existing order, but when the party is packed up, and the last of the rubbish picked, we revert to our everyday lives, where children, work and study occupy the majority of our time. The inevitable return of the everyday, has left critics divided over the utopian idealism of Bakhtin's work. Emerson suggests that of the Russian theorists studying him in the 1990's, "No one doubted that Bakhtin's image of carnival was utopian fantasy" (164). Previously, Emerson, along with Gary Saul Morson in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* employed the 'anti-utopianism' of Bakhtin's other writings to suggest that in *Rabelais*, Bakhtin uses the term utopia in an inverse sense: "Perhaps intended as a fig leaf for Bakhtin's unorthodox views, the term *utopian* may be misleading. In context, it appears to designate something close to its opposite: an idealization of unremitting skepticism and unending change without a goal. What Bakhtin offers is the utopia of an anti-utopian thinker" (94). But what of the utopianism of our dance zones? Although Massive events are notably tidier than the larger, more commercial parties, that they are still far from an environmental utopia the next morning is the bane of those who deal with the rubbish, and may account for the anti-utopian nature of this plea for those wanting to participate in the hedonistic sense only, to at least pay for the privilege: "Security will be relentless so watch out for electric fences, gin traps, snipers, hungry dogs and poison ..... so consider the low charge of this party [\$25-\$35] and pay, please" (Flier, Summer Soulstice 2002). To anyone who knows the Massive crew the militaristic warning is ludicrous, but it does highlight the fact that there is a disproportionate amount of work done by the volunteers. Massive owns some of the equipment used at the events, but until we can be fully DIY, events have no choice but to incorporate commercialism to some degree; they can be expensive to put on, and there is an imbalance in the spectator/participation divide. But do these conditions mean that our carnivals amount to little more than a confirmation of utopia's lack of substance, a nowhere place that exists only in the imagination? Is this a place that is utopian precisely because it is unrealisable?

The techno-carnival atmosphere of dance culture is conducive to envisioning the world as it is not yet, and the changing face of nature is celebrated as part of a process of renewal. Other critics disagree with Emerson and Morson's critique of Bakhtin's work, and posit that the utopianism associated with carnival can be politically effective. As the quote at the head of this chapter shows, Clark and Holquist believe that it was how carnival time was spent that was of significance: "Carnival is not time wasted but time filled with profound and rich experience" (302). Simon Dentith also notes that Bakhtin: "uses 'utopian' in a very particular way. [. . .] it is not that carnival looks forward to some distant prospect of social perfection, but that the space of carnival has already realised, it. Carnival becomes a time outside time, a second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance" (76). Thus the utopian elements inherent within post-rave cultures suggest that in many respects this second life does provide a legitimate utopian encounter, that whether the dancer's objective be hedonistic release or working holiday, it can offer both escapism and experience. Utopia realised, even for the shortest of times, leaves a lasting impression on its participants, and as the core of familiar faces at Massive events show, many are keen to repeat the experience. With events held at different places on the outskirts of Christchurch, nature's evolution is reflected in the seasonal changes, which can add an unexpected 'magic' to the event, such as the ice dancing at the Journey's End winter SoulStyles party when there was an eleven degree frost and the dancefloor froze. In summer, Little River provided the perfect dipping place next to the dance zone for several Soulstices, whilst the morning party of a particularly stormy Spring Equinox in Kaituna Valley featured a back-drop of fresh snow on the hills. Less benign was an Equinox held at The Willows, when a dust storm blew down the Waimakariri River in time for the pack up, leaving crew and equipment covered in thick dust. As celebrations of the progressive regeneration of the earth and its inhabitants, dance events thus project a utopian vision of the future based on the premise that change is an inevitable component of nature's cycle.

By creating a second life in which the old paradigms are turned upside down, Aotearoa outdoor dance parties are thus an example of what Gardiner describes as a 'concrete' utopia. Building on Bakhtin's metaphor of carnival as an 'antibody', Gardiner

suggests that carnival: “liv[es] within a pathological social body, always threatening to rupture it from within. [. . .] Hence, carnival is not [. . .] an ‘abstract utopia’ – one based on a wholly voluntarist and idealist view of the future – but rather a ‘concrete utopia’, one that represents a real and not just a formal possibility” (37-8). If carnival is an example of a ‘concrete utopia’ then its efficacy as a political tool for the repressed must be reassessed. Most outdoor parties in Aotearoa embrace a carnival spirit to a greater or lesser degree, but carnivalesque tropes appear at all, from the sci-fi-esque stilt-walkers at Alpine Unity to the clown-like game of ‘rugby golf’ that took place around the dance area at Wunderland.<sup>22</sup> That participation is also key to a party’s success suggests that dance parties may be the most potent form of carnival Aotearoa has yet experienced. Thus Aotearoa outdoor dance culture achieves what Gardiner describes as the political value of utopias:

Utopia represents a peculiarly well-suited vantage-point from which to view our own social arrangements, because these are suddenly illuminated in a new and very different light. [. . .] through a comparison with the utopian world, present-day society is estranged, rendered unfamiliar. Without such an imaginative leap ‘outside’ our own socio-historical situation, the critique of ideology would lack force and conviction. If an important element of the functioning of ideology is social integration, utopia operates as ‘social subversion’. (29)

Much of dance culture’s political achievement is that it exposes people – many of whom are dissatisfied with the status quo – to a multi-media projection of a modern utopia. At dance events we take an imaginative leap into a different world, where our attachments to consumer items are often rendered absurd, even as we continue to act them out in the zones (nothing appears as out of place on the dancefloor as a cell phone). Although we are a long way from making a full break with ‘official’ life, for the time of the party at least, we have the opportunity to enter a symbolic realm where our social arrangements are reassessed. Whilst any real material effects resulting from such a shift in consciousness may be difficult to pinpoint, dance parties can provide alternative arenas of desire and identification that displace those manufactured by corporate media.



### **Asylum Seeking – the Dunedin Winter Solstice as Multi-Mediated Carnival**

One event that is uniquely tied to a carnival spirit, is the Eudeamony Dunedin Winter Solstice which takes place on the same night as the Dunedin City Council's Mid-Winter Carnival. Held in one of the coldest areas of Aotearoa, the double celebration is a high point for many dancers. As the largest party organised by Dunedin's Eudeamony crew the Solstice attracts dancers from around the South Island, eager to attend an event that requires a certain amount of fortitude. Held outdoors in locations such as Buckland's Crossing and the grounds of the former Seacliff mental hospital, the party takes place far away from the annual Dunedin Mid-Winter Carnival, which is held in the public space of the Octagon. Hence attendance at the urban Carnival before the drive to the Solstice site has become part of the pre-party ritual for many of the dancers. The earlier event is a good example of how carnival has become incorporated and spectator-oriented. Whilst the Carnival is successfully carnivalesque in bringing together a cross-section of Dunedin residents to celebrate a pagan festival in the shadow of the Anglican Church, for the 2003 event, the celebration revolved around a lengthy, beautifully staged giant puppet show with pagan overtones. Performed by stilt-walkers and puppeteers, tall silvery fairytale characters ducked and dived amongst fake trees, but because the stage was placed at the bottom of an amphitheatre, much of the action was obscured, and the crowd was packed around the spectacle. Away from the show were cheap food stalls and an ancient merry-go-round, the tinny music of which competed with the 'official' sound of the pageant. Participation is encouraged during the lead-up to the event with the provision of an open workshop in which anyone can go and make a lantern for the public parade. But even this procession was choreographed within the elaborate nature of the event; it thus became subject to observation, with participants watched by those enjoying the Carnival from the comfort of the surrounding bars, most of which provided outdoor seating and heating. The public was invited to join the parade as it coursed around the Octagon, but accompanied by drummers playing a series of repetitive military style rhythms, it was largely a subdued affair, the separation between participant and observer physically demarcated by the footpath. Yet the festival was a celebration of the solstice, and at the end of the event, a demon-like character set fire to a large pagan symbol, which gave way to a fireworks display, after which buckets were handed around for donations. Whilst the

fire display is an example of the carnivalesque, rather than signifying the renewal of all things, it was the sign that the Carnival was over for another year, and the crowd quickly dispersing as the last of the flames died away.

For some, attending the ‘official’ celebration of solstice is part of the ritual preceding the Eudeamony event, which is where the *real* carnival takes place. At the city event, those planning to attend the Seacliff solstice celebrations stood out amongst the other Dunedinites. A mixture of students, artists and musicians, the dancers were dressed for an entire night outdoors, their colourful display of layers designed to combat the freezing temperatures. Hence, the Dunedin Winter Solstice becomes both a part of, and separate from the official celebrations; it does not openly challenge the status quo with a show of grotesque carnivalesque activity, it merely operates as a temporary utopian zone outside of the official carnival time and place. Attracting between 300 and 1000 dancers, in many ways the party is a celebration of nature itself: the solstice, the winter, and the provision by the earth of the natural hallucinogen – magic mushrooms. Plentiful in Otago during the winter, mushroom gathering is a popular student pastime, and at the 2003 event, that it had been a good season was evidenced by the open celebration of the fungi, some groups setting up camp on arrival and cooking a variety of mushroom dishes before sharing them in a meal. In contrast, ‘officially’ banned alcohol is drunk discreetly. Whilst other substances were undoubtedly in use at this event, the wide consumption of magic mushrooms provides one of the few examples when the majority of the dancers are on a similar ‘trip.’ That a number of dancers ritually search for, harvest, and ingest the drug suggests that this party is even more unlicensed than other events, where drug taking is usually the result of a consumer transaction. Here, all it takes is the time, know-how, and know-where, and anyone can join the collective trip.

The 2003 Eudeamony winter Solstice was held in the grounds of the former Seacliff Mental Hospital, and when this location is used, there is an added element of the grotesque to the event. Seacliff Mental Hospital was built in 1883 and was partially demolished in 1959, and since then it has been reduced to an imposing set of gothic ruins, fitting of its reputation as a medical chamber of horrors. In the grounds, a fence surrounds a ‘memorial tree’ to Aotearoa author Janet Frame, who wrote about Seacliff and her experiences of ECT (electric shock therapy) in *Angel At My Table* and *Owls Do Cry*; as

such the hospital has become symbolic of mid-twentieth-century mental health practices in Aotearoa, which also included lobotomies, which Frame herself narrowly escaped. In *Angel at my Table*, Janet Frame recalls glimpsing Seacliff from the train during a journey to Dunedin, prior to her incarceration:

The train approached Seacliff and once again there was a movement in the carriage as the passengers became aware of *Seacliff*, the station, and *Seacliff* the hospital, the asylum, glimpsed as a castle of dark stone between the hills.

The train drew into the station. Yes, the loonies were there; everyone looked out at the loonies [. . .]. Often it was hard to tell who were the loonies. (150)

By the mid twentieth century in Aotearoa, there was little outlet for madness in everyday life, and as Frame's own history with mental institutions shows, those who looked at the world with different eyes from what was perceived by society as 'normal' were deemed to be 'loony' and hidden away in places like Seacliff. If they were not lobotomised and returned to society with the aid of ECT, drugs and 'therapy', they were left to suffer their 'madness' in sombre isolation.

Mental institutions are the inverse of festive madness, so by 'occupying' Seacliff, Eudeamony celebrate madness in its original grotesque form. Bakhtin writes that madness was a theme of the Romantic grotesque which usually expressed fear of the world and sought to pass this fear onto the reader. He notes that:

the theme of madness is inherent to all grotesque forms, because madness makes men look at the world with different eyes [. . .]. In folk grotesque, madness is a gay parody of official reason, of the narrow seriousness of official "truth." It is a festive madness. In Romantic grotesque, on the other hand, madness acquires a somber, tragic aspect of individual isolation. (39)

Unfortunately passenger trains no longer pass through Seacliff, but should anyone venture into Seacliff during the Eudeamony solstice they may be forgiven for thinking that the 'lunatic asylum' was once again open for business. In a *Rip It Up* article for a previous Seacliff solstice event Melanie Selby writes: "Only in Dunedin would you get away with holding a dance party in the middle of winter at a spooky old mental asylum battered by sea winds" (34). Yet Eudeamony member Tim Owen acknowledges how spaces such as this can be reclaimed: "[he] says it's as if they are resolving something by

holding the party there. After all, all these happy people being in a place where once upon a time people were not happy must be a good thing” (35). With many of the participants hallucinating on mushrooms, at the 2003 event, instances of ‘loony’ behaviour were everywhere, as people responded to the shimmering, kaleidoscopic world unfolding before their eyes. The dance zone was situated so that the ruins remained largely out of sight, but the imposing walls of the high stone structure were yet visible from various points around the site, and occasionally shone out from under the full moon when you least expected it. At this event, the authority of the DJ was removed (the DJ tent faces away from the dance floor) and dancers were freed from the temptation to remain faced in one direction (as still happens at a majority of outdoor parties). Thus as dancers – anonymous in their layers of wool – weave and circle around each other – the collective trip is expressed in grins and laughter. And having survived a night of freezing intensity, the mass excitement that greets the sunrise at around 8am the next morning (when nature becomes the object of a spectatorial gaze) suggests that a night of licensed craziness can have a rejuvenating effect.

### **Utopia by Degrees – Carnivalising Our Everyday Lives**

For some dancers, the dreams, ideas, and knowledge gained at the dance parties inspire them to make gradual changes, so that the carnival spirit becomes instrumental in revolutionising their everyday lives. Emerson writes that carnival “does not and cannot hope to change the world; it can only change our inner relationship to that world”, and in some respects dance culture likewise produces this effect (103). Even in its decentred, disseminated, and internalised postmodern form, carnival continues to occupy a contested territory where the existing social order is both questioned and resisted. Carnival, as fragmented, mediated, and spectator-oriented as it has become, can nevertheless provide a vital platform for resistance, albeit one that operates as part of the licensed release of the “hegemonic dance floor,” a term used by McRae to describe popular culture’s safety valve function in contemporary society (5). In this article, McRae writes mainly on television and internet cultures but her findings are more widely relevant:

The sense of belonging that is activated through popular sites speaks to a range of disaffiliated subjectivities on the fringes of legitimate discourse. These identities mobilise a collective experience that is outside “official limits of belonging” and therefore entails reflexive interrogations of the self, the past and popular culture. (7)

Aotearoa dance culture goes one further than virtual communities however. These are not the imaginary utopias of the internet, but physical spaces that require physical and collective mobilisation. As such dance culture moves beyond reflexive interrogations and goes about creating a second life that is experienced in real, utopian terms.

In many ways the turn of the millennium turned out to be every bit the threshold age predicted, and as such a carnival consciousness became highly relevant. Of Rabelais’s and Bakhtin’s literary celebration of carnival, Clark and Holquist write that: “The early Renaissance and the Russian Revolution were threshold ages, border situations on the map of history. Each created in the inhabitants of its moment an urgent awareness of radical change. Each was a rip in the fabric of time” (296). The beginning of the twenty-first century is likewise turning out to be a period of radical change. As a range of grievances is played out in a number of war zones, the battles being fought between military and terrorists are perhaps the ultimate in postmodern warfare, and may yet prove to be capitalism’s last gasp. And, as the stockpiles of nuclear weapons grow, nuclear war is once again a very real threat. But not even that can overshadow the global concern over environmental issues and there is growing belief that the new age may be ushered in via the predicted ecological disaster that is global warming. *The Observer* notes the apocalyptic future predicted in a secret report on climate change that was originally suppressed by US defence chiefs: “The document predicts that abrupt climate change could bring the planet to the edge of anarchy as countries develop a nuclear threat to defend and secure dwindling food, water and energy supplies. [. . .] ‘Once again, warfare would define human life’” (“Now the Pentagon Tells Bush: Climate Change Will Destroy Us” n. pag.). But in this climate of fear and uncertainty, dance culture addresses the threat directly. Twenty years on from the first UK raves, much of the original hedonistic impulses have been left behind. In Aotearoa, dance parties have begun to

evolve as a culture that practices survivalist skills far from civilisation; skills that may yet prove to be essential to everyday life.

In the marginal locations of outdoor dance parties, a unique opportunity exists for people to establish an autonomous, alternative society that operates from within the existing world order. The nature of carnival provides a practical site of resistance for those wishing to build a new, more integrated life. Whether Aotearoa outdoor dance culture manages to more fully actualise any utopian impulses, its dream of an alternative paradigm may nevertheless continue to have political effect. Outdoor dance culture projects a future where the individual is swallowed into the body of the crowd, where participation supersedes spectatorship, and where the needs of the body are integrated with those of the head. It provides a space in which nature and technology co-exist in harmony, and where edification of the soul is achieved through the spiritual communion of the dance. Why must we dance? Because by dancing we laugh in the face of despair, and prepare ourselves for whatever may follow.

**Chapter Five:**  
**Looking to the Past, Reaching for the Future –**  
**Tribal Conversion as a Means to Evolution**

When a Maori looked at land, he did not see an area of so many hectares which could be divided, subdivided, rented, leased or sold. Instead he saw certain resources which could be used to feed, house, clothe, and equip him and his whanau. [. . .] And he saw places associated with his many atua (gods), and with the births, lives and deaths of his tipuna.

The tribe's land [. . .] was also the burial-ground of the placenta and of the bones of ancestors, and the abode of tribal atua and of many other gods as well. The ancestral lands were therefore regarded with deep veneration, and not merely as an economic resource. [. . .] The loss of the land would bring not only deprivations and disgrace, but spiritual anguish. (Harry C. Evison *Te Wai Pounamu: The Greenstone Island* 9)

Hope for a generation, just beyond my reach, not beyond my sights.  
 (Fat Freddy's Drop "Hope")

The post-rave theoretical framework of particular relevance to Aotearoa outdoor dance culture is tribalism, the tropes of which are increasingly influenced by Māori and Pacific Island culture. Despite the Pākehā mythology that pretends we are not racist, racism in Aotearoa is institutional, and Māori are still fighting for their rights under te Tiriti o Waitangi. Yet in the past few decades there has been a cultural renaissance that has seen Māori tropes and practices adopted by a number of Pākehā and other New Zealanders searching for ways to feel connected to Aotearoa, the land. And, with cultural protocol being disseminated through schools, workplaces and in the media, some Pākehā are mindful of tribal customs, an outcome which may account for dance culture's reluctance to embrace Māori culture too closely, when obvious displays of symbolism and ritual practices in the dance zone might be read as unauthorised incorporation, or worse, cause offence. Thus Māori culture is celebrated in the outdoor zones in ways that

suggest that a more subtle connection is being established with the tangata whenua, and the influence of localised art forms can be seen on the decorations and designs that compliment the parties' outdoor locations.

But it is the celebration of Māori culture that is embodied on the dancers that most symbolises dance culture's sense of connection to Aotearoa. Through the wearing of tā moko (tattoo), pounamu (greenstone), bone carvings, kete (flax bags), and other adornments featuring Māori and Pacific designs, Pākehā display their desire to feel spiritually connected to the great interlocking nomadic tribe who had mythologically mapped out the Pacific long before Captain Cook set it down on paper. An example of Western exploitation of indigenous cultures this may well be, but for many the wearing of such pieces carries with it a sense of responsibility that is closely associated with the spiritual and political significance attached to such things. Whether or not the adoption of these symbols is approved of by Māori, at a time when Aotearoa is divided along racial lines, these cultural markers also become a sign of affiliation with the tangata whenua, as dancers join other Pākehā in wanting to see greater cooperation between the many different tribes that make up this land.

As outdoor dance culture evolves in Aotearoa, a stronger Māori presence has helped instil a sense of the significance of the whenua to Māoritanga, around which a nascent spirituality is developing. With the Gathering having marked the 2000 millennium celebrations with a karakia for Aotearoa, awareness of the deep reverence held by Māori for Papatuanuku (earth mother), Ranginui (sky father), and their children is growing, with the message being disseminated in a number of ways. When there is greater cooperation between party organisers and local iwi, the opportunity for dance culture to learn more about Māoritanga is embraced. In Te Wai Pounamu, the Kaikoura Roots festival opened with a pōwhiri (welcome) given by local iwi, whilst at Destination (1996-2004), representatives from the Waitaha people shared their spiritual beliefs with dancers during the final years of the annual event, conducting opening and closing ceremonies and performing during the daytime celebrations. During these times, what Victor Turner refers to as spontaneous *communitas* takes place; felt as a strong sense of connection with the atua (gods), the tīpuna (ancestors) and all the tangata whenua of this land. As the many sub-tribes that make up Aotearoa dance culture acknowledge the moment, hope is



instilled and we feel one step closer to ushering in the new paradigm that dance culture ultimately seeks. Yet this feeling is not something that easily transcends the journey back to everyday life, and when groups who have experienced spontaneous *communitas* attempt to attain normative *communitas* the results are generally anything but utopian. Which brings us back to the conundrum of the previous chapters. Can the feelings of community and communion with the gods that takes place during these transcendent moments of group worship be translated into an everyday lifestyle, or should we just content ourselves with temporary respites that balance out the monotony of urban life? Can our utopian zones really effect change?

If the spiritual belief system growing in Aotearoa outdoor dance culture has any kind of apocalyptic vision, it is in line with what Graham St. John calls a global “ecomillennarian dance movement” which holds that the earth is undergoing another epoch of regeneration (“Techno Millennium” 213). Global rave’s desire to connect to pre-industrial cultures, has fed an interest in the teachings of the Mayan calendar, which predicts that the year 2012 will usher in a new world paradigm. For Aotearoa believers, the death that must occur before rebirth can take place is just as likely to be caused by the children of Ranginui and Papatuanuku causing havoc as they rain floods, lava and other ‘natural disasters’ upon us, as it is due the human race’s own mindless pollution. For New Zealanders the threat of earthquake, volcanic eruption, and global warming is far greater than that of war or terrorist attack; the evidence of past furies is all too visible in our diverse landscape, the beauty of which was mostly created by the violent uplifting of the tectonic plates which form the spine of our islands. With most of the major cities built on shorelines that are also close to fault lines and volcanoes, Aotearoa may yet be tested in ways that this generation cannot conceive. But tribal cultures retain an understanding of the cyclic nature of all things, and in the tribal drumming zones, these interconnecting cycles are expressed in the ancient art of drumming. Here, the importance of atavism and dancing is acknowledged as being central to social custom, unity and spiritual connection, and the threat of disaster is integrated into the understanding that there can be no regeneration without loss.

But whether or not worst case scenarios are played out, the multi-cultural outdoor zones could yet be a place where land-based principles are acted out, and this chapter has

been written as an exercise in ideological *communitas* – born of sublime moments on the dancefloor – that envisages Aotearoa dance culture as an ecologically sound, if temporary, way of life. At dance parties a form of normative *communitas* is played out in the camping areas, which become a paddock of small interlocking tribes, as friends create functional campsites that are organised along whānau (family, community) lines. But whereas pre-European Māori tattooed the land with pā sites built from environmental materials, the dance culture legacy for Aotearoa would be metal, glass, and plastic, which would scar the land for an significant length of time, if not permanently, were there not workers prepared to pick up the rubbish. At time of writing, many of the dance zones are merely an extension of throwaway consumer culture, the daylight highlighting the amount of packaging that is the detritus of such a lifestyle. Whilst there can be no return to a romantic primitive past (technology is still central to our culture), if Aotearoa dance culture is to come closer to realising its earth-based ideological potential, we need to take the lessons from the past and adapt them to the here and now, so that our future is at least sustainable. And we must start with the parties themselves. Until the evidence of occupation that every single dancer leaves is nothing more than the imprints of their feet, permanent normative *communitas* is a long way off, and our dreams of utopianism will continue to ring hollow. Yet, spontaneous *communitas* continues to convert dancers to a land-based spirituality where magic, miracles, and epiphanies remind us of our connection to, and responsibility for, each other and the land. Thus the flames of faith and hope are kept alive.

In the ‘techno-tribal’ zones of outdoor raves, a vision of a future – in which the past is honoured, and the present acted upon – hovers tantalisingly into sight. During the course of this research I have come to realise that greater confluence between dance culture and Māori may be the key to Aotearoa dance culture becoming more politically active. The first draft of this chapter included a vision of a dance party hosted by Māori, where dancers could come and learn more about Māoritanga and the local iwi. At the Parihaka International Peace Festival in March 2006, I had the privilege to experience such an event. That it was held on the sacred ground of the Parihaka pā, where the hosts’ tīpuna had lived in a state of self-sufficiency and passive resistance during the late nineteenth century, was of even greater significance. If the Gathering had awakened my

sense of possibility, Parihaka proves that Aotearoa dance culture can convert dancers politically. Here, our history is told by the descendants of the people arrested on that most shameful day in 1881. Welcomed on to Te Whiti's marae, we are free to walk through the place where hundreds of whare (houses) were razed during the sacking, and look into the ruins of the cold store that held the flour baked into bread with which the constabulary was welcomed. At Parihaka, the enduring spirit of the atua and the people is manifest, the majestic power of the volcanic Taranaki Maunga (mountain) a striking reminder of Papatuanuku's might as earth mother, a goddess that even at Parihaka we continue to dishonour. Yet the Parihaka Festival is imbued with the mana of generations prepared to fight for the land, and as such it has the potential to change attitudes: politically, spiritually, and ecologically. It also has the potential to inspire other events to work more closely with Māori on building utopian zones that operate within tribal principles. The challenge for Aotearoa dance culture now is to grasp that vision and for the time of the party at least, make it a reality.

### **Reconfiguring the Tribal – (Neo)tribalism in an Individualistic Society**

In the twenty-first century rave has become a network of what Maffesoli calls neo-tribes, and global members borrow tropes and spiritual beliefs from a number of 'classical' tribal cultures. In his discussion of neo-tribalism Kevin Hetherington defines the classical sociology and anthropological definition of tribalism and notes that: "tribes would normally be said to be ascribed and not elective or achieved. They would be seen as part of the dense sociability of small-scale societies where one's lifestyle and identity would be established at birth by ascriptive categories of culture such as caste, kinship, religious customs and beliefs" (49). Whereas classical tribal groupings are stable and non-elective, membership of neo-tribes is usually voluntary and connections are fluid. In *Time of the Tribes*, Maffesoli writes that neo-tribalism is:

characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal. [. . .] we can occasionally see 'instantaneous condensations' (Hocquenghem-Scherer), which are fragile but for that very instant the object of significant emotional

investment. It is this sequential aspect that allows me to talk of the surpassing of the principle of individuation. (76)

Concerned with the individuation of ‘the masses’, Maffesoli discusses neo-tribalism from an urban perspective, but global post-rave takes this notion several steps further by removing the spectacle from the cities, and for a short time operating as a site of practical tribalism. In these spaces, the tropes and practices of classical tribalism are also evident, and like the historical tribes from which we borrow, our rituals include dance as a necessary component of tribal spiritual cohesion.

Yet the application of the term ‘tribal’ to dance culture is problematic, as retrieval of the past is impossible and modern attempts at tribalism usually fail. In *The Culture Cult: Designer Tribalism and Other Essays*, Roger Sandall presents a convincing argument as to why the wish for a return to a tribal past is an example of what he describes as romantic primitivism:

The Culture Cult calls for a radical simplification of modern life. [. . .] communalism is seen as a practical goal. But there have been thousands of communes, and one way or another they all reinvented the wheel. [. . .] At the deepest level life itself is about ever-extending complexity, and it is time to stop dreaming about going back to the land or revisiting the social arrangements of the past. They aren’t options, and they probably never were. (viii)

Although this passage has the hallmarks of a paternal ‘stern talking to’ Sandall does raise issue with the problematic nature of such ‘Culture Cults’. The failure of many hippie communes was because the majority of the participants were middle-class, and lacked many of the skills – both practical and social – to realise their utopian dream of all living together under one roof. For those that embraced a ‘free love’ ethos, sexual power struggles were a factor in the hierarchies that formed within the community. As Sandall notes, “Disputes over power and sexual privilege are common in communes” (28). But cults and communes – aside from associated tragedies such as those of Jonestown and Waco – do very little to threaten the status quo. Like those tribes who continue to live in the jungle fringes of colonised areas, these ‘romantic primitives’ are not mobilised in their retreat from society. Mostly lived outside of cities, the success or failure of such

communities is generally only of mainstream interest when leaders are accused of sexual transgression, a local example being that of the Cust community led by Hope Christian, which relocated to the West Coast after television exposure of sexual misconduct. But this style of primitivism is far removed from the various tribes that make up post-rave global culture, which is organised along communicative, rather than sexual lines, and does not fully retreat from society.<sup>23</sup> Dance culture combines the modern interpretation of neo-tribalism with the communal and spiritual aspects of classical tribalism, but on a temporary basis; such tribes are not usually subject to the pressures experienced by permanent attempts to live separately from mainstream society.

### **Techno Travellers on the Move – European Rave as Nomadic War Machine**

In the UK, the techno travellers were dangerous because they believed that the retrieval of a sense of community and spiritual unity could be attained using modern technology, enabling the ravers to confront middle England using any equipment available. The travellers' lifestyle – although Spartan by bourgeois standards – relied on the very mobility that defines modern living. Vehicles, generators, sound systems, and cell phones were recycled and utilised as the untidy convoys rolled their way from party to party through the English countryside, and in the ceaseless repetitive beats booming out of sound systems were the voodoo rhythms of a marauding tribe. In his discussion of the Spiral Tribe, Collin notes that they believed that they were connected to prehistoric nomadic tribes who had celebrated thousands of years previously with music and dance in the same places. For the Spiral Tribe, “free parties were shamanic rites which, using the new musical technologies in combination with certain chemicals and long periods of dancing, preferably in settings with spiritual significance, could reconnect urban youth to the earth with which they had lost contact, thus averting imminent ecological crisis” (202). The Spiral Tribe's philosophy may have been tenured in exactly the sort of romantic ideology that Sandall despises, but this was a tribe that backed up its utopian policies with party warfare that struck at the heart of England's carefully manicured, bucolic image. Little wonder that John Major felt it necessary to declare in 1992: “New age travellers. Not in this age. Not in any age” (qtd. in Collin 218).

The travellers responded to this challenge with environmental protest action. Collin notes how this situation evolved: “It’s easy to see how Spiral Tribe’s ideas of ‘reconnecting with the earth’ dovetail with environmental protesters’ concerns about cars’ and roads’ unsustainable impact on the ecosystem” (227). As other tribes such as Dongas and Exodus began to blur the distinctions between protest and partying, environmental and housing protests began to resemble the free parties, and thus attracted a greater number of protesters. Exodus had gone several steps further and built a commune in a Luton squat called HAZ (Housing Action Zone) Manor which had been completely rebuilt by the group whose ranks numbered many with traditional working class skills. Collin notes that “their dream was to turn the temporary autonomous zone into a permanent revolution” (228).

After the CJA took effect many dispossessed travellers took their caravans to Europe where they found greater toleration of their lifestyle. For the British travellers, the new laws made life difficult, and Collin notes that unable to fund their lifestyles by selling wares or busking at the festivals the travellers became dispersed: “Isolated and depressed, many either moved into housing, parking their buses in the inner cities, or left the country altogether, seeking a less stressful life in Ireland, France, Spain or Portugal. [. . .] it appeared that the government had finally defeated the travellers” (233-4). Having fled to Europe after the Castlemorton charges had been laid, the Spiral Tribe regrouped in Paris and replaced confiscated equipment before staging their first Teknival in 1993, which attracted a number of acolytes who adopted their military style of dress. Later that year, they moved to Germany, to squat on the site of the former Berlin Wall, along with fellow British traveller tribe in exile, the Mutoid Waste Company who had built “a spectacular, Day-Glo-painted Stonehenge” from decommissioned Eastern Bloc tanks (238). Barred from the Wiltshire Stonehenge the group had recreated a futuristic model out of the debris of the cold war at what was the most famous junction in the East/West divide. Integrating many of the binaries that make up Western thought – East/West, past/future, war/peace – the act was symbolic of the very meaning of rave.

Joining forces, the Spiral Tribe and Mutoid Waste Company gathered a convoy of military cast-offs and travelled across Europe, holding Teknivals on the way. Featuring “two MIG fighters on tank transporters, huge circus trailers and massive six-wheel-drive

amphibious vehicles” the convoy took to the roads, staging Teknivals in the Czech Republic, Austria and Italy before returning to France for their twelfth event in August 1995 (239). Here was an example of Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadic war machine writ large: “War machines take shape against the apparatuses that appropriate the machine and make war their affair and their object: they bring connections to bear against the great conjunction of the apparatuses of capture or domination” (423). Discussing the war machine in relation to rave culture, Jordan writes that it is not a machine for waging military war, “but is the abstract form of assemblages that create lines of flight. The war-machine wages war on molar and molecular lines. As such war-machines are dedicated to mutations, changes and creativity and their aim is the formation of lines of flight” (133). But the Teknival that rolled across Europe in 1993 on an assortment of military tanks was not merely a war machine in the abstract sense, it had the potential to be a fully functioning military machine should the occasion arise, and Collin notes that despite threats by armed police, the French Teknival “powered on regardless” for twelve days (239). With the Tribe’s military equipment and drug-fuelled war dance, perhaps the police recognised that breaking up this party might result in blood being shed on both sides, and the war machine continued to produce the abstract “lines of flight” that the music and the dancing enabled. The Spiral Tribe and the Mutoid Waste Company had made use of the ‘State’s’ own cast-off weapons and succeeded in appropriating a space for themselves whilst authorities looked on.

### **Global Tribalisation – Rave as Post-colonial Religion**

As rave culture became established around the world, various tropes and practices have been adopted in the dancers’ quest to connect with tribal cultures. In “Techno Millennium” St. John notes that tribal and pagan symbolism have been a feature of San Francisco ‘trance dances’ since the early 1990’s:

these gatherings are often held in open-air locations (where dance floors are positioned in bushland, forest, beach or desert), celebrate celestial events and seasonal transitions (e.g. moon cycle, solstices, solar eclipse and other planetary alignments), are attended by a large cross-section of the dance

community, including pagans, travellers and other practitioners and affiliates of a techno-Earthen spirituality who may or may not consume psychoactive alterants. (225-6)

St. John lists the tribal tropes found at such events: “fractalized mandala projections, altars, chai tents, totemic installations, sacred geometry, earthworks” (226). Global post-rave cultures celebrate marginal religious cultures for whom dancing and community is regarded as a necessary part of life, and the influence of Native American shamanism, African tribalism, Jamaican Rastafarianism, and a number of Asian religions (of which Goa trance is a unifying symbol) is common. These cultures practice a merging of the spiritual with the technological, and the tribal tropes and pagan practices that are common to most global raves, are also found at Aotearoa events.

Whilst this exploitation of tribal cultures puts dance culture in line with other Western cultures that appropriate the symbols and practices of ethnic groups, tribalism for ravers is also acted out through a desire to achieve spiritual enlightenment. Like the hippies before them, ravers are guilty of exploiting non-Western cultures (both materially and spiritually) at a time when many struggle to maintain cultural identity in the face of increased exploitation by corporations and government. Yet, with the effects of globalisation resulting in the mass appropriation and exploitation of virtually all marginal cultures, dance culture is at least operating from a desire to connect spiritually. In “The Difference Engine: Liberations and the Rave Imaginary”, St John notes that ravers are ‘cobbling’ together different cultural practices in a desire for spiritual recovery:

The strong revivalist sensibility in the rave imagination is consistent with the mood of cultural and spiritual recovery characteristic of Neo-Paganism. Inhabitants of post-rave are not so much heir to unchanged traditions, but are, as are many pagans and practitioners of Earthen spirituality, innovators, syncretists, sampling from existing traditions, cobbling together reinvented traditions and adopting new technologies in their veneration of nature. (28)

Whilst post-rave cultures undoubtedly exploit marginal tribal cultures, they do not exclude them in the multi-cultural rainbow that is the global dancefloor, and there is desire for the difference that the presence of such cultures provides. In the non-denominational zones the dancers are not discriminating in how they honour their gods;



as long as it promotes the feelings of connectedness and wholeness with which tribalism is associated, any form of worship is considered appropriate to the spirit of the tribal dance.

### **Dancing on Colonised Land – Australian Bush Doofs and Aboriginal Culture**

In terms of contextual similarities of culture, post-colonialism, and tribal affiliations, Australian bush doofs provide a useful comparison for Aotearoa dance culture. Whilst New Zealanders attending Earthdream report back that the presence of snakes, poisonous spiders and flies makes the outdoor experience different to Aotearoa (few dancers sit or lie directly on the ground), Australian bush doof culture demonstrates how identity with tribal affiliations can be problematic when dancers have yet to take ownership of the history and legacy of colonialism. In “Going Bush and Finding One’s ‘Tribe’”, Luckman discusses the significance of the landscape to doof culture: “bush doofs – be they commercial, small scale and/or explicitly oppositional – are at least *prima facie* linked to the land, to its cycles and to a desire to connect with the rhythms of human life beyond the metropolises of the industrialised world” (321). From this reconnection grows a spirituality that is as influenced by Aboriginal ‘dreamtime’ as it is by Native American shamanism, but Luckman notes the problematic nature of such appropriation: “Given the substantial power imbalances between the communities involved, on what terms can the self-aware non-Aboriginal bricoleur engage in a dialogue with Aboriginal people and their cultural tropes?” (325). Luckman finds that for most non-indigenous participants the connection with indigenous tribalism is experienced on an individual level and is “far less likely to involve direct engagement with indigenous people themselves”, a factor that is symbolic of white Australia’s general lack of dialogue with Aboriginal people, as Aboriginal rights advocator Marcia Langton noted in 1993: “‘Australians do not know and relate to Aboriginal people. They relate to the stories told by former colonists’” (qtd. in Luckman 326). In Aotearoa there is greater integration between Māori and Pākehā at the most basic of social levels, but with Māori history generally ignored or ameliorated by state systems, there is a similar risk of ignorance from dancers wishing to connect with

Māori on an individual level, when they are not fully cognisant of the legacy of colonialism.

Whilst there are a number of differences between Aotearoa and Australia's racial policies, Luckman's challenge to doof culture with regards to the appropriation of Aboriginal tribal tropes is also applicable to Aotearoa dance culture with regards to Māori. Writing ten years after Langton's observations of Australian race relations, Luckman finds that although general awareness around indigenous issues has not translated to government action, it has resulted in greater sympathy for Aboriginal people from non-Aboriginal Australians. She writes that a "sizeable portion" of the community has been moved to "engage in genuine statements of sorrow and reconciliation" (326). She warns against complacency however and concludes that non-Aboriginal dancers should examine their relationship to indigenous culture and their employment of indigenous tropes:

If they are serious in their quest for connection both with the land and its traditional custodians, they need to move beyond the 'user-friendly', readily accessible cultural material and ideas, and engage in actual dialogue with real, embodied people, and the less 'fluffy' realities of the legacies of colonial Australia. Valorising romantic visions of Aboriginal traditional life works in many ways to simply reinforce racist colonial ideas of the 'Noble Savage', rather than provide a way forward for postcolonial Australia. (326-7)

As shown in the Introduction, the history and implementation of te Tiriti o Waitangi has resulted in many injustices to Māori, but it has also given Māori more legal rights than indigenous Australians who bear the repercussions of the "lie of *terra nullius*" (325).<sup>24</sup> But just because we *have* a treaty, a tribunal, bi-cultural policies, Māori television, and a Māori Party does not excuse Pākehā of refusing to *own* the wars, the land confiscations, the circulation of diseases and guns which aided the colonisation process, the Parihaka invasion, along with all the injustices that have been, and which continue to be committed. Once we acknowledge that all these things make us a racist nation, Pākehā will be ready to commit to *really* having the 'best race relations in the world', as the Pākehā mythology would have it. Within dance culture's politics of integration and difference is the opportunity to fully integrate our bicultural connections, but first we

need to become more aware of when our attitudes towards Māori merely reinforce a colonial stereotype operating within Aotearoa society as a whole.

### **Reconnecting With Spirit – Techno-communitas in the Dance Zone**

The political value of tribal identification in Aotearoa dance culture can be discussed in terms of Victor Turner's theories of *communitas*. Turner's study of tribal cultures (for which dancing to reach an ecstatic state is central to group celebration) led him to identify the sense of community felt during ritual practices as *communitas*, an example of sublime community which emerges in what Turner calls liminal or liminoid phenomena.<sup>25</sup> Of the three types of *communitas* that Turner outlines – spontaneous, ideological, and normative – it is the first, in which the ecstatic state is accessed, that is most relevant to dance culture. In “The Difference Engine” St. John refers to rave in the twenty-first century as a site of “*techno-communitas*”, where communal liminality, or spontaneous *communitas* occurs: “esoteric knowledge and understanding is shared between neophytes, cultists, communards, pilgrims or tourists who experience a direct and immediate abandonment of socioculturally mediated divisions in ‘a place that is no place, and a time that is no time’” (29). For Turner, liminal entities are, “neither here nor there [. . .] liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon” (*The Ritual Process* 95). Yet Turner understood liminality in tribal and religious societies to be obligatory, and as such, dance culture better fits what he describes as liminoid phenomena: “Optation pervades the liminoid phenomenon, obligation the liminal. One is all play and choice, and entertainment, the other is a matter of deep seriousness, even dread, it is demanding, compulsory” (*From Ritual to Theatre* 43). Whereas the liminal is often tied to established social structures, liminoid phenomena develop on the margins and are “plural, fragmentary, and experimental in character” (54). The liminoid nature of Aotearoa dance culture is likewise heterogeneous and ever-changing, as dancers move between the lines of differentiation – perhaps choosing to be a neophyte one time, and a sage the next.

Liminoid phenomena are also distinguished from the liminal by the commodification of the culture, which does not hamper the group's efforts in achieving spontaneous *communitas*. Turner writes that unlike religious or tribal affiliations, the liminoid is a commodity "which one selects and pays for" (55). Hence, despite dance culture's commercial aspects, that it can still be anti-structural is demonstrated by the sense of community found on the dancefloor, which enables a group of people to understand the world on a deeper level. He suggests that *communitas* is a pre-structural form of unity that is participated in by those who have been "saturated" in structure since infancy (58), a state which in dance culture is present in the communal identity break down of the dancefloor:

Is there any of us who has not known this moment when compatible people [. . .] obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level, when they feel that all problems [. . .] could be resolved [. . .] if only the group which is felt [. . .] as "essentially us" could sustain its intersubjective illumination. This illumination may succumb to the dry light of next day's disjunction [. . .]. But when the mood, style, or "fit" of spontaneous *communitas* is upon us, we place a high value on personal honesty, openness, and lack of pretensions or pretentiousness. (48)

Turner's account of the group moment of lucidity may be less hyperbolic than those of rave discourse, but the emotional tenor of his description shares much in common with the first person narratives quoted previously. The inability to sustain the feeling is analogous to the 'comedown' that most post-rave writers acknowledge as the flipside to the ecstasy of the dancefloor. Yet, because the participator has experienced humanity at its best, such moments are still significant.

At any outdoor dance party, individual dancers employ a variety of means (including the use of substances and ritual practice) to create the conditions required for spontaneous *communitas* to occur. One area in which outdoor dance culture fits Turner's model of *communitas* is in the similarity to the 1960's hippie movement, that "by the eclectic and syncretic use of symbols and liturgical actions drawn from the repertoire of many religions, and of 'mind-expanding' drugs, 'rock' music, and flashing lights, try to establish a 'total' communion with one another" (*The Ritual Process* 138). Turner

believed that these Western countercultures were an attempt to recreate the ritual conditions with which to invoke spontaneous *communitas*. Like all post-rave cultures, Aotearoa dance culture also uses similar means as the hippies to obtain an ecstatic state, and is thus open to the criticism made by Turner about the hippies for whom spontaneous *communitas* is seen as:

the end of human endeavor. In the religion of preindustrial societies, this state is regarded rather as a means to the end of becoming more fully involved in the rich manifold of structural role-playing. In this there is perhaps greater wisdom, for human beings are responsible to one another in the supply of humble needs, such as food, drink, clothing, and the careful teaching of material and social techniques. (138-9)

Turner is implying that the hippies, by pursuing the ecstatic state using any means necessary, were missing out on the communicative aspects of *communitas* that took care of the ‘humble’ needs, along with the teaching of customs that enabled spontaneous *communitas* to take place. These were the aspects of tribal life that were necessary for everyday living beyond the realms of ritual celebrations.

Increasingly, *communitas* is experienced in less manufactured ways in Aotearoa dance culture. If ecstasy on the dance floor was once attainable through the ingestion of drugs alone, as Aotearoa dance culture matures, *communitas* is engendered in a number of different ways. That reaching the heightened state associated with dancing is not always attainable is shown by Massive member Matthew Ayton’s response to a radio interviewer’s question as to whether it was important to stay up all night at events. He notes that at some parties the energy is there and “you want to keep going” and at some it is missing: “I said we find our utopian sort of place, that doesn’t always happen. [. . .] it takes the right music, the right environment, the right people – everything has to be right. It’s something we know is there, but to actually get to that place takes everybody to put in 110%” (National Radio 2004). Ayton acknowledges the different moods present at events. For some dancers, drug-taking is not part of the experience, and for others, it is less important than the dancing, so outdoor dance culture cannot be judged wholly as a culture that strives to achieve spontaneous *communitas* by drugs alone. And, whereas many undoubtedly attend the events with more money than supplies, there are others

whose budgets allow them only the entrance fee and the fuel to get there. For these dancers, responsibility for one another is very much apparent, and people share commodities considered valuable in these spaces: coffee, cannabis, kai (food), clothing, along with skills and knowledge that enhance the experience on a practical level. Hence with planning and preparation it is possible to have all dance event needs taken care of with very little exchange of cash, which suggests that Aotearoa outdoor dance culture can also fit Turner's description of pre-industrial societies regarding spontaneous *communitas* as being integral to the "rich manifold of structural role-playing" which ensures that tribal members are responsible for one another (*The Ritual Process* 139).

The more events attended the more the experience becomes a pilgrimage, with rituals developed that assist in the attainment of spontaneous *communitas*. As dancers learn what they require for each party, preparations become familiar and are ritualised through practice. Pre-party connections are made with other dancers, organising rides, tents, and leaving times, which enables greater sub-tribal community in the camping zone. Once the preparations have been made, the journey marks the transition between town and country, work and play, everyday life and temporary utopia. In his discussion of pilgrimage, Hetherington argues that places associated with marginal or 'outsider' identities are a significant factor in the construction of new identities. He writes that the places, "that are likely to become a source of social identity for those who adopt values and beliefs that are perceived as marginal within society, are likely to have some sort of symbolic affinity with the identity in question. Such spaces facilitate opportunities for being different and the constitution of new identities" (107). The pilgrimage to the dance zones enables the deconstruction of the dancer's city identity, and prepares the space for *communitas* to occur. As the location draws near, vehicles containing fellow dancers are acknowledged, and occasionally reunions occur in camping grounds and roadside rest areas. During the time of the event, the ritualistic aspects of dance culture, such as setting up camp, morning ablutions, pre-party routines (that may include dressing, shared meals, and drug taking), and the final pack-down are still spliced with spontaneity. The events lend themselves to instant decisions to do whatever, whenever, whether it be dancing, eating, swimming, walking, visiting friends, attending workshops or sleeping. It is during

these acts of spontaneity that *communitas* continues to happen, albeit in a less intense form than that experienced on the communal dancefloor.

Regulars to dance events around Te Wai Pounamu know that in practical terms, a certain amount of preparation is required to ensure that the conditions are right for spontaneous *communitas* to occur. Whether relying on chemical, herbal, or environmental stimuli (such as the music, lighting, visuals, other dancers and the landscape) to help engender the ecstatic state, the process can be severely hindered if the dancer is not well equipped for a weekend outdoors. Some events are particularly vulnerable to erratic weather patterns and the Destination booklet reminds people that they will be partying 2000 feet above sea level and that clothes should cater for both hot and cold conditions (2004 n. pag.). The site was subject to a range of weather, sometimes all in one day, and the ‘windy Destination’ of 2002 in which gale-force winds were followed by torrential rain, is remembered for the stage blowing down, requiring crew to erect a smaller one under a rock shelter. Another particularly trying event was the inaugural Kaikoura Roots Festival, which due to on-stage safety concerns had to be shut down at midnight, twelve hours before its scheduled finish. Grant Smithies of *Real Groove*, captures the sense of pride felt at surviving such an event:

it rained like some kind of apocalyptic biblical tale and it was fucking cold, but outdoor parties will always be a gamble. [. . .] Strongest non-musical memories? Tents floating away, mud-caked skankers holding tarpaulins over their heads so they could dance, treacherously slippery Portaloos [. . .], leaking wellies, shredded brollies, a swamp for a dancefloor and a pervasive smell of damp dreads. (“Bass Culture” 51).

The event is memorable *because* of the rain and trying conditions, which also inspire greater community spirit as dancers share shelters, umbrellas and dry clothing. My own memories of the party are of getting stuck in the mud up to my ankles when dancing, and having to peer under rain-hoods in order to recognise friends. Hence, monitoring the ‘natural’ becomes a survivalist skill, and a greater synergy between technology and nature develops than is usually found in urban loci. Through experiences like these, the dancer learns that the spontaneous moments of ecstasy are easier to access and maintain when there is a willingness to act tribally in looking out for each other.

The seriousness with which authors on dance culture treat spontaneous *communitas* is also an example of what Turner calls ideological *communitas*, which is theory based on insights gained during the ecstatic moments. In *From Ritual to Theatre* Turner writes that ideological *communitas* is: “a set of theoretical concepts which attempt to describe the interactions of spontaneous *communitas*. Here the retrospective look, ‘memory,’ has already distanced the individual subject from the communal or dyadic experience” (48). Due to the reliance on language and memory to describe these moments, Turner is wary of this type of *communitas*, which puts him in company with other participant-observers who struggle with the task of fitting these ecstatic states into a written paradigm. Yet memory persists and certain epiphanies continue to shape the written word, as candid accounts such as those of Collin and Reynolds attest. Thus, many post-rave missives reveal insights experienced at the parties, and during the research taken for this thesis there are a number of retrospective moments that stand out – memories of spontaneous *communitas* that have been worked into the text. It is the recurrence of these moments, and their subsequent retrieval in memory that has informed the substance of this thesis.

### **Drumming the Earth-beat – Atavism in the Tribal Zone(s)**

‘Tribal’ zones are a common feature at Aotearoa dance parties, and it is in these spaces that a more atavistic association with tribalism is played out. My first experience of a tribal zone was at the Gathering. Set well apart from the technological zones, the tribal was set around a fire, its entranceway marked with decorations made from stone, wood, and other earth-based materials. The drumming circle could be heard across the camping ground which it overlooked, its gentle heartbeat drawing people in for a welcome warm up. Circling the fire, the drummers changed percussion lines often, the fluidness of transition heard in the corresponding shift of rhythm as each drummer responded to the others. Sometimes, the drum-lines would break down altogether and amidst laughter the drummers took the opportunity to swap drums. Cannabis joints were passed, and their influence was notable on the outcome of the music, the rhythms changing in response to each drummer’s individual experience of the drug. In the introduction to *Rave Culture and Religion*, St John surveys the panoply of non-Western cultures that rave has been



associated with and notes that: “The rhythmic soundscapes of electronic dance music genres are thought to inherit the sensuous ritualism, percussive techniques and chanting employed by non Western cultures and throughout history for spiritual advancement” (4). In the tribal zones, the electronic element is removed, and music’s ability to engender a trance state is experienced in a more primitive form, a form that awakens the primal being. Thus, tribal zones operate as a marginal space within the zone of the event, where the music is stripped to its simplest, most participatory, organic form. At some events, the foot journey taken to get to the tribal zone is a pilgrimage in itself. Quoting Turner, Hetherington writes: “Pilgrimages, which tend to follow set routes, generally end at shrines that have significance as sacred places. Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of these pilgrim centres or shrines is that they are often to be found on the margins or peripheries of inhabited areas” (115). At the 2004 Destination a narrow, slippery path wound through rock towers to the tribal area, which was positioned under a large overhang, providing a natural acoustic space. At other events, the tribal zone can be of a more spontaneous nature, with drummers gathering around a fire for varying amounts of time. One such gathering occurred at the 2006 Massive summer solstice event, which turned out to be both wet and cold. Discovering a fire in the camping zone at 4am was welcome indeed, that it came with a circle of drummers was the perfect accompaniment to the sunrise.

One event notable for the influence of techno-paganism is Visionz, which at the 2003/4 event included a Burning Man ceremony, as part of the overall celebration of New Year’s regeneration. With opening and closing drumming ceremonies based on Asian and Native American cultures, the festival also included a highly ritualised neo-pagan ceremony associated with the Burning Man festival, which began in the United States in 1985. Sharing common ground with post-rave cultures, along with other neo-pagan festivals, the American Burning Man festival has grown to 29 000 people. In “Dancing on common ground: Exploring the sacred at Burning Man”, Robert V. Kozinets and John F. Sherry, Jr. note that the festival is organised around a holistic ethos:

It is a temporary spatial phenomenon that its participants construct as sacred and even utopian. [ . . . ] It embraces the exploration and use of ritual. It is deeply entwined with the participative ethos of DIY [ . . . ] it is opposed to

commercialism and commercial sponsorship, seeks a participative ethos, and follows an environmental “leave no trace” ethic. (288)

Dancers at Burning Man are encouraged to live out their environmental utopian dreams, and networks of tribes work together to reduce their own waste and ‘leave no trace’, a slogan which is literally carried out at Burning Man, with dancers expected to take everything they brought in with them when they leave. At the centre of the festival is the ritualistic burning of the ‘Man’, a 50 foot effigy, constructed of “wood, of trees, of ground, of nature, combined with technological contraptions” that “blends past and future, science and religion, high technology and the primal”. As the Man burns, the crowd celebrates his passing, and the “screams of joy and thrills of awe” are broadcast on radio shows and webcasts, the event filmed by documentary crews (293). Although far removed from tribal rituals lived only in that moment, and where there were no attempts to record it for posterity (a pointless exercise given the nature of ecstatic release), the Burning Man ceremony is an indication that rave culture can provide the space for participants to make a political and symbolic gesture to the religion that is consumerism, a gesture that is then beamed onto television and computer screens so that it reaches a greater audience than those in attendance at the festival.

That Visionz should be chosen to host the first Aotearoa Burning Man ceremony is fitting, as during the course of this research, Visionz came closest to the ‘leave no trace’ ethos. The inclusion of Burning Man in the 2004 Visionz festival was instigated by Mark Stirling, who first discovered Burning Man by accident in 1994 while camping in Black Rock Desert. Rather than try and achieve a “critical mass” in Aotearoa for a separate event, Stirling chose the Visionz festival because it had similar philosophies to those as Burning Man. As discussed in Chapter Three the “leave no trace” ethos was far from being fulfilled at Visionz to the extent that is attained by Burning Man, but Stirling notes that the ritual: “attracted about 300 to 400 participants who accompanied Mark in a procession of drumming, dancing and fire juggling to the site of the man in a rich green farm paddock beside the sea. [ . . . ] Mark had the expressed pleasure of lighting the man and watch it burn to a crescendo of drumming, dancing and cheering” (“The First New Zealand Regional Burn: The Culmination of 10 Years as a Kiwi Burner” n. pag.). Watching the Man go up in flames was indeed an impressive sight, and it renewed a

sense of hope that one day we might see capitalism burn out. Environmentally however, there was a sense of dislocation with the act, a rupture between the neo-pagan tropes and the location. Whilst bearing relevance to a number of global tribal cultures and undoubtedly inspiring a sense of connection for many of the participants, for me, the ritual seemed ‘out of place’ with the space of the event. Against the backdrop of native bush and sweeping golden coastline of Golden Bay, the pagan symbolism stood out as something not of this land, a place that had long been occupied by Māori iwi performing their own rituals of regeneration.

### **DIY Symbolism - Displaying our Tribal and Pioneer Affiliations**

At Aotearoa events many dancers wear signs of tribal and religious affiliations that borrow from a number of cultures. The hodgepodge of styles at Aotearoa dance parties shares much in common with Susan Szostak-Pierce’s description of a Midwest American rave:

On display [. . .] were body-conscious clubwear paired with platform shoes [. . .]. Hooded sweatshirts, skate shirts adorned in graffiti-style illustrations [. . .]. Ravers had various parts of their bodies pierced, tattooed, and painted.

[. . .] Many old skoolers [. . .] wore dress that was appropriate to the natural environment: layers of clothing, rain gear, hiking boots, and rolled-up jeans. (146-7)

If those new to the culture stand out for their impractical club wear, unless the weather is particularly inclement, people smile blissfully anyway. And if the ‘old skoolers’ are envied for their practical clothing, dancers soon take note of their style, until they gradually evolve into ‘old skoolers’ themselves, emulating the practical wear of our ancestors. For some dancers, the style of dress and accoutrements signifies a preferred music genre, whilst the presence of Māori and Celtic tattoo, African drums, Aboriginal didgeridoo, PI lava lava’s, and Asian-style headdress and jewellery, indicates dancers’ affiliation with various global cultures, albeit in postmodernist fragmentary form.

At Aotearoa dance events, originality is prized as regulars utilise the second-hand market to find clothing and accessories that serve a practical, aesthetic, and even spiritual

purpose. Whilst second hand shopping is still a form of consumerism, it is at least in line with sustainable practices, and it is popular with dancers. Supported by the vast amounts of second-hand clothing available in a highly consumerist society, it is common to see styles from a myriad of cultures and eras being paraded on an outdoor dancefloor. For some, practicality is the key and utility styles continue to be common. For others, aesthetics are of importance and loud bold patterns are prized on the dance floor; as the hippies well knew, giant paisley can do strange things when under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs. Increasingly dancers create outfits that serve both a practical and an aesthetic function, often made from second hand items. And whilst the core of dance culture plunders society's cast-off's for forgotten styles, the emerging party styles continue to be fed back to the mainstream via suburban mall fashion; one trend in the early 2000's was a feminine style that owed much to the gauzy fabrics and floating lines of both the hippies and the more traditional cultures that had inspired them. In the outdoor dance zones these clothes had long served an aesthetic and practical purpose in the need to cover up when dancing under a sun grown fierce due to the depletion of the ozone layer. Szostak-Pierce notes that when a style becomes mainstream fashion however, subcultural youth will discard it if they feel it has become commodified: "the commodification is an attempt to control and tame the subculture [. . .] the diffusion of style leads to the defusion of the subculture's subversive power". Such mainstream incorporations leads the subculture to "negotiate their styles" so as to regain authenticity. Thus, authentication "can be viewed as a means to protect the original ideologies associated with a subcultural style" (142-3). Although Aotearoa dance culture's recycling ethos embraces any 'fashion' version of key styles, authenticity is yet prized on the dancefloor, and 'originals' such as 'retro' woollen ponchos, Indian saris and handmade accessories are items that often carry with them a tale of mystical significance, as dancers use 'creative visualisation' skills to envisage the desired items before they even begin to shop for them. It is not unusual for a group 'op-shopping' excursion to begin with the participants stating exactly what they are looking for. That these items are easily found by the group is considered to be proof of new-age beliefs that the universe will provide, as long as you are clear in your requests and express gratitude. For Szostak-Pierce, style can be a symbolic marker of power: "It is through deliberate aesthetic reconstruction of

mainstream cultural practices that it is possible for subcultural groups to achieve a sense of empowerment. The symbolic power of style is a subculture's ability to symbolize otherness" (142). In this case, the reconstruction of cultural practices includes the mode by which the style is obtained. That this alternative mode of consumerism actually produces the desired outcome is evident in the stories that those who practice it tell of 'manifestations', where houses, vehicles, and clothing are obtained with less effort and money than the usual experience of consumerism entails. This process also operates within a wider karma perspective; reciprocation of generosity is demonstrated in the passing on of items that are no longer of use, or which may better suit or serve another's purposes. As such, the spirit of koha (gift) is practiced in everyday life, lending spiritual aura to otherwise everyday items.

Born out of the necessity-breeds-creativity ethos that the dance zones produce, a certain style has emerged as people use the DIY ethic inherited from ancestors used to battling the elements, to create functional party accoutrements. The environments in which the events take place often provide the impetus and the tools to begin making up for a general lack of DIY knowledge amongst city-raised youth. During unplanned events such as a storm, dancers manifest the spirit of pioneer ancestors and use any material on hand to remain comfortable in the volatile climate. As we learn how to make practical body wear and camping equipment out of a number of everyday items, a certain mana becomes attached to the maker, as dancers (re)discover the joy of creating functional gear for themselves and their friends. Using recycled, inexpensive, or found materials, some have begun their own creative businesses, sometimes operating at the events under both cash and bartering terms, as weavers, carvers, knitters, sewers, carpenters and jewellery-makers create items that are of practical and aesthetic value in the dance zones. As the designs and skills are shared amongst the creators, distinctive styles are emerging; styles that have their roots in a need to fill a requirement, such as clothing made out of candlewick bedspreads (for warmth), ponchos made from blankets (to wear or sit on) and raincoats with dreadlock shaped hoods. This output is another example of dance culture as war machine. In "Collective Bodies" Jordan quotes Deleuze and Guattari who write that the war machine exists, "in an industrial innovation as well as in technological invention, in a commercial circuit as well as in a religious creation, in all flows and

currents that only secondarily allow themselves to be appropriated by the State” (133). The industry, technology, creativity and spirituality that go into crafting hand-produced goods demonstrates how the dance zone can operate outside of mainstream culture. Items made with the specifics of dance culture in mind, also carry an aura of authenticity that can only secondarily be appropriated by corporations as mass-produced goods. Whilst the dancers’ creative output has resulted in corporate exploitation with dancefloor styles appearing in street fashion as cheaply made synthetic copies, the original detailing of one-off, home-made pieces continues to serve as a marker of creativity on the dance floor.

The distinctive theme emerging from this creative output is influenced by Māori and Polynesian culture, the markers of which have come to symbolise Pākehā affiliation with Aotearoa. A cultural renaissance has seen Māori take pride in cultural signifiers, and a number of non-Māori New Zealanders have also begun to wear bone or pounamu carvings, paua jewellery and koru designs as a badge of affiliation with Aotearoa. There is a nascent belief system growing amongst dancers that these tokens can hold great spiritual significance. Hence, it is not uncommon to see people holding their talisman in a gesture of energy transferral, or using on-site rivers and streams to cleanse pounamu, or similar pieces. From this reverence, an affinity for Māori and Polynesian culture and beliefs has grown, and it is perhaps with this intention that the markers are worn, circulated, and weaved into the DIY culture. That some Pākehā adopt Māori tropes to explore their own relationship to Aotearoa may be an attempt to differentiate themselves from the overt racism of others. In *Voters’ Vengeance* Jack Vowles and Peter Aimer note that underlying the political dimensions of race relations are the images evoked by the manifestations of low social status, high unemployment and high crime rates. In contrast and at the same time, there is also: “what might be called the ‘koru dimension’, the extent to which the symbols of a distinctive New Zealand identity were derived from the culture and achievements of the Maori [. . .]. Juxtaposed in this way, as they are in reality, the elements of race relations in New Zealand present a complex picture” (171). The display of such symbols may well be an example of ethnic incorporation and appropriation, but for most dancers and creators the wearing of these cultural markers is done in a spirit of celebration for our land and the tangata whenua in all their diversity; that this could be

read as offensive has either not occurred to most or has been overlooked in the dancers' wish to identify with a culture distinctly of Aotearoa.

### **Attempting to Connect – the Adoption of Māori Symbolism as a Gesture of Reconciliation**

The use of Māori symbolism and practice in Aotearoa dance culture may be indicative of dancers' desire to see greater reconciliation between Māori and Pākehā. Whilst dance culture cannot be exempted from the list of white cultures that colonise various ethnic groups' cultural markers, on a sliding scale between incorporation and exploitation it is far removed from other incidents of cultural poaching in Aotearoa. In her discussion of the problematic nature of Australian ravers' relationship with Aboriginal culture Luckman notes: "There is cultural appropriation and there is genuine cultural engagement; at what point does an appeal to acknowledging the multiplicity of racial backgrounds constituting human history cross over into problematic territory?" ("Going Bush" 325). In Aotearoa, at the extreme end of 'problematic territory' are incidents such as the selling and wearing of 'Rastafarian' hats (featuring artificial dreadlocks) by New Zealand supporters during the 2003 Netball World Cup, which was held in Jamaica. To a Rastafarian, the sight of fake dreadlocks being worn would also equate with how Māori must feel about fake facial moko being applied by rugby fans, after the imagery was used in marketing campaigns as a symbol of the All Black's 'warrior' stance. These cultural markers are steeped in tradition and spirituality, and whilst fashion dreads and tattoo are as common here as they are globally, those worn by dancers are often indicators of a wish for greater affiliation with the originating culture, and unlike fake dreads or tattoos they cannot be put on or removed according to whim.

But because dance culture seeks to break down binaries, the incorporation of Māori and Polynesian tropes by dancers must be contextualised. If the remote spaces of the dance parties operate as a carnivalesque TAZ where tribalism is organized along horizontal lines then the production and display of ethnic art forms suggests a willingness to include these cultures in the communal space. Set amongst the global tribal tropes are familiar Māori designs found on entranceways, decorations, stone koru (spirals made of

stones set into the ground), as well as the dancers' bodies. The fire displays are also a celebration of our Pacific location, with Māori and Polynesian dance instruments, the poi and fire-stick twirled to the accompaniment of tribal drumming. At the 2003 Massive summer solstice party the fire display also included a giant tiki sculpture, which to three Australian 'doofers' taking time out from an academic conference, was as great a signifier of place as the tī kōuka (cabbage trees) in distinguishing this event from the bush doofs they were familiar with. In this environment most marginal cultures are welcome because their presence addresses the imbalance of what is still largely a Pākehā culture, and enables dancers to share different knowledges. Thus the making and display of traditional Māori art forms can be read as a desire to connect to a thousand-year history of tribalism in Aotearoa. For some dancers the wearing of these cultural markers also instils a sense of responsibility that inspires the wearer to be as mindful of the customs and protocol as their (albeit, limited) knowledge allows. As such, greater political significance can be attached to this practice than one of mere appropriation; the desire to connect with Māori on this level suggests that dancers are genuinely trying to reconcile our history of colonialism. This openness indicates there is a space for Māori communities to become more involved in dance culture's utopian projections, and thus lend greater substance to our adoption of Māori tropes and practices.

Although ritualistic ceremonies draw from a number of global tribal cultures in Aotearoa, there is evidence that greater Māori involvement would be welcomed. In "A Spiritual Bypass", David Young discusses Pākehā spirituality and notes that "there are times when rituals that are grounded in this landscape and are of this time are needed. For the most part, however, only Maori seem to be able to fill this gap" (28). But where Māori protocol is concerned many Pākehā tread carefully. It is one thing to wear a pounamu pendant or a traditional design as a tattoo, with the full awareness that the symbols carry a burden of responsibility to both the land and the tangata whenua, but it is another to risk transgressing the bounds of tapu by holding, or participating in, rituals that you are not familiar with and for which you do not have sanction to undertake. Yet when these rituals are performed by Māori at dance parties they engender a sense of *communitas* that reaches beyond the ecstasy of the moment, so that it moves both



backwards and forwards at once. Such moments are analogous to the koru, a looped symbol that configures the past, future and the present as one.

### **Destination Te Kōhanga – Regeneration and Desecration in the ‘Birthplace of the Gods’**

Held at a place known to local Māori as Te Kōhanga, for nine years Destination was a landmark event for Te Wai Pounamu dancers. Set amongst some of the magnificent limestone outcrops that run for several kilometres along the hilltops in the Craigieburn area of Arthur’s Pass, Destination was started by Christchurch DJ Steve Willis (Dr. Wilhaus), who had long had an affinity with the area. Beginning as Initiation in 1996, the DIY nature of the inaugural event is recorded in the 2004 Destination booklet: “In 1996 a group of bright eyed youths with fire in their bellies and warmth in their hearts, dragged a small PA, a handful of lights and a generator up a very dodgy 4WD track into the valley that is now home to some of our most enduring memories” (sic. n. pag.). Unable to access the site using the four wheel drive track, dancers carried camping equipment across a valley from the car park, an experience that did not put them off. With a focus on trance, the event evolved as Tranceformation (1997), Trancemission (1998), and Trancefusion (1999). In 2000, the name was permanently changed to Destination, which better reflected the encompassment of a number of dance styles, which had evolved to include an increasingly local line-up.

By 2002, Destination was one of Te Wai Pounamu’s more commercial events, but extravagant lighting and laser shows and a strong Aotearoa line-up offered value for money. Going for three days and two nights, and featuring three zones (fire/main, earth/cave (tribal) and water/marquee), the event attracted around 2000 people, a comfortable number for the site. By now the track had been upgraded to a ‘road’, but it still required a considerable amount of navigation, especially if arriving at night. As discussed above, this was the ‘windy Destination’, and the gale force wind that came up on the Saturday afternoon, played havoc in the camping area, sending a number of pup-style tents flying surprisingly long distances. Yet it was the near-perfect synergy between the landscape and the music that made Destination one of my favourite events. To be able

to dance or lie on limestone rocks surrounding the natural amphitheatre and feel the connection between the environment and ‘homegrown’ music being played by artists such as Trinity Roots, epsilon-blue, Alpharhythm, Nomad, Shapeshifter and Pacific Heights was confirmation that our music is audibly influenced by these zones. Walking amongst the rocks during the day further emphasised our insignificance in relation to the land, and resulted in a spiritual connection to the place that would be strengthened during the following two Destination events.

In Destination’s final years representatives of the Waitaha people played a ceremonial and spiritual role at the event. For the 2003 and 2004 events, Waitaha elders were active in conducting opening and closing ceremonies, and during the day author Barry Brailsford read from *Song of Waitaha: the Histories of a Nation*. Although warmly received by the dancers, it must be noted that *Song of Waitaha* is at the centre of historical debate as to whether Waitaha can claim legitimacy as a separate people to those iwi collectively known post European contact as Māori. In *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, King notes that in the wake of the demise of the Moriori myth that held that Chatham Island Moriori had preceded Māori in settling Aotearoa, and were subsequently colonised and cannibalised by Māori (a myth that was disproved by Henry Skinner in the 1920’s), the Waitaha myth arose “phoenix-like from the ashes” to take its place. King writes that the Waitaha myth alleged that the Waitaha were the descendents of people who had sailed into the Pacific from Asia, Africa and South America, and that they were the first to make “landfall and footfall”. Using “concepts and technologies apparent in the earlier human histories of all those continents” the Waitaha were peace-loving people who lived harmoniously with the land and sea. King notes: “Their secret history, ‘hidden ... in the trees and the stones’ and withheld from Pakeha scholars for 200 years, would be published in 1995 as *Song of Waitaha: the Histories of a Nation*” (58). Finding that there is no factual evidence whatsoever to support the myth, but that “there had been tribes in both the North and South Islands who used the name Waitaha” King is concerned over the political and ideological ramifications of the emergence of a pre-Polynesian tribe that could potentially assert rights over Māori. He also notes the racist undertones for the number of Pākehā supporters for whom the story holds neo-Darwinist appeal, amidst

suggestions that the supposedly “pale-skinned” Waitaha people were representatives of “higher civilisations” (59).

Whilst the disputed historical status of the Waitaha cannot be ignored, like post-rave’s fascination with the Mayan culture, it is the mythology of such a people that is of importance to Aotearoa dance culture. Like many marginal cultures, outdoor dance culture is largely either suspicious of, unaffected by, or wilfully ignorant of historical analysis. What is of significance are the mysteries of ancient tribes and peoples, one example being global dance culture’s fascination with ancient Mayan cultures. The ‘rediscovered’ mythology of the Mayans has resulted in the adoption of a popular ‘end of the world’ theory based on the date that ends the Mayan calendar, which also corresponds with rave guru Terence McKenna’s ‘Timewave Zero’ predictions. St. John notes in “Techno Millennium” that: “Post-rave psychedelic dance culture has embraced variations of Timewave Zero and the Mayan Tzolkin, granting 21 December 2012 varied significance” (216). The significance of Aotearoa dance culture’s fascination with the Mayan calendar will be discussed later in the chapter, but what is of note here is the date’s similarity to one printed in the 2003 Destination booklet under the heading “Song of Waitaha: the histories of a nation”:

The 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2002 has seen the Ancient year Calendar of Waitaha come and go, and with the passing of an era of searching and finding the roots of a Nation. The elders and the Kaitiaki of the nation of the Waitaha look out into the future with great expectation, love and compassion for our people, our children and grandchildren. We glory in this fact of the world again searching for, Peace, love and compassion. (n. pag.)

Solstices are central dates in pagan religious practices, and are celebrated by at least three local South Island dance collectives. Thus, to dancers who attach spiritual significance to these sorts of predictions, the idea that the ‘Waitaha Nation’ have already entered a new era is unlikely to engender an interest in historical analysis.

The sense of mythology attached to the Destination site, is reinforced by Waitaha’s belief that Te Kōhanga is of great spiritual significance. Named Castle Hill in English, in the *Song of Waitaha*, it is described as the birthplace of the gods:

Within Te Kohanga, the Sacred Nest, Ranginui held Papatuanuku so close Tāne Mahuta and his brothers were driven to wrench them apart to let the Sun into their lives. Here Tawhiri Matea raged against their cruelty and began the conflict of the Gods which cuts deep into this land for all to see.

Māui stood high upon these hills and promised the Earth Mother to bring Te Kumāra, the Peace Child, to grow here, and to care for the waters, the lands, the birds, the forests and the fish. (42)

At the 2003 event, there was a quiet sense of *communitas* evident during the afternoon, when Brailsford – accompanied by Richard Nunns playing traditional Māori instruments – told the story of the stones upon which the listeners sat. Where we danced, he said, they had danced. Thus the disputed historical status of the Waitaha pales into significance next to the spiritual meaning attached to the words. And whether or not you believe this particular story of creation which makes Te Kōhanga the birthplace of the gods, to those who have had the privilege to see the towering outcrops up close, its mythical status as a portal to another world is entirely conceivable. And that night, grounded by the bass and with their hands raised in the air towards the upward thrusts of the music's soaring melodies, the dancers resembled nothing less than the children of Ranginui and Papatuanuku pushing against their parents so that they may have access to the light.

The idea that we might have been led to dance each year in one of the Waitaha ancestors' sacred places is of great spiritual significance to dancers, who like many New Zealanders are searching for reconnection to a syncretic earth-based belief system. That the spiritual significance and healing properties of the land are promoted by organisers is shown by the 2003 Destination booklet, where under the heading "Organic Dance" it is written: "As more and more people find unique ways to share their self expressions this land grows roots that connect with the strong ancient ones to create a greater understanding of who we are as a country" (n. pag.). New Zealanders' need to feel connected to Aotearoa, the land, is outlined by poet and novelist Fiona Farrell in a talk given on Pākehā spirituality. She writes that whether Māori or Pākehā, we are "new to these islands": "a mere thousand years of habitation barely computes in the vast history of our spiritual life, but what we share is the landscape. We live in it, we see it every day, we are quite literally made from it [. . .] My bones, my skin, my blood are in a quite

prosaic, scientifically provable, non-religious fashion, part of this land” (“Back to the Cave” 5). Most dancers practice an individualised form of what Aotearoa/Australian author Stephanie Dowrick describes as ‘freelance spirituality’ (*Free Thinking* 223). Thus we look for tribal myths that – whether traditional or new – are distinctly of this land to add to a belief system already multi-denominational in nature. Hearing *Song of Waitaha* retold in that place and at that time gave local substance to the shape of the earth-based spirituality growing amongst some dancers. Perhaps we really could be the ‘peace children’, nurtured in the womb-like space of Te Kōhanga, and become instrumental in returning order to the world.

That greater spiritual connection should occur at Destination can also be attributed to the sense of inclusiveness engendered by the Waitaha-led opening and closing ceremonies. Pākehā are attracted to Waitaha because the ‘nation’ is inclusive of non-Māori members, enabling Pākehā to feel connected to a local ‘tribe’, if only for the time of the interaction. That this invitation to participate in a Māori ritual is welcomed by dancers was particularly evident during the closing ceremony of the 2003 event, when Waitaha elders, accompanied by Fat Freddy’s Drop, sang a waiata in Māori and English that was a lament for the land, and for the people who live on it. The band stopped for the final karakia, which was taught to dancers in Māori. Singing together, tears streamed down faces, connections were made and the invitation to participate in a tribal ritual was embraced. That a simple prayer should evoke such a moment of spontaneous *communitas*, is not unusual, as Mason Durie notes in “Marae and Implications for a Modern Maori Psychology”:

*Karakia*, ritual chants, are another avenue for connecting the human situation with a wider reality. [. . .] the wider purpose of *karakia* is to create a sense of unity – at one with the ancestors, at one with the environment, at one with the spiritual powers (Salmond 1976:77-91). *Karakia* lift preoccupations with daily existence to an elevated spiritual plane. (359)

In the final moments of the event, it was not the stage being worshipped, but the land and all our ancestors. And so we joined in the ritual, lifting voices to Ranginui, Papatuanuku and all their children, a few of which had severely tested our spirits throughout the weekend. Connected as we were to each other and the past, we celebrated our joy of the

moment, and for some of us a vision of the future where the whenua is truly honoured, illuminated the dancefloor.

Yet the evidence that even the supposed sacredness of Te Kōhanga was not being honoured by dancers was particularly at odds with the karakia which venerated the land as a deity. Destination organisers were diligent in attempting to educate dancers as to rubbish disposal, and there were pleas in both the 2002 and 2003 booklets, requesting that dancers bring portable ashtrays and place all rubbish including chewing gum and lollypop sticks in the bins, and there were on-stage pleas that dancers take campsite refuse with them. But such measures proved ineffectual for some was evident in the piles of bursting supermarket bags left strewn around abandoned campsites that greeted dancers as they returned to their tents and vans after the closing ceremony. However, not all dancers behave in such a manner and at the 2003 Destination many began to pick up rubbish as they found it, not leaving the job entirely to the volunteers responsible for cleanup. The following year the standard request was repeated in more poetic terms in the “Welcome to your Destination” section of the flyer: “This year Destination is acknowledging the role that mother earth has played in all of our lives. No matter who you are or what others perceive you to be, you are a member of a tribe, the human tribe. We therefore pay homage to all our ancestors who in their perceived simplicity presented all of us with an opportunity to preserve the earth” (2004). And yet there was no notable improvement for the final event (if anything the situation was worse), a fact that was reflected in the closing ceremony that year. For me, the ceremony was moving but less uplifting, and there was no invitation to learn a karakia, as had taken place the previous year. For some, it felt right that the event would be held at Te Kōhanga no longer, and there was acknowledgement that perhaps our selfishness and lack of respect had diminished the magic of the place.

If Destination was instrumental in forging greater spirituality amongst dancers, on the economic level the event was not successful. Like most multi-zoned, multi-night dance parties in Te Wai Pounamu, Destination was expensive to put on, and although ticket prices rose, and sponsorship deals increased to a point where the MC’ing at some points during the party resembled a ‘sponsored break’, the event was unable to break even and organisers Willis and Derek McKee have chosen to “suspend” the event until

debts are cleared. In the “Announcements” section of the website, the organisers write: “we have unfortunately accumulated a large debt which we have tried to trade our way out of. Sadly, this has been unsuccessful so instead of getting deeper into debt we have decided to stand our ground and pay the debt off to our generous creditors over time” (n. pag.). Whether Destination will rise phoenix like in time for the build up to 2012 (the number of the post office box listed on the website) remains to be seen, but what is of importance here is the role that Destination and Te Kōhanga have already played in nurturing outdoor dance culture in Aotearoa.

One generation for whom Destination is likely to have had a great impact is for the children who attended with their parents. As dancers have grown up the dance parties have evolved into whānau based camping experiences, where the children of the original Gatherers are introduced to a way of life far removed from urban and suburban school and play environments. Like Visionz and Parihaka, Destination was family focussed and children were catered for with a kidzone and special activities, as outlined in the 2003 booklet: “Kids: shelter, fun, friendly, board games, colour competitions, stilt walking, bubbles, kites, hoolahoops, and meeting heaps of kids with creative minds” (n. pag.). The greater presence of children gives an event a different focus, as adults assume responsibility for their own, and others’ offspring. At potentially dangerous parties such as Destination – where there are sheer cliff faces – most adults are particularly aware of child safety. In the camping grounds, there is a greater emphasis on whānau groups, so that responsibility for the children can be shared amongst all the adults, with communal meals and sleeping arrangements enabling ‘shifts’ to be taken by parents. The sense of community that occurs between all members of the is strengthened with each event attended, and between events when families foster social and supportive networks. For these children, events such as Destination are likely to shine brightly in their memories; what will come of their exposure to dance culture may prove to be Aotearoa dance culture’s greatest political achievement.

### **Standing on the Threshold - Politicising the Tribal at the Kaikoura Roots Festival**

The Kaikoura Roots Festival is another event that emphasises the tribal connection between Māori and dance culture. Organised by Andrew Penman (Salmonella Dub) and Liz Parker, Kaikoura Roots was held annually in January from 2002-6, with the festival taking place on a farm next to the beach. Located between the Kaikōura Ranges and the Pacific Ocean, the area lies at the juncture of two tectonic plates and is associated with the sighting of UFO's. For the 2005 event, dancers were welcomed onto the festival site with a pōwhiri, and it was another instance where spontaneous *communitas* took place as part of a Māori ritual. Beforehand, security had reminded dancers in the campsite and car park that the official opening was due to start and soon a sizeable crowd waited expectantly at the marae-style carved entranceway to the event. As the pōwhiri was performed, the dancers were quiet, according the ceremony and its partakers the respect and attention demanded from the ancient words and movements, and – in keeping with the purpose of the ritual – remaining firmly outside the space set aside for the welcome. Durie writes that the gap between hosts and guests is deliberate:

In former times the distance [. . .] enabled each group to judge the intentions of the other, without presuming that the outcome was to be friendly. In modern times, a presumption of good intent can more often be justified, but the space of the marae continues to serve the purpose of maintaining distance, at least until the rituals for closeness have been completed. (353)

The distance is closed by the call and response nature of the ceremony. As the kuia representing the hosts and visitors sing their soaring karanga, the guests move slowly across the marae space. At Kaikoura Roots however, the pōwhiri was one-sided; because there was no one on the dancers' side to respond to the welcome, there was a gap in the ritual. Without a leader, we were unsure of our own role, and had to be gestured to twice before we realised that it was okay to cross the temporary marae.

Yet even our standing on this meeting ground between worlds is representative of Turner's liminal phenomena. Turner writes that liminality has: "both positive and active qualities, especially where that 'threshold' is protracted and becomes a 'tunnel,'" and links this state of liminality to initiation rituals, "with their long periods of seclusion and training of novices rich in the deployment of symbolic forms and esoteric teachings"



(41). Whilst dance culture hardly qualifies under the classical notion of seclusion and esoteric teachings, novices to the events gradually undergo a spiritual awakening as they repeat the experience. Thus the invitation for dancers to stand at the threshold between Māori and Pākehā culture in a ritual inviting them to step forward onto the land is significant to the overall ‘feel’ of the party. We have been welcomed as one tribe, and as one tribe we become participants in the rituals of the dance.

Despite the liminal nature of the opening ceremony however, that the Kaikoura Roots Festival overall is an example of liminoid phenomena is significant to the assessment of the event’s effect as a subversive forum. As befitting a festival with a strong Māori line-up and attendance, the site is decorated with distinctly local tribal tropes, yet the one-day nature of the event and the limited amount of land for camping make smaller whānau-style tribal associations difficult to establish. Hence, there is a greater concentration of people in the main zone throughout the party. Brylee Rowell notes the community atmosphere of the event in a review for *Rip It Up*:

Laughing barefoot dancers jump round with kids on their backs, their flowing garments spinning into balls of colour. There are groups of people – eyes closed – swaying to the music swimming through their heads. People curled up underneath trees absorb the energy surrounding them. It’s like being accepted into a small community for a short time. We are all here to experience [. . .] the music. No flashy clothes, no crazy lighting. Just the landscape, the music and the people blending together as one. (42)

Whilst much of the music at Kaikoura Roots observed the conscious roots theme that we all strive to be better humans, there was a definite political edge. Groups such as Kora, Cornerstone Roots and Trinity Roots weaved politically charged lyrics through their distinctly Pacific-style reggae/dub musical ‘workouts’, lyrics that questioned the government’s stance on cannabis, te Tiriti, war, racism and environmentalism. At the 2005 event, one song that stood out was by Dunedin band Irie Eyes. The catchphrase “what does the W stand for?” in a song about George W. Bush was a favourite amongst the crowd, the implication being that (in the local vernacular) the W might stand for ‘wanker’. Turner writes that the liminal phases of tribal society: “invert but do not usually subvert the status quo, the structural form, of society [. . .] But supposedly

“entertainment” genres of industrial society are often subversive, satirizing, lampooning, burlesquing or subtly putting down the central values of the basic, work-sphere society, or at least selected sectors of that society” (*From Ritual to Theatre* 41). Much of the on-stage banter at Kaikoura Roots was political in this respect, so that dancers are taught the lessons of the tangata whenua and the wider universe from the perspective of the performers’ own struggles. As such, commercial events such as Kaikoura Roots can be instrumental in creating greater political awareness amongst dancers. No matter how temporary, the invitation to participate in another cultural sphere is one that is embraced by many dancers searching for ways to connect to an ancient belief system, and thus find a kernel of hope for the future.

Yet for all the political aspirations being spoken and sung about on stage, the Kaikoura Roots festival became increasingly dystopian in terms of refuse. If the 2002 event was a mud bath, from 2003-5, the festival saw an increase in rubbish build-up, much of which was produced by the event’s commercial outlets. With Christchurch bar and brewery the Dux de Lux providing a bar, alcohol was free to be consumed anywhere in the main zone, and whilst this provided a relaxed atmosphere, it severely increased the amount of refuse littering the site. In addition to the usual debris created by bottles, cans, party pill packaging, cigarette butts and nitrous oxide bulbs were the clear plastic cups, which are easily broken when stood on, leaving sharp plastic shards that get tangled amongst the grass on the dancefloor, making this unnecessary packaging a hazard for barefoot dancers, and no doubt the stock that usually inhabit the area. Although the site is thoroughly cleaned by crew throughout the party and afterwards, at the 2005 event, the vast sea of plastic and metal that greeted the dawn after the all-night marathon remains one of my most vivid dance floor memories that was in sharp contrast to the sight of dolphins swimming metres from shore during the sunrise. Yet instances such as these could be easily avoided. When event organisers require vendors to reduce the packaging, there is less refuse. In my experience, no amount of recycling areas and requests that dancers be mindful of refuse can negate the fact that alcohol consumption contributes to increased litter; one solution might be to provide drinkers with a reusable, souvenir, thermal cup that can be attached to their clothing via a clip. As Destination and Kaikoura Roots show, too often our environmental principles are all for show. Until we can be

responsible for the way in which we disrespect the dance zones, we cannot be fully spiritually connected to the whenua on which we stand.

### **Where to From Here? – Future Implications for Aotearoa Dance Culture**

Aotearoa dance culture is poised for renewal, and at time of writing the direction it will take is not yet clear. We may be doomed to stand on the threshold between past and future, Māori and Pākehā, tribalism and consumerism in a never-ending celebration of the present. Or perhaps we are ready to step up to the challenge that has been set before us and turn the short bursts of sublime community experienced at the parties into something approaching Turner’s final category, normative *communitas*. In *From Ritual to Theatre*, Turner writes that normative *communitas* occurs when a subculture or group “attempts to foster and maintain relationships or spontaneous *communitas* on a more or less permanent basis” (49). This final category is the practical application of the utopian principles that ideological *communitas* longs for, and is fed by the ecstatic moments which are literally the high point of ritual. Of normative *communitas*, Turner writes:

Its spirit “bloweth where it listeth” – it cannot be legislated for or normalized, since it is the *exception*, not the *law*, the *miracle*, not the *regularity*, primordial freedom, not *anangke*, the causal chain of necessity. [. . .] Something of “freedom,” “liberation,” or “love” [. . .] adheres to normative *communitas*, even although quite often the strictest regimes devolve from what are apparently the most spontaneous experiences of *communitas*. (49)

Turner also notes that groups based on normative *communitas* are distinguishable from groups based on “a group of putatively biologically connected persons, a family, kindred, or lineage” (49). Outdoor dance culture, with its whānau-like connections and nomadic nature shares much with Turner’s definition of normative *communitas* and there is a notable increase of nomadic ‘ferals’ (especially in the Golden Bay/Tasman Bay areas) pursuing alternative community-based lifestyles that incorporate dance party values. But Turner’s models exist on a “more or less” permanent basis, and dance culture, especially in Aotearoa, where a smaller population limits the number of parties put on, is at best a

temporary model of this type of *communitas* practiced by a small core of dance party regulars.

Whilst outdoor dance culture in Aotearoa cannot be labelled as an example of permanent normative *communitas*, that it promotes a continuation of the feelings experienced during the ecstatic state is relevant to the future political potential of the culture. With each party attended, the ecstatic moments associated with spontaneous *communitas* continue to be felt. That this feeling can survive the dry light of (every)day and continue to have an edifying effect is shown by this account of the Gathering, printed in Aotearoa new age magazine, *Spirit*: “For many, the buzz of outdoor trance dancing lasts for months. Through dance, people experience ecstatic consciousness, releasing normal day-to-day worries, and allowing love, harmony and unity to be the natural state of soul consciousness” (Belzer et al. 19). The memory of these experiences, along with the various rituals that the dancer performs before, during and after the party, increasingly become incorporated into everyday life, resulting in greater integration of Western binary concepts. For many, learning to balance these extremes has resulted in a blurring of the lines between the work vs. play, head vs. body, and individual vs. collective extremes that society imposes; yet for most of us, a normative, everyday life based on dance culture’s utopian philosophies remains clearly envisaged, but well beyond reach.

Dance culture in Te Wai Pounamu has seen a number of large events come and go, whilst the smaller ones continue to attract a solid following. Although the sites continue to operate as learning zones, during the course of this research commercialism has increased, as has the corresponding refuse. At the more commercial end of the events are the Nelson-based Phat parties which attract a large number of drum and bass acolytes, but even smaller events such as those put on by Massive have seen an increase in the amount of rubbish left for volunteers to clean up. These dystopian practices suggest that Aotearoa dance culture has reached a necessary low point in our journey towards achieving our dreams of community evolution; as the tribal cultures understood death is a necessary prequel to renewal. Simon Kong’s 1997 vision for the Gathering was quoted in Chapter Four, but several years later this writer, sound experimenter, and organiser involved with a number of crews including Eudeamony and Massive, is less enthusiastic. In a website

essay entitled “Whose scene is it anyway”, he captures the zeitgeist of those disillusioned by the current state of Aotearoa dance culture. He notes the link between increased commercialism and the loss of magic and suggests that dance culture has become little more than another consumable:

Money alone is an incentive to be involved with Dance; you don't even have to pretend you are interested in the music because it can be treated as a product.

This could be part of the reason I don't 'feel it' any more. Profits, product, media, marketing control are all ideas that I sensed the early dance scene rejected. (n. pag.)

As the histories of the Gathering, Alpine Unity, and Destination show, large commercial dance parties are hardly a sure-fire investment, but the localised smaller parties such as Stardust, White Elephant and Massive continue to survive. Yet the commercialisation of some events does risk alienating the core of dance culture – those devotees who will never be put off by a weak line-up or inclement weather conditions, but will reject a party if it is too money-oriented.

If Aotearoa dance culture is experiencing a reduction of *puissance*, it is also in line with global post rave, where predicted apocalypses have prevented ravers from ushering in the new paradigm that rave's idealists ultimately hope for. As St. John notes in “The Difference Engine”, globally rave has failed to reach the desired goal set out by its own publicity machine: “rave's space is no more utopian than heterotopian, no more solid *communitas* than hyper-millennialist. Far from unifying the 'massive' under the divine Truth, in the techno-carnival hybrid utopias are (re)configured from divined futures and putative pasts in the multitudinous present” (40). One of the 'divined futures' that may be instrumental in keeping post-rave from attaining solid *communitas* is the apocalyptic approach to the new millennium, which has resulted in an addiction to the hedonistic aspects of rave for many. St. John writes that in the face of supposed global destruction, dancers may be creating their own “psychological” Armageddon:

In environments where young people encounter addiction to a cocktail of 'religious experiences' amounting to little more than psychedelic novelty rides, the atmosphere approximates that of living the Apocalypse now, making

the end of the world last longer. And if burnout from excessive alterant use is risked at parties designed with the Psychedelic Apocalypse cookie-cutter, perhaps in them we witness the possibility of psychological Armageddon. (36)

As noted previously, the panoply of alterants used within global dance culture is also found on Aotearoa dance floors, and one area in which this dystopian imagery is particularly evident is in the increased availability and use of both legal and illegal substances, which produces a notable ‘comedown’ period for the event as a whole. Thus Aotearoa dance culture is in line with global post-rave cultures that have experienced a loss of *puissance* due to the continued desire to live only in a perceived hedonistic present.

### **Apocalypse When – Aotearoa as Land of Upheaval**

Yet this downturn may be in line with the death and rebirth experience associated with global dance culture’s own version of Apocalypse – 2012. In “Techno Millennium”, St. John outlines the end of the world theories associated with dance culture and finds that they “hardly correspond to the apocalyptic scenarios of orthodox religion” and that many give significance to the Mayan date considered to signify the birth of a new world age (215). The twenty-first of December 2012 is pinpointed, but what form the transition will take is less clear and St John notes that dancers have various interpretations as to what the date implies: “it is taken to occasion hyperspatial breakthrough, alien contact, planetismal impact, historical explosion, quaser ignition, the birth of the ‘World of the Fifth Sun, the cleansing of the earth and the raising of a higher level of vibration’, etc” (217). That these predictions are also of significance to Aotearoa dance culture, is demonstrated by an essay published in the booklet of the 2001 local music/art collection Loop Select Edition. Entitled “Incubation”, the essay begins by stating that “Mother Earth is in a state of menopause [. . .] her temperature is up”, and follows with grim statistics about the nature of her condition, before advocating that communication is vital to survival. The essay goes on to suggest that one way to make a start is to reset our Western clocks which are based on the arbitrary idiosyncrasies of the Gregorian calendar, and are thus out of time with the earth’s cycles: “If you feel like you are stuck in some kind of retrograde

motion... go with that feeling. There are plenty of scientists who will tell you we are living in a fundamental dogmatic error in time.” What follows is an account of the Mayan’s achievements in pinpointing almost the exact time that it takes the earth to rotate around the sun, and a brief explanation of their understanding of time and the significance of the December solstice in 2012: “According to the Maya, time operated in great cycles, thirteen in total. Each cycle represents a new period of growth or destruction within the earth’s life span. Our current great cycle began in darkness on 4 Ahua 8 Cumku (13 Aug. 3114BC) and is due for completion, amid global destruction, on 4 Ahau 3 Kankin (23 Dec. 2012)”. There is a variation in date from most Mayan predictions (21 December 2012) which may take into account Aotearoa being twelve hours ahead of Greenwich mean time, but which is also indicative of the difficulty in pinpointing the corresponding Gregorian time for dates from other cultures, which do not fit the many vagaries of Western time structure. The rest of the essay suggests that the internet is vital to the process of global integration, and that communication (in the form of parties) is the key to survival:

So the ultimate goal of the global brain must start with global integration. To maximise the potential for continued evolution, to act to preserve all species within the ecosystem. To further the growth of existing societies towards the formulation of an integrated world society focused on ecological unification of the biosphere. A collective conscious.

So where to from here?

WE PARTY! (n. pag.)

The vision at the end of the essay is even more significant in the wake of the events of 2001, which has resulted in corporations and governments both engendering and combating fear with increased security and warfare. In the midst of such a terror trade, the dire warnings of the immanent effects of global warning that the essay addresses are more easily ignored by mainstream Western society. Never before has it been so vital for all nations to focus on ecological unification of our planet.

### **Practicing the Past, Surviving the Future – Rediscovering the ‘Useful’ in Our Everyday Lives**

End of the world scenarios aside, what can be established is that the news of the world has become increasingly apocalyptic in nature, and future survival will require more than simply logging on to the web. In *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*, environmental writer Thom Hartman writes that: “with or without Armageddon, our more immediate crisis is caused by people – for over four thousand years – conducting their lives and business as if it’s just around the corner. This leads to the get-while-the-getting-is good mentality that has left our environment and planet shredded. We need a different set of stories” (157). With mainstream media unable to criticise consumerism without risk of a loss of advertising revenue, the internet has become a valuable medium for deconstruction of the old stories, along with promotion of the new. That the web is useful in promoting greater communication is not in dispute here, and indeed, in the absence of a large body of published work on the subject, much of the local content has been taken from this valuable resource. But there is a risk that a saturation of knowledge and endless ‘communication’ will result in a lack of practical initiatives to cope with scenarios such as those outlined by Hartman:

[. . .] we need to wake up to the cold, clear reality of the situation we’ve created in our world, and the reasons behind why it is the way it is: the dominator city-state Younger Culture that sees everything in the world as potential food or raw material for itself. If things don’t change soon, it will grow and consume until there is nothing left to consume, and then our culture and our ecosystems will collapse, leaving billions of starving humans, polluted soil, air, and waters, and millions of dead species in its wake. (211-2)

Hartman compares older tribal cultures with younger city states and finds that those living in tribal cultures are more likely to survive environmental disaster, war and famine because they practice a lifestyle similar to their ancestors: “By adopting some of the lessons and worldviews of our ancestors [. . .] we can change direction and create a sustainable and livable future for at least a portion of the planet” (212). Yet *The Last Hours* is not merely an outline of an apocalyptic future, and in the second half of the book Hartman outlines the ways in which the reader can contribute to slowing the



damage: turn off the television, reduce consumerism, change how we use technology, reinvent daily life and rituals, and create what Hartman calls, “intentional communities”, a modern day version of tribalism, or normative *communitas*.

Hartman advocates a reorganisation of our myths into ‘useful’ and ‘not useful’ categories, distinctions which are more relevant to dance culture than arbitrary categories of what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. He writes that because our stories have increasingly been moving from the “useful” to the “not useful” category, one of the fundamental changes that must take place is a re-categorisation of the stories that define our culture and our belief systems: “Since so much of what we call reality is subjective, there are few ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ stories; instead there are ‘useful’ and ‘not useful’ stories, depending on what culture you belong to, and depending on your status in your culture. Depending on your relationship to the natural world and your vision of the future” (122). In the integrating space of the dance floor, ‘wrong’ and ‘right’ are distinctions that become largely irrelevant to behaviour and attitudes. The difference between ‘useful’ and ‘not useful’ however, is quickly discovered by dancers as they recategorise things often taken for granted. In these spaces, waterproof pants, which might be considered ‘wrong’ if attending a city gallery opening, are likely to be more useful than high fashion. Regular dancers prize items for their usefulness, and take pride in their evolution from party to party, their entire setups gradually shifting along the not useful to useful sliding scale until campsites resemble long-term occupation sites. Hence, the shift to change mindset is not difficult to achieve, and some have begun to reduce the amount of useless energy burned in our city states. Increasingly our stories are likewise changing and what is emerging is a spirituality that is expressed in an adoption of some aspects of Māoritanga. It is in line with what Hartman advocates as a reconnection to the fundamental values of tribal culture, which for those concerned with survival in an increasingly uncertain future, will be necessary in obtaining change.

Yet a complete return to an idealised tribal past is impossible, and the challenge is to integrate practices and knowledges from older cultures such as pre-European Māori with the technology available at present. Just as Bey warned against wanting a revolution, Hartman also warns against reactionary politics such as dismantling city states and replacing them with similarly dominator cultures: “This book is not a call for a revolution

or anarchy. Further, I'm also not suggesting that tribal life represents a utopian ideal. While many tribal peoples have leisurely and comfortable lives, there are also some who endure a difficult, brutish, and terror-filled existence" (211). Although pre-European Māori culture is sometimes portrayed as being both idyllic and terror-filled, Te Ao Māori (the world of Māori) fell somewhere between these two extremes. Prior to European occupation Māori were hardly living the utopian lifestyle attributed to 'South Pacific paradises', as portrayed by one set of Western myths. But nor were their lives wholly consumed by war, as the 'noble warrior' myth would have it. King writes that: "so long as Māori possessed only hand-to-hand weapons and lacked large quantities of portable food, warfare was probably not endemic. It usually took place in summer months, and often resulted in the deaths of no more than a handful of combatants [. . .]. Nor were Māori forever at war with all other Māori" (83). During times of peace life was organised around normal tribal concerns:

food growing, foraging, tool-making, and maintenance of dwellings, canoes and pa sites. Cultivation was carried out communally, with men most often responsible for clearing land and digging, and women for planting and weeding. Foraging too – fishing, shellfish gathering, birding and harvesting fern root [. . .] – was most often performed communally and seasonally. (85)

Māori had been swift in adapting to their new land, and that technology was vital to their survival in Aotearoa's notoriously harsh landscape is demonstrated by the retrieval of artefacts such as feather cloaks and pounamu adzes made from the new materials at hand.

One aspect of Māori culture that is problematic when assessing the usefulness of older cultures in establishing intentional communities is warriorhood. Although the modern media image of a Māori toa (warrior) is often positively associated with sports prowess, and negatively with domestic violence, or gang membership, Walker writes that war had always had a spiritual component, and was written into the mythology of Māori as Tumatauenga, the god of war who encompasses the "aggressive characteristics of the warlike nature of human beings" (13). Tumatauenga was a cunning god, using what he had at his disposal; hence in Māori warfare, "cunning and subtlety are to be preferred ahead of direct attack" (20). Evison also notes that the concept of war for pre-European Māori was inseparable from the veneration of tribal land and ancestors: "A proposal to go

to war required a proper *take* (pretext), for war [. . .] was not to be undertaken lightly. Any desecration of the bones of an ancestor, or any insult to a *rangatira*, particularly an *ariki*, was a potent *take* for war, and even the remotest borders were periodically patrolled to maintain the tribal rights” (9). Intricately linked to war was the concept of mana, which could grow or be diminished by the outcomes of war, loss of land, breaking of tapu, and loss of respect. Mana was associated with both ancestry and land-holdings, so the land’s protection was of vital importance to the community, and since the signing of te Tiriti o Waitangi the wairua (spirit) of te toa has returned with each generation to fight for the return of unlawfully taken land. Whilst I do not advocate a return to the bloody tribal wars of the past, connecting to a warrior spirit may be useful if dancers are serious about regaining the mana of our land. As eco-warriors of action, rather than violence, dancers could be as cunning and inventive as Tumatauenga in defending Aotearoa from further environmental debasement.

### **Revering the Tipuna – the Land as Ancestral Deity in Māori Culture**

Because they were neither entirely warlike, nor perfectly peaceful, ‘older’ Māori cultures have much to offer Aotearoa dance culture in the way of stories that are useful in restoring spiritual value to the land. The quote by Evison that heads this chapter explains the holistic approach taken by older Te Wai Pounamu cultures towards the land. Yes, the land held practical value and was ‘owned’ by tribes, but the concept of land was tripartite: the whenua, or physical land; the tangata whenua, or people of the land; and the atua, or gods who were manifest in every aspect of nature. Thus an iwi’s land was the source of spiritual wellbeing, and its loss would bring “not only deprivation and disgrace, but spiritual anguish” (9). When humans treat their environment not as a possession, but as inseparable from themselves, their ancestors, and their deities, respect follows. Although pre-European Māori were also guilty of creating sometimes devastating impact on the environment and the native birdlife, Young notes in *Our Islands, Our Selves* that: “as the excesses of islands past were revisited in the growing middens of extinct Aotearoa species, the idea emerged of leaving something aside for tomorrow, of looking forward and organising to avoid scarcity – of conservation” (40). Perhaps realising that there were

no more islands to exploit, Māori learned from their mistakes. Conservation of the land is also tied to a spiritual component and Evison notes that there was a belief that if the whenua were disrespected the atua would retaliate:

There were many *atua* and *wairua* – deities, demons, ghosts and spirits – who could influence human affairs. *Taniwha* were deities living in water. [. . .]

Mountains and other remarkable features of the landscape were also inhabited by spirits or *atua*. There were tribal and family *atua*, and *atua* who watched over particular individuals. These *atua* bestowed protection or punishment, according to the strictness with which the rules of *tapu* were observed. (11)

The complicated system of *tapu* which is still deferred to by Māori also served a practical function, such as safety and hygiene. What is of significance for Aotearoa dance culture is the idea of the land being possessed of spirits who will rain vengeance on those who disrespect them. Mythology it may well be, but it serves a useful purpose in ensuring that humans acknowledge the power of the land, and do not begin to think of themselves as gods over it. And with earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and storms common to these islands, respect for the *atua* who reside here takes on a whole new meaning, as Evison points out: “The Maori had to respect the natural world, or perish” (3). As veteran dancers know, environmental conditions can change in a matter of minutes in Aotearoa; a healthy observance of the power of the *atua* who inhabit this land is therefore a useful belief that can result in practical initiatives being taken by dancers to ameliorate likely outcomes of our temporary occupations.

But the spiritual aspects of older Māori cultures are not the only stories of use to dance culture, and were we to attempt to create intentional communities operating at a normative level, we could begin by adopting some aspects of the pre-European attitude to land habitation. Although land rights were based on genealogical lines, ‘ownership’ was not recognised in the Western sense and land caretakership was under the guidelines of *kaitiakitanga*, a term which in modern times is often translated as resource management. In “*Kaitiakitanga: A Maori Anthropological Perspective of the Maori Socio-Environmental Ethic of Resource Management*”, Merata Kawharu explains the Māori

understanding of a term that is often used in legal or environmental contexts to mean ‘guardianship’ (349). She writes that:

Although *kaitiakitanga* is seen within the broader context of cosmic unity between humans and the universe, it must nevertheless be interpreted on two interdependent levels: the philosophical and the pragmatic. [. . .] It incorporates a nexus of beliefs that permeates the spiritual, environmental and human spheres [. . .]. *Kaitiakitanga* also embraces social protocols associated with hospitality, reciprocity and obligation (*manaaki, tuku* and *utu*). [. . .] Moreover, *kaitiakitanga* is a fundamental means by which survival is ensured - - survival in spiritual, economic and political terms. (351)

Since Cook’s first visit, Māori have often been regarded by Pākehā as a single ‘race’, but divisions within and between iwi, hapu and urban Māori are common, and have been exacerbated by the Treaty settlement process. Thus, the principles of *kaitiakitanga* are applied in different ways by Māori groups, and not all decisions are environmentally driven. Yet regardless of how each individual iwi or hapu interprets this term, the overall concept is inherited from older tribal cultures, who believed they were guardians of the land and took their role seriously. Kawharu writes that: “The historical aspect of *kaitiakitanga* can be understood with reference to the aphorism regarding Maori walking backwards into the future, i.e., taking the past with them while advancing into the unknown. Present and future circumstances are made sense of by referencing the past and all it contains” (352). Thus the tribal principles of *kaitiakitanga* are guidelines pertaining to this land that could be of use to Aotearoa dance culture in our endeavours to move further towards our utopian projections.

### **Retracing the Steps – Learning Lessons From the Past and For the Future at Parihaka**

The vision of Aotearoa dance culture as a multi-cultural utopia has been fulfilled in part by the Parihaka International Peace Festival, the tribal atmosphere of which is in line with the previous occupants of the Parihaka pā. Held at the original pā site, the inaugural Parihaka festival took place in March 2006, and for many dancers, it was the first time

they had entered the historical site. The welcoming pōwhiri was emotional, and for those aware of the significance of walking the same path that the Pākehā constabulary had trod in 1881, there was an added poignancy. But the Parihaka people were as welcoming as their ancestors were famed for, and the hongī (press noses) line was long and jovial. Attending as a volunteer on the recycling crew, for me Parihaka could not have been a more different experience than Splore which had taken place several weeks previously. The number of volunteers and crew taking on the recycling and rubbish role was impressive, with the Parihaka people ensuring that there was little rubbish build-up throughout the event. Notably there was a whānau type atmosphere that discouraged negligence, with ‘aunties’ letting anyone caught littering know that it was not acceptable. But if the first Parihaka festival was notably tidier than the other Te Ika ā Māui events attended, the area in which it most realised my vision for Aotearoa dance culture was in the integration of Māori, Pākehā, and many of the other cultures that make up Aotearoa. Hearing te reo Māori integrated with English, along with a smattering of other languages was proof that the people of this land can create a harmonious environment where te Tiriti’s principles are acted out. Of great importance to this atmosphere was the presence of a generation not usually represented at Aotearoa events. Walking with mana through the crowds were the kaumātua and kuia (elders) who were encouraged to attend with heavily discounted entry, the provision of accommodation and meals, and a taxi service that boasted areas set aside as ‘kaumātua bus stops’. The inclusion of the elder generation, along with the abundance of tamariki (children) also sharing the experience, meant that Parihaka was representative of a greater cross-section of society than is usually found at outdoor dance parties. As spiritual elders, their presence lent an element of wisdom missing from other events.

Because it is hosted by an established Māori community, the Parihaka Festival is not so much a dance party, as a festive wānanga (place of learning). Featuring a strong Aotearoa live line-up (many of whom are Māori) on the main stage, politically ideological lyrics are couched in roots reggae and dub grooves, whilst on stage banter is pro-Māori and tackles issues such as land rights and the dishonouring of te Tiriti. That education is one of the objectives of the festival organisers is made explicit on the flier for the 2007 event, with the Tamariki Kids Zone “providing fun and educative

programmes”, The Speakers Forums, “Challenging socio-cultural, political, economic, peace and justice issues”, and the Workshops and Exhibition featuring presentations of Te Whiti and Tohu, along with the “Parihaka: the Art of Passive Resistance” exhibition (flier). In addition to these zones there were carving and weaving workshops, and Te Ao Marama, an “empowerment area” with alternative healing, spiritual and environmental workshops. In a large marquee behind Te Whiti’s monument was a traditional Māori healing area, indicating Parihaka’s support of such practices which are still not formally recognised in Aotearoa (as indigenous practices are in Canada), even though the 1908 Suppression of Tohunga Act which outlawed Māori medicine and spirituality and established fines for practicing tohunga (specialist, priest) was repealed in the 1960’s. As such, the Parihaka festival offers a holistic celebration, with the space for dancers to choose their level of engagement with the richly woven kete of knowledge that is on offer.

Yet even at Parihaka, Papatuanuku continues to be dishonoured at the most basic of levels. Although the standards of drinking water, flushing toilets, free hot showers, and ample recycling areas makes the camping experience a luxurious one compared to other events, the infrastructure is seriously let down by the apathy of some attendees. At the 2007 Parihaka festival, my role as a volunteer included working with two Massive crew members to help organise the recycling and toilet/shower cleaning crews. During four-hour shifts, volunteers were responsible for cleaning and water blasting showers and toilets, changing recycling and rubbish bins, and removing any obvious ground rubbish. With a large area to cover on foot, the experience was physically exhausting, but the sense of camaraderie formed amongst crew was rewarding, and we felt that we had done our best with the materials at hand, and a limited amount of organisation time. Yet the site at the end of the event was notably more untidy than the previous year, which may have been due to larger numbers and a less whānau-like atmosphere. Whilst the use of biodegradable potato plates in the food court reduced the amount of landfill produced, the disregard of vendors to reducing other unnecessary packaging such as sugar sachets and ice cream ‘sleeves’ resulted in this area being the worst for ground rubbish at the end of the event. Yet the greatest refuse problem encountered were campers who simply dumped their rubbish at the recycling stations as they left, most of which was unsorted

and unrecyclable. With most volunteers having worked off their hours over the course of the event, the few of us left struggled to keep up with the deluge, which included items such as broken tents and foldable chairs. The night before, the event MC had requested that people take their rubbish with them when they go, but despite these on-stage pleas (not to mention those from overwhelmed recycling crew), many campers seemed unable to grasp the concept that they should be responsible for their own waste. That we should be so nonchalant on such a sacred space as Parihaka is proof that Aotearoa dance culture is a long way from realising any dreams of an ecologically sound lifestyle.

But if anywhere has the mana to instil responsibility for how we treat the earth, it is Parihaka, a place long associated with conversion. In “The Difference Engine”, St. John notes the spiritual nature of post-rave: “dancers often report being changed, converted, redeemed, ‘born again’ (36). Yet even these experiences of salvation are subject to binary classification, and he writes that there are two types of salvation experienced at global rave events:

On the one hand, they orchestrate a *freedom from* everyday anxieties and relations [. . .]. On the other, they contextualise a *freedom to* experiment with and explore new social and psychological territory. [. . .] the former mode of experience begins with the festal or party as *release valve* [. . .]. At the other extreme, we have the party as crusade, staging the launch of proto-cultural ‘memes’ into the global system. (36-7)

Parihaka provides the space for dancers to experience both kinds of freedom. From the ecstatic oblivion experienced in the live and dance zones, to wide-eyed epiphanies in the speaker’s forum, dancers experience ‘freedom from’ their everyday constraints and ‘freedom to’ form new ideology at Parihaka. Yet this festival offers far more than just esoteric salvation; Parihaka’s history includes a spiritual legacy where converts built their own haven on earth through hard work and tribal community. Te Whiti, Tohu and Titokowaru preached salvation through physical acts, which included resisting the confiscation of their ancestral land, and this holistic approach to spirituality is still practiced at Parihaka. Here too, subjects deemed too delicate or difficult for state systems to discuss honestly, are spoken about freely, and opinion encouraged. In a review of the 2007 festival for *New Zealand Musician* Stephanie Gray writes that: “Parihaka is a site of



huge historical and cultural importance and the festival, besides being a whole heap of fun, is an opportunity to tune into events that continue to resonate. War, confiscation and invasion may not be at the forefront of your mind [ . . . ] but the information is there for the learning” (“Peace in Parihaka”). As a pan-iwi initiative, with the work power to build infrastructure, the Parihaka festival may have the economic fortitude to realise the organisers’ hopes that it will provide the means with which to maintain and extend the few remaining buildings and add new ones. If the Gathering gave us freedom from our everyday lives, Parihaka, using Māori earth based philosophies, has the potential to convert consumers into eco-warriors, ready to engage in passive resistance against the capitalist state.

### **Reaching for Utopia – the Drive Towards the Future**

The idea of intentional communities is one of the ‘future myths’ to emerge in Aotearoa dance culture. Lying nascent within the utopian ideology is a dream of collectively owned pockets of land on which the DIY skills learned at the parties could be applied to building alternative housing designed for the needs of a nomadic people. Many dancers grew up believing that owning our own ‘slice of paradise’ was our right as inhabitants of ‘Godzone’, but with a buoyant real estate market fuelled by baby-boomers and foreign investors, land ownership is increasingly imagined as a collective possibility. A few communities are already operating under this rubric, but there are signs that a number of dancers increasingly envisage this as a future necessity in serving the needs of the new wave of settlers and nomads emerging in dance culture; people who want to live off the land on either a permanent or temporary basis. In “V as in Voyages: A Letter from L’Abecedaire” Charles J. Stivale gives an overview of Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnett’s discussion of nomadism and notes that Deleuze makes a distinction between a traveller and a nomad, stating that those who travel are emigrants, but that nomads don’t travel. Stivale summarises: “It’s because nomads don’t want to leave, because they grip hold of the earth, their land. Their land becomes deserted and they grip hold of it, they can only nomadize on their land, and it’s by dint of wanting to stay on their land that they nomadize” (4). For those members of dance culture who have adopted a nomadic

lifestyle, this is an important distinction. Yes, nomads move around, but they also “grip hold of the earth” between moves, camping in one area for extended periods and thus getting to know it on a more intimate level than that of merely visiting and photographing. Aotearoa has many pockets of land where free camping is still possible, but increasingly these nomad-friendly areas are having restrictions placed upon them, and ‘no camping’ signs are common. Thus the dream of a network of nomad friendly collectives, based on connections already there, is one often talked about at events.

But future aspirations aside, what is of relevance now is whether Aotearoa dance culture can gather its *puissance* and do something about the situation we find ourselves in. Do we continue to believe that our dream of utopia will be magically realised, or do we become engaged with regaining Aotearoa’s mana and reconnect with our warrior spirit in our own way? After a small cave party on Banks Peninsular over Easter, 2005 a number of emails addressing this issue were circulated amongst dancers when attendees felt galvanised enough to begin a campaign for a ‘Revolution’. In an essay entitled “Working on the Revolution part-time”, Kong outlines how:

It was described to me how New Zealand could be a world leader in globalized Culture. As a nation we could identify ourselves as independent people who place our value in Nature. [. . .]

I’m not completely sure what the Revolution is, but I know that I desire a better world where each of us is in harmony with the environment around us.

I will still work for people who pay me, because I need to pay my bills and rent.

However [. . .] I will now also be working on the Revolution part-time. (n. pag.)

Kong’s words are echoes of the many conversations held at parties where we envisage an environmentally sustainable, paradisial lifestyle but seem unsure of exactly how to go about achieving it. The final stanza however is crucial. It grounds the declaration in the everyday. We do not have to be completely one thing or another. Ayton was another attendee of the party who felt moved enough to send out a group email: “Not being afraid has given me space to see the country that we live and the world in which it is placed, and from where I stand I see a big mess. [. . .] A Revolution was what we wanted at first, but

now we see our mistake, no more going in circles. EVOLUTION” (n. pag. his emphasis). Every uprising needs a *raison d'être* and for Ayton it is the loss of, and desecration of the land. The emails are indicative of the ‘threshold’ position of dance culture, as we stand in the space between one age and the other. Do we continue to make our ‘stand’ against the State by using any means available to obliterate our subjectivity in a never-ending celebration of the present, or do we step forward and use our underground networks to work our way towards a new version of an Aotearoa utopian myth? The problem is knowing how to start.

For calls to revolutions, without practical initiatives, are yet another example of ideological *communitas* without substance, and if dance culture is to move closer towards normative *communitas*, we need to start with the space of the parties themselves. Writing about Australian doof culture, Luckman writes that the events are:

a focal point around which to organise a group camp, where the act of camping itself is understood not just here but more broadly as something greater than a holiday experience, signifying as it does the experience of ‘getting away from it all’ to some more pure place. Demographically, motivationally and literally doof participants are backpackers: they are not tourists but rather ‘travellers’. (29)

At most Aotearoa events however, both attitudes can be shown to be operating. Whereas the travellers set up camp for a period of time longer than the official time of the event and experience it as a home away from home, other dancers experience the event from a perspective more in line with tourism. They arrive, consume and leave, often before the closing plea is made that they at least clean up after themselves. For all the new age projections that the ideology of dance culture claims to strive towards, the reality is that many of the parties are very much consumer driven, and if we really are going to ‘save’ our environment, then we need to begin by reducing our reliance on consumerism, and further encourage community initiatives so that parties are made successful by the participants and not the amount of money spent putting them on. Whilst there are few free parties in Aotearoa, volunteers are usually given free entry as a reward for their efforts in producing the event. This minimal ‘payment’ however, is hardly enough to keep them coming back party after party, to set up, run, pack up, and clean up the events

in what can often be testing conditions. It is the mana of doing it and the sense of community that exists between workers that enables small, collective-run crews such as Massive, White Elephant and Eudeamony to continue to stage a number of events a year. It is these converts who would welcome cash-free, community based events which rely on dancer contribution, rather than commercial outlets.

### **Hope For a Generation – a Vision for Aotearoa Outdoor Dance Culture**

Whether the hoped for ‘new age’ really is only a number of years away, what is almost certain is that the earth is set to undergo some major changes over the next fifty years, and for humans, a willingness to evolve may be key to survival. At the beginning of this research I could not have predicted the journey that I would take as part of my participant-observant role. As a typical Gen-Xer, negativity comes more easily than the positivity associated with dance culture, and I am aware that I have yet to achieve the utopian dreams envisaged at the gatherings in my own ‘everyday’ life. But this journey has taken me in a direction I could not have envisaged prior to that first Gathering almost ten years ago, and it is one that I am learning to embrace more fully each day. As the Fat Freddy’s Drop anthem that heads this chapter reminds us, hope for the future is what drives us towards utopia, a place that is “just beyond my reach, not beyond my sights”. For some dancers, the gradual conversion that occurs at parties has resulted in greater awareness of environmental and community issues and there is a shift towards lifestyles that are at least temporarily tribal and nomadic, rather than individualistic and fixed in nature. But as the disrespect of the dance zones themselves attests there is a long way to go before Aotearoa dance culture can be said to be embracing an earth-based ethic as a whole. St John notes that human beings, rather than serving the evolutionary process, “have largely become parasitical energy consumers, despoilers of the planet”, and if Aotearoa dance culture is to evolve we must reverse this process (“Techno Millennium” 225). Thus, my vision for our temporary utopian zones has been formed whilst confronting the reality left after the events, and it has grown stronger with each piece of rubbish picked up. I want to be able to walk through a party where we truly leave only our footprints. Where everyone is crew, and cleaning stations are set up next to toilets

and food areas so that dancers take responsibility for their own mess. It is a place where dancers carry eating and drinking utensils with them and have left all packaging at home, so that any consumables brought into the zone are stored in reusable containers. In this utopia, even the vendors have removed all unnecessary packaging and serve nutritious, tasty food, the scraps of which are left in the worm farm operating close by. I imagine the whole campsite as an eco-village, where whānau take pride in individual camps and would not dream of flicking their cigarette butts onto Papatuanuku's sacred curves. Where communal cooking sites are set up, and fresh fruit and vegetables are available so that people can take joy in shared meals. Perhaps we could even move forward into the use of sustainable energy, so that diesel generators are dispensed with in favour of renewable sources such as wind, solar and kinaesthetic energy (image lighting shows fuelled by a row of dancers on exercycles). For if utopia is anything, it is a place that should always be reached for, even though it will remain always just beyond our reach.

Inspired by the utopianism of our collective imaginings, I envisage the parties as festive wānanga, where lessons from Māori and others concerned with how we can restore value to the land and respect it on a daily basis, are taught in a relaxed atmosphere. Throughout our troubled history Māori have maintained faith in their own culture and people. It is a model that is necessary for those Pākehā who choose to take up the challenge to deconstruct the old mythology, acknowledge the truth, and work with Māori on building a new vision for Aotearoa, based on the principles agreed on in te Tiriti o Waitangi. Dance culture and Māoritanga share many similarities that could be utilised in enacting greater community between the two, enabling healing to take place, and the development of an eco-warrior spirit so that our concern for the exploitation and loss of Aotearoa might translate into practical, but fun initiatives that playfully confront the state. But regardless of whether this vision is achieved, as Aotearoa dance culture continues to immerse itself in the utopian projections of the dance floor, the sense of *communitas* – in all its forms – found within the culture remains vital in maintaining 'hope for a generation' and the future. Through dancing we reconnect with Ranginui, Papatuanuku and their children, along with the tangata whenua of this land, and all the other people who celebrate the earth through dance. The challenge now is to take the lessons from these older, wiser cultures and create communities that use technology,

spirituality, and the DIYism inherited from our ancestors to prepare for whatever the future may bring. The dance zone should continue to be a real, lived example of a place that is no place in a time that is no time, a place where dancers experience ecstatic moments of spontaneous *communitas*, so that the sense that we are all one becomes vital to the overall vibe of the party. Our parties can never be a permanent utopia, for utopia is not meant to be fully realised, but they can be more than just a temporary drug-fuelled hedonistic respite from everyday life. At the events we live a vision of utopia that at least opens our eyes to the realities of the outside world. No matter how far dancers evolve towards our utopian ideals, that we have stepped outside of city living rooms and bars, and lived an alternative, more environmentally aware lifestyle is political in its own right. The challenge for dance culture now is to decide whether we are content with the 'status quo' of our dance parties, or whether we want to keep reaching further towards utopia and evolve our potential as humans.

The current state of the events would suggest that dance culture is devolving further into a hedonistic dystopia, where the success of a party is measured in terms of the amount of drugs ingested, and where some dancers continue to prove incapable of cleaning up after themselves. Yet the music and the ideology continues to inspire hope, and at time of writing tickets are being sold for the Canaan Downs Festival 07/8, to be held over New Year's on the original Gathering site, which has been bought by a collective of dancers who wish to preserve this landmark of Aotearoa dance culture for the generation already attending the events with their parents. Prior to the event, I am hopeful that in returning to the site where many of us had our first taste of dance culture the whānau atmosphere will inspire a renewal of spirit, a collective conversion towards a tribal evolution that takes into account the environmental impact of our occupation. Only then will our utopian visions contain any substance.

**Coda (written August, 2008):****Taking up the Challenge at Canaan Downs - Envisaging Aotearoa  
dance culture as a Sustainable Utopia for the Next Generation of  
Dancers**

During the writing of this thesis I have come to believe that Aotearoa dance culture has the potential to challenge political, social and environmental injustices in Aotearoa, but only if it is prepared to move away from a consumerist model. Since submitting this thesis in December 2007, there have been a number of social, environmental and political developments that would suggest that humans will soon have no choice but to drastically reduce their consumption, and this coda has been written with the clarity of distance not always possible when one is fully immersed in the process of finishing a doctorate. Globally, capitalist ideology is proving to be untenable, and spiralling oil and food prices would suggest that demand is finally exceeding supply. In Aotearoa the lie of our 'clean, green' image is increasingly becoming exposed, most literally in the rubbish and refuse littering our most 'sacred' landscapes, and dance culture has proved to be no less guilty of desecrating such spaces. In this regard, the Canaan Downs Festival, which was held on the original Gathering site in December 2007 and January 2008, has proved a useful tool in assessing the tension between consumerism and tribalism as it is played out at a four-day New Year's event attracting 2000 dancers from around Aotearoa. Of course, not all dancers aspire to the utopian politics which informed this thesis, and for many the dance zones continue to provide a space for collective pharmaceutical disappearance from their everyday lives. However, for those for whom dance culture has become a second life, the community based survivalist skills learned at dance events could prove useful with regards to a catastrophic disaster such as an earthquake or tsunami. Whether we can build the community lifestyles that we so clearly envisage, but have (in the most part) yet to attain on a more permanent basis, will depend on our ability to move beyond the consumerist model, and the events are well-suited to experimentation in this regard.

Held on the site at which the Gathering took place a decade ago, the Canaan Downs Festival is the most recent large New Year's Event to operate in the Takaka area, and like the events discussed previously, there is a tension between the tribalism that is evident in the camping areas and the consumerism that pervades the dance zones. The significance of the site to the event is outlined by Simon Kong on the festival's *Facebook* page for 2008/9:

For many people around New Zealand and the world, celebrating New Year at Canaan Downs has become a definitive moment in their lives. The location, the land, the events that have occurred there are significant to us, to who we are as individuals, to the way we see ourselves collectively. Surrounded by native bush, lime stone rocks, rolling grass lands, at the end of a long road, high on a mountain, at the top of an island, in the centre of a country cast far into the pacific ocean its is not hard to recognise why people identify Canaan Downs as a special place. (par. 8)

Here, Kong captures the sense of wonder at the beauty of the place where so many of us experienced the magic of dance culture for the first time, a place that is now owned by a collective of shareholders who bought it in 2006, many of whom are also involved in organising the event. The festival began in 2006/7 as Uprising (which I did not attend) and the name was changed to the Canaan Downs Festival for the 2007/8 event. Organised by people with a long association with dance culture, I had high hopes of the event and in terms of tribal affiliations and whānau strength they were very much fulfilled. If the Gathering had been mostly about a hedonistic release into a drug fuelled playground, ten years later many of the Gatherers had become parents themselves and the addition of children brought a family atmosphere to the event that called for more elaborate camping areas and adult responsibility. The new whānau based ethos is expressed in Kong's description of the festival: "Dance and rock, youth and age, love and family. Deep tribal vibes and dazzling technical magic. Spine tingling performance that puts reality in a blender. [ . . . ] The confluence of ancient ideas and futuristic dreams" (par.12). The vision has moved beyond the hedonistic celebration of dance to an image of tribalism that welcomes difference, and this multiculturalism is reflected in the zones that include a



range of musics played over the weekend. Gone are the eight zones of pumping electronica, replaced by a mixture of bands and DJ's. The new emphasis on bands, however, has also resulted in more formality in the dance zones with most dancers facing the stage. If the Gathering camping grounds often looked like a hodgepodge of cars and cheap imported tents with the occasional organised camp standing out in the crowded paddocks, at the Canaan Downs Festival our evolution on the DIY camping front was highly evident. Many groups arrived early and picked the shadiest spots from which tent, van and tarpaulin living arrangements were made that would withstand the kinds of weather that Kong outlines as possible: "Rain, shine, hail or snow (yes it can do it all in the middle of summer)" (par. 10). For those campers with children, whānau babysitting arrangements were made so that parents could get breaks to attend the party, whilst older children formed independent groups that roamed free during the day. For these dancers, who were catered for with a kid's zone, the event was indeed magic, and most children relish the opportunity to try new things and make new friends, knowing that if they get into trouble they are surrounded by adults who will stop and help. In such a space the presence of children demands adult responsibility, and many dancers are aware of their presence and will do their utmost to help should it be required. The sheer joy of the children also adds an element of ecstasy to the event that does not require a chemical adjustment to the brain. They remind us of what the world is like when it is seen through the unjaded eyes of a child.

Despite these indications that the Canaan Downs Festival is becoming more tribal, consumerism, and the resulting trash, is still very much a part of the experience. The festival is overseen by the shareholders but relies on paid staff and crew, along with a large volunteer contingent to operate. Like all large festivals the operating costs are high, and the busy New Year's time frame makes hiring equipment expensive, whilst services such as sanitation are in high demand. In order to keep ticket prices down, revenue from stall holders is required. Although there was a fairly comprehensive recycling system in place at Canaan Downs (which included compost pits for food scraps and cornstarch food packaging), there was still a lot of unnecessary waste created by the stall holders and much of it was designated for the landfill. Given the large amount of waste created,

volunteers did an admirable job of keeping the event clean of debris and in terms of ground rubbish the Canaan Downs Festival was one of the cleanest I have attended. So much so, that I decided to forgo my usual picks during the event, and save my volunteer hours for afterwards when the volunteers would inevitably be reduced to a skeleton crew. During the festival, volunteers were also committed to the educational aspects of the job, and when one beverage vendor insisted on using cardboard cups (vendors were supposed to use biodegradable food packaging), the collected cups were displayed in long snakes around the recycling area. Although this area was designated as accessible to dancers, it was tucked away in a corner and made little impact on the main festival site. Whilst such a placement may aid the aesthetic value of the party, I believe that if we are to evolve in any real sense in this area, dancers should be confronted with the mess that they leave and that recycling stations should have maximum visibility and impact. Overall, however, the rubbish build-up during the event was kept under control and volunteers made regular trips to transport the recycling to the recycling zone, where it was then sorted through to ensure that as little as possible went into the landfill.

The general tidiness of the Canaan Downs Festival inspired me to undertake my rubbish research a step further and collect and analyse the items that I picked up over a three-day period after the event. In the past I have emptied my trash sack into the recycling when it got too heavy, but given the relative cleanness of this event I decided to save what I had collected for analysis later as the haul was light enough to transport back to Christchurch. Only a sack and a half of rubbish was found, indicating that most volunteers and dancers had at least taken care of the majority of the more visible pieces. In total however, there were more than 2000 individual pieces collected, the little things that had been missed in previous sweeps and which often take time to detect and retrieve. Previous to my own pick, on the last morning of the festival, I made a tour of the camping areas and gave the worst campsites sacks and requested that they clean up before they left. Most campsites were tidy, and when I returned the next day to undertake the final pick, I was impressed by the general state of the area, although the build up around the recycling stations indicated that many dancers had merely dumped their unsorted rubbish as they left, despite requests that they take it with them. The following

is a break down of the 277 items picked up in the camping areas: cigarette butts 20, filters 4, papers 11, bottles 2, cans 3, plastic bottle tops and pieces 16, bread ties 5, foil pieces 11, no-doz wrappers 3, candles/wax 2, mosquito coil 1, potato chip (not broken down in over two months storage) 1, food packaging pieces 36, chewing gum packaging 5, cardboard packaging 21, other plastic packaging 14, bean bag balls 10, plastic moth 1, clothing 1, plastic ties/hazard tape pieces 8, vodka bottle cover 1, string/ties 16, fliers 2, glow sticks 4, party poppers 1, tinsel pieces/ paper streamers 16, balloon pieces 1, silly string pieces 60, plastic bag of rancid butter 1. In addition to this list there was also a plastic bag of toilet paper, tampons, pads, condoms, plasters, etc. that was collected from the fringes of the camping areas. Whilst this pick was generally good by dance event standards, there was one particularly memorable moment that affected me emotionally. I was drawn to a beautiful rocky outcrop that was a short walk from one of the corners of the camping area. Beneath the majestic rocks and native bush was a sight that summed up the tension between the utopian impulses and the reality of dance culture that has informed this thesis. The rocks provided shelter and they were littered with faeces, toilet paper and sanitary items. Despite the portable toilets being within walking distance in the campsites, a group of people had instead chosen to desecrate an area that should have been spiritually inspiring. Overall, however, the results are fairly typical of dance parties. Cigarette butts and drug associated paraphernalia such as tin foil pieces and sealable plastic bags are found at virtually all dance events, as are food and chewing gum packaging and in general they are brought in by the dancers. Other items such as glow sticks and the contents of party poppers were more likely to be purchased on site.

There is an opportunity for organisers to reduce the cost of transporting recycling and landfill by working with the vendors on finding solutions to the problem of waste. As per usual, there was a far greater concentration of rubbish in the party zones and the following list has been broken down minutely so as to give the best possible representation of the types of trash found at Canaan Downs: cigarette butts 327, filters 38, papers 53, cigarette packets 2, plastic bottles 2, glass bottles 2, plastic jar 1, cups 4, aluminium cans 5, tin (half filled with tuna) 1, bottle tops/tabs 60, bread ties 4, glass pieces 3, tin foil pieces 41, polystyrene pieces 12, bean bag beads 67, non-food cardboard

pieces 68, food wrappers 73, gum wrappers 29, tent peg 1, glo-sticks/pieces 15, plastic straws 5, ice cream sticks 5, lollypop sticks 5, mirror ball squares (matching those on novelty Absolut bottle found in camping zone) 16, balloon pieces 20, wristbands 7, cap gun rounds 7, tarpaulin cut-outs 7, candle pieces 60, chalk 3, pen 1. All of these 944 items are fairly standard finds at Aotearoa dance events. The 41 tin foil pieces is indicative that Class A drugs such as acid or ecstasy (which are usually packaged in such a way) remain popular, and many of these items can be contributed to having been brought in by dancers. One area where Canaan Downs was particularly successful, however, was in the surprising lack of broken glass, showing a greater responsibility towards the problem by both organisers and dancers. But whilst the food vendors contributed greatly to the amount of recycling and refuse created overall, most of their trash was contained to the food area and the worst problems in terms of what was left on the ground after the event were those created by the use of non re-usable decorations and fasteners, along with the 'party' accessories such as party poppers. The following is a list of the decorative items found in the dance zones that were brought in by crew and stall owners: miscellaneous decorations 16, wire fasteners 26, wool pieces 12, plastic ties 12, string/fabric ties 76, tape pieces 53, tinsel pieces 38, party popper cardboard rounds 25, coloured paper pieces 391, paper streamers 150 (approx.), tinsel pieces 38. But these 837 pieces represent only what I was physically able to retrieve. Embedded in the dance floor was the worst trash problem I have ever encountered – the tinsel pieces. The 25 party popper rounds gave an indication of how many of these devices had been let off at midnight, and presumably one variety spewed forth thousands of tiny pieces of coloured tinsel that were scattered right across the dancefloor. An outdoor vacuum cleaner may have been able to solve the problem, but for one person physically picking up the tinsel by hand would have been backbreaking and time consuming. Given that the site is surrounded by the Abel Tasman National Park, there should be extra vigilance in preventing such a situation. In general, the amount of waste generated at Canaan Downs was fairly typical of most Aotearoa dance parties and was significantly less compared to events such as Splore '06, and the Phat parties, where the rubbish build-up is reputedly so great that it has become integrated into the earth that forms the dancefloor. However, when I left Canaan Downs, I was unable to shift the image of the miniscule pieces of

glittery trash still desecrating the very ground on which so many of us had discovered a love of dancing. It was confirmation that our consumerism is indeed holding back the evolution of Aotearoa dance culture.

Featuring a mirror ball, a teepee and antique green speaker horns, the posters for the 2008/9 Canaan Downs Festival have recently begun to appear around Christchurch, and preparations for the festival are well under way. If last year's festival was confirmation of our tribal evolution, this year's looks set to seriously tackle the waste problem by minimising it in the first place. Organiser Matthew Ayton provided me with copies of the "Zero Waste and Waste Education" plan and the expectation for stallholders. Featuring a sub-title stating that "CDF is working towards hosting a 'Zero Waste' event" (1), the instructions for the stallholders include a list of banned products printed in red, along with a list of substitutes and suppliers printed in black. Items on the banned list include all plastic packaging and polystyrene, cardboard and Tetrapak cartons, aluminium foil wrap, and environmentally harmful cleaning chemicals. The substitutes suggested are biodegradable containers, plates, cups and utensils made of wood, corn or potato starch, bio film, PET plastic bottles and containers and eco-friendly cleaning products. Also included are instructions on how to prepare recyclables (2-3). If stallholders comply, the Canaan Downs Festival will be well on the way to the 'Zero Waste' aim. However, greater education of dancers is also one of the aims, and the 'Vision' statement of the education initiative is both utopian and realistic in its outlook: "Canaan Downs Festival is a story. The story is a journey. A journey into the heart of a culture. The culture of the land and the people of the land. It is a story about who we are, who we want to be. It is a story about us, how we express ourselves and how we imagine ourselves. *And what we leave behind to define our passing*" (par. 1). The italicised statement halts the flow of the vision; what we leave behind is the factor that holds us back. The 'Process' of how to achieve these aims is broken down to "Respect", "Reduce", "Reuse", "Recycle" (par. 3). The 'three R's' of recycling have been joined by a fourth: "respect Mother Earth, our lovely festival site & yourself, ensure that you dispose of everything you bring in a respectful way and leave the land happy and healthy". In the suggestion to dancers that they reduce waste by thinking about what they bring in, statistics are quoted: "On average

festival goers create half a kilo of waste per day, which amounts to 0.4kg of CO<sub>2</sub>". Under the "Recycle" section dancers are given an incentive to take their rubbish and recycling with them when they leave: "this reduces the amount of work and money needed to dispose of your waste. This is one way you can help keep ticket prices down and create a Zero Waste Festival. There will be limited facilities on site for recyclables, compost and waste to landfill, please don't use them!" (par. 3). The unusual request at the end emphasises the message. 'Zero Waste' is about not creating the waste in the first place. The team that are organising and working at the Canaan Downs Festival have a long association with dance culture that for some goes back to the Entrain events first held on Takaka Hill. Most have learned hard lessons in relation to hosting a dance event and their ideas have been developed out of experience. They are committed to evolving as a culture, and the "Zero Waste & Waste Education" documents suggest that organisers are also committed to ensuring that the Canaan Downs Festival evolves environmentally. Once again, I am excited about attending the festival and hopeful that there will be a significant reduction in the amount of trash produced. [Thus, in the religion of dance culture, faith continues to be restored.

If dance party organisers are serious about reducing the amount of waste at dance events, there needs to be a commitment to responsible hosting and owning of the problem. When the recycling areas are hidden away in corners, the dancers never see the problem as it is experienced by the rubbish and recycling volunteers. A similar class system operates as that experienced in society, where the refuse is taken away and dealt with out of sight. However, dance parties are an autonomous zone and there is an excellent opportunity for environmental education by providing this all important crew with a zone that is inviting to dancers to come and help. On the dancefloor, highly visible recycling areas should be staffed by volunteers who can enjoy a great view of the stage whilst helping dancers use the bins. Often the recycling stations are situated away from the greatest concentration of people, and many dancers are too lazy to travel to them to dispose of their trash. The more outgoing volunteers should be encouraged to make a performance out of picking up rubbish, to publicly but humorously shame anyone who is caught in the act. The crew that deal with trash and toilets should be treated with the

utmost respect and given ample volunteers and resources (including adequate transport vehicles) to effectively carry out their duties. Sadly, at most dance parties that I have attended, the recycling managers have been lacking in infrastructure and volunteers (particularly after the event has finished). One method of resolving this problem would be to either charge the vendors for the amount of waste they generate or insist that they bring their own trash crew and organise removal themselves. Whilst recycling crews continue to be underfunded and understaffed, events will continue to create the sort of problems that have been outlined throughout this thesis. Menial tasks such as sorting through rancid rubbish for recyclables should be unnecessary within a culture that espouses environmental rhetoric, and volunteers should at least be paid for such stomach-churning work. The challenge for Aotearoa dance culture is to reduce the amount of rubbish created and streamline recycling to the point that such sorting is no longer required. Until there is a vast improvement in this area, no amount of utopian visions can make up for the reality of the mess left after the party is finished, when all that is left is the evidence of our consumption and the few hardy crew members who become familiar after-party specialists.

As the history of Aotearoa dance culture demonstrates, big events often collapse under the strain of economic concerns and an event's longevity may depend on the ability to move further towards a DIY model. The events that have survived financially are those that are either fully commercial and include a bar (Phat, Kaikoura Roots), or those that rely on community based DIYism (Massive, Eudeamony). Dance events are indeed expensive to put on in Aotearoa, but I believe that there are ways of reducing costs, so that less money has to be made to cover expenses. As has been discussed, DIYism is an important aspect of Aotearoa dance culture, and events could include an 'inventors shed' where alternatives to diesel generators and expensive hire gear could be experimented with. The more dancers are involved with producing the event (imagine lighting shows fuelled by dancers on exercise machines), the less expense occurred by organisers. Portaloos could be replaced by Visionz style dugout toilets, whilst the provision of solar-powered dish washing zones provided with cheap second-hand crockery and cutlery would reduce the amount of fuel and manpower required to deal with the refuse created

by vendors and disposable packaging. These initiatives would not only reduce costs, they would also be good for the environment.

Dance culture professes to revere the hallowed spaces of our dance zones, and at Canaan Downs there is a real opportunity to initiate change on a practical level. Kong acknowledges in the *Facebook* entry that “last years Festival was just one small step along a path of incredible moments, fantastic music, rich culture, amazing people and fabulous vibes for bringing in the New Year” (par. 4). The event was indeed one small step on the path towards our evolution, but that Aotearoa dance culture has evolved was evident in the sense of community created both in the dance zones and camping areas. At the end of the article, Kong writes: “So here we are. Standing on the brink of the inevitable. Looking towards a destination in time and place. What is it going to be?” (par. 11). Dance culture has the power to change people – and it could still be a temporary way of life that puts people before profits, and the land before the party. We have come so far since the first days of Entrain and the Gathering. Now is not the time to stall in our evolution.

Despite the current state of the events however, the hope that Aotearoa dance culture could still become an ecologically utopian space is nourished by music that continues to inspire a spiritual connection to our islands, and which is being disseminated throughout Aotearoa culture as a whole. The tide is changing for consumerism, and the children being raised in our temporary tribal zones will be better equipped for surviving a future with fewer resources and greater environmental challenges, than those whose lives revolve around electronic gadgets such as cellphones and computer games. And should our generation of dancers prove incapable of achieving our collective dream, perhaps the next generation coming through will develop the skills and the beliefs necessary to transform our visions into a reality that reveres the land that is Aotearoa. This is my hope for a generation.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> John Young describes a field recording as “a process by which sounds from a given environmental location are documented so that the resulting recordings can be considered as a fixed record of some aspect of the sonic parameters of that location or object. As such, source recognition criteria for composition stem directly from the use of sonic materials which are drawn from everyday realities and experiences” (5).

<sup>2</sup> .leyton has legally changed his name to this spelling. He also prefers to use small letters for the various monikers under which he produces music. This preference has been adhered to but as there is no discernable uniformity of album lettering, I have used standard capitalisation styles for all album and song titles, regardless of how they appear on the covers.

<sup>3</sup> In an interview for *RIP IT UP* magazine, published before the release of *Electronomicon* the interviewer writes that both Hodgson and Free “cringe at the thought” of vocals appearing in their music. Hodgson believes there is no need: “For us the dub is the vocals [ . . . ] it’s as lyrical as a voice, it’s just not so literal” (37).

<sup>4</sup> “How Many Dread” is a track on the Dubwise Meets Confucius album *To the Control Tower* that makes reference to ‘fashion dreads’ and features Little Jah singing “How many dread wear the dread for Jah?”.

<sup>5</sup> To date Salmonella Dub have released seven albums, three EP’s, and three remix albums.

<sup>6</sup> The line from the Hone Tuwhare poem “Rain” is “I can hear you / Making small holes / in the silence / rain” (238).

<sup>7</sup> In a government press release published on the Scoop website entitled “Exposing Dark Domestic Violence Secrets”, Police Minister Annette King quotes police statistics: “the number of recorded family violence occurrences over the past 10 years have increased from 31,654 in 1996 to 63,685 in 2005. [ . . . ] Our society has condoned and accepted domestic violence for far too long, and we all have to take what responsibility we can for changing attitudes” (4).

<sup>8</sup> Trinity Roots were originally Trinity but changed their name due to a Jamaican artist already using that name.

<sup>9</sup> See the “Messages” pages at [www.trinityroots.com/2004/messages.html](http://www.trinityroots.com/2004/messages.html). Accessed 3 September, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> A distinction must be made between Gilbert and Pearson’s understanding of *jouissance* and Luce Irigaray’s use of it in her discussion of Plato’s cave in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (353-64).

<sup>11</sup> Simon Reynolds writes that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill targeted squatters, travellers, illegal raves, and free festivals: “Defining a rave as a mere one hundred people playing amplified music ‘characterized by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats,’ the bill gave local police forces the discretionary power to harass gatherings as small as ten. If an officer ‘reasonably believes’ the ten are setting up a rave, or merely waiting for one to start, he can order them to disperse; failure to comply is a crime punishable by a three-month prison sentence or a £2,500 fine. Moreover, the police are granted the

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power to stop anyone who comes within a one-mile radius of this potential rave and order them to proceed no further” (173).

<sup>12</sup> There are claims that Nitrous Oxide depletes B12 which can lead to a depletion of bone marrow (<http://www.fast-times.co.nz/drugs/nitrous/index.html>). For Nitrous Oxide’s current legal status see <http://www.adanz.org.nz/HelpLine/Subnav/Drug%20Information/nitrous%20oxide>.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed medical study into the effects of these products see Paul Gee et al. “Toxic effects of BZP-based herbal party pills in humans: a prospective study in Christchurch, New Zealand” (<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/118-1227/1784/>).

<sup>14</sup> In *Recent Trends in Illegal Drug Use in New Zealand, 2006*, a study by C. Wilkins, M. Girling and P. Sweetsur 318 frequent drug users were interviewed in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Under the heading “Current Availability of Different Drug Types” they write: “The drug types which the largest proportion of frequent drug users considered to be ‘very easy’ to obtain at present were cannabis (60%), opiates (41%) and methamphetamine (38%). Half of the frequent drug users said ecstasy (54%) and crystal methamphetamine (48%) were ‘easy’ to obtain. The type [ . . . ] considered to be ‘very difficult’ to obtain at the moment was cocaine (24%). [ . . . ] (38%) reported that LSD was ‘difficult’ to obtain at the moment” (15).

<sup>15</sup> Dix notes that Nambassa was later “declared a tax dodge by Inland Revenue”, and that the festival ended in 1981 when organisers competed with Sweetwaters by holding the event on the same weekend. The first Sweetwaters was held in 1980, when Nambassa decided not to go ahead with their festival. In 1981 Sweetwaters attracted over 30 000, and Nambassa 5000 (253).

<sup>16</sup> On the Webweaver website, Gathering promoter Alison Green notes; “I dealt with the wildfire Chinese Whisper which became the dreaded ‘Skinhead Rumour of 1999’. My job included liaising with the police and calming Gatherers who had heard (and mistakenly believed) the rumours. Of course the skinheads never came” (<http://www.webweaver.co.nz/events/g2000.html>).

<sup>17</sup> The Zero Waste New Zealand Trust is a charitable trust established in 1997 to “support the activities of community organisations, councils, businesses, schools and individuals involved in waste minimisation and recycling” (<http://www.zerowaste.co.nz/>).

<sup>18</sup> I do not make these criticisms lightly, as I am aware that Splore can not be judged by the one event. However, the observations here are based on two ten hour days of picking up rubbish at the beach-side festival site, during which I was unable to clean up the site to what I consider a good standard. I got to know the recycling crew at meal times and when it was too dark to work, and thus gained a good understanding of how the situation had come about – too much packaging and too few crew. Tired of working by myself (usually rubbish is a social task) I left before the main zone was properly cleaned up, but Sandy and Marty (the paid recycling crew) were still working, and indicated that they would carry on until the job was done.

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<sup>19</sup> Stallybrass and White note that in Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* "many of the images and symbols which were once the focus of various pleasures in European carnival have become transformed into the morbid symptoms of private terror. Again and again these patients suffer acute attacks of disgust, literally vomiting out horrors and obsessions which look surprisingly like the rotted residue of traditional carnival practices" (174).

<sup>20</sup> The clip has been edited in a way that omits any other names, apart from that mentioned by the first interviewee shown, who in fact only says "John Digweed" when he is prompted by Radar. Whether Radar likewise prompted the other interviewees is not disclosed, but it is reasonable to assume that a number would have listed Digweed anyway. That big international DJ's are no guarantee of success is shown by the demise of *The Gathering* shortly after this documentary was aired.

<sup>21</sup> Moylan was most concerned with the "oppositional counter-culture of the 1960's and early 1970's" but Gardiner believes that his concept of a "critical utopia has considerable relevance for the understanding of Bakhtin's notion of carnival" (27).

<sup>22</sup> This game was played by two people (one dressed as a caricature of a golfer) using a rugby ball and specially modified oversized golf clubs. Rugby golf was effective as a parody of both rugby and golf, the game most associated with businessmen and corporations. When a spectator picked up the rugby ball and tried to 'pass' it to the golfers he was reprimanded for breaking the rules of the game.

<sup>23</sup> Rave culture has long been noted for its displacement of the sexual from the purely genital to the body overall, which has resulted in a breaking down of gender roles. A number of theorists have written on this subject (see McRobbie and Gilbert and Pearson), but I believe that the role of gender in Aotearoa dance culture deserves greater attention than could be given in this thesis, of which the primary concern is the relevance of the landscape.

<sup>24</sup> Māori support of Aboriginal rights has been evident of late when Māori Party MP Hone Harawira labelled Australian Prime Minister John Howard as a "racist bastard" for his radical intervention aimed at stopping child abuse in Aboriginal communities" ("MP Harawira Brands Australian PM 'racist bastard'" 1).

<sup>25</sup> These terms are derived from *limen*, the Latin for threshold or transition between.

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## Glossary of Māori Words

**Aotearoa:** New Zealand

**ariki:** chief, priest

**aroha:** love

**atua:** god

**hāngi:** earth oven and its contents

**hīkoi:** step, walk

**hongī:** salute by pressing noses together

**hui:** assembly, group

**iwi:** people, nation, tribe

**kai:** food, eat, consume

**kaitiaki:** protector, caretaker

**kaitiakitanga:** resource management, guardianship

**karakia:** incantations, prayer (modern usage)

**karanga:** call, summon

**kaumātua:** adult, elder

**kete:** flax basket, bag

**koauau:** flute

**koha:** present, gift

**kohanga:** nest, birthplace

**Kōhanga reo:** language nest (te reo Māori immersion kindergartens)

**korimako:** bell bird

**koru:** coiled, looped, spiral

**kuia:** old woman, female elder

**kura kaupapa:** te reo Māori immersion primary schools

**mana:** influence, prestige, authority, power

**Māoritanga:** Māori culture

**maunga:** mountain

**mihi:** greet, acknowledge

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**pā:** fortified place, village, inhabitants of  
**Pākehā:** foreign, a person of predominantly European descent  
**Papatuanuku:** earth mother/godess  
**pīwakawaka:** fantail  
**pounamu:** greenstone, jade  
**pōwhiri:** welcome  
**pūtātara:** shell used as a wind instrument  
**Ranginui:** sky father/god  
**ruru:** native owl  
**takutaimoana:** foreshore and seabed  
**tamariki:** child, children  
**tā moko:** tattoo  
**Tāne Mahuta:** god of the bush  
**tangata whenua:** local people, people of the land (usually refers to Māori)  
**tangi:** weep, funeral  
**tapu:** sacred, inaccessible (of sacred land)  
**taonga:** treasure  
**Tāwhiri Matea:** god of winds  
**te Ao Māori:** Māori world  
**Te Ika ā Māui:** North Island  
**te reo Māori:** Māori language  
**te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Treaty of Waitangi  
**Te Wai Pounamu:** South Island  
**tikanga:** custom, way of doing things  
**tī kōuka:** cabbage tree  
**tīpuna:** ancestor (plural tīpuna)  
**toa:** warrior  
**tohunga:** priest, expert, specialist  
**Tumatauenga:** god of war  
**tūrangawaewae:** domicile, home, standing place

**waiata:** song

**wairua:** spirit

**wānanga:** place of learning

**whakapapa:** genealogy, cultural identity

**whakarongo:** listen

**whānau:** family group, community

**whare:** house

**whenua:** land

Please note: macrons have been used throughout the text, unless words appear without macrons in quotes or titles.

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