

# **A Dictatorship of Taste**

**Cultural Nationalism and the Function of the Critic 1947-1961**

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In terms of some green myth, sailing or drowning,  
Each day makes clear a statement to the next;  
But to make out our tomorrow from its motives  
Is pure guessing, yesterday's were so mixed.

Sailing or drowning, the living and the dead,  
Less than the gist of what has just been said.  
(‘Sailing or Drowning’, Allen Curnow, 1940).

Criticism is much criticised. But this logically establishes its title to exist. Criticism never decides anything. It is an argument. The argument goes on.  
(W. W. Robson, 1982:56)

For New Zealand, then, these islands in the south-west Pacific, the growth of national feeling has meant a double exploration of the independence, in the region of politics – in the widest sense – and in the region of the mind. In either case, within the broad stream of the British tradition, the history of the country has been the history of its discovery – a discovery continuing still – of a tradition of its own.  
(‘The Development of New Zealand Nationality’, J. C. Beaglehole, 1954:122)

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### Abstract

Although much has been written on the 1930s as a period of ferment and innovation in New Zealand's literary culture, the immediate post-war period has remained largely unexamined. As an outcome, literary histories have tended to downplay the significance of the Centennial publications and overlooked the impact made by the literary-cultural periodical to the post-war literary economy. The formulation of a conversation within the pages of the journals and the associated creation of the culture-critic were central to the cultural nationalism of the period 1947-61. It is argued in this thesis that the 'long fifties', the years from the cessation of the Second World War through to the early sixties, were a discrete moment in New Zealand's literary history.

To understand the success of the journals as a form of intervention their founding needs to be traced not only to *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow* – journals of the thirties – but also to the programme of publishing that was part of the 1940 Centennial celebrations. Under the leadership of J. C. Beaglehole and E. H. McCormick, the Centennial publications contested the existing structures of cultural authority that lay with the amateur historian and the literary criticism of the 'bookmen'. Beaglehole and McCormick professionalised the discourse of history writing and literary criticism through the introduction of academic practice, and, significantly, a rigorously critical engagement with the formation of national identity.

Their critical engagement acted as an encouragement to the founding of the literary-cultural journal during the late 1940s: *Landfall* begun publishing in 1947 and *Here & Now* followed in 1949. This thesis argues, however, that alongside these two independent journals there needs to be placed the *Listener* under the editorship of M. H. Holcroft, and that these three publications created sites where the imaginative could sit next to the critical, and that this development was based on the belief that the absence of a critical undertaking would stunt the growth of the culture's imaginative and creative undertaking. During the period 1947-61 the development of a specific form of intervention in the writing of the culture-critic can be detected. The culture-critics sought to actively engage the reading public in a conversation; therefore, they wrote for the periodicals in a style that was accessible but discriminating; they understood that they had a specific function within society. Furthermore, the primacy attached to the cultural authority of Brasch and *Landfall* is contested, and it is instead

claimed that an exclusive focus on *Landfall* distorts the overall temper of the post-war years. *Landfall* was but one site where the developing national consciousness was published and assessed; it was a disputatious time.

## Introduction

The ‘long fifties’,<sup>1</sup> that period stretching from post-World War Two through to the early sixties, has remained one of the least examined periods in New Zealand literary history, and yet it was a potent cultural moment.<sup>2</sup> The period 1947-1961 marks the time in which a permanent and substantial critical and imaginative contribution was made to New Zealand literature by the advent of the literary-cultural journal. This thesis argues that during that period the three journals *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* undertook to construct a critical *conversation*<sup>3</sup> through the creation of the *culture-critic*.

These culture-critics, it is argued, negotiated the gap between journalism and literature, creating audiences and insisting that critical reflexivity was crucial to the creation of excellence in literary endeavour. In a small nation such as New Zealand there is often a high degree of cross-over in cultural production: as Keeble states, ‘within the intellectual economy of modern societies, authors, editors, publishers, campaigners and academics are found regularly changing roles’ (2007:2). The contents of the three journals illustrate an intellectual community that was comparatively modest in size; the main protagonists knew each other intimately, and therefore, found themselves occupying several roles, sometimes simultaneously. These periodicals of the post-war era not only illustrate the conflation of both patron-editor and poet-professor but, significantly, the contest that surrounds *cultural authority*.

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Collini in his history of the intellectual in Britain *Absent Minds* uses this phrase to describe the timeframe from 1946 to 1961 the period immediately post-war through until the advent of the ‘Swinging Sixties’ (2006:138). I have adopted this phrase as New Zealand has a similarly discrete cultural moment that I date from the advent of *Landfall* in 1947 through to the publication of Brasch’s *Landfall Country: Work from Landfall 1947-1961* (1962), described by the publisher as a ‘book [that] forms a unique self-portrait of New Zealand since the war’.

<sup>2</sup> Murray suggests that ‘it was really the processes of the 1940s, particularly the increased national cultural activity following the 1940 Centennial that formed what the 1930s would stand for’ (1998:18); the same I argue is true for the ‘long fifties’.

<sup>3</sup> Denis Walker writes of the requirement for literary criticism to express an internal conversation, revealing continuities and exploring new directions (‘The Ethics of Place: Criticism, the Canon and the Literary Conversation of New Zealand’, *Landfall* 181, 1992. 65-73). I use the concept of conversation to argue that a significant development occurred as a result of the advent of literary-cultural periodicals that sought to construct a critical discourse during the post-war period to contextualise the Curnovian poetic and signpost future developments. This idea of a conversation is different to that of the mode of literary critique that James Smithies argues distinguishes the period 1940-1983. Furthermore, Patrick Evans in *The Long Forgetting* argues that the problem with recent criticism is that it reads as if the parameters for the conversation have already been settled, and that consequently a complete lack of contest exists (2007:11).

*Cultural authority* is one of the key concerns occupying the intelligentsia in New Zealand throughout the mid-twentieth century and is central to the cultural nationalism and the critical conversation that informs literary production throughout this period; cultural authority as formulated by the Centennial publications is the concept that links the actions of the writers of the thirties to the interventions of the culture-critics during the ‘long fifties’. Collini argues that for cultural authority to be successfully deployed by an individual there must be some pre-existing disposition toward it in the culture (2006:57). In this thesis I argue that the Centennial created this predisposition; the state, through sanctioning the writing of the nation’s history by university-educated professionals, assigned value not only to the figure of the professional historian but also endorsed the legitimacy of academic criteria. However, while the state (acting upon the initiative of Joseph Heenan, under-secretary for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and chief executive officer of centennial celebrations),<sup>4</sup> conceived of a series of publications to commemorate and document one hundred years of (Pakeha) settlement, the publications also document the transition to a model that locates history writing and literary criticism firmly within an academic paradigm; this foreshadows the professionalization and entry (or retreat) to the university of history and English research from the 1960s.<sup>5</sup>

There are three objectives to this thesis. The first is to site Curnow’s criticism back within the 1940s, the decade in which it was published. Usually, Curnow’s anthology *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45* (1945) is understood with reference to the self-identified ‘beginnings’ of the 1930s. However, by repositioning the anthology as a text of the forties we can see Curnow as less of an originator, and as just another contributor – albeit a very forceful one – to an ongoing conversation. As an outcome of this repositioning of Curnow my second objective is the rehabilitation of the Centennial publications.<sup>6</sup> I argue that the texts the centennial produced are

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Heenan worked for twenty eight years in what he referred to as the ‘Omnibus Department’ (Barrowman, 1999:4). His succession to under secretary coincided with the election of the first Labour government in 1935 and was the beginning of a successful partnership between an administrator with cultural interests and a government with an undertaking to intervene in cultural affairs.

<sup>5</sup> Curnow’s appointment in 1951 as a lecturer at Auckland University College illustrates the transition from amateur to professional critic. His 1945 anthology *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945* and publication of Holcroft’s *The Encircling Seas* (1946) were the last substantial pieces of criticism to be produced outside the university environment. The monograph *Creative Writing in New Zealand* (1946) is suggestive of this turn to the authority of the academic, with the author J. C. Reid attaching after his name ‘M.A.’.

<sup>6</sup> Murray also viewed the Centennial as an important component to the cultural nationalism of the 1930s; but whereas he views the Centennial as significant for the increased national cultural activity

foundational to the project of cultural redefinition that flourished throughout the ‘long fifties’. Not only did the texts published under the state’s imprint articulate and mediate official versions of settler history, under the editorial leadership of Beaglehole and McCormick, but what I refer to as intellectual nationalism was formulated, something that established a paradigm for history writing and literary criticism which in turn institutionalised academic methodology and a critical imperative. My third objective is to illustrate that during the post-war years New Zealand writers and the intelligentsia supported a vigorous periodical press. Although *Landfall* and Brasch have been the subject of many literary studies, I contend that this emphasis on Brasch and the journal he edited has led to an incomplete narrative of the literary economy of the post-war period. His was not a singular voice. Both *Here & Now* and the *Listener*, along with the more ephemeral magazines, made significant contributions to the fostering of imaginative writing within a critical discourse; it was a disputatious time.

In chapter three I introduce and develop the idea of having a ‘conversation with the conversation’ to illustrate my argument that *Landfall* was not the only publication with an editorial mandate to fashion the imaginative and critical. By placing the contents of each journal side-by-side a narrative is revealed that illustrates how each editor was consciously contributing to the formation of a conversation. My methodology is thus a textual examination of the journals themselves; however, by reading the auto/biographical material (memoir and letters) alongside the public editorial the ideas, friendships and disagreements that informed the conversation are revealed.

To discuss the first objective, it is noted that it is impossible to avoid the presence of Curnow and the *Phoenix*-Caxton writers<sup>7</sup> as they were the first to challenge the existing structures of cultural authority. This they did by establishing *Phoenix* (1932-34), the literary periodical<sup>8</sup> printed by Bob Lowry and edited firstly by James Bertram and then by R. A. K. Mason. Although *Phoenix* ran to only four

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that occurred post-Centennial (1998:18), I view the publications and the ideology which informed their production as more significant than the institution-building that was undertaken by the Labour government post-1940.

<sup>7</sup> The collection of poets commonly referred to as the *Phoenix*-Caxton group due to their links with either the four-issue magazine *Phoenix* (1932-34) or through being published by Glover at the Caxton Press and canonised by Curnow in his 1945 anthology *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945*.

<sup>8</sup> The magazine *Tomorrow* (1934-40) attempted to achieve a similar reassessment by utilising an internationalist approach to critique the political and social structure within New Zealand.

editions it is the earliest manifestation of the struggle to wrest cultural authority away from the ‘bookmen’<sup>9</sup> and the poetic they championed. Yet while *Phoenix* called for the creation of ‘cultural antennae’,<sup>10</sup> it was the poet Allen Curnow who undertook to refute the dominance of the journalist-critic<sup>11</sup> and formulate an entire critical method that moved literary criticism beyond ‘encouragements’ to the poet and into a textual examination of the language and subject of the poetry (Baldick, 1996:66). Curnow, in an essay published in the Christchurch daily *The Press* (1938), judged the critical efforts of the bookmen as akin to ‘sentimental chatter’ (1987:6), setting down a challenge to both poets and critics that required of them ‘to know accurately the whole significance of words and images to the people for whom he writes’ (1987:9). Like T. S. Eliot, he sought to establish his own cultural authority through the combination of poetry and literary criticism. His was an offensive fought on two fronts. Like the modernists of Britain, the *Phoenix*-Caxton cohort used their critical artillery to ‘clear a public space for their own innovations in verse’ (Baldick, 1996:64). For Curnow, this innovation involved the creation of verse that reflected and ‘accepted the disciplines of uncompromising fidelity to experience, of an unqualified responsibility to the truths of themselves, in this place, at that time’ (Curnow, 1987:200).

Yet what has made Curnow such an entrenched feature of literary histories is the force of the accompanying essay-length introduction to the anthology; this malcontent monologue was an attempt by Curnow to consolidate his cultural authority.<sup>12</sup> The idea of cultural authority and the contest which informs it are central to the claim that the periodicals and the ‘long fifties’ require examination if we are to

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<sup>9</sup> The journalist Pat Lawlor referred to himself as a ‘bookman’ and the term usefully categorises the interests and activities of the ‘amateurs’, those journalists and librarians, who dominated local cultural production prior to 1940. They wrote most of what passed for literary criticism, edited anthologies and acted informally as literary agents. See Chris Hilliard’s monograph *The Bookmen’s Dominion: Cultural Life in New Zealand 1920-1950* for a detailed account of the personalities and the literary-cultural activities they undertook in the literary economy of the first half of the twentieth century.

<sup>10</sup> A call that is reminiscent of that of Ezra Pound (1918): ‘Artists are the antennae of the race’ (Baldick, 1996:42) and reflects the modernist and Euro-centric enthusiasms shared by the *Phoenix* cohort who adopted the role of poet as prophet.

<sup>11</sup> Throughout the thirties and until he took up a position at Auckland University College Curnow was a journalist working for the Christchurch paper *The Press*.

<sup>12</sup> Phillip Armstrong detailed the persistence of Curnovian criticism in an article in which he examined the poet’s later work for evidence of a poetic that had moved beyond his definitions of 1945 and 1960; ‘So authoritative did the voice of this movement become that writers, readers, teachers and students of this country’s literature continue to answer – or answer back – to it today. Plenty of backchat has occurred over the course of recent decades’ (7) in ‘Dis/coveries: Allen Curnow’s Later Poems’ in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1999, 34:1.

understand more fully the cultural nationalism that informed cultural production throughout the mid-decades of the twentieth century and, significantly, still informs the ideological imperative of intervention by the state in controlling and funding cultural production.

Dates have had a compelling influence in the writing of New Zealand literary histories. This is partly due to a natural instinct to structure periods, movements and individuals in a linear progression, but is also a hang over from the authority that still rests with Curnovian criticism. In his 1945 anthology, Curnow asserted that verse of merit had occurred primarily since 1923. It has subsequently become shorthand when discussing New Zealand literary history to adhere to Curnow's anthology dates of 1923-45 as if these 22 years are the absolute moment. So while the period prior to 1923 has been bereft of scholarship,<sup>13</sup> much the same has also occurred to the post-1945 years. Literary history has been truncated. It starts and ends with the flight of the *Phoenix* and the brilliance of provincial young men.

If the *Phoenix*-Caxton cohort had undertaken to disrupt the cultural authority of the bookmen it was the two academics, J. C. Beaglehole and E. H. McCormick, during their time working on the Centennial publications who initiated a further reconsideration of the question with whom and where cultural authority should lie. In seeking a multi-faceted consensus the government had political, economic and social agendas that were to be supported by cultural publications that created a 'discourse of nostalgia' (Brannigan, 2003:93) through reminding the country of the achievements of colonization while encouraging further advancement. As Hilliard notes, the creation of a sense of nationhood was the goal (1997:141). While the Centennial publications are the first example of state intervention in the arts and the most obvious display (Murray, 1998:15), they need to be seen as part of the more general programme of social reform that was to dominate the years of Labour leadership from 1935-1949; the infrastructure of the welfare state was multi-layered. The Centennial was a carefully choreographed act of nationalism that played during wartime; and yet sitting alongside statements from the government such as: 'I am confident that they [the youth] will realise more than ever before the wisdom of being nationally conscious—or in other words, alive to the advantage New Zealand has to offer them

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<sup>13</sup> *Maoriland: New Zealand Literature 1872-1914*, Jane Stafford and Mark Williams (2006), Wellington: VUP; is a recent exception to this trend.

in almost every phase of life. After all, patriotism, like charity, begins at home' (2),<sup>14</sup> was Beaglehole's assertion: 'a national culture could only come from the free intelligence working on its environment and its history' (T. Beaglehole, 2006:306). Evans notes that the, 'post-war renaissance [in literature] grows out of the side of cultural nationalism' (2006:151): this is precisely why the Centennial publications and the academics that formed the cultural nationalism implicit in their production must not be left off the page.

In this thesis, I want to show that it is a series of fits and starts, presses and personalities that has shaped literary history, and to emphasise that one of the neglected ways that a nation defines and contests the formation of a literary tradition is through the periodical press. Journals are conversations in print and provide a social memory (Middleton & Woods, 2000:5), demonstrating writing modes and styles, ideological enthusiasms, theoretical trends and recording the poets and essayists who, at a given time, 'help a society to breathe imaginatively' (Brasch, 1981: 182). Periodicals reflect the continuity that connects one generation to the next and help counter the reification of one literary era or generation at the expense of others.

Too often, the periodical is cleaved apart from, instead of being considered as a complimentary component of, the whole sphere of literary and cultural production (Keeble, 2007:6). Literature in book form is denoted as 'high culture' whereas the literature published in periodicals is considered 'low'. Within literary periodical publishing there is further stratification that deems a literary quarterly 'better' than a monthly magazine; the frequency of publication, therefore, is considered an indicator of the value of the journal. In New Zealand this has meant that *Landfall*, a literary quarterly, has been the subject of considerable and ongoing literary scholarship. In contrast, *Here & Now*, a monthly miscellany comprising public affairs and literary-cultural writings, has lain forgotten in the stacks of university libraries. The reputation of the *Listener* has suffered the most: dismissed for being a 'weekly'; that is, one of those publications categorised by Allen Tate (1936) as suitable 'for the intelligent layman who believes that the literary news of his period can bring him a sufficient criticism of it' (1959:63). A.R.D Fairburn adopted a similarly disparaging tone when he referred to the *Listener* as a 'very interesting family journal' (Edmond, 1991:251). Fairburn's sarcasm is due to the *Listener's* status as the official journal of the NZBS,

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<sup>14</sup>President of the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition, the Honourable D. G. Sullivan, *Centennial News*, no. 4, 1938.

the government's broadcasting service,<sup>15</sup> resulting in a perceived lack of editorial independence.

The journal-ranking system ensured that each editor strove to consolidate his own publication's position, to shore up support and fine-tune his editorial manifesto. The editorial hue of each periodical and the frequency of publication led to the creation of multiple sites so that weekly, monthly and quarterly the conversation was sustained. Arguments were conducted in the letters pages and generational back-chat led to new voices entering the fray;<sup>16</sup> the journals constructed a process of 'continuous communication, of amplification and correction' (Keeble, 2007:8). Collini has described periodical journalism as 'the noise made by a culture speaking to itself' (2006:435) and this would appear to be exactly what distinguishes literary production during the 'long fifties' and qualifies it as a discrete moment in our literary-cultural history.

A. R. Orage<sup>17</sup> said that the periodicals of his time were of two types: the representative, which reflected a mood or mode of thought in the common mind of England, and the presentative, which introduced new ideas and engendered new points of view (Wallace, 1967:2). The three journals crucial to the development of the culture-critic in New Zealand were of the latter variety, with each attempting to engage a public and persuade them of the value to be had from new critical and imaginative developments. The periodicals constructed a conversation, the intention of which was to address Curnow's 'fidelity to the local'; or in the words of Fairburn, to deliver a 'kick up the arse' and to dislodge the country's 'bloody awful love of dullness' and 'universal respect for moral cowardice' (1981:160). In his much less colloquial manner, Brasch wrote in the first issue of *Landfall* (1947): 'the arts do not exist in a void. They are products of the individual imagination and at the same time social phenomena; raised above the heat and dust of everyday life, and yet closely implicated in it' (1962:430). The periodicals of the 1950s were attempting to frame cultural discussion and art practice in a presentative manner that lay somewhere between 'kicking' and oratorical poetics.

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<sup>15</sup> In 1990 the *Listener* was privatised, bought by New Zealand Magazines, now part of APN Specialist Publications NZ Ltd.

<sup>16</sup> The publications *Arachne* (1950-51), *Numbers* (1954-59), and the annual *Poetry Yearbook* (1951-64) arose in part as a backlash against Curnow and the Curnovian emphasis in poetry and literary criticism.

<sup>17</sup> A. R. Orage, editor of *The New Age* 1908-1922.

What marks this period as rich and diverse is that none of these literary-cultural journals existed in isolation. While Fairburn (contributing editor of *Here & Now*) derided the *Listener* and belittled its editor, Monte Holcroft, he still requested book reviewing work and submitted non-commissioned pieces. Brasch, who was not immune from a Fairburnian jibe either, commissioned work – both reviews and essays – from him for *Landfall*. Furthermore, Brasch had to contend with Fairburn’s mendicant requests for the *Landfall* ‘leftovers’ to be sent north for inclusion in the *Yearbook of the Arts in New Zealand* – of which he was poetry editor (Edmond, 1981:161; 190; 196). Yet in spite of the back-stabbing and intellectual sniping, in a small country like New Zealand the editors needed to be mindful of the requirement to develop an audience not only for literary-cultural journal, but for New Zealand literature and the arts in general; in the end, they were all part of what Fairburn referred to as ‘the United Cultural Front’ (Edmond, 1981:161). The literary-cultural journals shared a collective of subscribers and it was in each publication’s best interest to consolidate the place of literature and art in New Zealand. To this end, material was dispersed amongst ‘rival’ publications. The modest number of writers during the post-war period meant the main protagonists amongst the intelligentsia knew each other intimately, and it was their combination of literary generosity and ideological animosity that made the conversation so rich. As Carter notes, ‘the first duty of any periodical is not so much to find actual readers as to invent its ideal readership, to write (and editorialise) its audience into being’ (1991:3). So while each journal attended to the construction of an audience, it was the point of intersection, where a choice had to be made between the greater project of New Zealand writing or editorial differentiation, which informed the contest.

Francis Mulhern notes in his book on the English periodical *Scrutiny* (1932-53)<sup>18</sup> that the journal had to be understood in:

its material specificity: not as a serially published ‘big book’ but as a practice that unfolded in time, constituting a history that was specific to itself and at the same time bound to the other histories that made up mid-century English history as a whole; not as the ‘expression’ of a master subject (Leavis) but as a

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<sup>18</sup> F. R. Leavis, the Cambridge-based literary critic, was chief editor of the journal until its closure. In his biographical writings E. H. McCormick, who was a student at Cambridge University from 1931-33 writes of his connection to the founding of *Scrutiny* (1996:116-117).

play of many voices, within the ideological formation of which *Scrutiny* was the organizer and bearer (1979: ix).

This crucial remark regarding the periodical press emphasises that even though journals often become identified with the personality or persona of the editor, a publication is also shaped by those whose work appears on the page, and by other contemporary publications, and, finally, by the affairs of wider society. Within New Zealand, there has been a tendency to elevate *Landfall* (and Brasch) to the extent that the quarterly is often examined in isolation from its contemporaries. Yet, what is illustrated by the private correspondence between each of the editors, as well as the missives against each other they published in their journals, is the degree to which they were ‘yarning’ with each other in their own backyard. *Landfall* is undeniably the most polished and critically formed of the three periodicals examined in this thesis; it consciously wears the demeanour of the English journals that Brasch admired, but the central aim is always ‘the growth of a distinctive consciousness and outlook’ (Brasch, 1962:12). The shape *Landfall* took, Brasch acknowledged, was developed from the input of friends and contributors and formed by discussions that went back thirty years to *Phoenix* (1962:11). As Mulhern notes, each edition of a journal is not simply another chapter as in a book, but the entry of another voice to the *conversation*.

By the early 1950s, a new form for that voice emerged in the format of the essay. The trilogy<sup>19</sup> of essays written by Holcroft and published throughout the 1940s had uncovered a receptive audience for this genre. During the war, Fairburn, too, was to publish an essay<sup>20</sup> that examined the problem of reality and appearance in New Zealand culture. While these essays by Holcroft and Fairburn were published as monographs, the essay often finds in the periodical press its natural habitat. The purpose of the essay is to illuminate a particular position or idea in a discursive manner; it is often written in a first person narrative; yet even when it is not, the imprint of the author lies close to the surface.<sup>21</sup> Collini refers to the essay as a ‘means of intervention’ (2006:227); and the culture-critics who wrote for the journals during the ‘long fifties’ certainly saw their writing in this way, as having a function; that is, an instructional imperative. As the journals gained momentum, so, too, did the

<sup>19</sup> *The Deepening Stream* (1940), *The Waiting Hills* (1943) and *Encircling Seas* (1946).

<sup>20</sup> *We New Zealanders*, A. R. D. Fairburn. Wellington: Progressive Publishing Society, 1940.

<sup>21</sup> The essay selections made by Brasch for *Landfall Country* are indicative of the breadth of subject and authorial voice that make the essay such an engaging genre.

interpretive purpose in the writing of the culture-critics evolve; the critical discourse became increasingly a subject in its own right, with the character of the nation and the conditions this imposed on cultural production emerging at the forefront. The subtitle to one of the more significant of these essays is testament to this emphasis: ‘a sketch of New Zealand behaviour and its implications for the artist’.<sup>22</sup> Without the development of the journals, it is difficult to imagine how the critical rationale that was commensurate with the creative would have reached a broader audience.

To understand the importance of the journal in disseminating a critical dialogue to the public we only have to contrast the features of a periodical with book format or specifically with an anthology. For while the prefatory introduction to Curnow’s 1945 anthology outlined the rationale behind his selections and omissions, there is an inherent finality to the process; the anthologist, having made his choices and offered his explanation, closes the book. Like T. S. Eliot, Curnow was able to buttress his poetry with critical judgements that challenged and condemned the reigning poetic orthodoxy. However, although Curnow’s anthologies established his critical judgements it was within the periodicals that they were contested or reinforced; throughout the ‘long fifties’ the journals illustrate a persistent engagement with the Curnovian discourse. The format of the periodical facilitates a conversation through the ability of the editor to site contrasting ideas between the pages. Thus a journal carries an internal conversation, the order of which can emphasise points of agreement or exacerbate differences amongst contributors. The contents of a journal and how they ‘speak’ to each other is a conscious construction. Ultimately, the periodical press produces a public record; editorials and correspondence columns chronicle areas of disagreement or misrepresentation within the journal and outside of it. The literary-cultural periodical provides individuals and collectives with the opportunity to make a hue and cry.<sup>23</sup>

Reading the contents of the periodicals together reveals a largely forgotten moment in New Zealand literature during which the periodical press was as important an outlet as book publication for local writers. As Carter notes, literary periodicals act

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Fretful Sleepers: a sketch of New Zealand behaviour and its implications for the artist’, Bill Pearson in *Landfall* 23 (1952) pp 201-230.

<sup>23</sup> What has been referred to as the Wellington Group of writers clashed with Curnovian criticism for much of the 1950’s.

as a mediating force between writing and the marketplace (1991:1),<sup>24</sup> and while *Landfall* was the only specifically literary journal of the trio, each of the periodicals attempted to publish as much creative work, by as many new authors, as possible.<sup>25</sup> It was to this end that Brasch included letters of encouragement with his rejection slips and Holcroft adopted an open-door policy to writers at the *Listener*. Each journal shared the common mission to create publications where the critical and the imaginative co-existed; printing the local without accompanying critical rigour was to attend to only half of the job. The creative and the critical were in partnership. As J. C. Beaglehole wrote, '[i]f the arts in New Zealand are to flourish in an adult way, then we desperately need criticism as a working partner of creation – as a partner working hard' (T. Beaglehole, 2006:325).

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<sup>24</sup>Just as Patrick Evans noted with respect to book publication during the 1930s, 'that without the inception of the small presses there would have been no literary renaissance'; the same is true for the periodicals of the fifties. Without printers who were able to set the type and turn a blind eye to payment inconsistencies they would not have occurred (1990:88). Caxton published *Landfall*, Bob Lowry *Here & Now*.

<sup>25</sup> This process in itself was contested with the charge most frequently hurled at Louis Johnson and the *Poetry Yearbook* that he was prepared to publish too much of too little quality in the act of creating a readership; 'Easy publication plays the devil with public taste' as Curnow warned him in a review published in *Here & Now* (May, 1953).

## Chapter One

### An Absurd Ambition

Most New Zealand literary histories follow an established pattern, suggesting a literary-cultural renaissance that began in the 1930s with the publications *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow*, followed by a necessary rupture for the war and culminating in the treatise of discontent that is Curnow's essay-length introduction to the *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945*. In this chapter, however, I offer an alternative reading, arguing the Centennial needs to be seen as central to the cultural production of the post-war years<sup>26</sup> and even to Curnow's anthology, and that, therefore, it displaces the primacy usually accorded to the *Phoenix*-Caxton alliance.

While it is commonly claimed that Curnow's 1945 anthology was the basis for the retrospective canon formation that occupied the energies of the *Phoenix*-Caxton cohort during the 'long fifties', and while it was Curnow who came 'to define and shape the tradition, moulding it to his own purposes' as Jones (2003:187) concludes, we need to be mindful that Curnow himself, in his 1945 introduction, acknowledged the utility he observed in Holcroft's philosophically-inflected prose, and the rigour and scholarly assuredness of McCormick's literary criticism (1987: 43 & 45). Curnow also discerned that the academic approach, in the writing of history, such as that undertaken by J. C. Beaglehole, was necessary to brace any advancement in imaginative and critical writing.

The only mention given to the Centennial in many literary histories is in association with either canon formation or state-derived nationalism<sup>27</sup> and the resulting anti-myth; the poets' response to the Centenary, as Jones has argued, and articulated most forcefully by Curnow and Glover. The outcome is a literary-historical narrative that is derived from the self-referential accounts of the *Phoenix*-

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<sup>26</sup> Stuart Murray in *Never a Soul at Home* (1998) also views the Centennial celebrations as the starting point for the nationalism of the 1930s, but his point is that it makes sense of the thirties and explains the dominance given to that decade, whereas I argue that the Centennial anticipates the structural changes that were to occur with the dissemination of cultural production that occurred with the periodicals in the early post-war period.

<sup>27</sup> Chris Hilliard has written of the need to view the Centennial publications, especially the historical surveys, as a form of colonization, arguing that: '[n]o one would dispute the relevance of colonization to writing in the case of polemical tracts against Maori or flagrant appropriations of taonga. However, even texts that do not refer to Maori people can be part of the enterprise of colonization in their treatment of the European presence in Aotearoa as normative or natural. Accomplished, reflective cultural nationalist writing which sought to make Pakeha culturally at one with 'the land', to give them a 'home in thought' was as 'colonizing' as any other writing' (1999:3). Furthermore, this also created a separation between Maori history and *New Zealand* history (14).

Caxton writers therefore, rather than looking at the publications and the ferment that created them, we are distracted by the noise made by the phoenix which continues to rise from the ashes to dominate yet another literary moment. All of these developments are commensurate with each other: the writers of the anti-myth become canonised as a result of Curnovian criticism; and the anti-myth was itself an attack on the perceived fallacy informing settlement myths (the Just City and the Pastoral Paradise [Jones, 2003:13]) which were the foundation for the jingoistic nationalism of the Centenary. However, while we should not ignore the significance of the anti-myth to the encouragement of a more circumspect national literature or the fanfaronade temper of the celebrations, we do need to explore the background to the centennial publications and the ideas and the personalities that drove such an ambitious programme of intellectual nationalism.

Beaglehole and McCormick created an intellectual nationalism, and without this and the related scholarship and structural conditions this established, there would not have existed the climate for Curnow's 1945 anthology or for the development of the literary-cultural journals of the post-war years. It is inadequate to simply dismiss the Centenary with a line or two from Glover's Centennial poem or similarly a verse from Curnow's collection *Not in Narrow Seas* (1939). While the objective of the state was to celebrate and document 100 years of settlement in an appropriately commendatory style, an unintended outcome showed itself in a nascent critical mode. This in turn would lead to scholarship and criticism underpinned by the academic expectations of veracity and accuracy whether in treatment of the subject or written expression. While academic fidelity as a clearly defined aim may not have imbued many of the centennial publications, its influence can be seen in the better.

The central argument of this chapter is that the Centennial publications acted as a necessary encouragement to the establishment of a critical conversation and therefore anticipate the literary-cultural journals of the 'long fifties'. An essential part of this claim is that the conversation initiated in the centennial branch under the leadership of Beaglehole and McCormick, led to the construction of a critical discourse that foreshadows Curnow's 1945 anthology. Furthermore, it is only by focusing on the Centennial that we can make sense of the retrospective myth-making surrounding the *Phoenix*-Caxton writers' accounts of the thirties. The state-conceived cultural nationalism orchestrated in the Centennial Branch enabled the literary renaissance of the 1930s to take centre stage. Both Beaglehole and McCormick

believed that the literature and visual art of a nation provided a litmus test of experience and achievement, and therefore gave primacy to these forms of cultural production. It was this attitude of seeking meaning and understanding in expressions of the local that galvanised Curnow into action and the anti-myth became an articulation and consolidation of the intellectual nationalism advocated by Beaglehole and McCormick;<sup>28</sup> what Bill Oliver claimed was ‘finding a country by thinking about it’ (2002:108).

Significantly, the structural initiatives of the Centennial Branch consolidated new approaches to culture and the creation of national identity. They were in response to the changing ideas surrounding the role of the state in promoting cultural production and an understanding of what was actually implied when people spoke of culture: was it art, literature and classical music, or was it the day-to-day experiences of a collection of people living in a particular environment; culture as civility or culture as identity as summarised by Eagleton (2000:64). The centennial celebrations were a composite of both definitions, whereby the creation of a strong national identity was to be fostered by creative cultural products: literary and music composition competitions, and the formation of a centenary orchestra. Culture with a big ‘C’ was strengthening culture with a little ‘c’; and by the post-war years culture and the arts were used as metonyms for each other.

Ultimately, culture like welfare was to become the responsibility of the state. This was the pursuit of ‘cultural democracy’ (Day, 1997:20), whereby all members of society should have access to cultural products and the opportunity to participate in culture. This philosophy was embraced by Walter Nash (Minister of Finance and Housing) and Peter Fraser, who became Prime Minister and leader of the Labour party upon the death of Michael Savage in 1940. Fraser viewed the government’s policies as ‘cultural education’ (Brickell, 2003:303); legislation had an educative function; from state houses and the architectural philosophies of Ernst Plischke<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> It was an extract from Beaglehole’s *A Short History* that Curnow included as an epigraph for his collection *Not in Narrow Seas* (1939), recalling in 1973 that this collection ‘had the good fortune to be reviewed by John Beaglehole in *The Press* – it was a brief review but it was a warm and welcoming notice by a man whose intellect one deeply respected’ (1987:249). In this same interview Curnow also states that when his 1945 anthology was published he ‘had the good luck to be reviewed by E. H. McCormick’ (249).

<sup>29</sup> Fraser and Nash were both influenced by the architectural philosophies of Plischke and the stress the European-trained architect placed on a modernist house devoid of ornamentation and orientated towards sun and light: ‘Labour’s vision of the good society had been characterised by notions of equality and cultural improvement for all, including good architecture, following William Morris’s

through to the formation of the National Symphony Orchestra, Fraser believed good art created a good culture ‘and therefore had a role in the betterment of the lives and the culture of the citizenry’ (Brickell, 2003:303). The interpolation of these two understandings of culture that was formulated under the first Labour government continue to underpin funding models and ideological imperatives to the present day.

Heenan and Beaglehole, who, along with McCormick, were the main architects of the centennial publications, understood and entertained many of the ideas of Fraser and Nash.<sup>30</sup> However, it was a shared love of literature that lay behind the emphasis on the textual in the planning for the centennial celebrations. In early 1941 Heenan recommended to his Minister, Bill Parry, that the Centennial Branch be permanently established as the Historical Branch with Beaglehole in charge of it (Barrowman, 1996:6) By tracing back to this, we can discover an explanation for the continued value the state places on textual cultural production and the persistence of historical narratives as nation-building devices. The New Zealand public’s sustained interest in general history texts is testimony to this influence.

Essentially the Centennial is about the creation of cultural authority and the role the state will play within it. Heenan enabled cultural authority to pass from the amateur journalist-historian to the professional scholar just as Curnovian criticism contested the authority of the bookmen. For with the Centennial publications, Beaglehole and McCormick altered the way in which historical and literary scholarship was to be conducted in New Zealand. They did this by insisting on good academic practice, consisting of research, data analysis, footnoting and the production of a text written in an accessible but academic style. The amateur historian with his journalistic prose and reliance on anecdote was pushed aside. It was this emphasis on critical interpretation and literary style that created a platform for the journals of the ‘long fifties’. The journals were formed under the leadership of men who saw themselves as cultural missionaries – setting out to convert, civilise and educate New Zealand society – and the public success of the Centennial publications was evidence that the public could tolerate rather more than the hyperbolic journalese that had so often passed for the writing of history or literary criticism in New Zealand.

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contention that the dwelling of the ordinary citizen was an object worthy of the artist’s thought’ (Brickell, 2003:305).

<sup>30</sup> Beaglehole would often share Nash’s ministerial car on the return journey home from meetings they attended together (T. Beaglehole, 2006:223); Beaglehole shared an easy friendship with Nash that extended beyond public affairs and into their social lives (186; 471).

It is therefore the Centenary which forms the link between the early journals – *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow* – and the periodicals of the ‘long fifties’. Both Beaglehole and McCormick were young men during the 1930s and were affected by the turn to fascism and aware of the political role the writer played on the Left.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Beaglehole was persecuted by the university colleges for what were believed by the authorities to be red-predilections. The frustration he encountered when unable to defend his case publicly (T. Beaglehole, 2006:180-84) ensured not only his support for journals (beginning with *Tomorrow*) which were independent and established for the dissemination of critical opinion, but also his insistence to history students that they should read widely and think deeply.

This was the background to the developing local consciousness that was to inform the conversation of the culture-critics in the post-war years. The Centennial publications provided the foundation for the institution-building undertaken by the Labour government in the 1940s and ‘set the state at the core of the infrastructure of post-war cultural development’ (Barrowman, 1996:3). It is as an outcome of these specific political conditions, alongside what could be called the more socio-cultural which are the subject of chapter two, and which I argue enabled the journals of the ‘long fifties’ to survive and flourish in a manner which the earlier periodicals did not. The intervention by the state into culture production, and, more specifically the practice of using the arts to foster the development of a distinctive national identity, facilitated the intervention by the literary-cultural journal and the culture-critic into the public sphere. The enthusiasm shown post-war by the state for culture and the arts dovetailed with the interests of the intelligentsia. However, this thesis does not view the nationalism of the Centenary celebrations and the commissioning of the Centennial publications as a sequel to colonisation or as a rubric through which to examine national identity (Hilliard, 1999:4); rather I want to examine the intellectual and cultural leadership – the creation of cultural authority – that the publishing programme formulated, and to argue that the intellectual nationalism of Beaglehole

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<sup>31</sup>McCormick writes in his autobiography that by taking advantage of special excursion fares offered to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the march on Rome, he was able to travel to Italy; while there he visited an exhibition of Fascism which ‘confirmed my detestation of Mussolini and his doctrines’ (1996:122).

and McCormick produced the culture-critic and the conversation they formed during the ‘long fifties’.<sup>32</sup>

Before I turn to the intellectual nationalism of Beaglehole and McCormick, however, I shall examine now the literary economy of the 1930s that they helped to change, I shall discuss the style of literary criticism that was prevalent then, and the skirmishes that resulted as the *Phoenix-Caxton* poets took on the literary establishment and what has been described as the ‘bookmen’.

### 1. Bread-and-butter criticism: ‘Bookmen’ and culture-critics

Benedict Anderson’s contention that the dual development of the newspapers and creative fiction made it possible to ‘think’ the nation (1983:22) has an interesting history in the New Zealand context. Among the most persistent and bitter disputes throughout the thirties and into the post-war years were the attacks made by the poets against the pervading journalist-critic tradition in New Zealand, or the men, Chris Hilliard has termed the ‘bookmen’ (2006). The culture-critics were the antithesis of the bookmen: whereas the bookmen were associated with broadsheet journalism, the culture-critics established or wrote for journals; the bookmen acted as agents for publishers and authors while the culture-critics founded presses; the bookmen were enthusiastic scribblers (a few lines of poetry here, a murder mystery<sup>33</sup> there), the culture-critics were practitioners intent on living by their talent and craft. Essentially what the list of binaries illustrates is that the bookmen were amateurs, the culture critics saw themselves as professionals.<sup>34</sup> Significantly, the culture-critics believed themselves to be a crucial component of society; its conscience and critic. They saw themselves as members of a distinctive class, not unlike Coleridge’s clerisy, and therefore as possessing an interpretative mandate and as having a duty to interpolate

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<sup>32</sup> Stuart Murray in his book *Never a Soul at Home: New Zealand Literary Nationalism and the 1930s* (1998) argues that one explanation for the dominance of Curnow in the post-war years was his ‘understanding that, in fact, cultural nationalism was an intellectual undertaking’ (244).

<sup>33</sup> This was the collaborative writing of ‘Murder by Eleven’, Lawlor’s attempt at a collectively written mystery like those recently published in England and Australia. ‘Murder by Eleven’ was never published but a comic spin-off *The Thirteenth Clue* was serialised in the *Railways Magazine*. A fictional account of the writing of ‘Murder by Eleven’ is given by Maurice Gee in *The Scornful Moon: a moralists tale* (2003). Ngaio Marsh asked the audience at a meeting of the English Association in Christchurch to assist her with a plot, Holcroft’s recollection has Curnow coming up with the ingenious murder scenario of a gun hidden in a piano firing when a specific note was struck (1984:163).

<sup>34</sup> This was a crucial distinction, leading to the assumption that writing was a fulltime occupation and that consequently (at this time when a woman’s place was in the home and gender roles were strictly prescribed) women could only be amateurs. Women were effectively removed from the literary economy as an outcome of this insistence that writing was an occupation.

their views into society. The periodical press made these interventions accessible; the letters, editorials and essays written by the culture-critics entered the public sphere, creating an audience and constructing a conversation; Daley terms the act of creating a conversation the ‘epistolary format of the periodical press’ (2007:31).

Many of the authors I refer to as culture-critics are the same as those James Smithies identified as exponents of the mode of literary critique;<sup>35</sup> and while I agree with his analysis that the mode of the essay allowed writers and critics a new means from which to explore the country imaginatively and critically, I argue that he neglects to acknowledge that it was the site in which these essays were published that further marks their significance. Being published in periodicals, the essay is not atomised from the society which created it, and is positioned in conversation with other imaginative and critical work. Furthermore, by interacting with the other features of the journal: political articles, advertising, book reviews, editorials, and letters to the editor it helps to form a conversation among the pages.

As an outcome of the enlargement of the concept ‘culture’ (away from the narrow definition of the ‘arts’ and towards encompassing the everyday practices of a society and the right of its members to participate in their culture), the culture-critic had far greater scope for reflection as imaginative literature was positioned alongside topics representing the breadth of societal experience. In the post-war years this led to essays written with a sociological inflection, a development that mirrored international trends, especially those in America, where the failure of the left to propagate proletarian literature had by the forties led to ‘a commitment not to social causes but to the life of the mind’ (Gilbert, 1967:166). The life of the mind, and the fact that the bookmen seemed to have such scant regard for it is what defines the struggle for cultural authority between the *Phoenix-Caxton* poets and the bookmen.

As Fairburn noted in an essay entitled ‘Some Aspects of New Zealand Art and Letters’ (1934),<sup>36</sup> ‘we writers could ignore the newspapers were they not the main channel open for our expression. Even so, we must do our best to forget about them’ (214). The literary pages of the dailies provided not only one of the few outlets for publication by local writers, but were also where the majority of literary criticism was

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<sup>35</sup> *Imagining New Zealand: Literary Critique and Cultural Redefinition 1940-1983* (2002)

<sup>36</sup> The essay was published in *Art in New Zealand*, the periodical had the by-line ‘devoted to art in its various manifestations in our own country’; the literary editor was C. A. Marris.

located.<sup>37</sup> This was criticism, though, in a very loose sense of the word. According to Fairburn this was not at all surprising when the idea of *culture* itself was equated with the ladies' debating societies, and 'not in the wider sense of a whole way of life, rough and smooth intermingled harmoniously and without snobbery'. The point that Fairburn makes here is essentially a definitional one, and a concern with what the term, 'culture', actually implied was to occupy Fairburn's writing and thinking throughout his life, culminating in his essay 'The Culture Industry' (1956), which I examine in chapter three.

In 'Some Aspects of New Zealand Art and Letters' Fairburn clearly articulates what he understands as culture, yet the form of culture he calls for involves the popularisation of high culture based as it is on the precepts of taste and education.<sup>38</sup> This, significantly, is not a push for *popular* culture. What Fairburn is arguing for is the expression of elite culture to be made an everyday component of society; to be manifest in architecture, furniture and crockery design;<sup>39</sup> this is what he denotes by the 'whole way of life'. Here his views are in sympathy with the Labour government who also believed that matters of culture were to be embedded in the everyday and accessible to all (a composite of both modernist and socialist philosophies [Brickell, 2003:297]): but where they were to diverge concerned the intervention of the state into cultural production. Specifically, for Fairburn as a writer, this involved the question of the state's intervention into the literary economy through the mechanism of the State Literary Fund (1947).<sup>40</sup> An awareness of taste, along with high quality

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<sup>37</sup> 'I suppose you are thinking of the bread-and-butter criticism, the newspapers and the weeklies, rather than studies like Holcroft's *The Deepening Stream?*'; Allen Curnow in conversation with Ngaio Marsh, (1987:79).

<sup>38</sup> In an article published in the *Listener* in 1946, 'The Arts are Acquired Tastes', Fairburn claims that the function of criticism is to enable people to develop judgement, and therefore to increase their taste levels and then to be able to value the best in cultural production: 'I think it can be said that no society can live for long in a state of civilisation without a fairly widespread appreciation of the arts – that is to say, without well-organised aesthetic sensibility' (1967:160).

<sup>39</sup> The influence of Fairburn can be seen in the manifesto of the Architectural Group, which was an association of lecturer Vernon Brown's students. Brown was a great friend of Fairburn. The following is from a pamphlet they published in 1948: '[w]e shall not be satisfied until this outlook includes our whole environment – the places where we work or play, where our children spend their school days, our streets and parks, our cars and buses, the plates from which we eat, and the chairs in which we relax. Because we want this in New Zealand, overseas solutions will not do. New Zealand must have its own architecture, its own sense of what is beautiful and appropriate to our climate and conditions' (reprinted in Lloyd Jenkins, *Dreamland* 2005:142).

<sup>40</sup> Fairburn had been a vocal detractor of state funding since the 1930s and was especially outraged by the practices of Joe Heenan. In a letter to Brasch in December 1947 he wrote, 'The notion of having Heenan (or anybody else) acting as a secret arbiter of letters – backing horses off course, so to speak – doesn't appeal to me much' (Edmond, 1981:177). This was a suitable metaphor for Heenan who was

public art and a national orchestra, *but* not more ‘watercolour societies’ (1934:215) would be sufficient, in Fairburn’s view, to allow New Zealand to develop creatively and critically. Fairburn’s remarks, from 1934, are not only an attack on the newspapers and the literature he believed their literary editors encouraged, but an expression of his own belief system concerning the primacy of art and culture in society. Fairburn was an aesthete, but also a versatile practitioner of the arts, who lived his definition of culture as a whole way of life: composing poetry, designing and block printing fabric, writing on architecture and lecturing at Art School. All this, along with prolific concert and lecture attendances and his friendships with leading artists and writers, ensured an existence where culture was the *whole* of life.

In ‘Some Aspects of New Zealand Art and Letters’ Fairburn also states that such a conception – culture as the whole way of life – was the ‘enemy rather than the protégé of our press magnates’ (214). He believed culture was viewed as little more than a hobby and not as an essential component of individual and civic life. Brasch, writing in 1947, states,

[the arts] have been made to appear unreal, a decoration on the surface of life, which may be of use in whiling away a few leisure hours, but is scarcely of use to those engaged in the serious business of mankind.<sup>41</sup>

Accordingly, the arts and participation in them were based upon dated assumptions and practices that were unaltered since the days of the *Triad*.<sup>42</sup> New Zealand culture seemed caught in a cultural time warp. Significantly, Fairburn also saw that if arts and culture were perceived as leisure activities, then other diversions, especially those which were part of popular culture, could replace them. Fairburn was well aware that not only did the press barons financially support visiting music theatre troupes, they were also associates of the cinema mogul James Kerridge.<sup>43</sup> This was a theme Fairburn was to return to throughout his writing; but, as the following chapter shows, his was a position that lay outside the suggestions commonly offered as solutions. Fairburn continually asserted that the mindless enthusiasm displayed by the

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known to interrupt meetings to attend to bloodstock matters; he was an influential figure in horse racing circles ([www.dnzbgovt.nz](http://www.dnzbgovt.nz)).

<sup>41</sup> *Landfall* 1, 1947, (3).

<sup>42</sup> *The Triad* (1893-1927); ‘A journal devoted to literature, art, science and music’ as the cover proclaimed.

<sup>43</sup> James Kerridge, cinema and the influence of popular culture upon New Zealand society were the topic of an article in *Here & Now*, March 1956, with his publicity and staging described as the ‘struggle to wed culture to mass appeal’ (36).

bourgeoisie for culture, state patronage and a critically un-reflexive press were the triumvirate that ensured the continuation of literary-cultural mediocrity in the country. Although Fairburn was the doyen of overstatement, his 1934 article reflects the position held by the *Phoenix-Caxton* writers.

For the *Phoenix-Caxton* writers, the literary middlemen were the cause of the dismal quality of literature in New Zealand, being fearful of anything ‘modern’ and continuing to champion the ‘Georgian week-end notion of poetry’, as Fairburn referred to it (1981:90). Literary criticism was often little more than reviewing; it was affected, dated and prescriptive. The *Phoenix-Caxton* poets with their modernist interests and poetic forms were thus excluded. The attacks made by the likes of Glover and Fairburn against the bookmen was simply a challenge to their ascendancy, as editors, bookmen like Marris, ‘were well placed to promote the kinds of writing [they] valued, and attack and marginalise the kinds [they] did not’ (Hilliard, 2006:28). The Centennial assisted the young Turks in getting their own back on ‘Mother Marris’ and his ilk by formulating an academic discourse and infrastructure for research and writing that left no room for the amateur. By the advent of *Landfall* in 1947, literary criticism had passed from the literary pages of the newspapers to the literary journal (Hilliard, 2006:111).

Through founding literary-cultural journals the *Phoenix-Caxton* writers were able to define themselves in opposition to the bookmen; this was essentially the programme that lay behind *Phoenix*. It was a deliberate strategy to appropriate cultural authority from the bookmen and the newspapers. By writing in periodicals, the *Phoenix-Caxton* writers were formulating a new style of literary journalism: from topic selection to an essayistic style, this was journalism *as* literature, as opposed to journalism *about* literature. The contents of the journal and its overall voice had to reflect this primacy accorded to the literary. The frequency of publication further defined its superiority to the literary journalism published in the broadsheets; this is the idea of worthiness that structures the hierarchy of the periodical – the less frequently published the more elite the publication and the more serious its intention is perceived to be. Journals are a genre of their own, and they are not neutral vehicles for other texts (Carter, 1991:2) but actively formulate an identity and inscribe work that is published within them as contingent to this identity. Structural classifications of value are also a feature of journals, and often this means that the imaginative

writing is privileged over an essay or review; reviews, after all, are always located towards the back of a journal.

A further difference between the bookmen and the culture-critics is that, while the former had never associated literature with the need to develop cultural autonomy and therefore, with wider political independence, the latter did so, enabled by the intellectual changes the Centennial brought about. The bookmen did not seek to be culturally independent from Britain; they were content ‘to refashion in these islands the homeland they had left’ (Gillespie, 1930: v). A sentiment such as this could only increase the distance between them and the culture-critics, as well as setting them apart from the nationalist endeavour that was central to the Centennial: as Peter Fraser remarked, ‘I hardly think New Zealand had ever before been so conscious at once of its own past and its own destiny, for the future alone gives significance to the past’ (2).<sup>44</sup> The post-war periodicals created a reading public that was an integral component to the development of the nation as a written subject; ‘they helped advance the ideological debates a nation encounters in the act of creating itself’ (Smith quoted in Keeble, 2007:8), or what in the New Zealand context was the trajectory to nationhood within the detritus of Empire. The Centennial created a celebratory discourse that sought to foster the collective through the creation of social memory – pageantry with purpose – that would establish a shared narrative of beginning; it was the ‘orchestrating [of] an ideological consensus’ (Jusdanis, 1991:xi) by the state. The rubric on the rear covers of the final two issues of *Centennial News* (August, 1940 & February, 1941) proclaims: ‘the Real New Zealand seen in Centennial Publications’, and is representative of the discourses employed by the state to direct suitable expressions and depictions of the nation.

The periodicals illustrate the fact that the concept of culture is ideological and illuminate literature’s role in the building of nations. The journals of the ‘long fifties’ both endorse and critique the consensus as shaped by the Centennial publications. *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* are both collaborators and dissenters in the formulation of national identity; this is what Jusdanis argues is the ‘paradoxical position [literature occupies] in simultaneously mediating identity and reflecting on it from a distance’ (1991:48). The journals record an internal and external debate as Curnovian criticism seeks to overturn the fallacies of state-conceived settlement

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<sup>44</sup> *Centennial News*, No. 15, 6 February, 1941.

myths with his own; but in doing so, it constructs a canon based simply on a different set of illusionary fictions. In due course this canon is then attacked by younger poets and writers through the mechanism of the journal; submitting letters and essays or by simply founding their own journals, they set out to confront, head on, the Curnovian dictum and the wider nationalist imperative. The creation of the critical conversation and the multiple sites that are established for the opposing opinions shows a literary community contesting and creating simultaneously.

Marris claimed real literary life existed in the newspapers not the universities<sup>45</sup> (Jones, 2003:63); unfortunately for him and the rest of the journalist-critics, the criticism of literature, through its association with nationalism, was becoming an increasingly intellectual project; and it was, therefore, increasingly the university (and those with academic credentials) that would lead the charge and create alternative vehicles for the publication and reception of imaginative and critical work. Just how acute this change to the infrastructure of criticism proved to be can be illustrated by the author's note for J. H. E. Schroder's collection of literary essays, *Second Appearances* (1959). Schroder's essays were written while he was overseeing *The Press's* literary page and demonstrate antagonisms that are generational, ideological, and idiomatic; the sparring between the 'Georgians' and the 'modernists' boiled down to what the word *criticism* actually implied. For Glover, Curnow and Fairburn, it was simply laughable for Schroder to contend, as he did, that his work had been reprinted in response to criticism that 'has taken a violent philosophical and technical turn, [and] away from readers who liked a bit of gossip about books' (1959:7). As far as Glover & Co. were concerned these essays should never have made even a first appearance, let alone a second.

It is little wonder that the bookmen were so vilified. McCormick described their critical efforts as little more than 'meaningless lists of names and compliments' (Hilliard, 2006:100). The 'bookish culture' that the likes of Marris and Lawlor were so eager to establish signals more than just a difference in the generations. The publications attached to their names were compendiums of enthusiasm – a little literary diversion – not volumes inflected by cerebral discrimination.<sup>46</sup> In the

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<sup>45</sup> O. N. Gillespie, writing in the preface of his anthology, *New Zealand Short Stories* (1930), declares: 'possibly, though, our story-telling activities are not so much hindered by our possession of extraordinary wealth and comfort as by the equal abundance of Bachelor of Arts' (vii).

<sup>46</sup> In his autobiography *Confessions of a Journalist* (1935) Pat Lawlor's reminiscence of the founding of *The New Zealand Artists Annual* (1929) is particularly good at establishing the differences between the

bookmen's publications, writing was an amusement and not something to do with paradigms; 'trivial if sincere' was Curnow's summary of the poetry anthologised prior to his 1945 effort (1987:43). In the eyes of Glover, Curnow and Fairburn the bookmen were pretenders, little more than literary hobbyists, where they as practitioners required the creation of literary outlets where standards of taste and execution could be established and maintained. The dim view they held of the literary pages of the dailies was tied up with a more general lack of confidence in the papers, as represented by the following lines taken from the poem 'To My Butcher' by Fairburn: 'of one who, in his simple heart/finds Sunday papers running sores,/and weeklies merely harmless bores' (18).<sup>47</sup> 'It has always been difficult to follow from New Zealand newspapers what was going on in the world outside', wrote Brasch in *Landfall* 19 'Notes', 1951; '[t]his year, thanks to the emergency regulations, it has been equally difficult to follow what was going on inside the country' (163). Brasch's comments were in response to the wide-held impression amongst the left-leaning intelligentsia that newspaper proprietors had suppressed the freedom of the press to fairly report the Waterside Workers' Union case alongside the governments.<sup>48</sup>

Brasch implicitly distrusted the ability of newspapers to form an intellectual climate and this partly explains the inclusion of non-literary material in *Landfall* (Anido, 1972:248). Brasch's manifesto for *Landfall* called for the creation of a national consciousness, and crucial to this was the provision of space for essays that examined, critically, wider socio-political issues; for this he saw as the context within which creative writers functioned (Anido, 1972:245). In the foreword to *Landfall Country* (1962), Brasch reminds the reader that the poems and stories collected in the volume had originally appeared alongside work of non-fiction prose – literary and historical essays, surveys of education and broadcasting, the press, and foreign policy (12) – emphasising the intrinsic relationship between the institutions of society and

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generations. He writes: 'The birth of the *Annual* was piecartian. By piecartian I mean that the *Annual* was born of an atmosphere of pie carts. Therefore, like all great men, movements and morals, the *Annual* was of the humblest origin [...] I am sure it was the piecartian atmosphere, generated by the meat pies and by the yard or two of saveloys, that inspired the suggestion of launching an artists' annual' (1935:121-122). On the adjacent page is a cartoon by G. Minhinnick depicting the founders as saveloys brandishing quills and glasses of beer as they toast the success of the enterprise.

<sup>47</sup> *The Disadvantages of Being Dead and other Sharp Verses* (1958) Wellington: Mermaid Press.

<sup>48</sup> The Writers' Conference held as it was in May 1951 was right in the middle of the dispute (it lasted for 151 days; from February to July) and was a topic of discussion amongst attendees especially after Pat Lawlor's talk in which he remarked, with regard to the suspension of *Tomorrow* in 1940, but also in regard to police action against waterside protesters: '[t]hese things just have to be done and in the case of *Tomorrow* and other Little Reviews with similar 'advanced' views, what a world of trouble might be saved to us if the silencings were always prompt' (Simpson, 2004:124).

the imaginative literature produced. For Brasch, and for the other culture-critics, New Zealand needed to increase its critical faculties; to ask questions, to think reflexively, and, ‘to live, imaginatively, by a light of its own’ (1962:13).

## 2. Cultural Antennae: *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow*

In literary histories the 1930s have long been considered the starting point for the poetic and critical revolt in New Zealand; but what Maynard has said of the thirties generation in Britain – ‘it could be regarded as something of an invention, more the product of literary history than a concrete moment’ (1997:29) – is also true of New Zealand. The critical revolution did not solely commence with *Phoenix*; its centrality in literary histories is both a reflection of international trends (notably Modernism), the arrogance of its founders and the persistence of a revisionist history that places the 1930s centrally (Murray, 1998:18). The thirties were a tumultuous decade both internationally and locally; PEN was launched in New Zealand in 1934, coinciding with the inception of the independent presses (Unicorn Press in Auckland, followed by the Caxton Press in Christchurch), *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow* were published, the impact of the Depression<sup>49</sup> led to the Queen Street riots (1932), while abroad the rise of Fascism suggested the increasing likelihood of major conflict in Europe. It was indeed an action-packed decade, and the events that define it have had grave historical consequence. Literary histories, however, often employ a linear narrative, that requires a singular starting point, and the one most commonly nominated in New Zealand is the first issue of *Phoenix* in 1932 (Evans, 1990; Jones, 2003). This date fits nicely with the Queen Street riots and usefully conflates personal histories with a moment of national upheaval that leads to a creative impulse.<sup>50</sup> Although this may make for tidy histories, it is a distortion of the fits and starts that characterise the evolution of a critical framework in New Zealand literature, and further misrepresents the significance of certain individuals to the detriment of others (Evans, 1990:9; Jones, 2003:14). As Barrowman has noted, ‘the *Phoenix* movement was not as original, or originating, as it perceived itself to be, notably unaware of New Zealand

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<sup>49</sup> Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, The Depression was attributed by many writers and poets, to be *the* defining moment for New Zealand literature; for example Robert Chapman: ‘It is fairly patent that we have to thank the depression for the original impetus...the overturn in social conditions broke up the crust of complacency, allowing artists to see into what lay beneath’ (1953:27), *Landfall* 25.

<sup>50</sup> For those on the editorial board of *Phoenix* becoming members of the armed Special Constabulary to help the Police quell the unrest was a watershed moment.

literary history, and acutely conscious of its own present and the role it should play in the establishment of a new culture' (1990:3).

However, the tone adopted and the content of *Phoenix* are not surprising when the influences of British modernism are considered, part of which involved a 'paradoxical concern with, and engagement with, questions of national identity' (Robichaud, 2005:135); or what Curnow referred to as 'the homelessness of the modern mind' (1987:162). Baldick summarised the position taken by British poets prior to the Second World War as 'quickened by its belief in itself as a "central" and decisive cultural force' (1996:113). In 1930s New Zealand, young modernists felt much the same. The early *Phoenix* is the essence of middle-class, educated, youthful enthusiasm, and the culmination of much reading and earnest school-boy discussions which were fulfilled by the typographical skills of Bob Lowry and the infrastructure provided by Auckland University College.

*Tomorrow* was founded in what Barrowman has described as 'virtually an intellectual vacuum' (1991:35). Crucially, *Tomorrow* and *Phoenix* provided the framework for the journals that emerged in the post-war years; Brasch wrote *Phoenix* into the history of *Landfall* (1962:11), thereby securing its status in literary history but also linking *Landfall* back a generation, and emphasising continuity with the coming-of-age antics of the 1930s. *Here & Now* was to adopt a similar attitude to *Tomorrow*,<sup>51</sup> characterised by the commitment to encourage debate and critical opinion: while a fondness for the left was the natural inclination of the editors and the political temper of the journal *Here & Now*, and just as *Tomorrow* had, the editors called for material from all points along the political spectrum. Furthermore, *Tomorrow*'s editor Kennaway Henderson was an admirer of A. R. Orage's editorship of *The New Age*, and it was this editorial model of situating imaginative fiction and essays of opinion alongside political, economic and social articles that he adopted.

In the 'Notes' for the inaugural issue of *Landfall*, Brasch writes: '[t]o relate: that is one of the chief social – and spiritual – functions of the arts' (1947:3). Therefore, implicitly, the role of the arts is to reflect on the shared apprehensions of society – its public affairs – which is something that cannot be undertaken unless they are seen as an active component of society. *Tomorrow* was the first modern journal of public affairs published in New Zealand (Cutler, 1989:22) and illustrates the formula

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<sup>51</sup> This is possibly not that surprising, considering Fairburn was the most prolific contributor to *Tomorrow* and a major figure in the shaping of *Here & Now*.

that is intrinsic to magazines that aspire to document more than merely public opinion and offer an exposition on the conditions and culture of a nation. In *Landfall Country* (1962) Brasch titled his selections from the prose he had published over the preceding fifteen years *Explorations*; so, while the literary may have been inspired by the *Phoenix*, the inclusion of essays and the topicality of Brasch's 'Notes' owed much to the earlier impulse of *Tomorrow*.

The earlier sections of this chapter have established the 'back-story' that leads up to the centennial publications. The remainder of this chapter now explores the shift in cultural authority that shaped the post-war period as a consequence of the intellectual work of Beaglehole and McCormick. By placing Beaglehole and McCormick firmly at the forefront, I contend that it was the academic imperative that the Centennial publications ushered in (Barrowman, 2004:163) and not just Curnow and the thirties that shaped the critical conversation. This different point of emphasis does not refute the significance of Curnow's anthology *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45* (1945) but does contend that it is through his position as respected poet, the force of his literary criticism, and the persistent focus on the 1930s in literary histories, that has permitted Curnow to dominate the conversation to the exclusion of others.

The Centennial publications created the climate in which the literary-cultural journals were able to take root in the post-war years. Significantly, the Centennial also enabled Curnow to establish the primacy of the thirties as the site of the literary renaissance as *Letters and Art in New Zealand* and *The Deepening Stream* (both written during the 1930s) wrote of the burgeoning development in literary production by poets and writers in that decade. *Letters and Art*, the creation of the Historical Branch and the more general professionalization of history, earn both McCormick and Beaglehole the accolade of the country's first culture-critics. *The Deepening Stream*, the winning entry in the centennial essay competition, by Holcroft, introduces the prose format – the essay – that was to become the most potent medium for the culture-critics of the 'long fifties'. McCormick's survey *Letters and Art in New Zealand* (1940), distilled, as he wrote, 'from my Cambridge thesis, divested of theories, stripped of superfluous verbiage, and supplemented by a brief consideration of contemporary writing' (1996:148), documented the existence of a native literature and introduced the authors Curnow would canonise in the following decade. Holcroft, entirely independently of McCormick, won the essay competition with a work that

similarly found something called a native literature, but also emphasised the necessity for critical frameworks; where McCormick saw reason for hope, Holcroft proclaimed the need for ‘an end to kindness’. However, before each of these were written, J. C. Beaglehole had published *New Zealand: A Short History* (1936), a monograph that was both scholarly and impressionistic, comprised as it was of academic prose and acerbic pen sketches of recent political leaders. It was the template, stylistically, which Heenan designated as suitable for the centennial surveys, and yet Beaglehole seems to have been forgotten. For, while he did not win a competition, or write a seminal piece of literary criticism, Beaglehole is central to a nascent *cultural authority* that pushed aside the amateur and installed the academic.

### 3. The Centennial

The Centennial celebrations should convince the people that their country has definitely reached the grown-up stage.<sup>52</sup>

In 1940 New Zealand celebrated its Centennial and the government commissioned a variety of writing that sought to textually create a past and plotted a history of Pakeha belonging; it was an exercise in history-making. National identity is a construct, and the Centennial publications and celebrations were the government’s attempt to seek a consensus through the creation of a national identity which emphasised pioneering values.<sup>53</sup> The first Labour government’s policies were introduced to ensure wellbeing ‘from the cradle to the grave’ to guarantee that all citizens had the ability to participate in society with equality and dignity (Mein Smith, 2005: 154). The Centennial commemorations were designed to ensure that all New Zealanders were able to partake in the celebrations, and that collectively the nation would salute the achievements thus far and strive toward yet greater economic and social goals.<sup>54</sup> It was a patriotic duty; if social security ensured that citizens were educated, provided

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<sup>52</sup> W. E. Parry, Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister in charge of Centennial Celebrations, *Centennial News* (25 October 1938, no. 3, p.1).

<sup>53</sup> Peter Gibbons has termed this process, where Pakeha sought to construct a New Zealand national identity, *cultural colonization* (2003:2), and has written of the necessity for cultural and literary histories to be theorised outside of the constraints of national identity, therefore allowing for a much greater macro and internationalist approach to New Zealand history.

<sup>54</sup> The Principle of “Carry On” proclaimed the editorial by Minister of Internal Affairs, Bill Parry, in the October-November issue of the *Centennial News*: ‘This principle of “carry on” [adopted from the Great War] applies, of course, to various activities which are not directly related to the war. In New Zealand, for example, the people have a national call to carry on spiritedly and worthily the Centennial celebrations’ (30 November 1939, no. 12, p. 1).

with medical care, adequate housing and old age pensions, the least citizens could do was parade down their main street extolling the achievements thus far.

Since the 1890s and the social legislation introduced by the Liberal government that led to New Zealand's description as a democratic social laboratory (Mein Smith, 2005:95), the country had played host to a variety of 'specialist international visitor', as well as tourists seeking to experience utopian splendour (dusky maidens included).<sup>55</sup> New Zealand had been the subject of general histories that diligently set about detailing the advancements and transformations occurring within Britain's wider brethren.<sup>56</sup> The approaching centennial presented, therefore, a timely opportunity to document the nation's achievements by 'locals', and for the state to take greater control of social memory. Writing and publishing allow a society to extend its control over large areas of space and time and the centennial publications enabled the state 'to ensure its posterity by transmitting records of its achievements on whom its future integrity depends' (Middleton & Woods, 2000:5). Many of the publications were specifically targeted to be classroom materials with the pictorial survey *Making New Zealand* (1939-40) to be used in the classroom for another 30 years (Mein Smith, 2005: 172). Minister of Education Peter Fraser had copies of the bound two-volume sets distributed to all schools. They were to become valuable teaching tools after the inception of the new social studies syllabus introduced during the mid-1940s (Renwick, 2004:187).<sup>57</sup> Schools had a resource that sought 'to promote popular identification with territory and history and to instil national symbols into daily practices' (Jusdanis, 1991:162); the magazine format of the *Making New Zealand* series was an especially powerful medium, as the visual – photographs and illustrations – particularly appealed to children.<sup>58</sup> With the inception of the Historical

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<sup>55</sup> In 1901 New Zealand created the first national government tourist department in the world (Alessio, 2008:26).

<sup>56</sup> *Verdict on New Zealand* (1959) edited by Desmond Stone, a prodigy of Holcroft's, is a collection of impressions made by visitors to aspects of the New Zealand culture. It is notable for the twenty page introduction by Stone. His essay illustrates the developing critical stance of the 'long fifties', reflecting the two principal developments of the post-war years: a critical vigour and the sociological imperative to the cultural assessments made.

<sup>57</sup> An education syllabus that reflected the experiences and geographical realities of the New Zealand student was to be a major area of development through the middle decades of the twentieth century. *Here & Now* ran a series of lengthy articles highlighting the shortcomings of an education system based on English principles. Much of the resulting initiatives are owed to the foresight of C. E Beeby. These developments again show the inter-relatedness of the national project and the notion that if the state has an interest in cultural production it will filter through the education system.

<sup>58</sup> *The School Journal* underwent a face-lift and its function began to mirror the wider cultural nationalism of the mid-twentieth century. Under the direction of Beeby the journal began to ask what it meant to be a New Zealander and published writing and art that expressed a pride in a national identity.

Branch an institutional infrastructure of cultural memory was created (Assmann, 2006:16). The foundations were laid whereby the state would both *preserve* the written history of the nation through archives and libraries but would also actively *produce* that written history.

The creation of the centennial texts<sup>59</sup> touched on an area of ongoing enmity in local cultural production, that of the role of the journalist. ‘One of our great hopes and God bless him and save him – particularly from journalists and journalism’ (Reid, 2004:53) wrote an anxious Frank Sargeson to A. P. Gaskell as he reflected upon the fate that may befall yet another young writer, in this insistence, David Ballantyne. Sargeson’s tone is typical of the attitude displayed by many *Phoenix-Caxton* writers towards journalism and journalists. Until the 1940s, history writing and literary criticism had been dominated by journalists; McCormick wryly noted that when the National Centennial Committee convened, ‘journalists [were] as numerous as Professors’ (1996:138), and the persistent claim of those who saw themselves as writers – practitioners who lived off their craft – was that the journalists acted as cultural gatekeepers. Of course the distinctions were never this clear cut; Curnow himself is one of the most obvious examples of overlap, being a working journalist on the Christchurch paper *The Press*, a poet and a vocal detractor of the literary establishment. Curnow, writing in the Australian literary journal *Meanjin* in 1943, asserts: ‘*Kowhai Gold*<sup>60</sup> should stand as a warning to the journalistically minded who mistake magazine verse for a nation’s poetry’ (1987:34). Curnow touches here on one possible explanation for these long-standing antagonisms, the lack of periodicals in New Zealand in which poets and prose writers could supplement income earned from literature with literary journalism.<sup>61</sup>

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Beaglehole even wrote, ‘I am not sure that the School Publications Branch does not hold the New Zealand future in its hands’ (T. Beaglehole, 2006:441). Visually the journal began to *look* like a New Zealand publication, but also the stories attempted to *sound* local. The story ‘Our Street’ by Brian Sutton Smith shows the influence of Sargeson’s colloquialism and depiction of local vernacular. Interestingly, the *Journal* of the ‘long fifties’ looks remarkably similar to the other literary-cultural journals of the period. The names of poets and writers are those of the ‘adult’ journals, due to many poets and writers supporting themselves through employment – editorial or creative – from the publication (O’Brien, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> 30 pictorial surveys, 12 book-length historical surveys, Scholefield’s *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* and the uncompleted historical atlas.

<sup>60</sup> Poetry collection published in 1930 and edited by Quentin Pope, a journalist.

<sup>61</sup> Curnow found himself in a fortunate position with *The Press*, who published his book reviews as well as essays on the state of poetry and criticism in New Zealand; the essays were clearly journalism *as* literature rather than journalism *about* literature.

In *The Deepening Stream* Holcroft reflects on the difficulties facing writers. Those he touches on are clearly derived from his own experiences: ‘the professional writers make their bid for success. Most of them fail. If they are lucky they find their way into journalism’ (1940:54). He observes that ‘this may explain to a certain extent why so many New Zealand novels show signs of having been written in the spare time of their authors: they are the work of amateurs’ (56). However, while Holcroft was to write of his retreat to newspaper journalism as evidence of his failure as a writer he is able to identify the structural weaknesses within the literary economy that serve to impinge on a writer’s expectation for success. A significant factor, Holcroft claims, is the lack of critical aptitude amongst critics:

it is not enough to release the clichés of a superficial criticism, to write a synopsis or brief précis and thereafter to say merely that the book is “good”, “brilliant” or “disappointing” [...] My contention is that criticism must share the creative progress, advancing with the latest novel or poem, relating it to what has been done in the past and what may be done in the future, and widening the scope of an author’s work by entering critical insight into his creative mood as expressed in the published book, or in the suggestions and possibilities to be carried over into the next attempt. (1940:60-61)

It would be these twin concerns of informed criticism and financial assistance to writers that Holcroft would pursue during his editorship of the *Listener*, doing so by offering review work to writers (‘the ideal type of critic is the writer who is also something of a poet, or the writer who is half a novelist’ [1940:60]) and advocating fair rates of remuneration for contributors. However, even Holcroft, who had been a writer prior to either of his careers as journalist or editor of a literary-cultural journal, could not escape the anti-journalist jibe; McCormick in *New Zealand Literature* (1959) remarks that at times in the trilogy essays Holcroft ‘indulges in leader-writer topicality’ (135).

#### 4. Cultural Authority and the professionalization of Librarianship

The kind of cultural authority deployed by someone who successfully occupies the role of intellectual cannot, of course, be a merely individual matter. There has to be some pre-existing disposition in the culture to assign value or understanding to the activities in which that figure is seen to be distinguished, and there has to be some pre-existing disposition to be receptive to the expression of views on the topics they address. (Collini, 2006:57)

In the statement above, Collini describes the transition that occurred in the production of history writing in New Zealand during the 1930s through the actions of the Labour government. By encouraging the academically trained historian to actively participate in the writing of the nation's history it was assigning value to scholarship but also investing the role of the historian with cultural authority. The actions of the state in the thirties worked to create a predisposition in the culture to the cultural authority of the professional historian that has endured to this day.<sup>62</sup> Cultural nationalism became an intellectual project under the labour government and the state not only sanctioned the professionalization of history but also undertook to create institutions in which that authority would be reinforced.<sup>63</sup> The professionalization of librarianship was one such infrastructural development, and The Library School was established in 1946.<sup>64</sup> When research for the Centennial publications got under way it exposed a library system that was archaic; cataloguing was erratic and non-standardised, valuable documents were not appropriately housed<sup>65</sup> and the contents of special collections were jealously guarded by those in charge of the various libraries.<sup>66</sup> Just as history

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<sup>62</sup> Michael King's *Penguin History of New Zealand* (2003) has sold more than 230,000 copies. King was himself a journalist before becoming an academic.

<sup>63</sup> However, it is surprising to note that there has been no mention of the correlation between professional librarians and the ability for graduate students and academics to undertake research at a higher level in any of the literature related to the Centennial publications; and yet I would argue that the work of Beaglehole in the Centennial Branch (and then later when it became the Historical Branch) shows a clear relationship between the two, as well as a clear undertaking by the Labour government to institute structural reform to strengthen the collection and dissemination of national materials.

<sup>64</sup> Beaglehole gave lectures at the School during the period 1946-1956, sometimes as many as seven a year. Although in a letter to Janet Paul he describes the students as 'sit[ting] there as dumb as a lot of new students in Stage I', he no doubt enjoyed the lectures which were on his life-long passion of books – the history of the book, on printing, illustration and publishing (2006:315). He often held soirées in his study at home for his graduate students, where he would display his rare books with an accompanying discussion on typography (T. Beaglehole, 2006:230).

<sup>65</sup> The *Listener* published an article in 1949, 'Microfilm Means Revolution in the Library' in which the significance of new technology was outlined as a resource to protect for posterity important documents of national significance (vol. 21, no. 545).

<sup>66</sup> Allegations of hiding manuscripts from other researchers were made against Andersen, librarian of the Alexander Turnbull Library since 1919 (Hilliard, 2006:15); and Bill Oliver writes in his memoir of

writing and literary criticism had been the preserve of amateurs, often those with a background in journalism, so too had the libraries. As a result the collections housed in the libraries were testimony to the idiosyncratic practices of the self-taught librarian.

The cataloguing and general organisation that occurred in the university colleges and the public libraries in the four main centres following the Carnegie-sponsored Munn-Barr Survey in 1934 led to a systematic upgrade of library resources and facilities.<sup>67</sup> Library collections were expanded, shelving was imported from America and the public service and intellectual capital model applied to the job of librarian. The changes in professionalization had begun in the libraries during the thirties with the Carnegie Corporation funding travelling scholarships to America to ensure professional librarian skills were fostered. The survey met a receptive audience with the election of the Labour party in 1935, whose general policy of social improvement included support for libraries<sup>68</sup> (Rochester, 1990:6); within the Labour government there were several ministers who were forceful advocates of advancing libraries, and education in general and the establishment of the Country Library Service in 1937 was an extension of the centralised New Zealand education system (Rochester, 1990:91). Minister for Education (later Prime Minister) Peter Fraser took a particular interest in libraries (he was Patron of the Library Association until his death in 1950) as part of his more general interest in the provision of educational opportunities; his support for the work of the WEA<sup>69</sup> is a further example of this commitment.

The development of the library school suggests another way in which the culture of New Zealand was developing throughout the 1950s. The professionalization of library training and services mirrors those developments occurring in history and English departments of universities. The library school

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discovering that Scholefield, who had been appointed Controller of Dominion Archives in 1926, had defaced manuscripts with instructions to his typist (Oliver, 2002:107).

<sup>67</sup> For graduate students, especially those undertaking MAs who due to the distance from Britain were restricted to New Zealand topics, this greater availability of material was significant and certainly aided the quality of the research undertaken. This was particularly the case for Auckland and Canterbury University Colleges, whose students did not have nearby a secondary library resource such as the Turnbull in Wellington or the Hocken in Dunedin.

<sup>68</sup> Of course there were limits to how much support a left-wing "Labour" government would accept from a corporation whose philanthropy was the outcome of a fortune made in steel works and by a company with a poor record of industrial relationship practices (Rochester, 1990:70).

<sup>69</sup> Beaglehole referred to his time as a WEA lecturer in Dunedin and Hamilton as 'commercial travelling in miscellaneous wisdom' (T. Beaglehole, 2006:155).

bibliographical exercises support the growth of a critical infrastructure by collating the local into permanent research materials. The bibliographical exercises carried out by the students were to become an important source for the critical studies of New Zealand literature which began to appear in the 1950s. When combined with the establishment of the literary-cultural periodical, a progression towards the ordering and management of the forms and structures of cultural production in the country is displayed. Standards are applied.

## 5. Heenan

The centennial publications were the brainchild of Heenan, and it was he who largely ushered in the transition that occurred in the research and writing of history in New Zealand. ‘I agree with you in every judgement you made in that book of yours [*The Short History*] except about Massey’ (Beaglehole, 2006:269): this was Beaglehole’s first introduction to Heenan and was a meeting that would prove immensely important to the ideological presentation of the nation as depicted in the Centennial publications, and more generally to Beaglehole’s career.<sup>70</sup>

Heenan did not believe spectacle celebrations, such as pageants or the proposed Centennial exhibition in Wellington, were an adequate way to record one hundred years of settlement. He wanted something of enduring symbolism and with the surveys and the *Making of New Zealand* series he achieved this. Furthermore, the publications supported the nationalist rhetoric of Labour’s policies and illustrated their ‘willingness to use the levers of the state in what it considered to be the public interest’ (Renwick, 2004:18). Heenan was fortunate that his ambitious centennial project was book-based and by entrusting Beaglehole with the role of typographical adviser he was able to corral the energies of enthusiastic young men (and a woman, Ruth Fletcher),<sup>71</sup> who, infused with a radical temperament and the righteousness of youth and higher education (many of whom were recent graduates of Beaglehole’s from Victoria University College), embraced the opportunity to make a difference; to make their mark. So while initially Beaglehole did not have any enthusiasm for

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<sup>70</sup>It was due to the undertaking of Heenan that Beaglehole was able to commence work on the scholarship that would define his career, on Captain James Cook.

<sup>71</sup> With the formation of the Historical Branch in 1941 several more women came to work for Beaglehole. Notable amongst them was Janet Wilkinson (who would later marry Blackwood Paul). As a result of the war, most history graduates were women and Beaglehole appointed the most able to the Historical Branch. Within the Department of Internal Affairs, it was referred to as ‘Beaglehole’s kindergarten’ (T. Beaglehole, 2006:287-288).

helping shape the discourse of national identity, by appointing him as typographical adviser,<sup>72</sup> Heenan was able to engage him more deeply in the project through his ‘interest in printing and book design [which] went back to his boyhood and student days’<sup>73</sup> (2006:274). Furthermore, through the creation of the Research Fellowship to the Turnbull Library, the appointment was made in 1938 to allow Beaglehole to be relieved of some teaching at Victoria so he could begin work on Cook.<sup>74</sup> Beaglehole’s close proximity to the Centennial Branch office alongside his employment by the state in an advisory capacity and the fact that Heenan had selected *A Short History* as the template for the surveys meant that Beaglehole was quickly brought into the inner circle.

By the time the publications were completed Beaglehole, the sceptic, who considered the centennial celebrations a vulgar indulgence, ‘a series of fatuities’ had undergone ‘a process of conversion, slow and awkward, into a conscious New Zealander (2006:269):

Something should be done without delay that would increase our self-knowledge and power of self-criticism, which will be as much a part of our self-respect as Social Security or the Government [state] houses (2006:282).

But this conversion, as the quotation above illustrates, was based on an intellectual project and, importantly, reveals the sense of evangelistic nationalism he now felt. This was undoubtedly due to the scope Heenan gave Beaglehole and McCormick to interpret the Centennial not as a populist project but as an intellectual endeavour. This is what I consider marks Beaglehole as an intellectual nationalist, this belief that if the scholarship is supported by an institutional framework – the Historical Branch,

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<sup>72</sup> He had previously undertaken typographical work for the government when Beeby had entrusted him with planning and printing of *The University of New Zealand* (1937) and similar publications for the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (T. Beaglehole, 2006:274).

<sup>73</sup> Typography was an interest from his youth, which along with poetry and art he combined for the Christmas of 1927 and 1928 when he and a friend had printed (by Cambridge University Press) Christmas cards featuring a woodcut by the friend and a poem of Beaglehole’s (2006:114). The woodcut was done by Raymond McGrath, an Australian who Beaglehole met on the boat to England in 1926. McGrath was a post-graduate student of architecture who would eventually become professor of architecture at the Royal Hibernian Academy (2006:147-48). Considerable time was spent walking around London to find the right paper. This was typical of the type of typographical diligence that Beaglehole would apply to the Centennial publications in the following decade.

<sup>74</sup> Lindsay Buick, after retiring from journalism in 1933, devoted himself to the writing-up of New Zealand history from the contents of the Turnbull Library. He had a pension-salary which upon his death was diverted to Beaglehole, under the auspices of his role as Research Advisor to the Turnbull Library. Buick’s interpretation of what constituted history was more along the lines of what Barrowman describes as the compiling and recording of facts (2004:163). The transformation from a pension-salary to a research endowment is an illuminating example of the change that occurred in the practice of state-mandated history as a result of the partnership of Heenan and Beaglehole.

libraries and a universal educational system – and the cultural products produced are done so within an academic framework, then a strong national identity will be formulated that is more than a mere cataloguing of national highpoints and actually a deeper cultural examination.

Heenan was a cultural enthusiast, almost a throwback to an earlier time when an interest in the arts did not prevent participation in less esoteric activities. These, for Heenan, were horse racing and sport, particularly boxing. Most significantly, Heenan was a highly competent administrator who had the confidence of his minister, Bill Parry. To this end, none of the appointments made to the editorial team for the centennial publications were advertised positions; Heenan wrote to McCormick offering him a temporary position, firstly, as assistant to the Dominion Archivist (Scholefield) and then as secretary of the National Centennial Historical Committee (McCormick, 1996:147), and other editorial staff were employed often upon the suggestion of Beaglehole. Heenan was adept at winning ‘the ear’ of the Prime Minister Peter Fraser (from 1940) and the Minister of Finance Walter Nash. Both Fraser and Nash<sup>75</sup> were key members of the Labour government and they shared a commitment to education and an understanding of the arts as a common good. Heenan was an ‘enabler’, who had good relations with ministers and other public servants that usefully included Treasury. As an avid reader, and in his youth, a contributor to the *Bulletin*’s red page, he was always a useful ‘ear’ to a writer in matters regarding the twin concerns of artistic enterprise and cash flow.<sup>76</sup> He was a prolific letter writer, corresponding with many of the poets who came to form Curnow’s canon during his time as under-secretary. He went to great (and often covert) lengths<sup>77</sup> to assist those poets who belittled his Georgian preferences and ‘ha[d] left him far behind along the cultural road’, as he wrote to Curnow (Barrowman, 1996:7). In Denis Glover, he found a useful informant on the literary comings and goings and a sounding board on which to test his most recent scheme for further investment in the project of growing the cultural capital of the nation. Glover

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<sup>75</sup> Unlike Fraser and Nash who were self-educated men and beneficiaries of the WEA, Heenan had attended Victoria University and completed a degree in law.

<sup>76</sup> To demonstrate his support for the journal, Heenan, took out a three year subscription to *Landfall*.

<sup>77</sup> ‘The essence of this scheme, as of the free and generous spirit behind it, was its informality. In an eighteenth century patron, whose own affairs were his own affairs this could work very well; but in a twentieth century democracy the system, if it can be called a system, was after a while bound to break down’ (146). Beaglehole’s reflections on the personal-as-public patronage practices of Heenan in an essay ‘New Zealand Since the War’, *Landfall* 58 (1961).

described himself as one of ‘Heenan’s bright boys’ – Sargeson was the other (Barrowman, 1996:7) – and it was by being privy to Heenan’s confidences and through his publishing that Glover became our first cultural mandarin.

In the *Bookmen’s Dominion*, Hilliard writes, ‘Heenan is remembered as one of New Zealand’s greatest public servants, and his most significant achievements were in the fields of scholarship and the arts’ (2006:9). I would suggest that it was in fact his support for the introduction of scholarship *into* the arts that makes his leadership of the Centennial publications exceptional.

## 6. The Antipodean Scholars

### (i) Beaglehole

In spite of everything and without any important qualifications, I do admire your work...you are really the only one of the lot of us who amounts to anything outside our own parish.<sup>78</sup>

I take sides most furiously. Don’t tell anybody that, because it might ruin my reputation as a good historian.<sup>79</sup>

Beaglehole’s *A Short History* (1936), although primarily regarded as a history text, is the earliest of the prose criticism – or essays – that would become such a feature of the critical landscape of the post-war years. Beaglehole’s monograph was an enlargement and revision of an essay published in the periodical *National Opinion*, which he noted in the preface was ‘a journal now defunct (after the habit of more aspiring New Zealand journals’ (1936:10).<sup>80</sup> It seems fitting that the work that informed the style of the Centennial surveys and was the forerunner to the essays by the culture-critics of the 1950s should have first been published in a journal. By suggesting *A Short History* as the model for the surveys, Heenan was asking rather a lot of the selected authors (Barrowman, 2004:161), but he was also expecting the 30,000 word surveys to conform to academic standards of research and presentation and to display ‘literary panache’, as McCormick informed Helen Simpson, author of *The Women of New Zealand* (1940) (Barrowman, 2004:161). It was this emphasis on

<sup>78</sup>McCormick in a letter to Beaglehole (2006:267).

<sup>79</sup>Beaglehole in a letter to Janet Paul (2006:421)

<sup>80</sup> *National Opinion*, the journal of the New Zealand Legion. Beaglehole sold essay to the journal for £20 and it was serialised in sixteen fortnightly parts commencing in October 1933. The Legion was a conservative political movement and the “pink-hued” Beaglehole thought selling the essay to them, ‘one of the best jokes of modern times’ (T. Beaglehole, 2006:199-200).

accuracy and authority that Beaglehole and McCormick advocated for the Centennial publications and subsequent state-commissioned cultural production.

The centennial surveys altered not only the way literary and historical texts were presented in New Zealand, but also the more general way in which historical writing was approached; the sense of which is conveyed in the job description Beaglehole wrote for his Research Fellowship at the Turnbull Library:

To carry out historical research and to supervise the publication of material in the library, to assist students, and to advise the government on historical matters generally and on the subsidising research and publications (T. Beaglehole, 2006:270).

He viewed the role of the historian as critical intervention; it was not enough to simply locate the historical; it needed to be carefully interpreted and cross-referenced. Therefore, Beaglehole and McCormick did not have time for publications that were little more than a recount of events anecdotally; compilations of names and dates or a text that was little more than ‘a wickedly episodic bundle of papers’ – one history graduate’s description of Cowan’s *Settlers and Pioneers* when it arrived at the centennial branch (Hilliard, 2006:91).<sup>81</sup> Beaglehole and McCormick were university men, their narrative style conformed to the academic norms of citation – footnotes and bibliographies<sup>82</sup> – while their prose showed evidence of note-taking and research (Beaglehole, 2006:250), and crucially, critical enquiry.

I do not think that Dr G. H. Scholefield’s *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* is a monument of accuracy & judicious comment...our Dr Scholefield is not a man to soil a tomb with ambiguous flowers; he lays the pure lily; no weed of criticism enters into his wreath...he aims at only giving Fact & not Comment (2006:276).

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<sup>81</sup> Centennial Historical Survey, no. 4 (1940) was criticised by the academically trained staff for being little more than a collection of newspaper articles cobbled together (Hilliard, 2006:91). Cowan wrote history as chronicle. His books and newspapers articles were full of primary sources – excerpts from letters and interviews – but his narrative lacked the necessary analysis and interpretation that defines academic practice (Barrowman, 2004:163). The government were also unhappy with the survey and had removed the section criticising the Crown’s treatment of the Maori in Waikato during the Land Wars (Barrowman, 2004:168).

<sup>82</sup> It was McCormick’s *Letters and Art* that Phoebe Meikle kept on her desk as a reference text when first appointed editor at Blackwood Paul in 1960 (Ross et al., 1993:53). Upon accepting the position of Editor of Publications at the University of Auckland (1963-64) McCormick found that the University had no style guide, so he wrote *Notes on the Preparation and Style of Manuscripts* (1963). Meikle was given two copies of the style guide by McCormick and it replaced his earlier *Letters and Art* as her editorial “Bible” (Ross et al., 1993:54).

The extract above illustrates the limitations Beaglehole felt existed with the historical writing of the ‘old guard’, and which can usefully be summarised as a lack of scholarship and criticism. Scholefield used newspaper obituaries as major source material for the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (Hilliard, 2006:17); and while he was diligent in checking accuracy in dates and spellings (Tunnickliff, 2004:140) it was his contention that a biography was a life record, a place for fact and not critical accounts or pen sketches (Tunnickliff, 2004:139) that set his mode of history writing at odds with Beaglehole. The pen sketch, being a predominant feature of Beaglehole’s *A Short History*, illustrates a clash of purpose and interpretative difference; for Beaglehole, the task of the historian was elucidation and not just the impassive laying out of facts upon the page.

Scholefield was a civil servant, appointed as parliamentary librarian and dominion archivist in 1926, yet he had begun his working days as a journalist. While living in London from 1908-1918, during which time he was the New Zealand Associated Press’s London correspondent, he attended university, eventually writing a thesis for the Doctor of Science degree on the Pacific and international politics (Hilliard, 2006:18). However, his research practices and prosaic writing style betrayed his pressman roots, making him an easy target for the younger university-educated men now gaining favour with Heenan.<sup>83</sup>

Scholefield’s *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* marked the end of an era in written history (Tunnickliff, 2004:147), and *Letters and Art; New Zealand in the World* (1940) by Fred Wood, Professor of History at Victoria University College, and Beaglehole’s own survey, *The Discovery of New Zealand* (1939) the new direction that was to occur. There would no longer be room for the bookmen and the journalist-historians of the previous generation. Historical writing and literary criticism, mirroring what was occurring in Britain between the wars, was being institutionalised as academic disciplines, with formal and centralised structures for teaching and administration, and, increasingly through the ‘long fifties’, mechanisms for public display, such as the presentation of lectures under the auspices of the university. Reinforcing specialist knowledge was the domain of the university.<sup>84</sup> A structural and

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<sup>83</sup> The transition from the ethnographer-journalist-librarian historian to the university-educated was made easier thanks largely to the old age of many of the men who were either retiring or dying in the 1930s.

<sup>84</sup> The Winter Lectures, a series of public talks given at the University of Auckland, commencing in 1959.

epistemological shift had occurred. McCormick even extended his mistrust and distaste for the journalistic style prevalent in the writing of the earlier generation to Oliver Duff, a newspaperman with exemplary experience and standing, writing, '[h]ad he continued as editor I think the series may have been scrappier than it turned out. What consistency it finally achieved came from the academic background of most of the writers and editors' (1996:146).

Not only did Beaglehole and McCormick tighten the presentation of the written text by insisting on an academic format and prose style in the surveys, but Beaglehole was also responsible for the introduction of typography that was closer to the Caxton Press than local publishers such as Reed or the Government Printer. Critical standards did not end with the written text but were to extend to how the text sat on the page. For Beaglehole, a book was a sum of all its parts. By the time of the practice print-run in 1939, the Caxton Press had published Beaglehole's collection of poems, *Words for Music* (1938), the typographical mastery that was a Caxton hallmark no doubt acting as an encouragement to Beaglehole as he strove to create a new benchmark for state-commissioned publications.<sup>85</sup> As typographical adviser he spent long hours with the printers, instructing, encouraging and overseeing, so as to ensure that the publications met his expectations (2006:276). He was fortunate in having persuaded the printers, Whitcombe and Tombs, to import new type (2006:277) and to have ordered the paper prior to the wartime climate of thrift and shortages.

While McCormick and Holcroft (even in spite of vocal detractors), both have held their place in the pantheon of literary-cultural histories; the same cannot be said for Beaglehole.<sup>86</sup> In his autobiography, Fred Turnovsky describes Beaglehole as 'Schongeist' which he translates as more than just a lover of the arts; but someone for whom the practice and enjoyment of the arts is part of his being; an integral part of life (82). For Beaglehole, the pleasure derived from artistic and cultural endeavour was to be shared; it was never a private pursuit. Furthermore, if a society wanted to encourage artistic production, then the public had to be encouraged to open their eyes and their minds, and this was where the culture-critic was an integral component of the structure of cultural production. For the critic offered a challenge to both artist and

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<sup>85</sup> *An Introduction to New Zealand* (1945) is notable for the use of colour and the overlay of text upon illustration. Flair and stylistic flourishes mark the later books he oversaw as research advisor for the Historical Branch.

<sup>86</sup> Timothy Beaglehole's biography of his father published in 2006 may go some way to remedying his neglect.

audience he offered the following observation in an article he wrote on the founding of the National Orchestra:

Early in the year I wrote for *Landfall* an article<sup>87</sup> on our National Orchestra – not without some travail of spirit, for the subject is a prickly one, and I am no fonder than the next man of grabbing at nettles. But it seemed that somebody ought to say something (307).<sup>88</sup>

It is this sense that if a writer, artist or musician is prepared to contribute to the cultural capital of a society than there must be an infrastructure into which the work can be received and assessed part of this infrastructure is the function of the critic; ‘it is the duty of the critic to examine, with coolness and what knowledge he has’ (8) wrote Beaglehole in an earlier review of the orchestra published in the *Listener*<sup>89</sup> in 1947 regardless of any unpleasantness that may result as an outcome of a negative exposition. And Beaglehole generated a lot of ill-will as a result of his belief that a ‘national culture could only come from the free intelligence working on its environment and its history’ (T. Beaglehole, 2006:306); the mail bags of the *Listener* tended to bulge after the journal had published a book review, a piece of art criticism or a note on one or another musical performance carrying his initials.<sup>90</sup>

Beaglehole had a very idiosyncratic prose style and while it was lively, it could also be fey and humorously obscure. His review entitled ‘Lots of Poetry’<sup>91</sup> published in the *Listener* in 1945 resulted in a large mail bag for several weeks, with most correspondents agreeing with the critical assessments but offended by the style, which they contended trivialised the value of poetry. This review prompted Curnow to write two letters, and he was an acquaintance and admirer of Beaglehole. However, while his prose style may have met with dissension, he was always sincere in his attempts to enlarge the critical capacity of the audience; so while a poetry review in December 1948 employs a rather distracting fish metaphor Beaglehole does seek to educate by defining for readers the difference between ‘modern’ and ‘modernistic’ (12).

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<sup>87</sup> It was not published earlier in 1948, Beaglehole held onto his judgements for a further 8 months and the essay was published in the December number.

<sup>88</sup> *Landfall* 8 (1948): 307-320.

<sup>89</sup> March 21 1947, vol. 16, no. 404

<sup>90</sup> In 1949 (May 6) Beaglehole reviewed *Notes Toward A Definition of Culture* (1948) by T. S. Eliot; the *Listener* received seven letters over the course of a month, of which only two (by Munz and McCormick) agreed with Beaglehole’s review. The remaining letters neglected Beaglehole’s review and instead attacked Munz for the comments he had made in his letter of support for Beaglehole.

<sup>91</sup> *Listener* June 8, (1945), vol. 12, no. 311

In the same year, 1948, Beaglehole reviewed an exhibition of McCahon: ‘yet for us he is one of the important people. He is a serious artist. His pictures are open to criticism but they can take criticism’. In this review, Beaglehole challenges the public to encounter McCahon, acknowledging that the art is not ‘easy’, but required viewing for it offered a new direction with which to imaginatively encounter the nation. Beaglehole had confidence in his estimations, he had travelled through Europe and seen first hand ‘the greats’ his criticism was learned. He was widely read and as a result of his education and experiences he felt he had a duty to act as our earliest culture-critic; his function to increase our self-knowledge.

It is in his reviews of the National Orchestra, both in the *Listener* in 1947<sup>92</sup> and *Landfall* in 1948 that we see evidence of the form and function of the culture-critic that was to become so prevalent throughout the ‘long fifties’. Within this review, all the features which were to become commonplace in the later journals are in the foreground. The review is not simply a report of what the orchestra played and the quality of the sound produced (although he does mention that the horns were too loud and the strings lacked finesse), Instead, Beaglehole places the origin of the orchestra within a broader context, discussing the expectations and responsibilities that lie with all parties and asserting that the key is *criticism*, and that without it the orchestra will not be able to grow. The function of a good critic is to temper audience enthusiasm by critical reflection, writing in the *Landfall* article: ‘[o]ne does need a measure of discrimination, one must have some sort of critical balance. To be uniformly and wilfully mean with praise would be as absurd as to be permanently on the heights of ecstasy’ (309). Significantly, he ends the *Listener* review: ‘[w]ell, that’s how one person reacted to the show’ (9) suggesting, I think, the intention to encourage a conversation; if you don’t agree with the judgements write to the editor. And write they did.<sup>93</sup> But for Beaglehole this was all part of the requirement to ‘keep banging a way in NZ until criticism is accepted as a normal part of life’ (T. Beaglehole, 2006:325).

Beaglehole can be described as *culturally civic*: he was eager to support cultural initiatives whether they were literary, artistic, musical or intellectual, and this explains his involvement in the Wellington Progressive Bookshop, his contribution to

<sup>92</sup> *Listener* March 21, (1947), vol. 16, no. 404

<sup>93</sup> The controversy attached to this review went back to Beaglehole’s part in the campaign to have the English conductor Andersen Tyrer replaced as conductor. Heenan took Beaglehole’s review as a personal slight (T. Beaglehole, 2006: 318-323).

the fund for Sargeson (McCormick organised the collection of donations but it was gifted anonymously [T. Beaglehole, 2006:283]), his being a founding member of the Wellington Chamber Music Society (1944), his lectures to the library school, his collecting of New Zealand art and his willingness to engage as a critic for the journals. Beaglehole was a scholar who embraced the ethos of the public intellectual, and his reviews in the *Listener* are the precursor to the conversation of the culture-critics of the ‘long fifties’.

## **The Antipodean Scholars**

### **(ii) McCormick**

A quasi-intellectual jack-of-all-trades.<sup>94</sup>

In what he termed ‘autobiographical fragments’, McCormick wrote that to be a writer was the ‘absurd ambition’ (1996:1). McCormick, from the provincial backblocks, who had ‘longed to be a writer’ (1996:1) was to have a compelling influence upon the reception of literature in New Zealand, and his Centennial survey *Letters and Art* (1940) is still regarded as a landmark piece of literary scholarship. He is also one of our earliest art historians, ably interpreting the visual representation of the nation as an important twin to the written; when asked in 1958 to give a public lecture ‘which might contribute to art research in this country’ (McCormick, 1959) he presented what he termed his visual history; the ‘inland eye’. In this lecture, published the following year,<sup>95</sup> he relays his life with reference to the visual stimuli which has surrounded and informed it: ‘London did not teach me to look – I had been looking all my life – but its violent contrasts did, I think, force on me the habit of discrimination’ (1959:34). He was to present a similar lecture in 1959, when as keynote speaker at the Writers Conference in Wellington, he ignored the direction to speak to the topic ‘New Zealand Letters Today’ and proceeded to read a chapter of autobiography instead (Holcroft, 1968:170). Once again this illustrates a predilection amongst the mid-century culture-critics toward the utility of the essay. As a mode it allows individual experience to be explored as a means of satisfying a wider national impulse.<sup>96</sup> Through applying the interpretative lens he had formulated for New Zealand literature

<sup>94</sup>McCormick’s description of himself (1994:129)

<sup>95</sup> The text printed by Pelorus Press is a wonderful example of mid-century New Zealand typography and enclosed by a striking cover design by Colin McCahon.

<sup>96</sup> Holcroft’s trilogy of essays (1940, 1942, 1946); Beaglehole’s *The New Zealand Scholar* (1954) and Pearson’s *Fretful Sleepers* (1952) are all particularly good examples of this mode of literary writing.

– exile and adaptation – McCormick was able to relate his own life to these two impulses he found so prevalent in his examination of the country's literature.

The emotions of the returning native have been so often recorded, they are so much a part of our common experience, that it would be superfluous to expatiate on them here. I need only say that I felt both elation and depression but in the first difficult weeks most often depression. (1959:36)

Upon returning to New Zealand in 1933 McCormick expressed the usual array of emotions felt by the antipodean intellectual; the complex composite of a desire to remain in England with an acknowledgement of the futility of such a hope, causing in equal measure an embracing of, and then recoil from, the country. McCormick expresses this tension when he writes of his growing awareness that it was the colonial 'desire to shape from the materials at hand some small simulacrum of Europe' (1959:39) that had shaped the culture of New Zealand. Out from this emerging realisation grew the necessity to place this colonial cultural inheritance within a framework that would allow an indigenous culture to evolve, a need that informed the intellectual nationalism of Beaglehole and McCormick, and post-war, Curnow and Brasch. The task of writers and artists returning to New Zealand after travel and education in Britain was to construct a framework from which they could counter the fallacy or loss of 'home'; having discovered their otherness, their New Zealandness, while abroad, 'I was not some species of offshore Englishmen' (McCormick, 1996:126): they should now fashion an autonomous intellectual and cultural pattern. It is this pursuit of the local, the non-derivative, that sees the actions of the state and the intellectuals correlate into a synchronous programme of cultural rupture from Britain, and the deliberate shaping of doctrines of national identity that commences with the Centennial publications.

The invention of a template for cultural and intellectual articulation was of course in the forefront of McCormick's mind when he returned to New Zealand, as he still had a thesis to complete. On the basis of his MA at Victoria University College he was awarded a post-graduate scholarship that enabled him to spend the years 1931-1933 as research student at Clare College, Cambridge. Although he was initially to work on a Tudor book, *The Mirrour for Magistrates*, after revealing the difficulties he was having to F. R. Leavis at one of the Leavis's garden gatherings, he was encouraged by Leavis to return to the topic of his Victoria thesis. The new thesis was entitled 'Literature in New Zealand: An Essay in Cultural Criticism', the sub-title

reflecting the influence of Leavis and the use of ‘Culture’ as an interpretative device (Smithies, 2004:95) that Leavis, I. A. Richards and Mansfield Forbes were championing, along with the introduction of psychological and philosophical insights, into literary criticism. The period (1928-36) is considered the ‘Golden Age of Cambridge English’ and was when English Studies became institutionalised in Britain. The periodical *Scrutiny* (1932) was founded to support the critical imperative introduced to literary studies by the new interpretative techniques of Leavis, Richards and Forbes. The quarterly periodical was to counter the prevalence of academic journals, ‘where criticism was practised in a spirit of sociable, conservative amateurism’ (Mulhern, 1979:40). Fortunately for McCormick when he returned to New Zealand he was to take up residence in Dunedin, a city ‘well equipped to meet my needs. There were two collections of New Zealand books, manuscripts, and pictures. The larger was the Hocken Library [...] the other was the McNab Collection’ (1996:127). Not only did he complete his thesis, but he substantially revised it so that it became ‘a study of the two literatures and the two cultures: those of the scriptless Maori people in brief terms; then at greater length, the literature and culture of their European successors’ and ‘while my honours thesis had been deficient in its scholarly apparatus, this one listed a source for each of the innumerable quotations and footnote-asides’ (1996:131-132).

‘The reading, the seemingly aimless gazing, the pondering, even the theorising were to find an outlet, possibly a justification, in the wholly unexpected episode that followed’ (1996:133). This was how McCormick recalled his summons to Wellington in 1936 to work first in the Dominion Archives and shortly after, as Secretary to the National Historical Committee (upon Oliver Duff’s departure to edit the *Listener* he would become editor of Centennial publications 1939-40), and his authorship of the centennial survey, *Letters and Art in New Zealand*. For McCormick, the years spent at the centennial branch were an ‘opportunity to make something of the knowledge of New Zealand that I had accumulated, partly by chance, partly by sheer effort’ (Ross et al., 1993:20); the intellectual wanderings at Cambridge and the months in the basement of the Hocken Library, where he discovered a literary and visual colonial endowment – watercolours by Heaphy, Fox and Buchanan – coalesced into the Centennial survey *Letters and Art*. Here, McCormick directs the reading public to an indigenous literature and visual tradition and formulates the interpretative lens through which to read it: exile and adaptation.

Although Katherine Mansfield's is the face that greets the reader's eye, her portrait<sup>97</sup> placed on the page opposite the title page of *Letters and Art*, so as to reinforce to the reader the notion of precisely where New Zealand literature begins, but also to illustrate McCormick's intimation that a new direction is required for New Zealand. The age of the expatriate has passed (1940:132); there need be no further exodus of talent.<sup>98</sup> Instead, he states what New Zealand requires is writers 'who accept the New Zealand scene not as something to be apologised for or explained but as a place and a people to be interpreted with sympathetic detachment' (178) and in the 'language and the rhythm of everyday New Zealand speech' (179). In these statements we can see McCormick pulling together all the strands that had influenced his thinking and writing since his return to New Zealand. McCormick took his academic training from England and his discoveries in the libraries of Dunedin and created a discourse of intellectual nationalism that was both critical and encouraging. *Letters and Art in New Zealand* provided a cultural roadmap and was based on a highly individual and original thesis. The following remark from Beaglehole captures the interest it elicited:

We could do first-rate coloured reproductions of Heaphy and Buchanan that would make the kids realise N.Z. and art and history at the same time...I was reading McCormick's survey last night and got more and more excited...if we can seize the chance we might really in time touch the mind of the country (2006:282).

In McCormick's words, they had both come to the 'uneasy refuge of nationalism' because they knew what they *were not* ('you didn't quite realise in those days what you were until you went overseas, since one's whole education was orientated towards England and Europe'[Ross et al., 1993:18] ) and were searching to discover what the country could be. Beaglehole wrote in a letter to a friend that it was 'fatal for youths of my temperament and tastes to come to England and Europe at the age of 25' (T. Beaglehole, 2006:145). For Beaglehole it was a bitter disappointment

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<sup>97</sup>Painted in 1918 by the American artist Anne Estelle Rice when both women were staying in Cornwall, England.

<sup>98</sup> In *Landfall* 18 (1951) McCormick stated: 'Frances Hodgkins would not have painted "The Pleasure Garden" had she remained in this country. She belonged to that generation of New Zealanders – a generation including Katherine Mansfield, Sir Peter Buck, and Lord Rutherford – who were compelled to go away if they were to fulfil themselves in the larger spheres of creation or scholarship. Reasons for this compulsion are plain if we return for a final glance at the illustrated. That mélange of trivial fiction, ill-assorted articles, and inept verse, all poured into the crudest of typographical moulds' (120).

to be a scholarship boy in London with the taste and education, but never the income; he complained he would be coming back to New Zealand ‘half-baked’ (145). Where the *Phoenix-Caxton-Tomorrow* clique could scoff at the Centennial celebrations, for Beaglehole and McCormick their involvement created a tangible way in which to advance and influence the development of a critical infrastructure in the country so that the cultural divide between the hemispheres would diminish. For Beaglehole and McCormick, the centennial was an opportunity to catch all the matter that swirls around in a society and defines and enriches a culture: ‘[d]imly I began to see that art, literature and philosophy were related to one another, as they were to the humbler activities of human kind; tentatively I pondered on the force of the word “culture” in its wider signification’ (McCormick, 1959:24). With the Centennial publications Beaglehole and McCormick undertook to textually institutionalise the necessity of ‘begin[ning] to think as well as act as New Zealanders and to do that thinking *in* New Zealand’ as Beaglehole put it in his speech for the opening of an exhibition of Frances Hodgkins paintings in 1954 (T. Beaglehole, 2006:439).

And for both of them, too, it was the ability to immerse themselves in collections of New Zealand art (Ross et al., 1993:18) that opened their eyes to what New Zealand had to offer. Interestingly, although they were both literary men in practice, it was New Zealand artists and the depiction of the landscape that illuminated this growing awareness. This would lead to McCormick’s work on Frances Hodgkins and Eric Lee Johnson, and Beaglehole’s championing of McCahon. In an interview with Michael King in 1972, McCormick stated that it was during his time in England that he fell into the habit of going to galleries, and it was this opportunity to visit the greats in London and across the continent that developed his interest in art and sharpened his consciousness and discovering ‘what it means for a country to possess not merely scenery but a visual tradition, recorded and constantly enriched’ (1959:34). Furthermore, his time spent as librarian at the Hocken Library gave him access to the large collection of historical and pioneer paintings collected by Hocken, and which were stored in the basement. Beaglehole had similar moments of clarity in the galleries of London, and these common experiences undoubtedly fuelled both men’s championing of local artists. Beaglehole initiated the art collection of the Victoria University Staff Club; a still life by Sam Cairncross was the first purchase and the second was a John Weeks landscape; both selections illustrate the taste for

local art Beaglehole was developing and the patronage he provided either personally or on behalf of the staff club.<sup>99</sup>

Beaglehole and McCormick were men who believed that cultural consciousness was a multifaceted project. It was not just about literature but needed to encompass the visual arts as well. More especially, they were aware of how highly problematic culture was. Lionel Trilling states: ‘the category of culture is so deeply implanted in the modern mind – it can be easily falsified and must therefore be subjected to critical analysis of the strictest kind’ (1952). Like Trilling, Beaglehole and McCormick were aware that they had to safeguard the culture – written and visual – from the imposition of another set of myths. They were to construct a cultural authority based on critical enquiry. If cultural production was to enrich national culture, literature and art must attempt to make sense of, and to speak to the culture; the local vernacular must be expressed in the visual as well as the written, but, significantly, there must be a critical component to the local conversation. Importantly, the written must not be restricted to the imaginative or left to the endeavours of the poet; the essayist as historian or literary critic had a vital role to play. This was where the literary-cultural journal came into its own. It was a medium that allowed for the articulation to be multi-faceted: poetry, short stories, reviews, essays and art all could contribute to the conversation. The periodical is a highly plastic medium; all manner of nouns can prefix it, and it is this variation that makes the journal such an important component in a nation’s intellectual culture.

### **The Antipodean Scholars**

#### **(iii) Holcroft**

Now all the history that did not happen  
 Begins, and hurts like an unfrozen wound;  
 Beaches are barbed, the obvious roads lie open  
 Towards those foothills, Monte, where you found  
 Spiritual powers, but root and rock to grip;  
 For Islands, an intelligible hope.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> In Tim Beaglehole’s biography of his father, there is a wonderful extract from a letter written to Frederick Page from John Beaglehole informing him of the details of the selection of the painting he and Douglas Lilburn had purchased on behalf of the Victoria staff common room collection. At the time, 1955-56, both Beaglehole and Lilburn were on leave in Britain and Page instructed them to spend £90 on the painting; they decided to purchase a Frances Hodgkins ‘Kimmeridge Foreshore’, but unfortunately it was £70 over budget. But as Beaglehole reported to Page: ‘I said to Douglas we’ve done a good day’s work [...] we’ve done our duty by N.Z.’ (444). When adding to the cultural capital of New Zealand, budgets were obviously meant to be broken.

This chapter ends with Holcroft and his prize-winning essay *The Deepening Stream* (1940). Holcroft is an individual who bridges the space between the Centennial publications and the periodicals. He is a contemporary of Beaglehole,<sup>101</sup> a child during the Edwardian period when life in the early years of the twentieth century was characterised as both ‘structured and free, working class and genteel’ (Smithies, 2004:94); both men were raised in homes filled with books and quiet prosperity. Similarly to Beaglehole, Holcroft was abroad during the 1920s, living in Sydney 1921-26 and spending a further year abroad from late 1928 based in London but including six weeks in France. Like Beaglehole and McCormick, he returned to New Zealand reluctantly, and conscious that he was not some South Seas Englishman. Unlike them, he did not identify himself as a New Zealander, instead stating that as a ‘colonial’ without connections or special skills, it was virtually impossible for him to find employment in London (1984:141). Whereas Beaglehole and McCormick as educational visitors found themselves automatically part of a social environment, Holcroft had to rely solely on his own enterprise. For Holcroft had wanted only to be a writer, and he had no need to preface this with the noun ‘New Zealand’. When he did discover ‘these Islands’ (1984:179), however, the imprint he drew was anti-modern, provincial in outlook and regional in metaphor: with that cultural melancholy that Peter Simpson notes as typical of the former (1982:59).

Prior to his move in 1937 to work on the *Southland Times*, Holcroft’s nationalism had been at an impasse; as a novelist he had chosen to set his books in locations outside New Zealand, and as a reader he was naturally drawn to the high English canon and to the newspaper men who propagated it. However, the move to Invercargill allowed him to emerge from the self-imposed exile of the novelist and while he found journalism did not allow him the time or energy to work on fiction, he found himself ‘writing the first chapter of an extended essay’ (1984:178). The novelist was becoming an essayist:

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<sup>100</sup> ‘To M.H. Holcroft’ in *Sailing or Drowning*, Allen Curnow, Wellington: Progressive Publishing Society (1944).

<sup>101</sup> Beaglehole born 1901; Holcroft born 1902; McCormick born 1906. Monte Holcroft was two years and a year older than Fairburn and Sargeson; and nine and ten year’s senior to Curnow and Glover. Although Lawrence Jones places him in the central wave, those poets and prose writers who began to publish between 1932-1935, it seems to me more accurate to place him in the early wave, amongst Fairburn and Mason who gained publication in the 1920s (2003:16). Holcroft was already a published author with an English publishing house imprint by 1928 (*Beyond the Breakers*), and from the period 1921-1927 he resided in Sydney, supplementing and then earning a living from freelance writing in the form of short stories published in the *Bulletin* and other local periodicals.

At last, belatedly. I was discovering life in New Zealand. I was also finding it a starting point for larger investigation, drawn as always to a wider scene, and beyond it to intuitions – rough and ill shaped – of reality beyond appearance. I had not wanted to write novels about New Zealand, though I turned often to the Pacific basin, seeing it as our larger environment. But now that I was writing an essay I turned at last to these islands, and found in them all the themes I needed, particular or universal (1984:179).

The themes he found himself exploring were those that concerned the question of ‘some deeper impulse within the nation’s life’ (1940:17), contending that,

[o]nce it is possible to frame an opinion on this fundamental question it should be easier to understand the implications of so much that is puzzling and disappointing in the contemporary life of a young country (18).

Holcroft undertook to discover this impulse by tracing his own experiences as a writer with the more general material and social conditions of the country, one of the most persistent themes being that of the relationship between the land and the people. Of this theme he believed ‘that a few genuine poets are now beginning to discover an essential relation between the anatomy of the land and the values of human experience’ (1940:20).

I know that many of my ideas can be challenged, that some of them can be refuted, and others that which may have the faint glow of truth – or – reality could have been given fuller and better expression. But they were not devised in a scholar’s study: they came from my own life and my own country. (1950:14).

Or, as Curnow saw it Holcroft’s, was ‘criticism with a point of view, a scarce enough commodity at any time’ (1987:116). The idiosyncrasies of Holcroft’s writing style appear less problematic when the mode he wrote in is considered: the *essay*. Significantly, Holcroft understood that the essay was a creative form of writing, imaginative as well as discursive: ‘an essayist may use words, if he wishes, as a poet uses them – not always for precise meanings, but sometimes for suggestion’ (1950:14). Essayists are not formalists and they speak as generalists, but with didacticism (Tate, 1952:377); their purpose is to share a personal reflection with an audience that does have as its intent, to persuade or instruct. The essay is the presentation, on a page, of one side of a *conversation*. Holcroft at times seems to have been afflicted by what Tate referred to in 1952 as his ‘conducting an unfinished

education in public. All essayists seem to do this; unlike the scholars, they cannot wait until they have made up their minds before they speak' (377). As editor of the *Listener*, this was Holcroft's great strength, with his weekly editorial having the authority and personal inflection of an abridged essay. In *The Deepening Stream* he wrote, 'we must give more thought to the preparation of a system which will protect and encourage the diversities of individual outlook and at the same time make them an inner strength of a healthy national temper' (52). This was what lay behind the culture-critics intervention.

Holcroft's criticism, whilst asking similar things to McCormick in terms of the critical, came to his ideas from an entirely different perspective.<sup>102</sup> Whereas McCormick had formulated a cultural history based on the concept of adaptation ('to create an individual variant of the parent culture'; [McCormick, 1996:131]), Holcroft was attempting to formulate a notion of cultural psychology (Murray, 1998:80). He was seeking a psychological framework to explain the lack of cultural expertise or feeling in the country. The extent to which this was the case is born out by Holcroft himself when he writes in the preface to the trilogy:

[f]or six years I had had close and varied experience of the difficulties in publication faced by writers in New Zealand: the subject was much in my mind, and I came to regard the essay as a last and rather desperate attempt to find a solution (1950:11).

Holcroft wrote in his autobiography: 'Invercargill was a good place in which to study our cultural deficiencies. It was isolated' (1984:181). However, while in the early years, Invercargill enabled him to develop and formulate 'out of my personal experience [...] a thesis which was, in broad outline, the nature of creative problems in New Zealand' (1950:12), by the completion of the third essay, published in 1946, Holcroft had entered a period of quiet malaise; the Antarctic winds had been howling through his marriage and his journalism career; he was approaching forty and had failed as a novelist and with the publication of the third of the essays *Encircling Seas* (1946) he was beginning to be heavily criticised for the opaque quality of his prose

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<sup>102</sup>Holcroft and McCormick wrote their criticism entirely independently of each other. Holcroft based his assessments on the lived endeavour of attempting to survive as a writer during years spent in Australia, where his writing appeared in every publication available; London, where his three novels were published; and New Zealand, where poverty and indifference led to his years in journalism, firstly in Christchurch with the *Weekly News* and then later with *The Press*, and *The Southland Times* in Invercargill.

and imprecise philosophical meanderings. I return to the reception of Holcroft's essays and other prose writing in chapter three, but I will quote from a letter published in *Hilltop* in June 1949 that illustrates the extent to which in the space of less than a decade New Zealand had developed a cultural consciousness. The letter, authored by Alastair Campbell, was written in acknowledgement of the pioneering criticism undertaken by Holcroft, whose aim, Campbell claimed, 'was to heighten our national awareness to receive and nourish ideas, to convince us of the existence of a New Zealand type of consciousness by elucidating various causes and phases in its development' (38). What arose out of the Centennial publications were the conditions for the journals to take root. Holcroft's *The Deepening Stream* and McCormick's *Letters and Art* initiated the standard and tone of criticism that would appear in *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* as well as the 'little magazines' of which *Hilltop* was one. The Centennial publications were the monologues to the conversation that ignited with the journals during the 1950s.

In the following chapter we will see that the periodicals of the 1950s were not passive receptacles for the aggressive nationalisms of the 1930s and 1940s. The Centennial publications document a nation undergoing a process of transformation, seeking to emerge from behind the colonial skirt and put on an indigenous coat. Jay claims that 'the nation represents itself to itself as a writing subject, a single consciousness expressing its history and self-understanding' (1990: ix), and it was within the pages of the journals that this consciousness and understanding were encountered. The outcome was that, in the mid-twentieth century period, nationalism had two formulations; one derived by the State, and the other formulated by the poetic of Curnow and popularly expressed in the survey *Letters and Art* and the prize-winning essay *The Deepening Stream* (notably both these publications arose independently of *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow*, showing that criticism was not only the preoccupation of the *Phoenix*-Caxton writers). Through the conversation that the journals encouraged, we see a literary community attempting to make sense of what writing themselves into the history of the 'beginnings' meant. For Beaglehole, McCormick, Holcroft, Fairburn and Brasch this was actively participating in the public sphere created by the periodical press.<sup>103</sup> The journals also provide a platform

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<sup>103</sup> Curnow was much less open in encountering the public sphere offered by the journals. In his persona as "Whim Wham" he hid behind a nom de plume, which meant that only a privileged few were able to see the continuity of the critique he offered outside his book-based literary criticism. Holcroft

for the younger writers to react against, furthermore; creating their own publications was a public expression of defiance against the Curnovian poetic, but it also ensured that new voices joined the conversation:

I have been working sometimes in a region without landmarks. I have tried to present one man's view of his world, following all that I have seen to the limits of a personal vision. Others will see differently, and more clearly; but in the meantime I hope that I have left a track here and there which may help them to make better journeys. (1950:14)

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wrote: 'It is no accident, but a necessity of history, which makes our best poets sing to one another and to a few enthusiasts rather than to the general public. Equally significant is the fact that the only really 'popular' poet in New Zealand today is one who writes ingenious verse commentaries on the news. And he writes them under a pen-name which covers the identity of a poet whose more serious work would puzzle and dismay at least ninety percent of his newspaper readers. Thus a people's poet does not speak as a member of the anonymous crowd, but as one who writes down to it with a trained sense of news values'(1950:154).

## Chapter Two

### Trying to think for ourselves

[C]ould anything as good have been produced in New Zealand in the twenties, or in the thirties? Indubitably, no. We move, we make ground.<sup>104</sup>

In this chapter I want to examine how the three periodicals of the ‘long fifties’ consolidated the intellectual endeavours instigated by the Centennial celebrations under the leadership of Beaglehole and McCormick. As a consequence of the establishment of the journals, *sites* were created where a *conversation* could be conducted; so while the State may have created an embryonic cultural infrastructure, the journals set about institutionalising a national culture by creating sites for its dissemination and publishing the efforts of those writers and artists who Beaglehole believed showed ‘we are trying to think for ourselves’ (*Landfall* 19, 1951:228). The intention of the journals was to incorporate nationalism into a broader discourse that could take account of modernism and the adoption of standards of excellence and taste, within an ideological position that understood literature to be an exploratory lens for society.<sup>105</sup> The journal was to become a cultural object in its own right (D. Carter, 1991:177).

Periodicals circulate ideas; and the cultural authority of a journal is measured by its effectiveness in the presentation of ideas. Like other forms of literature, the journal is ‘an active participant in the construction and imagination of our social and cultural reality’ (Brannigan, 2003:12), consciously positioning itself in agreement with or opposition to the ruling ideas of a society at a given time. *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* adopted editorial positions that sought to influence the representation of the national character by ‘constructing a liberal intellectual sphere’ (D. Carter, 1991:178), within which the conditions of society could be examined honestly, as objectively as possible and independently. This was what each of the journals perceived as the mandate for the literary-cultural journal and the function of the *culture-critic*.

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<sup>104</sup> A. R. D. Fairburn, from his review of James K. Baxter, *Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry* (1951), *Landfall* 20, December 1951 (318). This was the published essay version of the address delivered by Baxter to the Writers Conference held in May of that year in Christchurch.

<sup>105</sup> In a similar fashion to the Australian journals of the post-war years, *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* saw the ‘publication of poetry, fiction, reviews and literary criticism [as] a larger responsibility to the [creation of a] national culture’ (D. Carter, 1991:177).

Periodicals do not emerge from a vacuum but are intimately connected to the historical moment of their inception and to the interests of a literary, artistic or intellectual cohort who combine a missionary zeal with a mechanism to make something happen. The literary-cultural journals published in New Zealand during the period 1947-1961 would not have occurred without the two following interventions: firstly the establishment of the Caxton Press (as Evans states: ‘to write of the press as coinciding with a renaissance in New Zealand writing is to put things back to front: it was the renaissance’ [1990:88]) and secondly, the Centennial publications. While Brasch was keen to emphasise the common ancestry that *Landfall* shared with *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow*, without Glover and the Caxton Press *Landfall* would have struggled to find a typographer who shared the same vision of excellence in both content and publication; for Glover was not only a printer, he was an astute editor as committed to a literature from his ‘own patch’ (Ogilvie, 1999:87) as Brasch was. The Centennial publications had shone a strong beam upon New Zealand’s historical shadows, so while an official cultural memory was written, at the same time the intellectual nationalism of Beaglehole and McCormick illuminated a new path. In the intervening years, the young men involved with *Phoenix* and *Landfall* had consolidated their collective cultural authority. The Centennial publications reinforced their mission firstly by confirming their opposition to the political myths of paradise and justice which had infiltrated the popular literature, and secondly by confirming the existence of an audience for criticism and local literature. The subscriptions of the Caxton Club would mutate into ones for *Landfall*, a reminder to those who had subscribed in 1936 that in 1947 here again was the chance to support the ‘wider circulation of authors’ works and a corresponding community of interest between authors and the public’ (Ogilvie, 1999:87).

Evaluating the journals of the ‘long fifties’ is a project of intellectual history; the poetry and prose published illustrate the changing trends in literature – Modernism, New Criticism, Internationalism – but also a changing world order as the Iron Curtain was drawn.<sup>106</sup> Each of the journals published throughout the ‘long fifties’ moves literary history ‘beyond the closed narratives of periodisation’ (Brannigan, 2003:12). All were edited by men whose personal experiences were informed by the

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<sup>106</sup> The non-literary content of the journals is especially representative of these changes; Professor Airey’s article published in *Landfall* 2 entitled ‘Liberalism is Not Enough’ is indicative of the belief that the war had radically altered social and political factors and that New Zealand needed to accept that it too was a participant on the cusp of a new world order (1947:105-115).

profound social and political events of the mid-twentieth century who then produced journals under the perma-frost that was the Cold War. A periodical carries the tincture of its editor's interests and prejudices and therefore cannot be examined in isolation from the historical matrix that informs the editorial mandate. Within New Zealand this was the continuation of the intellectual nationalism initiated by the Centennial publications and the associated development of imaginative and critical writings. The editors and contributors to the magazines could not distinguish between a political independence and a literary one.

The periodicals reflect the existence of a particular mood – both critical and independent – that characterised the post-war years. The experience of war, both on the battlefield and at 'home', had galvanised New Zealanders into accepting their distinctiveness and separation from the British. The discussions surrounding full political sovereignty and the need to emerge from the shadow of mother England intoned during the Centennial celebrations of 1940 were realised by the ratification of the Statute of Westminster in 1947. Beaglehole, writing in the *Journal of World History* (1954), asserted that 'the feeling and the act go somehow together' (107). New Zealand was becoming nationally conscious, as Keith Sinclair in his autobiography *Halfway Round the Harbour* (1993) claimed: 'by about 1950 there was a community of serious New Zealand writers' (146). Significantly, these writers were attempting to articulate this 'outgrowing of emotional colonialism' (Beaglehole, 1954:122); and the journey to political independence was reflected in the pursuit of cultural sovereignty. The embrace of nationalism and a number of self-identified writers ensured an environment in which a literary-cultural journal could find writers and readers; the perceived 'thinness of New Zealand culture' (Sharp, 2003:107) was being fattened up.

Removed from the continuing trauma of war-ravaged Europe and a rebuilding Britain, New Zealand intellectuals and artists were encouraged to claim a local culture. After the deprivation and atrocities of the prior decade and the exhortations of the 1940 celebrations, the post-war years were a time of renewal and assessment. The editors of *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* relished the prospect of debating and questioning the shape the world was taking post-war. They were men who claimed to have been 'deeply affected' by the Depression, the political turmoil of the thirties and the inevitable march to war. They did not want to see the issues that needed to be addressed – social justice and democracy – thwarted by the quest for

security, whether it be economically or politically. So alongside poetry and prose that displayed writing that was attempting an honest assessment of the New Zealand character<sup>107</sup> were articles that considered New Zealand's role in international relations.<sup>108</sup> It was an intellectual project to be fought on two fronts; a greater outward gaze but also a hard inward stocktaking.

New Zealand society had undergone massive changes since the publication of *Phoenix* in the 1930s. The 'bookmen's' primacy was waning as they retired or died. Membership of literary circles was increasingly the preserve of full-time writers and academics, and those of the expanding arts bureaucracy. And, finally, the literary-tinged newspaperman was to evolve into the much more respectable literary editor of a periodical. The journals emerged within this matrix of external and internal influences. New Zealand underwent remarkable cultural change post-World War Two; as Fairburn noted, in his review of Baxter, culturally, New Zealand was a society that had 'moved and made ground'. The following section of this chapter outlines what I perceive to be key events that helped shape the journals and imbue them with cultural authority.

## 1. The Bungalow Bourgeoisie

While down in the harbour refugee ships  
bring more walking wounded from exhausted Europe  
to till fresh fields and play their violins.  
(What's local has got a fist like an All Black  
And downs ten jars between five and six.)<sup>109</sup>

New Zealand was disappointing – grubby and hot and homemade looking. I felt we had left civilisation behind.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> This search for a distinctive culture was also encountered in other areas, for example architecture, where a distinctive culture would have a distinctive architecture (Lloyd Jenkins, 2005:8). Architects Paul Pascoe and Humphrey Hall in an essay published in 1947 wrote: '[t]o appreciate the significance of the modern house and its sociological influence, the word 'modern' must be clearly defined. Unhappily, it has been used to describe the all too common 'modernistic' house of the arty, streamlined exterior; a false cloak to a dull stereotyped plan' (121) and asserting instead, that domestic architecture must 'reflect the social life of today' (124). This essay was published in the second issue of *Landfall* and illustrates Brasch's intention to include material in each issue that was non-literary.

<sup>108</sup> Editorial by Holcroft, 'Education of the World' in which he discusses the role education needs to play in Asia, the related issue of the fear of the East by the West and the work of UNESCO (*Listener* vol. 21, no. 543, November 18, 1949); the editorial discusses the transcript of a talk, 'Neighbours in the North' by J. H. Ford on the West's responsibilities to South East Asia (*Listener* vol. 22, no. 571, June 2, 1950).

<sup>109</sup> Excerpt from 'Wellington 1955', Peter Bland (2004:212).

The 1950s are a decade blighted by clichés of cultural dullness and mindless conformity that are claimed to have enveloped post-war suburbia; a New Zealand satirically termed the land of ‘the bungalow bourgeoisie’ by Bill Wilson in an essay published in *Kiwi*<sup>111</sup> in 1948. The poem quoted above by Peter Bland, an English immigrant, and the recollection of novelist Marilyn Duckworth, New Zealand-born but English-raised, each document some of the realities and myths mid-twentieth century New Zealand lived by. As the Bland poem illustrates, the ‘long fifties’ were a time of sharp contrast. It is commonplace for post-war New Zealand to be described as socially and economically prosaic; as servicemen returned, houses were built and families started. The progress was unrelenting; suburbs sprawled and maternity homes overflowed—the twin indicators of post-war prosperity.

However, in amongst the banal domesticity (‘[...] up and down this crumbly hill the lawnmowers are whirring, the radios are chanting comments, winners, prices, from the trots: the glare strikes up, the dust blows: the air is rich with the smell of all those roast dinners eaten at high noon’),<sup>112</sup> ideas were beginning to chafe and projects to be conjured; as Keith Sinclair states, ‘it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the fifties were when the New Zealand intellect and imagination came alive’ (1993:155). While Sinclair may be writing himself into the narrative (he was a central figure in Auckland of the 1950s, teaching in the History Department and finding success as a poet), his assertion does correspond to the growth that occurred across a wide range of literary, artistic and intellectual areas. One of these which he was part of was the creation of the practitioner/academic or the ‘poet-professor’ as J.C. Reid referred to them.<sup>113</sup> This was a further evolution of the role of the professional historian with university affiliations that Beaglehole and McCormick ushered in with the Centennial publications.

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<sup>110</sup> Marilyn Duckworth’s account of her impression of Auckland upon returning to New Zealand as a twelve-year-old in 1947 (2000:49). By 1958 she recollects she would sit in La Scala coffee shop ‘drinking coffee and reading the *Listener*’ (110). Duckworth’s memoir tracks not only her own development but also the changes she witnessed in social practices.

<sup>111</sup> The annual magazine of the Student’s Association, Auckland University College. Wilson’s essay was entitled ‘The small house’ and was an examination of how architecture in New Zealand represented the pastiche that afflicted other areas of society: ‘[y]ou can’t make building express anything. You can only, by trickery, achieve ‘effects’ – or by intelligent and sensitive discovery give living people such shelter as will help them to express, or more exactly, to realise themselves’ (Reprinted in *New Dreamland: Writing New Zealand Architecture*, edited by Douglas Lloyd Jenkins (2005).

<sup>112</sup> Duggan in a letter to Davin, 1953. (Richards, 1997:182)

<sup>113</sup> Beaglehole was of course the original poet-professor, but alongside him and Sinclair can be added Allen Curnow, C. K. Stead, Bill Oliver, Ken Smithyman, M. K. Joseph.

Closely connected to this development of the poet-professor, and influenced by and influencing of it, was the existence in Auckland and Wellington of active and noisy artistic enclaves that served to fuel the creativity and associations needed to drive a periodical press. While the two journals established by members of the *Phoenix* generation were produced outside the university, several ‘little magazines’, which seemed to have as their mission statement to unsettle, contest and adopt generational scorn toward their elders, emerged directly out of the university.<sup>114</sup> A salon culture (as Christchurch had seen in the 1930s) had developed in Auckland and Wellington that provided opportunities for conversation, friendship and heavy drinking; ‘The kitchen packed with bodies/ floated loud/ with beer-warmed conversation and with roaring clash of egos’<sup>115</sup> (V. Lowry, 2001:34). So vibrant were both of these circles of the intelligentsia<sup>116</sup> that Brasch surmised that either of the Northern cities would be most suitable as the home of the proposed journal. Christchurch was never an option, a city that he was unkindly predisposed toward, stating that the negative qualities of New Zealand ‘reflected all too closely the barren complacencies of suburban Christchurch’ (1980:389).

The Bland poem also points to a further impulse for change: the influence, disproportionate to their numbers that European refugees had on enlarging the intellectual-cultural experiences of the local intelligentsia. As a result of the war New Zealand society and the university colleges benefited from the Jewish Diaspora of the 1930s, acquiring students and academics who brought with them different approaches and linguistic skills to essentially monolingual and monoculture countries<sup>117</sup>. New Zealand intellectuals, writers and artists discovered kindred spirits: here were individuals with whom they could share their enthusiasms for art, music, literature and modernism (Beaglehole, 2006:240), and who, often more significantly, were

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<sup>114</sup> *Hilltop* (which would become *Arachne*) is considered in greater detail in the following chapter.

<sup>115</sup> Lines from ‘Elisabeth’ written by Irene Lowry in memory of Liz Rotherham after her death by suicide.

<sup>116</sup> To counter this sense of being fractured from the northern “centre” Brasch made frequent visits to Auckland. Yet, Brasch would have been unlikely guest at the Lowry-type gatherings, his dislike of excessive drinking (‘[w]hy this adolescent attitude persists I do not know, but relatively few New Zealanders drink naturally and moderately, out of simple thirst and for pleasure and relaxation’ [1980:387]) and its associated decline in behaviour that often follows such bingeing, meant they would not have been to his liking.

<sup>117</sup> Peter Munz is one such example. Arriving in Christchurch from Germany in January 1940, he studied at Canterbury University, gaining a Masters degree in 1944. In 1945 he left to study for his doctorate at Cambridge University. He returned to New Zealand in 1949 and taught at Victoria University of Wellington until his retirement in 1987.

sympathetic to the experiments being tried out by local writers, artists and composers.<sup>118</sup> These new neighbours and colleagues brought with them cosmopolitan tastes, infiltrating the local with new perspectives and practices. It was the coming together of the European salon with the kiwi “booze up”, the international being applied to indigenous surroundings. These continental influences informed the houses they designed, the art they collected and the music they played.<sup>119</sup> Although Beaglehole noted that his new immigrant friends<sup>120</sup> ‘make us feel very inferior & uncultured & raw, damn them’ (Beaglehole, 2006:240), they provided New Zealand intellectuals, writers and artists with a receptive audience and the impetus to be cultural boat-rockers. Suddenly, New Zealand did not appear so shallow.

While the post-war years brought prosperity to a significant number of New Zealanders, the beginning of the decade is best remembered for the 1951 Waterfront strike/lockout, a bitter industrial dispute that polarised society, filling the broadsheets with ‘anti-commie’ rhetoric and reducing affected families to economic conditions reminiscent of the Depression. The treatment of this conflict by the police and media suggested to writers and intellectuals that New Zealand was not so changed from the 1930s. In that same year the Writers Conference was held in Christchurch.<sup>121</sup> Organised by the English department of Canterbury University College, it was the first gathering of the country’s writers (and the ‘wannabes’) since the PEN-sponsored

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<sup>118</sup> Polish psychoanalyst Mario Fleischl was another refugee whose European sophistication embraced that which was challenging and foreign to local taste. Mario and his wife Hilda originally settled in Dunedin and became early patrons of Colin McCahon (Richards, 1997:81); the painting ‘Otago Peninsula’ (1946) was commissioned by the Fleischls and was McCahon’s first commission. John Beaglehole was familiar with McCahon’s work and a champion of it. The first McCahon he saw was ‘Otago Peninsula’ hanging in the Fleischls’ sitting room. The Fleischls’ artistic interests also embraced music, and upon Douglas Lilburn’s move to Wellington in the 1950s, they became friends and supporters of the composer. Mario Fleischl was so highly regarded in Wellington music circles that composer and Professor of Music at Victoria University David Farquhar dedicated his 1972 piece ‘Scenes and Memories’ to his memory (Fleischl had died the previous year).

<sup>119</sup> Fred Turnovsky was prominent in the establishment of the Wellington Chamber Music Society, outlining in his autobiography (1990) that it was from his experience in Prague that the society adopted the subscription model for concert attendance (81).

<sup>120</sup> Joachim and Gertrud Kahn; Ernst and Anna Plischke; Peter and Ilse Jacoby; Maire Vanderwart and Helmut and Ester Einhorn. Douglas MacDiarmid’s 1945 painting ‘The Immigrant’, depicts a woman dressed in European style standing in a modernist interior featuring Ernst Plischke-designed furniture, and is wonderfully evocative of the taste and style Beaglehole admired in his friends.

<sup>121</sup> During the 1930s Christchurch was seen as the cultural capital of New Zealand: its two papers, the *Press* and the *Sun* had the best literary pages in the country; and it had a collection of painters who were developing a sharp regional style. Peter Simpson has described the 1951 Writers Conference held in Christchurch as ‘something of a last hurrah in terms of Christchurch’s cultural centrality’ (2004:135).

Authors' Week of April 1936.<sup>122</sup> Considered a successful and well-attended event which was reported in all three journals and several of the university magazines, it nonetheless illustrated the generational chasm running through literary circles, between the Victorian *bookmen* represented by Lawlor and exemplified by his diatribe at the conference conflating *Landfall*, modernism and morality (Hilliard, 2006:108) and the modernist-inflected *writers*. The papers presented, the ideas expressed and the arguments that flared all served to reinforce the rupture between eras.<sup>123</sup> But, as Peter Simpson has noted, Baxter's speech also served as the catalyst for a new schism that would develop between those born pre-1920 and post-1920 (2004:135), and it was this generational conflict and the poetic that each championed that the journals would document throughout the 1950s and into the Sixties.<sup>124</sup> The conference also saw discussion on the issue of state patronage, which was as divisive as the other topics.<sup>125</sup>

By the late forties, New Zealand's self-perception was perceptibly changing; what had begun with the Centennial continued to flower throughout the war and acted as an encouragement to those who wanted to respond creatively to the developments in New Zealand and beyond; for many artists, this was the embrace of modernism. In 1949 Helen Hitchings<sup>126</sup> opened a gallery in Wellington. It was a venue for displaying modernist painting,<sup>127</sup> ceramics, textiles and furniture, all designed and made in New

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<sup>122</sup> The newly elected Labour government provided assistance to cover a salary and the travelling expenses for an Authors' Week representative to co-ordinate activities in towns around New Zealand (Hilliard, 2006:4). This was the first instance of what would become substantial assistance to the arts during the 1940s.

<sup>123</sup> With Authors' Week (1936) the bookmen (newspaper editors, critics and local librarians) led the way, but by 1951 it was the practitioners – writers – led by the poets, their manifesto charismatically presented by Baxter: 'One of the functions of artists in a community is to provide a healthy and permanent element of rebellion; not to become a species of civil servant. The younger writers are at least aware of this necessity' (1951:15).

<sup>124</sup> In his 1952 essay 'Fretful Sleepers' (*Landfall* 23), Pearson makes some pointed remarks regarding the intellectuals of the previous 25 years (223-224).

<sup>125</sup> The introduction of the State Literary Fund in 1947 formalised Joe Heenan's practice of secret patronage of benevolent pocket monies to writers.

<sup>126</sup> As part of the 2008 New Zealand Arts Festival, Helen Hitchings's gallery was recreated in an exhibition titled: 'The Gallery of Helen Hitchings – from fretful sleeper to art world giant'. The exhibition held at the Museum of Wellington recreated the gallery that was originally located at 39 Bond Street and featured paintings by McCahon, Woollaston and Angus, pottery by Len Castle and furniture designed by architect Ernst Plischke.

<sup>127</sup> By 1949, head Librarian Stuart Perry had established gallery space in the Wellington Public Library to show work that fell foul of the Arts Society (Skinner, 2000:103). Interestingly, Perry was a 'bookman' and one of the authors of 'Murder by Eleven', but while he fraternised with the Lawlor crowd he was obviously not so conservative in taste to be adverse to modernist art. Ironically, a larger gallery space was created by removing the newspaper reading room (Skinner, 2000:103). The French Maid Coffee Bar on Lambton Quay provided wall space to artists and a convivial meeting place for the wider arty-intelligentsia crowd. The challenge to find exhibiting space that was sympathetic to

Zealand, as well as a performance space for musical works and poetry readings. In 1951 she closed her gallery and headed for England, taking with her works by New Zealand painters with the intention of mounting exhibitions (the works were not for sale and were loaned by the artists or private owners) in London and Paris. Beaglehole assisted her by bringing her plans to the attention of the government, which led to a grant to aid the Paris show (Beaglehole, 2006:426).<sup>128</sup> While *Landfall* published an extended review of Hitchings' pre-closure show (written by Beaglehole, 1951), the *Listener* had previously interviewed Hitchings shortly after the gallery's opening. The small article entitled 'Arts and Craft' was accompanied by a photograph of Hitchings along with one of the interior of the gallery. The unsigned article described the gallery 'as a clearing house for all types of New Zealand art' (June 17, 1949). The articles on Hitchings provide an excellent example of the conversation the journals were creating, the *Listener* greeting the arrival of the gallery and *Landfall* giving the farewell.<sup>129</sup> Within the two years the gallery was opened, the shows exhibited received many negative reviews (from the broadsheet press) and few positive (Louis Johnson writing under a pseudonym in the *Southern Cross* was one exception, but again this was a progressive periodical).<sup>130</sup> The literary-cultural journals insured that Hitchings's efforts were placed in a context that was not only sympathetic to the art, but were examined beside poetry, prose, music and criticism that were engaged in the same conversation concerning the local and the modern. The journals were acting as a clearing house for a new discourse.<sup>131</sup>

The inverse of this type of pioneering environment for art was the enthusiasm with which a 'nesting' and economically solvent middle class was displaying toward

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modernism was alleviated by the opening of the Architectural Centre Gallery in 1953. This gallery had an aggressive policy of exhibiting, offering both 'rent' and 'non-rent' exhibitions. The Architectural Centre also exhibited modernist works loaned to them by immigrants and refugees who had fled Europe during the 1930s and World War Two with small collections of art (Skinner, 2000:105).

<sup>128</sup> New Zealand House in London undertook to print the exhibition catalogue and invitations to the opening; Hitchings recalled that the results were 'pretty horrible' (Fraser, 1983:36), but then she was used to the typographical artistry of Bob Lowry (after he became too unreliable Harry Tombs printed the catalogues).

<sup>129</sup> *Landfall* 12 also featured a review written by Janet Paul in which she remarks that the 'back street location will make it share in the incestuousness of our intellectual life. The well-designed object will be bought by the already converted' (1949:358).

<sup>130</sup> It was also a significant article as the newspaper reviews of exhibitions showing modernist artwork were invariably greeted with derision. Eric Rumsden, a political reporter for the *Evening Post*, wrote on art and found every exhibition put on at the Helen Hitchings Gallery deplorable. But as Hitchings points out, in the age of good manners he would always ring her to inform her of the forthcoming negative review and allow her to correct any oversight he may have made (Fraser, 1983:36).

<sup>131</sup> In an interview in *Art New Zealand* 29 (1983) Hitchings remarked how she 'always stocked the literary magazines *Landfall*, *Arachne* and *Arena*' (36) in the gallery.

culture. The actions of the state in nationalising Broadcasting and establishing an infrastructure for cultural production (National Film Unit and the Historical Branch), and initiatives in state patronage of the arts (the National Orchestra and State Literary Fund) during two terms of the Labour government acted not only as an encouragement to the arts; but also led to an increased willingness by an expanding middle class to purchase and participate in *culture*. The arts were the beneficiaries of a developing consumer culture in which the idea that consumption, rather than hard work, might provide self-fulfilment (Brickell, 2006:146). Art and culture were transformed into commodities that could be consumed within the home; art was purchased as if it were akin to a home appliance. It was this trend to view art as decoration and entertainment; as forms of distraction that Fairburn was reflecting on when he wrote, ‘I fear that there is in our day a great deal of aimlessness, and not a little that is shallow and pretentious, in the “appreciation” of the arts’ (1956:200).

## 2. The Fretful Critics

*Landfall*, despite your contrary opinion, is talked about by a considerable number of people who are neither contributors or subscribers [sic].<sup>132</sup>

Bill Pearson in his *Landfall* essay ‘Fretful Sleepers’ (1952) states ‘I doubt if a New Zealander has any other moral referee than public opinion’ (207). For culture-critics it was the sway of public opinion that they were attempting to overhaul, believing that an excessive concern with public opinion had led to the development of a conservative, normative and prescriptive public culture.<sup>133</sup> The role of the journals was to give the culture-critic, along with the writer and artist, a public space in which to carry out his interconnected functions as conscience and critic of society. Secondly, the journal was to create an audience for the artist and critic: ‘[n]o artist can work without an audience willing to co-operate: if he is to be honest; his audience must be

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<sup>132</sup>Lines taken from a letter to the editor following an indifferent review of *Landfall*, by then editor, Oliver Duff (March 12, 1948, vol. 18).

<sup>133</sup> Habermas claimed that a ‘public sphere’ was created through the interdependence of the print media, mass culture and public gathering spaces. However, just as not all members of a society attend political rallies not all members read critical periodicals; yet both help to shape ideas and direct participation in society. The modern public sphere he argued is a communicative space in which private people came together as a public. Habermas, like Benedict Anderson, traces the creation of the public sphere back to the printing press and the formation of the bourgeois novel in the late eighteenth century (Jacobs, 2007:110). The literary public sphere formed through a combination of the imaginative (the novel) and the publishing of the discussions and debates held in coffeehouses (printing press). He understood the formation of a public culture (as depicted in periodicals) to be an essential component in the shaping of public opinion and critical rationality (Jacobs, 2007:111).

honest; they must be prepared to speculate about themselves. This is something New Zealanders will not do' (212). This was the most significant achievement of the three journals: their understanding of the inseparability of criticism and art – that criticism was preparatory to art – 'it cultivates the right atmosphere for the epochs of real creative achievement' (Salusinszky, 1987:1). The editors and contributors to the journals understood that without a strong and rigorous critical infrastructure society would lack the opportunity for self-reflection, which is vital not only to the continued advancement of the arts in a society but also to the more general principles of democracy. For the younger culture-critics such as Pearson and Chapman, a sociological inflection was appended: literature became the arbiter of cultural truths (Smithies, 2008:94).<sup>134</sup>

The real success of the post-war years and the rejuvenation that was aroused by the earlier critical work of Beaglehole, McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow was that by the commencement of the 1950s, New Zealand had three periodicals whose intention was to establish '[that] criticism is accepted as a normal part of life' (Beaglehole, 2006:325). These journals promoted and encouraged the public role as instructed, firstly, by Curnow, and again by Baxter when he addressed the Writers Conference, asking his audience to consider 'to what degree should the poet be the entertainer or physician of his society' (1951:9). Furthermore, the journals democratised the reception of criticism. The critical essay no longer existed only in book form, thus 'disrupting the authorial monologue' as it was placed instead with a 'crowd of [other] voices' (Paul Carter, 1991:91). The magazines enabled more than just the coterie (in the form of the 'bread and butter' reviewer) the opportunity to contribute to the conversation; participation was enlarged by the letters to the editor pages.

The letters pages illustrate the reception of the debates and concerns of the writers by the reader. *Here & Now* documents this better than most. In the first edition it published both the letters of support and those that were less enthusiastic which it

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<sup>134</sup>This was the progression of Curnow's instruction that 'it is the *uses* of poetry we need to realize: and that what is admired, but does not change the imagination, has been wrongly admired' (1987:73) or as Holcroft put it: 'truth can be uncomfortable, even perilous; but there are times when it must be spoken' (1952:31). Pearson and Chapman wrote of the need for the literary critic, by utilising the social reflections made by writers, to expose the flaws inherent in society: 'the critic is at liberty and it is his function to give an analysis of cause and effect and thus to tie up the phenomena selected by one or several authors. So the critic provides a background for the stories which he has to examine and makes it possible for the bold relief of the stories to be set against the sketch map of the society' (Chapman, 1973:78).

had received after sending around a circular of intent, and in doing so, revealed the personality of the respondent as well as the “personality” of the publication. This was a calculated move to create around the magazine a sense of the contest that those behind *Here & Now* felt to be absent in the nation’s public discourse:

Sirs: I feel that your editorial somewhat anticipates you. You fear that ‘some owls may accuse you of being too light-minded’. You seem at the moment to have no mind at all.<sup>135</sup>

While Lamb has written of the inclination in New Zealand to veer away from debate (‘[to] shut your audience or opponent up is held to be the proper end of rhetoric’ [1990:197]), the number of sites for a conversation alleviated this tendency during the post-war years. As the following reply of Brasch to Ballantyne (who had written a letter of grievance to him over Robert Chapman’s review of *The Cunninghams* in *Landfall* 10 (1949) reveals, the journals were actively seeking to animate the local literary culture: ‘what a pity your letter isn’t for publication; it would have helped to make *Landfall* livelier, which would have been a public service’ (2003:111).

An example of just how lively the debate in the letters page could get, was shown by the mail bag following an editorial and article on the expansion of national archives in the *Listener*.<sup>136</sup> In his editorial Holcroft wrote of the importance of archives for the preservation of a nation’s memory—this was very much a continuation of the ideas promoted by the Centennial activities under the guidance of Beaglehole. Within a fortnight the first letter appeared, authored by Bill Oliver; it questioned the logic of the expense that arose when storing vast quantities of paper resources, and argued that a ready access to ‘facts’ hindered the writing of history in the country, rather than facilitating it; ‘the writing of history is not solely a matter of discovering facts. It is quite as much an exercise of the imagination’ (5).<sup>137</sup> The following week Keith Sinclair entered the debate with the contention that:

lately a new species has appeared which sneers at research, that is, at such techniques as historians have devised to temper their historical imagination

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<sup>135</sup> Fairburn in the editorial ‘Kick-off’ had written, ‘We should perhaps make it clear that it is not the purpose of *Here & Now* to compete with the digests; we have no wish merely to provide an accompaniment to the munching of chocolates in second-class railway carriages, or even in ministerial sleepers. But we hope to offer our readers some diversion. We shall interpret the word “serious” without the implication of “solemn” – and we daresay that now and then we shall have letters from owls accusing us of being too light-minded’ (October, 1949:7). The letter was from G. Boulton (November, 1949:35).

<sup>136</sup> March, 1950, vol. 22, no. 559

<sup>137</sup> vol. 22, no. 561

with accuracy...unless it is anchored in the facts uncovered by research, history is merely the playground of cranks, prophets, propagandists, and poets (5).<sup>138</sup>

Sinclair stated that while he too was a poet, unlike Oliver he could not champion texts with imaginative inflection over that of solid scholarship. To let one's epistemological guard down would be to invite back the history-writing of the past with its 'distrust of intellect and the tolerance of good intentions' (Beaglehole, 1936:157). McCormick entered the fray in the subsequent issue, and not surprisingly on the side of 'team Sinclair'. In his letter he directs readers to George Orwell's *1984* and the need to safeguard historical record from alteration, as well as his experience in the national archives during the 1930s. Over a period of ten weeks, eight editions feature letters of opinion regarding the archives. Professor Wood, of whom Oliver was a student at Victoria University College, writes in support of him. Ruth Allen, a past student of Beaglehole and recruited by him to work in the Centennial Branch, offers a contrary position to that of Beaglehole's colleague, Wood. During the course of the correspondence readers heard from Sinclair on two occasions and Oliver on three, with Holcroft giving the final word to Oliver before noting that correspondence was closed on the issue.<sup>139</sup>

The correspondence shows part of a wider willingness to utilise the journals as a means to contest established ideas (the value of retaining large and varied collections of historical documents) and cultural authority. In this instance 'experts' (academics) were challenging each other in the public domain and attempting to bring to the attention of the lay readership the questions that surround the writing of history and therefore the transmission of cultural memory; this skirmish illustrated the persistence of the belief held by the intelligentsia that history-writing and imaginative literature were central to the growth of an intellectual nationalism. Furthermore, this correspondence shows a sort of gamesmanship between Oliver and Sinclair who as two 'up-and-comers' were each eager to contest the other's claims to intellectual ascendancy. Significantly, this confrontation illustrates that the conversation is carried individually and collectively. In the past, this discussion would have been undertaken in private correspondence, but the development of the periodical allowed disagreements to transcend the individual and to enter the public sphere or the

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<sup>138</sup>vol. 22, no. 562

<sup>139</sup>vol. 22, no. 569

collective consciousness. The protagonists invite the readership of a journal to participate in the estimation of individual cultural authority by choosing to engage in a *conversation* in the letters pages. The Oliver-Sinclair exchange is one episode in a series of literary-cultural dialogues that made up the wider conversation that the journals facilitated and encouraged during the post-war years, and that led to the creation of the culture-critics.

This episode is informative of the role the journals were to play throughout the ‘long fifties’ and reveals several key developments in the creation of a public discourse. Through examining the contents of the *Listener* over the ten-week period in which correspondence was received, we can observe that the reaction the archives article caused was part of a continuing conversation on the role of scholarship, art and culture that the *Listener* was producing. During these ten weeks the *Listener* featured an interview with the newly appointed conductor of the NZSO in which he remarked that it was the role of the conductor to ‘lead public taste’ (6).<sup>140</sup> In his editorial of the following week, Holcroft asserted that a greater familiarity with philosophy would help ‘toughen’ the mind of the critic (4).<sup>141</sup> The next week featured an article written by Fairburn, with accompanying photo of the house, that was designed and built by architectural students of Auckland University College, and showcases the adoption of modern design and building practices (6).<sup>142</sup> Immediately after this article was an interview with the recently returned Director of the New Zealand Council for Education Research, who, having spent five months visiting American schools, suggested that New Zealand schools lack ‘academic adventurousness’ (8).<sup>143</sup> In accepting the editorship of the *Listener*, Holcroft had come to Wellington to be a part of the literary and cultural scene and he intended to use the editorial page to participate in the *conversation*, his conviction being that ‘the heart and soul of the magazine was upfront, in the editorial and the letters’ (1986:22).<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>vol. 22, no. 566

<sup>141</sup>vol. 22, no. 567

<sup>142</sup>vol. 22, no. 568

<sup>143</sup>vol. 22, no. 568

<sup>144</sup>Holcroft later wrote that the two collections of selected editorials *The Eye of the Lizard* (1960) and *Graceless Islanders* (1970) were testimony to the fact that the years spent at the *Listener* did not end his career as a writer, ‘but had allowed it to continue in a different form [and] tested in a weekly appraisal of experience’ (1986:47). While due to their brevity it may be an overstatement to call Holcroft’s editorials essays, this mode that he found so conducive to his requirements in 1939, continued to sustain him throughout the years at the *Listener*.

The archives debate begun by Holcroft illustrates the role of the editor in shaping the presentation of ideas. Letters received on a particular topic are always grouped sequentially; this enables the correspondence to mimic an actual conversation: comment/rebuttal/reply and so on. An editor choreographs the conversation, directing how it will unfold by choosing to hold back certain contributions or simply not to publish others, positioning letters in a manner that clearly privileges the status of one correspondent over the other, abridging letters and ultimately stating: ‘correspondence on this matter is now closed’.

Sirs: What are you aiming at? A post-war version of *Tomorrow*? There is a definite need for such, bearing in mind that post-war problems are more complex than ever and that it is less possible even than in the ‘30s to sit on the principal fence. Internationally, how will you stand with regard to the New China? Nationally, with regard to inroads on civil liberties? All very well to say that we’ll give everyone a go. No publication ever succeeded as a vast correspondence column. It has to have direction.<sup>145</sup>

What Brasch’s reply to Ballantyne and the decision by Holcroft to close correspondence on the archives illustrate, is that, crucially, journals are put together by an editor (or in the case of *Here & Now* an editorial collective); decisions are consciously made as to how each essay, story, poem, review or letter will interact with each other. An editor constructs the contents of a periodical in a specific order to achieve a certain dialogue; writers are on the pages together in a specific formation. A journal is the manifestation of an editor’s viewpoint: the tone of a periodical is not organic but carefully cultivated and manipulated. This is what Locke is driving at in her letter to *Here & Now*. She is dismayed that the editors believe that they can create a forum in which voices from both sides of the political fence could be heard. She does not believe that a periodical can function without a clearly defined ideological or political position; otherwise who would read it. In her letter, Locke is referring to the role of the editor to find an audience<sup>146</sup> for his contributors. As the following chapter

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<sup>145</sup> Letter from Elsie Locke to *Here & Now* (November, 1949: 35).

<sup>146</sup> An ‘audience’ is not the same as ‘the public’; in chapter four I examine this distinction and the impact this need to ‘represent the public’ or ‘speak for the public’ has had upon both funding models for the arts and the function of culture-critics and the role of the journal. The periodicals of the post-war years ensured that a public record was kept of the debates and enthusiasms of the day, but their contributors were speaking to the public, not on behalf of ‘the public’, and culture-critics like Fairburn were actively speaking against ‘the public’. Literature and criticism were revelatory; their function was to expose societal malaise and compel the reader to face up to the national ‘flaw’. Furthermore,

will show, *Here & Now* did find an audience and develop a distinctive voice. In an essay entitled ‘The Function of the Critical Quarterly’ (1936), Allen Tate stated the following:

The critical review must severely define its relation first to a public<sup>147</sup> and then to its contributors. The editor’s attitude towards his contributors, his choice of contributors, and his direction of their work, depend upon the kind of influence that he has decided to exercise (1959:63).

Magazines compete for intellectual and cultural space (Carter, 1991:2) and invent a readership. The contents of the journal – including formatting, typeface, covers and colour use – communicate *who* the readership is (Carter, 1991:3) and reveal the influence they wish to exert. Lining up side-by-side an edition of each of *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* illustrates in a clearly deliberate manner the idiom of each of the magazines or who they are pitched toward. *Landfall* is small, formal and uncompromisingly austere with clean red and black typeface and a fawn-coloured cover<sup>148</sup> absent of illustration; its statement is undeniably proper and *serious*. In stark contrast, *Here & Now*’s covers are often bold slashes of primary colour enhanced by the modernist illustrations of the Auckland artist D. Knight Turner; they have a freedom of line and form suggestive of an interest in international modernism. The cover of the *Listener* betrays its “other life” as official publication of the NZBS, and occupying the cover is more often than not a celebrity from a radio serial or a photographic image with a connection to a forthcoming radio programme. One of the notable differences between *Landfall* and *Here & Now* and the *Listener* is in the inclusion of advertising in the latter two magazines and not the former. The fiscal beneficence of Brasch, courtesy of a private income, and, after 1951, a grant from the State Literary Fund, accounts for the absence of advertisements in *Landfall*. *Here & Now* and the *Listener* had to pay their way; subscriptions alone could not cover costs, and as with newspapers, advertising was the obvious source of revenue.<sup>149</sup>

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occupation of the conceptual space indicated by the adjective ‘public’ (Collini, 2006: 56) is analysed; a ‘public’ intellectual is not necessarily a critic and it is this distinction that is considered also in chapter four.

<sup>147</sup> I would argue that here Tate is referring to ‘public’ in the same sense as ‘audience’ and not in the contemporary sense of ‘the public’.

<sup>148</sup> An acid-yellow cover with contrast colour for the title band was used in 1949; but 1950 saw a return to a muted cover and any colour was limited to the title from then on.

<sup>149</sup> A number of friends were also sought out by *Here & Now* for donations towards running costs. Brasch himself gave funds. There was no conflict of interest here; *Landfall* was the premiere literary

Flicking through past issues of a periodical is akin to an archaeological dig: you have an idea what you may come across, but there are still plenty of surprises. Most interesting is the intersection of the very modern with the very arcane; magazines document the impulses of a time with adumbrations of the past and visions of the future. David Carter has written of the need to ‘attend to the mediating and structuring functions of journals—their structuring of both reading and writing—and to the history in as well as behind them’ (1991:2). In New Zealand, this structuring was the partnering of imaginative writing with critical reflection; the development of the culture-critic. The history within and behind the inception of *Landfall* and *Here & Now* and the editorial direction of the *Listener* under Holcroft is an engagement with the intellectual nationalism championed by Beaglehole and McCormick; and therefore it is intimately connected to the development of a local literature, the professionalization of history writing and the creation of a critical impulse. Or, as Beaglehole explained in an essay from 1954, ‘[...] the historian, no more than the poet or writer of stories, need blush to find that he was taking his native land seriously, and that to be a New Zealander did not prevent his being a scholar’ (122).

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the journals *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* were created out of a particular historical and cultural moment. Like all literature, journals are cultural texts, but what a journal exposes is the surrounding milieu in which it is conceived; During has described periodical writing as ‘provid[ing] a cultural motor for our times’ (1991:32). Throughout the ‘long fifties’ the three journals sought to invest literature and the visual arts with the duty to achieve ‘[the] fine and disinterested critical integrity’ which Beaglehole writing in 1946 had claimed was one of the principal needs of New Zealand (Beaglehole, 2006:325). The journals took a concern with standards of excellence in local cultural production and a commitment toward fostering the creation of an independent and liberal intellectual sphere and constructed a national discourse around it. They created a conversation which was fashioned out of the interests and enthusiasms of a select group of writers and academics. However, the dictates and prejudices of the ‘*Phoenix men*’ acted as an encouragement to others who saw the role of literature and the function of the culture-critic in quite different terms. For the younger writers a need to voice their own ideas about the limitations of Curnovian

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journal and *Here & Now* never had such a narrow focus. Furthermore, Brasch genuinely saw periodicals as a way to ensure the growth of criticism and imaginative writing in the country.

criticism led to the establishment of a number of 'little magazines' where a necessarily combative stance was adopted: 'they (the Wellington poets) were sound[ing] off against the official culture of older New Zealand writers who'd discovered something called a national identity and then built a fence around it' (Bland, 2004:172). Heated exchanges across the literary-cultural fence ensued.

## Chapter Three

### A shelter for the homeless imagination

For over two hundred years most writing has been published in periodicals. Literary history and criticism have not been comfortable with this fact though they have not completely ignored it. Their anxiety is itself traditional: the book has long been set against the journal in an opposition which helps draw boundaries around “literature” or “polite letters” within the mass of print. (During, 1991:28)

While the previous two chapters examined the conditions which created a cultural space that was receptive to the revival<sup>150</sup> of the literary-cultural journal, this chapter turns to the journals themselves. Editorial policy defined not only the personality of each journal but the contribution each editor saw himself making to the *conversation* and his associated claim to *cultural authority*. Therefore, the method of analysis is not an issue-by-issue account of each of the three journals, but rather a combined textual study of their contents and the autobiographical writings and letters of each of the editors. While the conversation created within the pages of the journals is the public one,<sup>151</sup> those privately conducted and contained in letters to friends and associates, or recollected in memoir, help to reveal the more general and specific aims each editor aspired to for their publications and wider New Zealand society. By interweaving extracts from the journals with letters and memoir I am engaged in a conversation *with* the conversation. This is an especially useful device when dealing with material associated with Brasch and *Landfall*, much of which is very well known and been extensively covered in the past. However, by placing Brasch’s recollections and editorial notes side-by-side with those of Fairburn and *Here & Now* and Holcroft and the *Listener* it becomes obvious that Brasch’s editorial endeavour to enlarge the

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<sup>150</sup> I use the term ‘revival’ to account for earlier publications with a literary and/or wider cultural interest; for example *The Triad*, *Phoenix*, *Tomorrow*. It was not so much that the literary-cultural journal was an original innovation of the post-war years but that societal conditions were favourable – a combination of cultural nationalism, a population increasingly keen to read about themselves, editorial skill and printing mechanisms.

<sup>151</sup> This did not mean it did not become personalised or personally targeted; the review by Curnow of the second volume of *New Zealand Poetry Yearbook* in *Here & Now*, May 1953 is testimony to this. Curnow writes the long review as a letter to Louis Johnson and it has the tone of an elder statesman taking a young upstart to task (in 1953 Curnow was 42 years old and Johnson 29); this hardly makes Curnow “old”, but so successfully had the *Phoenix* generation neutralised the role of the pre-1900 poets that battles raged between men in their twenties, thirties and forties. Furthermore, this was the second review of the *Yearbook* by Curnow for *Here & Now*: his review of volume one had appeared in December 1951. By choosing not to offer the review to another writer, *Here & Now* contributed to the personalising of the debate.

literary-cultural landscape of New Zealand was neither as original or discrete as he liked to claim.

The letters and recollections of these mid-century culture-critics reveal that intellectual life in New Zealand did not cease with the demise of *Phoenix* and reignite with the creation of *Landfall*. These journals of the ‘long fifties’ emerged as an outcome of the conditions created by the intellectual nationalism of Beaglehole, McCormick and the Centenary publications, and the early critical essays of Holcroft. Furthermore, the specific features of post-war New Zealand created a society increasingly receptive to expressions of the ‘local’. In this chapter I want to put *Landfall* and Brasch back in their place, that is, back in the cultural *conversation* of its time.

Far too often the period 1947-1961 is read as a history of *Landfall*. The genesis of *Landfall* may have coincided with the post-war renaissance (Anido, 1972:5) but it is not the sum of it. This tendency in New Zealand literary histories to start and end with *Landfall* has resulted in the breadth of periodical publishing during the post-war years being relegated to footnotes. Examining *Here & Now* and the *Listener* alongside *Landfall* destabilises the assumption that there is ever a single story or meta-narrative in literary history (Evans, 1990:9) and also illustrates that none of the journals emerged out of, or were edited, in a literary vacuum. This predilection to favour *Landfall* was illustrated by an anonymous *Times Literary Supplement* article in 1957. Responding to this, Holcroft, in his autobiography *A Sea of Words* (1986) wrote that he was angered by the ‘frivolous and misleading view of the literary situation in New Zealand’ (48) especially the inference that *Landfall* was the ‘only journal with any literary pretensions’ (48); he concluded: ‘I learnt to conceal resentment when the *Listener*, which reviewed more books than any other periodical, and actively promoted creative writing was ignored or overlooked; but I felt it nevertheless’ (1986:48). For it was not only *Landfall* and Brasch who were concerned with improving the quality of local writing and criticism; viewing the post-war years through the singular lens of *Landfall* results in a misleadingly sombre and circumspect tint to a time that was robust, experimental and noisy.

The ‘long fifties’ was a vibrant and argumentative era during which the journals established the function of the culture-critic and created sites for a conversation, and while literature may have had primacy, the editors did adopt editorial programmes based on the precept of cultural communication. The writer had

a civic role, but so did the reader, and the public were encouraged to participate in scrutinizing the society of which they were members. The format of the magazines, which includes editorials and correspondence, illustrates the intention to enable the public not only to 'listen in' but to interject. As Baxter stated in his Macmillan Brown lecture in 1954; 'the functions of poet, reader, and critic, are closely related. Without ability to criticise, a reader is a mere sink of ideas' (1978:13).

As chapter two illustrated, periodicals need to be examined in a way that takes account of the intellectual, cultural and social factors that influence them as well as the role they play in the wider literary economy. The journals acted as an intervention. This intervention had a dual purpose: to encourage local writing through the creation of a platform where good work was recognised and to wrest criticism from the clutches of the broadsheet press. They would achieve these goals (with varying emphasis) by independence, the exercise of standards and taste and the insistence that ideas – creative or critical – should not be divorced from the life and times of a society. In this way the journals were building on the nationalist energies and structural initiatives of the 1940s. This chapter commenced with a quotation taken from During in which he notes the long existence of the periodical press as well as the traditionally oppositional position played by books and periodicals in the literary economy. The development of the literary-cultural journal during the period 1947-1961 enabled the literary economy in New Zealand to diversify; writers could practice their craft in their own backyard. Writers not only had a variety of publications to send submissions to but also the opportunity to experiment with different literary modes, with the essay acquiring a new prominence in the journals and little magazines. The journals were also associated with the pioneering presses of the thirties, therefore consolidating the role of the local presses in the continued growth of a national literature.

While the scope of this thesis does not allow for anything more than a cursory acknowledgment of their existence, the 'little magazines' too had an important function. For although the journals *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* established an environment for the creative and the critical they also entrenched a new set of discriminations which it became the task of the more ephemeral magazines to

destabilise.<sup>152</sup> Fairburn reviewing the *Poetry Yearbook* in *Here & Now* in 1955 wrote, ‘Louis Johnson does us all a public service by publishing the *Poetry Yearbook* and allowing himself to be turned into a battle ground once a year’ (1967:14). To disrupt the hegemony of the writing and criticism of their elders was the function of the little magazines.<sup>153</sup> And while their presence may have been fleeting they illustrate the contest that informed the literary-cultural conversation; a multiplicity of sites meant a multiplicity of voices. Furthermore, while the presence of the little magazines ensured that oppositional ideas and literary experimentation were given the permanency of a paper record, importantly, they document the realities of life in a small literary community.

Reading across the journals the same names appear continuously and promiscuously, with contents pages revealing writers dividing their talents amongst publications. It is not unusual for the intelligentsia and literati to congregate together; like attracts like and the exchange of ideas and the sharing of work is often crucial to artistic development. In New Zealand the small size of the population accentuated this collective tendency, throwing into sharper relief the factions within. Marilyn Duckworth, having observed her fellow writers sharing lovers and editors, mused, ‘something about the size of the country entangles its inhabitants like a clumsy mess of string’ (2000:143). Disagreements can seem much more intransigent and alliances more impenetrable in a small community. Oliver, in an essay on the subject of Brasch

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<sup>152</sup> Most notably during the mid-eighties *AND* (four issues, August 1983–October 1985) was created as an intervention to introduce new techniques namely, structuralism and post-structuralism, into local literary criticism. The editors of *AND* claimed that New Zealand literature and journals were resistant to change and still dominated by the methods of thirty years earlier; *AND* set out to ‘revise local reading habits’ (Williams, 1991:203–208). *AND* was not the first little magazine since the 1950s to attempt to unsettle; since *Arachne* (1950–51) which initially appeared under the title of *Hilltop* and published three numbers in 1949, onwards, New Zealand has had a continual stream of interventions that have positioned their mandate as other to *Landfall*. See for example, *Numbers* (1954–59), *Mate* (1957–69), *Comment* (1959–72 & 1977–82), *Freed* (1969–72), *Parallax* (1982–83), and *Splash* (1984–86). *ISLANDS*, established in 1972 by Robin Dudding following his dismissal as editor of *Landfall* and the position of general editor of the Caxton Press, was not so much as an intervention into the literary economy as a reinvention of the early *Landfall*: ‘the ISLANDERS are the splinter group from the landfallen. Although attempting to move with the times their manifesto is too similar for their appeal to be much wider than the Grand Old Party’s’ (John Hales, *Salient*, quote from rear cover *ISLANDS* vol. 2, no. 2, 1972). Both Brasch and Glover had pieces in the first volume of *ISLANDS*.

<sup>153</sup> Written on a loose sheet and inserted into the spine of the first edition of *Arachne* (January, 1950) was the following: ‘In the nineteen-thirties some poets and essayists, using the facts of New Zealand’s history and geography, endeavoured to create a myth which would give the New Zealand writer a setting in time and space and an accepted function in his community. *Arachne* sets out with the principle that there is no such easy solution to the absence of anchorage in the world...’ The manifesto statement continues, spelling out its rejection of the Curnow-Holcroft-Brasch ‘land and the people’ thesis and thus establishing the oppositional stance of the Wellington poets which would be conveyed in a masterly fashion by Baxter in his lecture entitled ‘Recent Trends in Poetry’ at the Writers Conference in the following year. The conversation would move off the page and into the auditorium.

as editor, wrote that during the middle decades of the twentieth century the cultural life of the country was directed by a 'homogenous intelligentsia that shared a wider range of interests and competencies' (2003:117). He notes that boundaries were easily crossed between different forms of artistic activity, with opinion and enthusiasm the only requisites for participation (2003:116). But the small scale of cultural life could have some unexpected outcomes; although seven years earlier Oliver had taken Brasch and the other 'senior' poets on in *Arachne* he was later entrusted with the editorial duties of *Landfall* for six months when Brasch had a sabbatical abroad in 1957. And occasionally generational and ideological distinctions would be an irrelevancy, for example when *Arachne* published Brasch's damning review of Holcroft's monograph on Lebanon in 1951. It is difficult not to see this review as a cynical attack on Holcroft, and although published in a university literary journal, and therefore technically in the public domain, it was still virtually obscure. Undoubtedly Brasch knew who would read it, but his wider public would not, and his aloof and patrician reputation would remain untarnished.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Prior to this review Brasch had been happy to leave to others reviews of Holcroft's work which were less than complimentary.

## 1. Toplofty<sup>155</sup> by inclination

How [to] explain that whenever Charles Brasch or John Beaglehole were out of the country I felt uneasy until they'd returned? They were unique guardians of our values and culture and I cannot speak my sense of loss now they're gone.<sup>156</sup>

New Zealand poets of a new generation, after the second World War, found they had predecessors worth following or quarrelling with. As the country called home the thousands of its youth, dispersed by war to the ends of the earth, it seemed a question whether the fragments would ever fit together again to form the nation that had begun to be.<sup>157</sup>

However, it was not only the young who were returning. Brasch, now in his forties and having spent the majority of his adult life in England, resolved toward the end of the war to board a ship for 'home'. Even though he had spent the last twenty years as an expatriate with only brief spells in New Zealand, Brasch could lay claim to being one of those, who through his verse, had begun to form the nation; Curnow included Brasch in his 1945 anthology *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45*, illustrating his introduction with examples of Brasch's poetry and writing; 'where the [his] images of sea and sea-coast, island, do begin to attain symbolic force in their own right' (1987:64). Like Mansfield, Brasch the expatriate had carried New Zealand in his 'bones',<sup>158</sup> upon his return to New Zealand he would set out to encourage a national consciousness onto the page; to create a 'shelter for the imagination'.<sup>159</sup>

Brasch arrived back in New Zealand in late 1945, and upon settling in Dunedin, had chosen the city of his childhood as his permanent home. In his

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<sup>155</sup> I have borrowed this phrase from Allen Tate who used it to describe the tone of his own writing in the preface to his collected essays, stating, '[a]nother source of regret is the toplofty tone of some of these essays and reviews. Minorities cringe or become snobs; snobbishness, of which the explanation is not the excuse, was the unredeemed course open to me' (1959: x). Brasch adopted a similar stance – 'toplofty' – toward the public in his own writing, presuming the quality of his reason and opinion to be better than most. Both friends and detractors alike remarked on a man whose interests, taste and speech did not run to the ordinary or everyday.

<sup>156</sup> Douglas Lilburn reflecting on Brasch's death in *ISLANDS 5* (1973) and summing up the importance he was to the mid-century arts community (247).

<sup>157</sup> Allen Curnow, Introduction to the *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* (1960) [1987:169].

<sup>158</sup> 'That is true, no doubt of an increasing number of us, but it does not show itself in a great many of our minds' wrote J. C. Beaglehole in 'The New Zealand Mind', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4 (December 1940), p.50.

<sup>159</sup> This phrase is taken from the introduction written by Brasch in the catalogue for the 1958 exhibition at the Auckland City Art Gallery, 'Thirty seven New Zealand Paintings from the collection of Charles Brasch and Rodney Kennedy'. P. A. Tomory, director of the gallery, described the Brasch and Kennedy collection as 'the most extensive and carefully chosen in the Dominion' and said that it 'demonstrate[d] both the judgement of its owners and the confidence they have in the painters of their own land' (1958: Foreword).

autobiography *Indirections* (1980), he depicts his repatriation as both reluctant and willing, recalling the sense of purposefulness he felt along with malaise brought on by having to live again amongst New Zealanders: ‘there were towns where one had to live – no one can live on scenery alone’ (1980:400). He worried that he would be bereft of friendships that could provide him with ‘intellectual exchange and sustainment’ (1980:400). The final section of *Indirections* is littered with references to the lack of thinking and feeling that Brasch identifies as symptomatic of New Zealand: ‘people, it seemed to me, treated each other rather like features of the landscape...[m]en clung together for mere animal warmth in this empty country where the landscape did not speak’ (1980:412).

While Brasch may have lived away from New Zealand for close to twenty years, both Holcroft and Fairburn<sup>160</sup> had spent time in England and Europe, with Holcroft also living for six years in Sydney;<sup>161</sup> the ‘flight’ from New Zealand seemingly an intrinsic component of membership of intellectual and literary circles in New Zealand. A few were never to return,<sup>162</sup> but for most a combination of an inclement climate, scarce employment and publishing prospects (even those with literary talents were hindered by the taint of the colonial) and the realisation that as New Zealanders they were not exiled Englishmen induced a ‘godwit’ response and back they came.<sup>163</sup> For some, like Fairburn, this realisation did not bring desolation, only a sense of resignation as his letters to Mason show: ‘Creswell had told him that “no New Zealander really reached his majority until he came to London”’. Fairburn agrees with him in part, but concludes, ‘in the end, every man goes back to where he belongs, if he is honest’ (Edmond, 1981:80).

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<sup>160</sup> Fairburn left for London in August 1930 and returned with a wife (Jocelyn, a New Zealander and painter whom he met while she was at Art School) and child at the end of 1932.

<sup>161</sup> Holcroft had departed for Sydney in 1921, the breakup of his first marriage precipitating his arrival back in Christchurch in early 1927. Having previously been unable to find employment with the newspapers in Christchurch, primarily due to the absence of a scrapbook of published writing examples, now as a result of the industriousness of his years in Sydney he had a bulging portfolio of ‘clippings from every magazine and some newspapers of good reputation in Australia’ (1984:105). By March he was employed as sub-editor with the *Weekly Press*. The *Weekly* was in the final throes of its existence and Holcroft found himself in the unenviable position, along with recently appointed editor Cuthbert East, of reinvigorating the magazine. However, the demise of the *Weekly* was inevitable with the final copy off the press in late October 1928. With the Depression deepening and with a recently published novel in London Holcroft packed his bags for another stint as a literary expatriate.

<sup>162</sup> Alongside earlier notable expatriate Katherine Mansfield, other literary expatriates from this 1920-45 period who never returned included Dan Davin, Geoffrey Cox and Ian Milner.

<sup>163</sup> ‘The majority stays behind; but the incidence of travel works like a leaven in the mass’ (1940:14) wrote Holcroft in *The Deepening Stream*.

While Fairburn returned willingly, the same could not be said of Holcroft. On the one hand London was a miserable experience characterised by literary disappointments, hunger and cold. Six weeks spent at a hotel in Lourdes, France, offered welcome respite from the actual and metaphorical iciness of London. A research expedition to Tunis – Holcroft had improbably chosen to locate part of the plot of a novel he was writing in a phosphate mine in North Africa – was one other highlight in a bleak year. Yet in spite of the miseries he did not want to return to New Zealand and did so reluctantly, due to fatigue and a lack of funds (1984:142). Having found himself abruptly back in New Zealand and suffering a loss of confidence after the disappointments of London, nevertheless, Holcroft pressed doggedly on with his writing, submitting essays to J. H. E. Schroder<sup>164</sup> for publication in the literary pages of the Christchurch *Press*. The years 1933-36 were important ones, shaping Holcroft the essayist,<sup>165</sup> just as the 18 months working at the *Weekly*<sup>166</sup> proved an invaluable experience to Holcroft the editor. The money he earned as a freelance enabled him time to further his self-education, and his choice of reading material was greatly increased when permission was granted him to read several afternoons a week in the Canterbury College Library (1984:162). And finally it was in the thirties that he made significant associations: meeting Ursula Bethell,<sup>167</sup> Denis Glover and Allen Curnow; recollecting that ‘Denis soon helped me to see the *literati* in a more realistic way’ (1984:162). In many respects it is the relationship which Glover and Curnow had with Fairburn, Holcroft and Brasch that shapes the conversation.<sup>168</sup> Brasch and Fairburn were often perplexed by the recognition both Glover and Curnow gave to Holcroft; but Glover’s and Curnow’s literary memories allowed him a reputation as essayist and critic:

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<sup>164</sup> Literary editor of the *Press* and previously associate editor of the Christchurch *Sun*, Schroder featured in the Glover poem ‘The Arraignment of Paris’ alongside Marris and Mulgan ‘in his triumvirate of editorial mediocrity’ (Hilliard, 2006:106).

<sup>165</sup> From 1933-1936 *The Press* had published a series of essays by Holcroft that would later be collected together and published by the Progressive Publishing Society under the title *Timeless World* (1945).

<sup>166</sup> Not only were both publications weeklies and with a strong literary flavour but it was here too, that he would learn the importance of paying well for contributions and the necessity of technical improvements, such as quality paper for layout and illustration; both of which he ensured were maintained throughout his tenure at the *Listener*.

<sup>167</sup> This was his first meeting with her as an adult; as a child she had taught him Sunday school (*Landfall* 8, 1948:284).

<sup>168</sup> Glover, especially, seems to have been everyone’s mate, adopting certain personae to meet the expectations of the company. Curnow remarked at Glover’s funeral that ‘there was more than one Glover to more than one friend’ (Ogilvie, 1999:466). This is particularly evident in the letters Glover wrote to Fairburn and by contrast to Brasch.

It may very well be that not this, but some future generation of young writers, under stricter pressures, may turn to those earlier essays of Mr Holcroft and feel glad of this 'fore farer's footmark' as old as the nineteen-thirties and forties. They may be critical, they may be amused by this or that earnestness or naiveté; but they should be grateful.<sup>169</sup>

Yet they could be bitingly critical of the writing and the man; Curnow calling him 'the leaderizing philosopher and the journalistic topographer' (1987:119). Curnow's skill with metaphor and the precision of his critical discourse appeared to make Holcroft's language and idea construction even less precise and opaque than it already was. Glover was at times almost hostile and certainly careless with Holcroft.<sup>170</sup> However, Holcroft in his autobiography writes that during the 1930s he had the sense that as his self-education expanded to greater horizons and he became aware of higher standards and tried to replicate them in his own writing, '[he] was in danger of becoming an outsider, a writer not easy to place in the appropriate pigeonhole and therefore a nuisance' (1984:155).

In the following section I examine further the relationship between Brasch and Holcroft and illustrate the efforts that Brasch made to isolate and undermine Holcroft's cultural authority while emphasising that their editorial manifestos were often less discrete than Brasch liked to claim.

## 2. Visiting his Cultural Diocese

Within a few weeks I had met or met again half the most active and fertile minds in the country, and began to have an inkling of what was stirring in this tiny community and how it thought and felt (1980:407).

However, what becomes apparent is that to those who had made a name for themselves in the literary-intellectual renaissance during the thirties and forties, Brasch was a largely unknown quantity; but he very rapidly set about changing this and understood quickly who could be useful. After disembarking in Wellington Brasch spent time there, and then in Christchurch and Auckland renewing old

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<sup>169</sup> Allen Curnow from a review of Holcroft's *Dance of the Seasons* (1952) published in *Landfall* 27, 1953:224).

<sup>170</sup> The second volume of Holcroft's autobiography depicts an awkward friendship; although Glover did come to 'regard *A Book of New Zealand Verse* and Holcroft's *Discovered Isles* as "the twin peaks of a somewhat rugged publishing career"' (Ogilvie, 1999:225).

friendships (James Bertram,<sup>171</sup> Fred Page, R. K. Mason) and establishing new ones (Dorothea Turner, A. R. D. Fairburn and Allen Curnow).<sup>172</sup> In doing so he established a pattern of visiting that sustained his personal friendships, gave him access to intellectual nourishment and, most importantly, enabled him to meet and groom new contributors for his journal;<sup>173</sup> Fairburn referred to these as Brasch's pastoral visits around his 'cultural diocese' (1981:252).<sup>174</sup> Brasch seemed to understand that friendships and associations needed to be tended; he was a prolific letter-writer and a frequent visitor 'North'. Here a comparison can be drawn with *Scrutiny*, with Brasch also having the objective to 'forge an intellectual stratum [...] an intelligentsia of the 'classic' type, cohesive, independent and critical of the conventional purposes of its society' (Mulhern, 1979:77). Similarly to those in England, the possible defenders of 'culture' in New Zealand were 'scattered and unorganised' (Mulhern, 1979:76): Brasch hoped that by drawing into his orbit those whom he felt were able to contribute to the general goals behind the development of *Landfall*, he would create a community of intent and interest.

This community could include Fairburn but not Holcroft: 'Our relationship [was] never an easy one...with [its] curious blend of criticism and forbearance' (Holcroft, 1986:84). It was an association defined by private support and public derision, in spite of the fact that on the inside page of the second essay *The Waiting Hills* are four lines from Brasch's poem 'The Land and the People'. Lawrence Jones notes, 'there seems to have been a complex interplay between Holcroft's work and

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<sup>171</sup> Brasch was educated at Waitaki Boys along with Bertram, Bennett and Milner, with whom he would share life-long friendships. It was Bertram who edited *Indirections* and it may be partly his fault that the public Brasch is so remote; 'what I have tried to do is to preserve Brasch's own words, order and emphasis throughout, but to cut a considerable amount of personal and background detail' (1980: xii). In deifying Brasch the poet-editor, Bertram limited Brasch the man.

<sup>172</sup> Brasch wrote that upon his introduction to Curnow, '[w]e eyed each other closely, warily' (1980:409).

<sup>173</sup> C. K. Stead has written of his discovery on the bottom of one of his rejected poems in Brasch's archive: 'file, meet' (2008:18); this was very much the Brasch way, an invitation into the fold with careful direction and restrained encouragement.

<sup>174</sup> During the 'long fifties' the cultural intelligentsia were metaphorically and literally engaged in traversing the imagined nation. The poetry, prose and painting are full of landscape and the journey within or beyond it. The January 1952 edition of *Here & Now*, was a special edition devoted solely to writers and writing, and includes a photograph of Glover and Curnow totem-like on a southern rocky outcrop alongside the note 'Glover on holiday with Allen Curnow, one of his most distinguished authors, could again symbolise all our writers, whose vigilance and integrity help to keep our country a green and pleasant land' (4). A little tongue-in-cheek possibly, but it is easy to see how such an image would inflame the young Wellington poets and further encourage them in their efforts at 'getting people down off the hills and into bedrooms' (Smithyman, 1965:48). Furthermore, there are the letters and memoirs detailing the constant arrival and departure by ship as friends undertook the migration 'to overseas' that still defines passage to adulthood in New Zealand.

Brasch's' (2003:96), and remarked on the resemblances between Holcroft's ideas and those Brasch published in an article (March 1941) commissioned by John Lehmann for *The Geographical Magazine* (2003:95).

Brasch would publish D. Daiches Raphael's critical review of *Encircling Seas* (1946) in the first issue of *Landfall* in March 1947. By asking Raphael to review the essay Brasch was effectively setting Holcroft up. Raphael was a professor of philosophy at Otago University who before returning to Britain, after having only spent three years in the country, suggested in a radio talk (subsequently printed in the *Listener*<sup>175</sup>) that 'for the ordinary man New Zealand is probably the best place on earth' (Stone, 1959:186).<sup>176</sup> Holcroft, like Brasch and Fairburn, was not so interested in the needs of the 'ordinary man'; their essays and articles were addressing the needs and issues facing the writer or painter. As culture-critics they were interested in the conditions that made a society so indifferent to the activities of the mind and spirit, and did not need a philosopher to mock this interest in 'society'<sup>177</sup> by yet again pointing out the material wealth enjoyed by the country, along with the benign weather (Stone, 1959: 182-184). Yet most revealing was Raphael's contention that New Zealand writers worried unnecessarily about producing a native culture instead of simply getting on with the writing (185). His final point was in response to the question of standards:

It is generally recognized that New Zealand culture does not reach a very high standard by comparison with European countries. But at the same time I want to add that the standard of culture that is reached has a wider spread than in Europe, or at any rate wider than in England (185).

Here Raphael touches on the vexed issue of the application of a double scale of criticism and standards of excellence as well as the related issue of 'pitch'; writing *for* the reader or writing *in spite* of the reader. In his review of Holcroft's essay Raphael

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<sup>175</sup> November 12, 1948

<sup>176</sup> Pithily, Stone in his introductory note observes, 'he [Raphael] did not discuss its [New Zealand's] suitability for the man of above-average ability' (1959:181). Desmond Stone had worked at the *Southland Times* during Holcroft's time as editor (Holcroft, 1984:193). In 1955 Stone won a Nieman Fellowship in Journalism and spent a year at Harvard University; he worked as a journalist in both America and New Zealand.

<sup>177</sup>This helps to make sense of the tendency to talk down to the public or the standards and responsibilities which pepper Brasch's 'Notes' and was what McEldowney was referring to when he commented that 'the Holcroft *Listener* has been less concerned with the opinions of the ordinary man, more interested in opinions about him' (*Listener*, vol. 39, no. 1000, October 17, 1958:9). Sociological inflection was also the fashion of this period and informs the function of literature and the role of the artist; educating public taste.

focuses upon what he sees as the philosophical flaws in Holcroft's analysis of the culture of the country. Raphael reviews *The Encircling Seas* through an academic lens and in doing so does not account for the function of the essay which is often akin to listening in as the essayist forms his ideas and tries them out. In his final paragraph, Raphael claims that:

it seems to me that Mr Holcroft by brooding in isolation, is doing an injustice to his ideas and to the contribution which they can make to New Zealand's culture [he should] come out into the market-place<sup>178</sup> and discuss with others, before finally setting them down, his views on the questions which interest him (63).

It is a patronising view that implies that with a little direction Holcroft could be put on the right path, and it is also written by one who seems strangely unaware that apart from the *Listener* and the newly formed journal publishing his review, that there was simply nowhere in which to discuss and contest ideas. Holcroft noting in *The Deepening Stream*; '[i]t is not easy to think boldly when ideas are not the common interest of friends and fellow workers, and the dynamic influence of conversation is withheld from the surrounding mental climate' (1940:55). It is difficult to believe, that Brasch ever really believed in the essays, although Lilburn wrote the following in a letter to MacDiarmid in 1946: 'we [Brasch and Lilburn] share something of a crusading enthusiasm over Holcroft's imaginative writing....' (Norman, 2006:136).

Holcroft writes in the second volume of his autobiography of his public treatment by Brasch with dismay, not at all sure of what he had done to warrant such ridicule. Holcroft suggests that it may have arisen as a result of the 1948 monograph recording his reflections on Palestine as part of the UNESCO delegation in 1947. In his review (*Arachne*, 1950)<sup>179</sup> Brasch calls the writing 'a series of journalistic articles dressed up in book form and published at a price which the contents do not justify' (35). Furthermore, it was an occasion Brasch obviously felt merited that old barb –

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<sup>178</sup>Holcroft did come out into the market-place when in 1947 he delivered lectures to the Dunedin and Invercargill branches of the W.E.A, his talk was published in 1948 by Caxton under the title *Creative Problems in New Zealand*.

<sup>179</sup> Two years earlier Brasch had published a review of Lebanon in *Landfall* 12 (1949) by B. J. Garnier. It too, was a negative review: 'I am as ignorant of its [UNESCO] serious achievements as I was before reading Mr Holcroft's impressions and am left with the unpleasant suspicion that these conferences are little more than a rather attractive holiday for the participants' (385). Garnier remarks that 'much of Mr Holcroft's writing is highly romantic' (385) and concludes, 'the remainder of the volume is hardly worthwhile' (386).

‘journalistic’ – as well as comment of a more general tone: ‘his [Holcroft’s] writing was never notable for clarity’. And in response to the note that the Education Department had ordered copies of the book as a teaching resource for issues of international affairs, Brasch remarks, ‘if it is given to school children it should be given to them as a object lesson in the inflation of language’ (35). Holcroft was not alone in the attack, with Brasch directing harsh words to Glover as well: ‘it is interesting enough if you do not expect too much; but it is unworthy of its author and its publisher’ (35). The rebuke directed to Glover can be interpreted as a way of telling him that as publisher of *Landfall* he should not be publishing work that could damage Caxton’s reputation and by association the standing of *Landfall*.

Brasch seems to have disliked Holcroft from their first introduction, Holcroft recalling their meeting in 1946: ‘although we talked freely on literary topics, I could sense a constraint between us: there were too many gaps in the conversation, too many times when I found myself thinking too hard what to say next to keep it going’ (1986:24). While Holcroft does not offer an explanation (other than suggesting he may have inadvertently caused offence to Brasch’s Jewish heritage by his enthusiastic accounts of Arab culture in *Lebanon*), I would suggest that partly it was because Holcroft shared the same editorial outlook as himself, the idea that a good editor was a type of patron. This is shown by Brasch’s surprise at having received such a perceptive and insightful review from a New Zealand newspaper-man, and from one so deep in the provincial heartland (the review was published in the *Southland Times*). The intervening twenty years in which Holcroft received letters from Brasch, ‘not for publication, in which he praised in the warmest terms my editorials in the *Listener* or my conduct of the journal generally’ (1986:24) is revealing. Brasch was clearly aware that Holcroft shared many of the same passions and a clear editorial manifesto that was based on the degree to which one could claim cultural authority. They were members of a small literary economy where publication prestige and editorial eminence needed to be guarded jealously; ‘a magazine had to have a character of its own, definite and recognisable, if it was to survive; and this character was formed by editorial decisions’ (Holcroft, 1969:19) Furthermore, since Holcroft was able to publish his views weekly and to a much larger readership, a degree of editorial jealousy seems to have marked the relationship. The frequency of the *Listener* also meant that at times Holcroft seemed to have ‘trumped’ Brasch and *Landfall*.

Significantly, both Holcroft and Brasch pursued the same authors. During the post-war years not only were there limited outlets for getting poetry and short prose published but there was also a limited number of writers to fill the pages, and both editors were aware that writers ‘picked and mixed’ which editor got what, especially as both *Landfall* and the *Listener* paid for work. Unfortunately for Holcroft, this often meant that a writer would submit their ‘best’ work to *Landfall*. Holcroft was acutely aware that the *Listener* under his stewardship was an easy target for the disdainful putdown by those who preferred to be connected with a less commercial and mainstream journal; and Holcroft acknowledged this when he noted that he had to ‘bend’ high standards so as to ‘make room for promise rather than high achievement’ (1969:26). He remarked that he also had another restraint placed on his selections in that the *Listener* was a general circulation journal with a mixed readership, so that there were some things that he at the *Listener* could not print that *Landfall* and the others could (1969:28), suggesting that he too could spot good new work but was constrained not only by spatial limitations but also by bureaucratic expectations.

In the end Holcroft was lampooned mostly as an oddity, wearing three-piece suits when the usual literary-intelligentsia uniform was corduroy and a tweed jacket; Peter Bland recalls him as ‘a dapper, almost Edwardian figure in striped dark suit, waistcoat and stiff white collar’ (2004:155) and steadfastly refusing to compromise on what he called ‘the intelligent middle-ground’ (155). Holcroft was to remain an outsider within the literary community. He was well-known and initially his work was well-regarded by the young dissenters of the 1930s; Jane Mander wrote to him in 1937 that his *Press* articles ‘have earned the admiration of both Fairburn and Sargeson, who are both sniffy and demand high standards’ (1984:161). It was Glover who sought Holcroft out and it was a young Allen Curnow who read Holcroft’s paper to the English Club when he himself was too unsure and self-conscious to do so (this lecture would be serialised by Schroeder for the literary page). The 1940s brought him success with his essays gaining publication and wide reading. But Holcroft was a generation older than those with loud opinions and youthful stunts of literary outrage. And as literary fashions changed post-war and criticism became inflected with the discourse of the New Criticism, Holcroft’s relevance waned. It was commonplace to attack the *Listener* (and its editor) and *Here & Now* especially enjoyed taking its shots at him the following squib appeared in the December 1955 issue; ‘the editor of the

*Listener* is probably a/squid, because he discharges inky/clouds when he's attacked. And whenever/he opens his mouth he puts his footnote/in it'.

### 3. Lively Contempt<sup>180</sup>

They were the dilettantes, the cultured upper-crupper [sic] crowd. Some of them were poets and some were musical. They were novelists, short story writers, painters and critics; they were actors and WEA lecturers and a few went to that new-fangled dance group. They didn't play cricket or football in the weekend like most people, and didn't follow the horses with all their spare money and raise families with all their spare time. They preferred instead to talk about art and go to crazy beer parties like this one (34).

The excerpt above is taken from the short story 'Down at Jake's Place' written by P. J. Wilson and published in the May 1952 issue of *Here & Now*, and offers something like a fly on the wall account of an A. R. D. Fairburn or Bob Lowry party. In many respects the monthly journal that Bob and Irene Lowry began in October 1949 provides the most complete account of the social and creative flux that New Zealand was to undergo through the 'long fifties'. As a monthly or mostly monthly – it was not referred to by its subscribers as 'Now & Then' for nothing (V. Lowry, 2001:37) – *Here & Now* provides a compelling account of the preoccupations, local and international, of New Zealand writers and intellectuals:

Taking a last look of the contents of this issue of *Here & Now* before it goes to press, we feel unhappily that its name should be changed for the duration of the "emergency" to *Long Ago & Far Away*. Too much of our space at present has to be devoted to past times and foreign troubles, when we should be giving much more of attention to those important local and current problems which so urgently concern us all—but on which, under the regulations, only Mr Holland and his supporters are free to give their views (May 1951, p. 11).

*Here & Now* sought to remind society of the responsibilities it feared it would not aspire to in the age of the "golden weather"; the post-war years were full of promise but their potential was to be treated without complacency. *Here & Now* documents

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<sup>180</sup> 'Sir: On the spiritual side I cannot see from the circular what you think you have to say, I think a magazine should have its core somewhere, in literature, or politics or some special interest or idea and expand from that core. Otherwise you get a digest. The central phrase in your circular seems to be "lively contempt". This is naturally inadequate'. This letter was received from Erik Schwimmer in response to the circular distributed prior to the first edition and was published, along with others, in that first edition (October, 1949:34). Schwimmer was part of the editorial committee for *Arachne* and would later edit *Te Ao Hou*.

the hope but equally the pessimism that many felt while in the midst of post-war prosperity and post-war reconstruction; the following lines from a poem titled 'Let's Build a Nation', signed J. F. M[cDougall] (December, 1950:25) reflect the feeling: 'The war was fought for the right of everyone to collect stamps, religions/film stars and stomach ulcers./Let's build a nation, a nice clean, no-halitosis, no night starvation, no body/odour, air conditioned, hygienic, streamlined, empty nation./Yes, let's'.

In the first issue the editorial (written by A. R. D Fairburn) states the aim of the journal as to document 'over a period, something like a true picture of the collective state of mind of those people in New Zealand who think about anything at all beyond horse-racing, football, and the next meal' (October, 1949:7).<sup>181</sup> He also mentions the editorial policy to 'discourage dullness and long-windedness' (7), no doubt a sideswipe at the content and editorial demeanour of *Landfall* and the *Listener*. The manifesto for *Here & Now* was informed by the belief that critical discussions on politics, literature, art and public affairs were an essential part of the democratic process (October, 1949:7), and that by necessity journals needed to be independent: 'the social health of a community is directly reflected in the extent to which its journalism not only has the right to criticise all aspects of social life, but regards it as its constant duty to exercise that right' (July, 1951:13). These statements illustrate that *Here & Now* shared many of Brasch's preoccupations, including the suspicion that the press, if not corrupt, was certainly negligent and toothless. 'Wrapped in the *Herald* (YOUR protection/From dangerous thoughts and mouth infection)': these lines are from a long poem that recaps the year; it is unsigned (not uncommon) and entitled 'A Merry Christmas – and all that' (December, 1951:19). However, as a monthly review – 'our title suggests the present indicative; but we shall not ignore other moods and tenses' (1949:7) – *Here & Now* did wish to adopt a topical voice, its intention being to rouse New Zealanders out of their intellectual stupor and to get them thinking and participating in a national conversation. '[*Here & Now*] is essentially an opportunity for New Zealand thinkers and writers, and has purpose in only insofar as they avail themselves of it' (Advertisement in *Arachne*, 1950:17). As

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<sup>181</sup> After the first two editions (October 1949 and November 1949), it would be a further year before *Here & Now* reappeared: 'we don't apologise for our enforced absence from your fireside. The fact is, our optimism and enthusiasm rather undermined our economic stability – we ran out of hard cash. But there's one thing about going into temporary retirement – you know then how much you are missed' (November, 1950 p. 3).

an Auckland-based publication, inclining to the left and with an unmistakably bohemian inflection, it does not appear dissimilar to what we now refer to as a 'lifestyle' magazine; many of its columns still feature (under different names) in periodicals to this day; for example 'Things we get hot about' – described as 'lively grievances' – is '20 Questions' in the contemporary *Metro* magazine, and something very similar to 'Beneath my bowler hat'—'pomposities and stupidities kindly furnished by newspapers and leading citizens'<sup>182</sup> can be found on the back page of *Metro*. It is very easy, when reading *Here & Now*, to see it as reflecting the milieu of Auckland's literary-intellectual enclaves, which any number of (auto)biographies of the Auckland writers and artists testify to. While *Here & Now* has a strong regional inflection, presenting the interests and activities of a small number of New Zealanders,<sup>183</sup> it still perceives itself to be contributing to a national conversation, and significantly the journal is the embodiment of viewing culture as a whole way of life.

Despite being Bob Lowry's publication, *Here & Now* in many ways appears to encapsulate the preoccupations of Fairburn. Holcroft, reviewing the latest addition to the periodical family in the *Listener*,<sup>184</sup> suggested that while *Here & Now* was an interesting read, the 'tincture of Mr Fairburn' (November 25, 1949) was rather too perceptible. While the taint of Fairburn may have been too conspicuous for some, *Here & Now* was an ambitious project and required the enthusiasm and polemic of a Fairburn to ensure articles were written or encouraged from others. As a monthly, the magazine's turn-around in contributors had to be far quicker than a quarterly, with the right balance struck between *news* articles and contributions concerning *ideas*; as a result many of the articles and essays were written by the editorial board under pseudonyms.<sup>185</sup> Members of the editorial board included Mary Dobbie, J. F. McDougall, M. K. Joseph, artist D. Knight Turner & Frank Hoffman. The contributing panel included Kendrick Smithyman, Frank Sargeson, Helen Shaw & Maurice Duggan. Duggan had been approached as editor but declined after payment was admitted to being unlikely.

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<sup>182</sup> *Here & Now* readers were encouraged to send in contributions, 'a free subscription given to those whose items are used' (October, 1949:21).

<sup>183</sup> Aucklanders – here again the similarity with *Metro*; but politically with a pink tint and not a blue tinge.

<sup>184</sup> The *Listener* seemed to have a policy of reviewing any new periodical; this included publications from the university colleges.

<sup>185</sup> The column titled 'Letter from Washington', which purported to be a first-hand review of American affairs, was in fact a work of fiction authored not by William McChesney Martin as the by-line stated, but by Bill Sutch (Shadbolt, 1999:211).

*Here & Now* wore its dissatisfaction with the political<sup>186</sup> environment in New Zealand as a flashy overcoat, drawing attention to what it saw as the deficiencies of both the left and the right in New Zealand politics, and a pervasive and endemic habit of apathetic silence by the public.<sup>187</sup> *Here & Now* believed that New Zealanders were too easily sated by policies that often amounted to little more than political gesture:

There is an urgent need in this country for a great deal of plain speaking and fresh air in our social and political life. *Here & Now* proposes to ask awkward questions, and speak out of turn as often as possible. We are sick of bureaucracy, whichever political party administers it, and dictatorship, however benevolent. (October 1949: 25)

The tone of writing was intemperate and inclined toward Fairburnian overstatement, but *Here & Now* did encapsulate the position espoused by the poets, writers and intellectuals that unless critical awareness was aroused in all facets of life, standards in literature and art would not rise, as the public would not have the critical capacity to embrace new and necessary cultural development. In an essay entitled ‘The Arts are Acquired Tastes’ published in the *Listener* in 1946, Fairburn states: ‘in making judgements about art and literature, every individual is thrown back upon the accumulated...and more than accumulated—the *organised* knowledge and experience of the past’ (1967:160). Fairburn argues that the arts are an ‘acquired taste’ and the way in which members of a society acquire that taste is through being exposed not only to art but also to criticism, thus developing skills of judgment and appreciation for themselves; ‘becoming something of a critic on [their] own account’ (165). The function of journals therefore, is to provide an accessible or organised array of criticism as a resource for society:

We don’t believe, for instance, that left is always right and right is always wrong; BUT – we do believe, being no Einsteins, that left is very often right

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<sup>186</sup> ‘I’m looking forward to it very much myself; only I hope – particularly after the conscription campaign – that *Here & Now* is going to be more political than your circular pretends’: Charles Brasch emphasising the necessity for New Zealand journals to have an explicit political focus (October 1949, p. 34)

<sup>187</sup> Continuity of the stance taken by *Here & Now* was shown by the periodicals *Comment* (1959) and the *Monthly Review* (1960), the co-editor of which, Winston Rhodes, wrote that the appearance of the *Monthly Review* had been precipitated by the demise in 1957 of *Here & Now*: ‘when conformity is common and complacency widespread there is room for some regular and non-official publication’ (1960:4).

and that when right is wrong it should most certainly be left. [sic] (November 1950, p. 3)

*Here & Now* contributed to this conversation in a forthright and combative manner. Their mandate to provide a forum for discussion and space for critical and creative writing was a challenge as much as an invitation to others; this approach was illustrated by the editorial stance to accept articles and essays from both ends of the political spectrum. *Here & Now* was the product of inveterate debaters who relished the opportunity to throw around a few ideas and although it appeared that many of the editorial panel (like its contributors) were left-leaning, they did believe that many of New Zealand's problems would be solved if a wider range of views and ideas were presented, examined and questioned:

*Here & Now* believes that the number of people who hold a certain opinion is not necessarily a guide to its truth. Democracies obey the majority, but take care that dissenting views are also heard. (Jan/Feb 1951, p.3)

The content of the magazine is always lively and although its editors were particularly adept at poking fun, many of its articles and the issues it championed were no less serious or considered than those that appeared in *Landfall*. The editors clearly felt that the New Zealand public was only ever presented with half of the story and that much of the journalism was superficial and devoid of analysis.<sup>188</sup> Unlike *Landfall*, which although beautifully produced, is dour and appears to shout its credentials as a serious and considered publication, *Here & Now* with its vibrant hued modernist art work by D. Knight Turner both on the cover and throughout offers a different type of typographical flair. The literary content, political comment, articles on and by women,<sup>189</sup> education, the advertisements and recipes featuring wine<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> 'Are there enough New Zealanders who want to buy and read an independent monthly magazine which is not already committed to writing-off watersiders, miners, modern artists, Russia, the civil service or even the Waterfront Commission, the Arbitration Court and the Government (well not yet anyway); a magazine which isn't committed to reckless adulation of film stars, General MacArthur or royal babies' [sic] (November, 1950:3).

<sup>189</sup> Mary Dobbie contributed a monthly column in which she wrote on issues that were specific to the experiences and interests of women; however, they were not of the housework tips and recipe variety, but rather essays that explored the lives of women in a rapidly changing world.

<sup>190</sup> The *Listener* began this earliest in the 'Aunt Daisy' columns, but even though there were sections entitled 'Recipes of all nations' and 'Cooks as diplomats', Aunt Daisy had anglicised the recipes; there are none of the chillies and spices either Sargeson or *Here & Now* encourage their readers to seek out. In 1951 even *Landfall* 18 addresses the changes occurring, when Brasch published Margaret Scott's letter asking for cooking details of a dish mentioned in Frank Sargeson's memoir 'Up onto the roof and down again' (156).

document a more international or outward-looking orientation and indicate the social and cultural changes afoot.

Even the style of the magazine is a cultural document in itself; typography, colour and paper, while a manifestation of the editorial style and the considerable typographical skill of Lowry, also record a wider historical moment of stylistic fashions and evolving techniques. The printing palette is modernist, with prominent hues and the artwork indicative of international art trends. It is a sophisticated publication, with an internationalist feel that suggests the provincialism of the past twenty years may be on the wane. Periodicals place in “real time” both imaginative writing and critical prose, the contents do not sit outside the “here and now” within which they are published. Advertising, the societal debris of an age, rubs against the writing, insuring that it is not isolated or atomised from the products of consumption. The advertising itself reveals the tone and readership of the periodical, too; there are none of the advertisements for health supplements, household products (with the obligatory pretty lady shown relishing her domestic chores) or the beauty and undergarment products that profusely pepper the pages of the *Listener*, in *Here & Now*. Rather, *Here & Now* features advertisements for modern furniture, jewellery, leather goods, photography, the local presses, bookshops and Corban’s Wines and the Waikato Brewery, and in each edition a Family Planning advertisement is prominently featured. The effect is that the advertising in the *Listener* makes the publication itself appear dowdy and old-fashioned whereas the product placement in *Here & Now* complement the cosmopolitan and contemporary outlook of the journal. *Landfall* carries no advertising except lists of recently published books by the Caxton Press and the occasional notice for a scholarly journal, or a book shop such as Parsons.

This is the periodical seen as cultural artefact – its ability to document a moment within a society – to provide a historical window (now one with an aluminium frame) or the tone and concerns of that society. The format of the monthly enabled the editors to serialise issues that were highly topical, but also present these in a more thoughtful or extensive manner than a weekly would allow. A topic or issue that would soon look tired and predictable by week four in a weekly magazine was enlarged and examined over four months, with each month allowing for a different perspective to be explored or issue to be enlarged. *Here & Now* did this with frequency; areas given an extended examination over the course of several months

included educational theories,<sup>191</sup> children's sex education, and women's maternity services (recipes with wine were also given several months coverage). And when the monthly letters to the editor were added, a conversation began to appear on the page. From the first issue, *Here & Now* was committed to encouraging correspondence: 'our "letters to the editor" section will, we hope, be a big one. But here again we shall be ruthless in consulting the interests of reader as well as writers' (October, 1949:7).

As an outcome of allowing the interests of the readers to dictate the contents of the letters pages, these pages not only reveal that local writers and intellectuals were especially concerned with the decline of the Labour Party in New Zealand and the implosion that was occurring to the left internationally as the West – due to America asserting her will – turned on Russia and China; but also with robust exchanges between the various camps of writers. 'A few comments writer-to-writer-like, in connection with recent literary topics in *Here & Now*', began Louis Johnson in a lengthy letter in which he criticised Anton Vogt for what he saw as his erroneous comments concerning the *Poetry Yearbook*, followed by several paragraphs of complaint concerning the recent review, by Tom Crawford, of a British pamphlet on *Key Poets* in which he suggested the review was flawed due to an unnecessary emphasis from a 'leftist' position. Johnson then concludes his letter with an extended attack on what he refers to as Winston Rhodes's 'literary Presbyterianism' (42) shown in the essay 'Crisis in Criticism' (February 1952:21-24);<sup>192</sup> the basis of Johnson's discontent is that Rhodes does not qualify his generalisations about the decay and depravity of western literature, asserting:

I am convinced the Professor is using his academic standing in order to discuss impressions and prejudices as though they were facts...[and] which he did not care to express as literary opinion before all the writers of the country at the Christchurch Writers' Conference' (March 1952:42).

The mail bag was large in response to Johnson's letter and letters referring to it were published through to June, when a final response from Johnson was published and a letter from Tom Crawford;

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<sup>191</sup> 'As part of the National Government's economy drive in this poverty-stricken little country, the Education Department has been forced to cease publication of its excellent periodical *Education*, in which teachers advanced and discussed their theories and views on education in a changing world. *Here & Now* is glad to help both the Government and educationalists in their emergency by supplying space in each issue' (March, 1951:27).

<sup>192</sup> Published in the same month as Johnson's letter was a second essay, 'For whom do you write?'

Professor Rhodes is a typical non-artist criticising the artist, telling him what he should write about and what he shouldn't.<sup>193</sup>

The weakness of Mr Johnson's position is that the prose style he uses in his own letters is ten times more horrible than anything else in the paper. If you are concerned to protect his literary position, I suggest that you précis future correspondence from him. You could, if you thought it worthwhile, have a regular feature, headed 'Latest view of Mr Louis Johnson' ....<sup>194</sup>

A supercilious righteousness about prose does not ring true from one who is himself eminently capable of writing effusive and jargonesque [...] Louis Johnson stoops to his level when he accuses Winston Rhodes of exploiting his academic standing, and it is here that he puts his foot into a quicksand of precedent, for it is well known that he is one of the editors of a Wellington literary magazine in which the list of contributors corresponds tediously with the list of editors.<sup>195</sup>

Johnson's attempted condemnation of Rhodes' articles is so ill-informed that one is forced to wonder why he excreted such syntactic diarrhoea in public.<sup>196</sup>

The extracts above correspond to the general temper of *Here & Now* and illustrate that it was a journal that did not shy a way from conflict; arguments proved that the issues raised and the ideas discussed mattered. An end to apathy was the only way forward for the literary-culture of New Zealand, the editors believed, and disputatious mail bags meant that their readers felt impelled to enter the conversation. While *Here & Now's* method of *intervention* was entirely different to that of *Landfall*, it was no less successful. In the following section of this chapter I am going to return to Brasch and outline the editorial mandate he felt he had, but by interweaving material from *Here & Now* and the *Listener* into the narrative – the conversation – I am able to illustrate that *Landfall* and Brasch were informed by the wider literary-cultural conversation surrounding them. The following quote from Brasch's memoir shows

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<sup>193</sup> Letter from W. Hart-Smith April 1952, p. 41

<sup>194</sup> Letter from R. G. Collins April 1952, p.41

<sup>195</sup> Letter from Brian Bell, April 1952, p. 41

<sup>196</sup> Letter from Jack Thornton May 1952, p. 43

his intention to use the initiatives of others as an encouragement for his own intervention.

#### 4. Making *Landfall*

There was no such thing yet as a distinct New Zealand literature; but the small cloudy nucleus of one was already forming, and our journal would foster that, enabling it (I hoped) to define itself and so to define New Zealand. Allen Curnow's *Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45* [...] appearing at the end of the war was most aptly timed. It also offered a splendid starting point for a literary journal. (1980:391)

Brasch recounted feelings of indecision and indifference toward the plans that he and Glover had formulated in London for a literary journal (Ogilvie, 1999:180) – ‘both literary and general’ (Brasch, 1980:389) – that he would edit and Glover and the Caxton Press would publish.<sup>197</sup> ‘I was not committed, except to the conviction that a periodical was needed. Denis would signal when the Caxton Press was ready and we would review the position then (1980:420)’.<sup>198</sup> He wrote that what he desired most was to publish a book of poems, ‘a good one’ that would, he hoped, ‘bring me some reputation’ (1980:420).<sup>199</sup> However, at other times, like in the epigraph above, he articulates a clear sense of direction and purpose. Brasch was well aware he was returning to a very different New Zealand to the one he had left in 1927 or even 1938<sup>200</sup> and yet, significantly, he does not mention either McCormick's *Letters and Art* or Holcroft's essays in helping to create a receptive climate for a literary quarterly, despite all four works not only raising the profile of local literature but also creating an audience for further works of criticism by illustrating the function

<sup>197</sup>Through his association with *Landfall* Glover continued to shape the local publishing landscape. For Brasch, having the name ‘Caxton Press’ on the inside cover meant that *Landfall* could tap into Glover's ‘nation-wide hook-up of culture hungry Caxtonites’, as referred to by Fairburn (1981:128).

<sup>198</sup>The title for the journal was not settled until Brasch's return and debated and selected one afternoon by old and new friends surrounded by the lush mangrove arcadia of Ron Mason's coastal garden (Richards, 1997:96).

<sup>199</sup>In 1938 Brasch met Ursula Bethell for the first time, at which time she told him she did not like his poems and advised him ‘to give up writing and to be a “patron”’ (1980:303). In spite of this opinion they shared a warm friendship and in many ways she did ensure Brasch became the patron she envisaged. By introducing Brasch to her friends, like the painter Toss Woollaston, she set in motion the associations that Brasch was to call upon for work in *Landfall*, while also introducing artists to a man with a private income and the education and the outlook to be a collector – a patron.

<sup>200</sup>In 1927, aged eighteen, Brasch left New Zealand and entered St John's College, Oxford to read Modern History. In 1930 he graduated with only a third class degree, but a degree seemed not to have been the purpose for going to Oxford; rather it had been ‘to confirm my tastes and interests, and become a poet’ (1980:171). He was to return briefly for a period of nine months in 1931 before returning to London in February 1932. Over a period of twenty years he had returned only three times to New Zealand.

literature and art had in shaping the culture of the country; McCormick and Holcroft's role was nothing less than consciousness-raising. Yet Brasch's tone is ambivalent toward Holcroft.

In *Indirections*, when referring to the planning in London with Glover, he quotes Holcroft neutrally (388); but by the time the narrative returns to New Zealand in 1946, he writes that reading *Encircling Seas* 'would make me a little wary of him' (420). Brasch had read Holcroft's essays and even written to him from London to thank him for the generous review of his collection of poems *The Land and the People* (1939) which Holcroft had devoted a full column to in the *Southland Times* (Holcroft, 1986:23). Others, too, shared this awareness that New Zealand was changing, and some even shared the same conviction that a literary journal was needed and that they too could play a role. Writing in *Waiting Hills* (1943) Holcroft expresses his hope that in time the mechanism would appear 'to publish the type of journal which every serious writer dreams of in his more hopeful moods—a journal devoted entirely to the arts' (1950:190). Previously in *The Deepening Stream* he had noted that 'the confusion of values and the naiveté of outlook will be progressively emphasised until a thinker or group of thinkers, of more than usual capacity provides a focal point for the essential attitudes for the contemporary mind in New Zealand' (1940:76). This quotation is taken from the section entitled 'Experience and Ideas', showing the correlation Holcroft saw between publishing and the dissemination and reception of knowledge in a society. Like Fairburn, Holcroft believed journals had an educative and fertilising effect in a society, creating audiences for writers but importantly replenishing intellectual capital. Fairburn's approach was what Edmond has described as that of an 'artist-citizen', and identifiable by being 'fiercely committed to responsible membership of his community' (198: xv). Fairburn, writing to Mason from England in 1932, just prior to his return to the country, states, 'I'm itching to get my feet on NZ earth again – itching to start Bloody Hell in that little land. I'm full of schemes, and hardened a lot, and full of righteous wrath, and fairly reckless' (Edmond, 1981:84).

'Our generation, spread throughout New Zealand and across the world, formed a group who would always find again when they met the attitudes and interests they had in common; loosely knit yet close in sympathy' (1980:415). Here we see Brasch in Curnovian fashion writing himself and his coterie into prominence. Brasch was at pains throughout the coming years to remind and reinforce the idea that

*Landfall* was the direct descendant of *Phoenix* and the mature legacy of the young poets of the thirties (1962:11). He asserted that the emphasis on the critical and the establishment of a scale of standards placed *Landfall* in a diachronic dialogue with *Phoenix* and the thirties. Brasch's departure from New Zealand for a second time (in 1932) had coincided with the creation of the *Phoenix*, the mouthpiece of the self-proclaimed literary renaissance of the 1930s. In *Indirections* Brasch details the lineage of *Landfall* when he states, 'that great advance must not be abandoned, and from the time *Phoenix* died, James, Ian, Jack Bennett, other friends and I began talking about another journal to succeed it' (1980:187). *Phoenix* had acted as a manifesto for the young poets of the thirties and upon his return Brasch set about to stoke the flames and reignite the avian ghost; by 1945 the myth of *Phoenix* the journal had grown to match those of the magical bird of antiquity. While the title *Phoenix*<sup>201</sup> was a youthful salute to D. H. Lawrence and the modernists of Britain, in keeping with the land-and-people theme which Curnow, Holcroft, and Brasch himself had been formulating, the title was no longer of a mythical bird rising from the ashes of Georgian mediocrity, but *Landfall*, and the pronouncement of cultural settlement.<sup>202</sup>

Where Brasch was keen to emphasise his relation to *Phoenix* as a reason for his cultural authority, Holcroft perceived the successful reception of his essays as a public endorsement of his cultural authority, writing in his autobiography that by 1947, 'I felt I could play a larger part in New Zealand life' (1984:192). He understood his individual cultural authority would reflect favourably upon the *Listener*, strengthening the position of the magazine in the eyes of both the readership and potential contributors. Holcroft saw his success as a critic as his mandate for strengthening and enlarging the role of the *Listener* so that it 'reach[ed] beyond radio to life outside, fostering the arts, and setting standards which had already given it a

<sup>201</sup> Interestingly, 'The Phoenix' was the title put forward by McCormick and his friend Iqbal Singh for a magazine they proposed to publish while at Cambridge featuring 'stories, poems and articles in sympathy with the views of D. H. Lawrence' (1996:116). These discussions are dated November 1931; however, McCormick and Singh were discouraged after doing the rounds of local printers. Others (L. C. Knights and Donald Culver) who they had discussed their plans with were not, and after Leavis was consulted 'The Phoenix' became the critical journal *Scrutiny*, the first number dated May 1932. The second Auckland *Phoenix* (1932-34) was followed in 1938 by the third; 'The Phoenix Club' a Victoria University College group devoted to the arts and to whom Beaglehole gave a talk to on printing with an accompanying exhibition (2006:230).

<sup>202</sup> Alan Mulgan in his book of essays entitled *Great Days in New Zealand Writing* (1962) offered these remarks: '*Landfall* was a perfect choice for title. It is short, easily remembered, and stimulating in its associations. The sound of the word itself, its cadence, its haunting tone to seamen and travellers, brings memories of real landfalls. Thought of landfall suggests at once the end of voyages, perhaps long and hazardous, conquest of the elements, and, with so many, the raising of new horizons and realisation of hope' (133-134).

unique place in New Zealand journalism' (1969:19). In comparison, Fairburn, who embraced the role of 'artist-citizen', seemed less troubled by claims to cultural authority. This was no doubt due to a combination of factors: an extensive and varied journalism career, temperament and a sense of entitlement to comment, that arose when one possessed multiple artistic competencies.

The Magnificence of the approach to the country set me soaring. And then everything shrank. This happened again and again. A sudden sweeping view and I saw the country in the grandeur of its proportions, set in its frame of sea and cloud and endless air. Then I was brought to earth, and saw that most people's view hardly strayed beyond their own street and that they had forgotten the sea and the mountains almost at the end of the street (1980:407).

The recollection above after a long absence explains the writ for *Landfall*. Brasch left the country during the heyday of the cultural nationalism of the 1930s, and in 1947 he still thought of and responded to the country in the terms set out by the poetics of those early years, seeking to define human experience through a response to the land. However, to the younger poets, those who aligned themselves with the Wellington publications *Arachne*, *Numbers* and the annual *Poetry Yearbook*, it seemed that *Landfall* was entrenching a dated and defunct myth, Schwimmer stating,

this myth was never widely believed in by New Zealanders; in fact only a handful of the *literati* were ever touched by it. This, however, does not detract from its importance, as myth-makers have always tended to be a social or intellectual elite and the people have followed by accepting the myth. (*Poetry Yearbook*, 1951)

The accusation of Schwimmer and Johnson was that through a critical discourse which emphasised isolation, impermanence and spiritual unease Holcroft and Curnow were stunting writing through the imposition of a narrow and prescriptive poetic and preventing the growth of the local imagination they claimed to be fostering.<sup>203</sup> They sensed in Brasch an editorial resistance to an internationalist inflection and were

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<sup>203</sup>It was provincial realism as defined by Allen Tate in the essay 'The New Provincialism' (1945). Kendrick Smithyman was the first local critic to use the term as a tool to analyse the literature of the last thirty years in a series of three essays published in the literary journal *Mate* and then collected together in *A Way of Saying* (1965): 'If the pursuit was to be a working tool for the writer and no more than that, well and good. But as we have seen it became less a working tool and more a value, and more unacceptable to writers for whom professions of primeval shadows on menacing hills or claims of isolation and the uneasiness of shallow occupation were only figments' (46).

quick to categorise *Landfall* as another exponent of the myth.<sup>204</sup> Charles Doyle in the 1954 *Poetry Yearbook* sums up their position when he asks: ‘why make “regional” and “real” complementary? [...] a true poet will always speak of the soil from which he is wrung, but must he always speak of it in parochial terms?’ (45); for theirs was a poetic that had moved beyond sea and mountains and into the heads and beds of the suburbs. Furthermore, their gaze was turning to America and her poets, and therefore by-passing the modernists of Britain, who with their acute concern with local and national cultures and the preservation of cultural memory and artefact (Robichaud, 2005:135-145) sounded far too like their own old(er) poets.

Brasch saw *Landfall* as helping to lay foundations. But he seemed curiously unaware that others might be capable of laying foundations, too. He returned to New Zealand and set about creating a publication to establish a creative and critical pattern in New Zealand society where the practice and value of the arts would be seen as a normal and necessary experience. Brasch believed that the complacency shown by the country was due to the fact the ‘beliefs as it professed had scarcely been tested’ (1980:310); if the function of criticism was to ‘test’ beliefs then the first step was to identify and bring to public attention those writers and artists working to unsettle the existing imaginative order. He identified this development in the work of artists, and in particular, McCahon and Woollaston:

That even one such artist had appeared in New Zealand at once changed the nature of the country. If Toss [Woollaston] survived, then other artists too would appear in time and perform—whatever the cost—their essential fertilising, civilising work (1980:310).

Brasch supported McCahon publicly and privately because his paintings revealed ‘a bitter and unpalatable truth [...] they tell us something about ourselves which had not been plain before’ (*Landfall* 20). Here were artists who did new things to the landscape through looking hard at it, and were able to paint the ‘first raw meeting’ (Brasch in Scott, 2007:92).<sup>205</sup> The significance of painters to the imaginative

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<sup>204</sup> Schwimmer, reviewing the collections *Shadow of the Flame*, by Hubert Witherford and *Mine Eyes Dazzle* by Alistair Campbell, claims their publication as a victory for *Arachne* and the poetic it has championed, concluding, ‘[i]t means that the view of poetry implied in this work will now be impressed more forcibly on the New Zealand audience’ (January 1951, p. 28).

<sup>205</sup> Brasch spent the Northern winters of 1932-35 in Egypt assisting on archaeological digs and visiting the Middle East and Greece on the return journey back to England. His diary entries from this period illustrate his sharpening sense of New Zealand’s youth as an inhabited country: ‘New Zealand was the

development of New Zealand led Brasch to write a critical review, published in the first number of *Landfall*, of the *Arts Year Book* for 1946: 'If I criticise Mr Wadman's selection severely it is because I believe the *Arts Year Book* is important and will be influential and needs to be taken seriously. It is through the eyes of painters that we shall increasingly see New Zealand' (73). Early in 1948 Brasch had another swipe at the dismal quality of art reviewing he believed existed in New Zealand, on this occasion it was not in *Landfall*,<sup>206</sup> but in pages of the *Listener* that he passed judgement:

It is disheartening that the *Listener* should so far depart from the standard which it has taught its readers to expect as to give an important publication like the *Arts Year Book* to a reviewer [Isobel Andrews] who by her own admission is not equipped to write seriously about painting (vol. 18, no. 449, January 30, 1948).

For Brasch believed that an increase in artistic standards would only occur if works of the imagination were considered by critics with informed taste and the appropriate authority on which to base their judgements; for the creator and the critic are Janus-faced, you cannot have one without the other. In the 'Notes' for the first number of *Landfall* he asserted:

the arts generally and literature in particular can only flourish in a society where ideas are welcomed for their own sake, and on a foundation of sound scholarship. Furthermore, without knowledge there can be none of that searching and discriminating criticism which is one of the essential disciplines of the arts. Knowledge, scholarship, ideas.... (1947:6)

Knowledge, scholarship and ideas: Brasch underlines what he sees as the specialised function of the journal and the central questions of *where* and *with whom*

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exact antithesis of this [Greece's antiquity]; there, every hill, plain, lake and stream was encountering man's gaze for the first time' (Brasch in Scott, 2007: 92). It was during a walking trip in Greece with his cousin that he began to articulate the importance of the work that poets and painters do, remarking, 'it takes a fine poet or painter to engage and master such riches and not be overwhelmed' (Brasch in Scott, 2007:91).

<sup>206</sup> In *Landfall* 46 Brasch published an essay by P. A. Tomory entitled 'Looking at Art in New Zealand' in which in a similar vein to Brasch, Tomory wrote: 'We shall only get good art critics in New Zealand when the discerning public, which does exist in this country, no longer countenances unthinking commentaries but demands criticism which will create respect for integrity, and increase public sensitivity towards serious painting' (1958:169). As if to illustrate his remarks Tomory showed 'Thirty Seven New Zealand Paintings from the collection of Charles Brasch and Rodney Kennedy' at the Auckland City Art Gallery that same year.

cultural authority should reside. Ultimately, he did believe that some people had greater entitlement to act as culture-critics. As editor of *Landfall*, Brasch was fortunate in being able to imbue the journal with his own cultural authority. He returned to the country a poet who had won the approval of New Zealand's foremost critics (both Holcroft and Curnow had included his work in their critical essays), he had a demeanour that compelled people to accept his judgements, and he had lived abroad; and in a country afflicted by what Curnow called 'overseasia' – or the belief that if 'it' was from overseas then 'it' was automatically better than the local version – this too reflected favourably upon him. Brasch would use all of these factors as leverage in constructing his claim to superior cultural authority, especially in his interactions with Holcroft.

In this next section I return to a closer examination of Fairburn and Holcroft, and in particular their reactions to the burgeoning intervention of the state into the arts in New Zealand. However, while each culture-critic had a different perspective on the expanding role of the arts, they approached the issue from very different directions. Holcroft was employed directly by the state through his position as editor of the *Listener*; the official publication of the Broadcasting Service. *Landfall* received a grant from the State Literary Fund from 1951, upon the condition that it would only be used to pay literary contributions and not opinion pieces. Fairburn was the only culture-critic out of the three editors, who was unconditionally unaligned, editorially, to state funding.<sup>207</sup> Fairburn's stance was ideologically determined by what he believed to be a detrimental enlargement in the definition of *culture*.

### **5. State Patronage: Intellectual endowment or a Dictatorship of taste?**

Holcroft always referred to the *Listener* as a 'cultural magazine' (1969:153) and continually emphasised the magazine's centrality to the periodical culture of New Zealand. While the *Listener* may have published the radio timetables, Holcroft

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<sup>207</sup>In a letter to *Landfall* 40 (1956) Kendrick Smithyman writing in response to Fairburn's essay 'The Culture Industry' states: 'Sir, you will scarcely need reminding, and neither should Mr Fairburn, that *Landfall* is published with the aid of a grant; that issues of the *Arts Year Book*, for which Mr Fairburn edited the poetry section, received grants; that the *New Zealand Poetry Year Book* has published Mr Fairburn, and presumably paid him for the privilege at a time when the *Year Book* was receiving a grant; and that the New Zealand University Press published Mr Fairburn's *Three Poems*. The University, he tells us, is dependent on State funds' (369). For some writers it was contestable to just how independent of the state Fairburn actually was.

believed this should not prevent the journal from creating a less ephemeral presentation of the nation, so while '[t]he spread of radio had a profound influence on the way people informed themselves and how they thought about themselves. Radio introduced its listeners to and joined them in national and international environments' (Day, 2004:77), the written had permanency. Published reviews, verse and prose could be reflected upon at will, and the response of the public dictated less by the vagaries of programming. Furthermore, if New Zealand writers could be *heard* in panel discussions<sup>208</sup> then their poetry and prose should be *read* in the pages of the *Listener*. Both the *Listener* and the Broadcasting channels were state-owned and therefore publication (with payment) was a natural extension of this nascent state patronage. Holcroft's bias would always lie with the written word and the intrinsic value of the book: 'communication is not merely the utterance of thoughts: it requires also their reception by other minds... [a] further necessity is the publication and distribution, on the widest scale, of new books which can add something to the tone or substance of the nation's thought' (1950:179). Those lines, taken from the second essay *The Waiting Hills*; show how instructive the early essays are to understanding Holcroft's stewardship of the *Listener*.

My earlier ambitions had been put aside as I moved away from fiction; but my conception of authorship had become stronger and deeper, perhaps too high-minded, touching ideas metaphysical and speculative. It had been reached or worked out in my *Press* essays. The enthusiasm with which they were written (and I give "enthusiasm" its Greek and visionary meaning) had never quite left me. I wanted to serve literature, not merely as an idealist, but in practical ways also. I supported the earliest moves towards state patronage, and as editor of a weekly journal with strong cultural interests I wanted to provide opportunities and rewards I myself had missed sorely in my years in the wilderness (1986:48).

The role of editor provided Holcroft with the opportunity to put into action initiatives he believed would be beneficial to both writer and reader alike. Of special significance was the notion of patronage; of both the editorial and state varieties. Holcroft had profited from the involvement of the State in literature, and as a result of

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<sup>208</sup> The *Listener* dated January 21, 1949 informs listeners of the introduction of the 'ZB's new book session, with reviewers to include: Sargeson, Ngaio Marsh, James Bertram, Isobel Andrews, Fairburn, Lawlor, O. N. Gillespie and Curnow' (Vol. 20, no. 500 p.13). Note that the ZB stations were not the non-advertising stations but the lighter more populist stations.

winning the essay section of the Centennial literary competition, local publishing opportunities (outside newspaper journalism) became available to him. In *The Reluctant Editor* (1969), the memoir of his years with the *Listener*, Holcroft wrote, ‘my principal motive [for publishing fiction], however, was a conviction that the official journal of the Broadcasting Service had a duty to foster imaginative writing...help[ing] the NZBS to play its part as the country’s largest patron of the arts’ (25).<sup>209</sup> This role as patron was not to everyone’s liking: Fairburn in a letter to Brasch likened Holcroft’s editing to the distributing of ‘ten-bob notes on the street’ and charged him with acts of ‘cultural inflation’ (Edmond, 1981:256).

Holcroft’s early advocacy of state patronage can be seen in *The Deepening Stream*, where he notes, ‘in a literary sense the age of kindness should now be closed, or replaced by some method of economic assistance for those who have proved themselves worthy of encouragement’ (1940:60). By the time *The Waiting Hills* was published in 1943 he had formulated a much more concrete set of ideas: ‘The ideal method would be to confine the function of a State editorial board to the selection of promising work, which could then be placed on the market at a nominal price by means of Government subsidies’ (1950:188). The function of the State Literary Fund after its inception in 1947 was remarkably similar to that outlined by Holcroft. The inference behind Holcroft’s suggestion was that the market, as denoted by publishers and the book-buying public, should not be the sole determinants of whether an author should or should not be published. The value of certain types of literature existed outside these usual factors and they must be published to ensure that the more esoteric requirements of a nation were met: the ‘endowment of intellect’, as he termed it in *The Waiting Hills* (1950:183). Fairburn shared a similar position, writing in ‘The Culture Industry’:

From a social point of view it is more necessary that literary works should be put on the record than that they should be acclaimed by reviewers, or make money for their authors. A State Literary Fund Committee must not try to be too highly selective, for that would imply a sharpening of the critical function that is out of place. Better that a great deal of mediocre work should be

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<sup>209</sup> This was an extension of the role the first Director of the National Broadcasting Service, Professor James Shelley, envisaged for Broadcasting. His approach to broadcasting had the aim of raising the population to a higher level of cultural appreciation (Day, 2004:78). Holcroft’s belief that broadening the culture was the duty of the Broadcasting Service and that patronage was the key to imaginative writing (1969:25) complemented those of Shelley.

published than that any sort of dictatorship of taste should be set up (1956:210-211).

Fairburn wrote the essay 'The Culture Industry' specifically for publication in *Landfall* and from his letters the inference is that it was a commissioned piece: 'I'll see what I can do about a piece on culture-culture' he writes to Brasch on 12 February, 1956 (Edmond, 1981:238), and in a letter dated 1 April, 1956 he complains to Brasch, 'I simply can't discuss these matters in the way I think they ought to be discussed in 3000 words', admonishing:

Come, Charles! I see by checking back on old LFs that that study of the press ran to something like 16000 words, and Bob Chapman's odyssey in estuarial waters to about 16000, and even Ken Smithyman's shopping excursion in the Goblin Market to about 6000.<sup>210</sup> Surely you can spare a measly 5000-odd for an examination of cultural conditions under the shadow of the Apocalypse? (Edmond, 1981:240).

Fairburn makes a clear distinction between assistance for publishing, after the work has been completed, and financial assistance while the work is being undertaken, writing:

Among the young writers the soup-kitchen mentality is strongly in evidence. Some of them give the impression that they are anxious to allow the State to take over all power both secular and spiritual, so long as they are provided with the means of fabricating their private worlds. The artist, if he values his soul, can never afford to make the eunuch's bargain: 'Give me a hand-out for Art, and I'll agree to keep off politics, economics and religion'. It must not even be remotely implied. (1956:207)

As a 'citizen artist' it was crucial to Fairburn that writers would maintain their independence from political or other influence, believing that it was impossible to be the 'conscience and critic' of society when on the State payroll:

Poetry and fiction, should in my view, remain completely exempt from State patronage—except for the recording function provided by the State Literary Fund. They are of value only when they are the work of independent artists (211).

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<sup>210</sup> 'A Study of the Press', Elizabeth Warburton, *Landfall* 31 (1954), 'Fiction and the Social Pattern, Robert Chapman, *Landfall* 25, 'A Reading of "Goblin Market"', Kendrick Smithyman, *Landfall* 32 (1954), were the examples given by Fairburn.

Brasch had a somewhat different opinion of state patronage and his ‘Notes’ of December 1947 contain a long consideration of the State Literary Fund. His is a much more measured approach to patronage from the state seeing it as a way for the writer to get recognition from the community:

His necessary isolation – this is true of each artist – places him half outside the community, both in its eyes and in his own; and where the community is as small and requires as high a degree of conformity as in New Zealand he must at sometime, however self sufficient, feel overpoweringly the need for a symbolical reconciliation with it, for acceptance as of right, on his merits (242).<sup>211</sup>

‘The Culture Industry’, published in 1956, was a reflection on nine years of the existence of the State Literary Fund, and many of the issues he sees as problematic would rear their head in the *Poetry Yearbook* dispute of 1964. Fairburn wrote his essay during the early years of the Cold War and many of his concerns with State interference, censorship and artistic freedoms are coloured by what was occurring in the U.S.S.R:

Grants made for the sustenance of writers raise a more difficult problem. Certain works of public record (historical and biographical) can be quite properly assisted by State funds without risk of intellectual corruption. Yet even here we should be extremely circumspect. It would be easy to arrive by slow stages at the point where history is re-written to order by State-employed professionals, as happened in Nazi Germany, and as has become the standard procedure in the U.S.S.R. (1956:211).

By 1956, when ‘The Culture Industry’ was published, the left-leaning intelligentsia had rethought their views regarding the Soviet Union and China; in his ‘Notes’ of the same issue as ‘The Culture Industry’ Brasch made the following remarks:

Intellectuals, it may be, can be ‘remoulded’ under pressure; but works of art cannot be faked [...], the artist is in the true sense a discoverer and a creator, not a cheerleader or interpreter or popularizer of political and social doctrine, nor apologist for any established order [...]; like ideas, works of art do not

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<sup>211</sup> *Landfall* 1 (1947).

‘serve’ the state: they are not ‘useful’ to society: yet society cannot live and breath without them (176).<sup>212</sup>

Fairburn’s comments need to be seen against this development and also within the context of the general mistrust felt by the literary-intelligentsia toward either political party in New Zealand. This readjustment was partly due to the 1951 Waterfront Dispute and the rescinding of civil liberties which took place. Lawyer, Dr Martyn Finlay, the Labour Party Member of Parliament for the North Shore 1946-49,<sup>213</sup> wrote an article examining the scale of the executive’s powers since the declaration of the state of emergency. The article was within a cover emblazoned with the word ‘Censored’ stamped across Regulation 4; this was the regulation which prohibited the publishing of comment and reports about the strike (March, 1951:17-20). The essay’s mistrust of the state was also a reaction to Fairburn’s belief that New Zealand should think more independently on issues of foreign affairs: ‘America’s policy or our own?’ asked the editorial of October 1953.

The essay is also a reflection on the more general developments in attitudes towards *culture* and the role of the State that developed in the post-war years. This is the focus for the following section of the chapter. While neither Brasch nor Holcroft believed that culture and cultural production were to be distractions from the everyday; it was Fairburn who had the most coherent and articulated stance:

There seems to be common agreement at the present time among all those who, for good reasons or bad, wish to advance the arts that the State should be looked to for support. This is in accordance with the trend of the age. The power of the paternalistic State grows apace, and gradually becomes more totalitarian in character (1956:206).

## 6. ‘Interior decoration for the mind’: The changing definition of culture

We can’t say we have no facilities for culture, or no time. We can say we have no inclination for it and with many that would still be the simple truth; but the number of subscribers necessary to support a literary quarterly is perhaps 2000, or less than 1:700 of those over 25. If that would put a bigger strain on our cultural crust than it will at present carry, the fact must be accepted that we still are primitives.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> *Landfall* (1956).

<sup>213</sup> Finlay lost his seat in 1949. In 1960 he was elected party President becoming the Member for Waitakere in 1963. From 1972-75 he was Minister of Justice.

<sup>214</sup> Oliver Duff, *The Listener*, editorial 11 April 1947, ‘A New Quarterly’.

The advantage of employing the word [culture]—which time, I feel, will deal with as harshly as it has with “genteel”—is that I am saved the trouble of defining it. Everybody knows what it means. Everybody is in favour of it.<sup>215</sup>

The above quotations usefully summarise the contradiction that many of the local intelligentsia believed to be inherent in the treatment and support of the arts during the post-war years; culture was ‘fashionable’:

Art books and LP records pour from the presses. The film is taken seriously [...] architecture and furnishing have become matters of intense interest, and it is almost impossible to avoid getting caught up in an interminable discussion of the modern home (Fairburn, 1956:199).

However, the suspicion was that it was a ‘popularisation’ of the *cultural* and not an acceptance of the intrinsic value of culture:

It would be ridiculous to suggest that the suburbs as a whole had by this time become fully ‘culture-conscious’. Horses, motor-cars, divorce cases, sport, crime, pornography and alcohol are still the main interests of the majority of the people (1956:203).

Although ‘culture was widely debated and therefore seemed important, it was increasingly located in the home—books, records, reproductions etc, where it became associated with relaxation and leisure and was diminished as a means of critical reflection on self and society’ (Day, 1997:23). The post-war years saw the extension of leisure time and the expansion of products and services related to the increasing delineation of work time from non-working time. During has argued that as an outcome of this separation,

[a] deep-seated instability is created. Is leisure to be considered a form of recreation, a time for the regeneration of the workforce and its real task of reproduction? Or is it to be considered as what people work for? This crisis of cultural valuation takes another form: are cultural products potentially the beautiful fruits of our civilisation (and the means by which society can come to understand itself less blindly)? Or are they finally trivial, belonging to a

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<sup>215</sup>Fairburn, ‘The Elixir with a Hangover’, *Listener*, February 1949, vol. 20, no. 502, p.18.

fetishistic realm of play and pleasure? Or, again, are they counters by which cultural capital is distributed? (1997:823).

Here During effectively outlines all the developments Fairburn believed were occurring and which he set out to detail in his essay 'The Culture Industry', arguing that a persistent decline in the integrity of painting and literature would occur as their production was compelled increasingly by the mechanism of state funding and created for a public dominated by the interests of a materialistic and dilettante middleclass. Fairburn wrote his essay in 1956, decades before During made his observations, illustrating a prescient awareness of what an enlarged definition of culture combined with a bureaucratic enthusiasm for the arts would lead to. Such was the implosion of culture production and purchase that Fairburn suggested 'that the various activities that go under the name of "culture" may become a rival to sport as a palliative for suburban boredom' (1956:198).

This was similar to what Duff was referring to when he spoke of 'primitives', the sense that a genuine interest in the arts did not exist; it was a veneer, a fabricated shiny coating pasted over an uncritical public taste. This attention had an artificial quality to it, therefore, a sense of somehow having been manufactured; Fairburn remarked that to his mind "'culture", as a specialised activity rather like orchid-growing, is beginning to thrive' (199),<sup>216</sup> and did not reflect a society motivated to embrace culture for the esoteric uplift it offered. To Fairburn's mind, enthusiasm for the arts in the suburbs and state patronage were two sides of the same coin. He argued that the meaning of culture had been narrowed greatly so that it no longer encapsulated the idea of culture as a whole way of life but signified, 'in the main, the practice and appreciation of the arts' (198). *Here & Now* was a reaction against such definitions, so while providing space for the practitioner through the publication of prose and poetry, the journal sought to contextualise the practice of the arts and the appreciation (or consumption) of them within an everyday framework, viewing them as part of the broader social fabric of life, a reaction against what Fairburn described as things 'produced to meet the needs of the suburban culture-consumer, as interior decoration for his mind, as relief from ennui, or simply as ostentation' (1956:200).

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<sup>216</sup> I wonder if this is a reference to Joe Heenan, who was a keen gardener and through his activities during the 1930s and 40s initiated many of the state-sponsored programmes of the post-war years. Fairburn was highly critical of Heenan's secret patronage with the contents of the public purse.

He was not alone in this belief, Baxter writing, ‘in every society [the middle class] looks upon art forms as saleable commodities and is bitterly intolerant of the artist’s demand for intellectual freedom’ (1954:46). This issue of how to balance the potential benefits of a heightened interest in the arts against the suspicion of rampant commercialism; preoccupied writers and editors throughout the ‘long fifties’ creating genuine tensions as writers and artists attempted to balance a livelihood with artistic integrity. As Baxter remarked, ‘most writers do commercial work with their left hands, and with their right hands, occasionally, what they can really respect themselves for’.<sup>217</sup> For while in a small country state patronage could kick-start the process of getting work to the public they were wary of the potential threat to artistic freedom and independence, crucial if the arts are to act as the conscience and critic of society.

Fairburn, like Brasch and Holcroft, did not believe that the function of the arts was to divert people; he believed that its social function was to hold up a mirror to society, something that the ‘massification’ of art would not achieve. He feared that the implicit communal good that great art and literature bestowed on a society and the critical component which must accompany it were being undermined by state patronage and the promotion of a model that was based on social participation and managed by a new class of white-collar officials (1956:202); bureaucratic middlemen posing as patrons were, he argued, a real threat to the contract between artist and society (202): ‘The mushroom grows in the open,/The toadstool under the tree’. Mostly he worried that *entertainment* was being disguised as culture, which had the outcome of ‘making the community appear to be more cultured than in fact is the case’ (208). Fairburn’s advocacy for the arts was *aegis*; good art and fine artists needed protection from bourgeois consumers and the amateur enthusiasms of the types who occupied seats on the State Literary Fund committee; David Ballantyne described the members of the committee in 1948 as being ‘typical of the political pipsqueaks and literary hacks who dictate what’s what in what passes for Culture in New Zealand’ (Reid, 2004:97).

Standards were to be expected of both parties and robust criticism would ensure that this was so. It was here that the role of the critic was crucial: their function

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<sup>217</sup> One of Baxter’s responses to the questionnaire sent to New Zealand poets by Louis Johnson and published in *The Poetry Yearbook* of 1954 (p25). At this time he was teaching at Epuni School in Lower Hutt, he remained at the school until 1956 when he began working for School Publications, eventually as editor of the School Journal.

was not only to prevent the public from merely ‘eavesdropping on the transactions of artists’ (Fairburn, 1956:200), but to annotate artistic production with criticism. According to Fairburn, and also Brasch and Holcroft, the best way to ensure this occurred was through the pages of the literary-cultural journal. For, as Tate outlined, the role of the periodical was not necessarily to give ‘the public what they wanted but what they needed’ (1959: 72).

### **7. ‘Leading or stimulating opinion’: Brasch and cultural authority**

However, despite the enormous contribution both Fairburn and Holcroft made as culture-critics during the ‘long fifties’ the meta-narrative of *Landfall* has maintained its precedence, in the final section of the chapter I examine some of the possible explanations for this.

Brasch’s *Landfall* was to dominate New Zealand letters for two decades, establishing itself as the benchmark publication for the country’s poets, prose writers and essayists. Brasch as editor defined and reinforced the canon while at the same time publishing the emerging poets and prose writers; the December 1948 edition of *Landfall* contained ‘a collection of work by six of the younger poets, [and] makes plain the existence of a whole generation of poets to succeed those represented in Allen Curnow’s *Book of New Zealand Verse*’ (243). This may seem an impossible paradox, yet was achieved by an unflinching commitment to edit and mentor. Brasch always replied to a submission, noting in diligent detail what was amiss with the piece and where repair or revision was needed; in effect a template, or as his detractors referred to it, ‘*Landfall* poetry’ evolved (Baxter, 1951:8). He was not alone in his attitude toward his contributors; Holcroft, too, took very seriously the role of editor and was keenly aware of the assistance or hindrance he could provide to a writer’s career. He welcomed visits from writers and took the time to offer words of support and practical assistance when rejecting work. He approached writers with reviewing work, having personally experienced the poverty that often went hand in hand with creative endeavour in New Zealand.

Brasch was only interested in publishing what he saw as the best that was on offer, explaining in ‘Twenty Years Hard’ (1966):

A literary journal that tries to set certain standards will often fall below them. But the best work it prints, if well presented, offers a silent criticism of poor or false work; if the reader can see that the best has been recognised for what it

is, its effect will be lasting, and it will help to purge away the harm done by what is inferior (1981:185).

Brasch had a very clear and articulate position regarding the role his journal played in the literary economy. Unquestionably this led to the exclusion of some with the talent but not the outlook to fit his editorial mandate; it was by and large the journal for the established writer, which in turn led to a very narrow or restricted idea of the nation on display. *Landfall* assisted in the longevity of provincial realism, a mode of writing that arose in the thirties in the poetry of Curnow and the short prose of Sargeson and described by Simpson as Eurocentric and elitist; ‘the provincial sees himself as an island in a sea of mediocrity and measures the life around him in accordance with standards derived from metropolitan culture’ (1982:58).<sup>218</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the pre-eminence attached to *Landfall* and its contributors was not an outcome approved by all: ‘Auckland needs a publication if only to keep *Landfall* from ruling the country’ stated D’Arcy Cresswell, upon hearing of *Here & Now*’s inception in 1949. This was indeed the real strength of the 1950s; the conversation had variety due to the multiplicity of voices that the three journals contained. It is only when a public has a selection of magazines to choose from that a critical conversation is prevented from becoming self-referential; a crowded and jostling periodical marketplace ensures that ideas and modes are contested and judged. As During notes, ‘new journals are defined in a blend of imitation and differentiation of those in circulation’ (1991:37). As the editorial statements of *Here & Now*, *The Poetry Yearbook* and *Arachne* illustrate, it is much easier for a rival magazine to promote and articulate its own position when it can clearly see what it is the ‘other’ to.

C. K. Stead claimed that in *Landfall*, Brasch’s ‘jealousies and grudges are dressed up as Good Taste and paraded as Critical Judgement’ (Harding, 1999:76) but as the following (from an essay by Tate, ‘The Function of the Critical Quarterly’ [1936]) suggests, ‘for criticism is not merely a way of saying that a certain poem is better than another; it gives meaning to the awareness of differences only in so far as

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<sup>218</sup> Both *Here & Now* and the *Listener* used material from outside of New Zealand, unlike, *Landfall* which had an explicit programme to only publish work from local writers and artists. While Fairburn and Holcroft shared a clear commitment to fostering the local they made room for events and ideas that were generated from outside of New Zealand to penetrate the pages of their journals; as Cyril Connolly remarked, when asked why he published, writing and writers from outside of England in *Horizon* ‘an island fortress must always be on its guard against provincialism’.

it instructs the reader in three fundamentals of mounting importance: the exercise of taste, the pursuit of standards of intellectual judgement, and the acquisition of self-knowledge' (1959:66). Brasch was implementing an established model (one that could also be said to apply to T. S. Eliot and *The New Criterion* and Cyril Connolly and *Horizon*). Brasch's 'Notes' would again and again emphasise the centrality of these features to the journal and to the wider project of cultural development in New Zealand. As he declares in *Landfall* 3:

[*Landfall*] is not meant to be bolted in a quarter of an hour, but to be digested through a season; its concern is with questions of permanent interest, with ideas, with standards, with works of art which are often the creation of years, and may be the delight of generations. (1947:161)

This statement raises the vexed issue of periodical frequency and the hierarchy this implies. During calls this 'the hierarchy of seriousness' (1991:35). The quarterly is perceived to have greater status because it has fewer spatial restraints. Alan Mulgan referred to it as the ability of a quarterly (*Landfall*) to 'g[i]ve writers elbow room' (1962:136), selection is not based on brevity; there is room for a short story or a suite of poems. Secondly, the material is temporal in outlook, with the contents of a quarterly not constrained by claims of 'out-of-datedness'. The quarterly's cultural authority is derived in part from the fact that it does not report on the world of events but on ideas; it is based on 'knowing rather than the known world' (During, 1991:35).

The specific function of the critical quarterly, according to Tate, was to halt the 'splitting off of information from understanding' (1959:63). Its function was much more than just getting new ideas or books out there, its role being to inform the reader of the content of a new idea and not to just name it. A quarterly's purpose was to initiate a conversation, to flesh it out by reference to the past and surmise its uses for the future. This is what Brasch meant when he stated *Landfall* was a read for a season; the contents necessitated reflection. 'Leading or stimulating opinion' became the specific concern of *Landfall*. *Landfall* like the other journals of the post-war era saw their role as being the presentation of ideas and opinions and they were dedicated to raising intellectual consciousness (Anido, 1972:247); it was mind work.

## 8. Conclusion

A new literary magazine is to be welcomed as a sign of life. If it does nothing else, it shows that writers are not only dissatisfied but active – dissatisfied with the mediums for publication which already exist, and active enough to set about providing another (151).<sup>219</sup>

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to show that the culture-critics of the ‘long fifties’ created a conversation and published it in the pages of the three journals *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener*. And while the common presentation in literary histories is to emphasise the role of Brasch and *Landfall* I have illustrated that both he and the journal he edited were but one voice in the conversation and that many of the ideas and issues that *Landfall* is claimed to have independently encouraged were in fact shared by the other journals. In an essay entitled ‘The Anthologists’ Alan Mulgan remarks that an anthology of poetry is ‘a social as well as a literary document’ (1962:44) the same can be said of the literary-cultural journal. They reflect not only the individual achievement of creation and publication but also interact with other imaginative work and rub against the ideas and issues informing a society.

In many ways the most successful publication of the period 1947-61 was *Here & Now*. It was much less concerned with its cultural authority and was trying to present the country in a local way; it was not derivative and clearly stated its intentions (‘the people of Britain have their weekly journals [...] which between them provide a forum in which public affairs may be dealt with freely and honestly for the benefit of literate people. Because we have lacked this sort of journalism in New Zealand, the newspapers have dominated the field’ [October 1949]), but it did not wish to appear imitative. What was ‘local’ was plastered all over its pages – whether in the fiction, advertising or political articles – and while the editors embraced peace and prosperity they also critiqued the models put forward and engaged their readership in the challenges that lay ahead at both a national and international level.

In contrast, based on its appearance, *Landfall* could have been published anywhere. The editorial notes had a definite Oxbridge inflection, with only the poetry, prose and art plates betraying its geographical location. It does not appear to be really grounded, a strange occurrence when its dominant mode was social realism; it ‘looks’ local on the bookshelf next to other Caxton published books, the imprint of the

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<sup>219</sup>Landfall 31 (1954).

press's typographical skill is obvious. The *Listener* had a different set of limitations but under the editorship of Holcroft did attempt to position itself centrally to literary and intellectual developments. He fought hard to gain respect for the journal. Holcroft himself claimed that the intelligent middle-ground was where he sought to position the journal; '*Landfall* was a platform for academics;<sup>220</sup> one or two popular magazines [...] offered lighter reading and information to solid segments of the population [...]. Only the *Listener* stood in the middle, trying to serve people who loved music and writing and drama, and a movement of ideas' (1969:163).

Williams has suggested that the pervasiveness of the middle-ground, and the dominance it would have in New Zealand literary culture, was the creation of both the *Listener* and *Landfall* (1991:207). Furthermore, Wystan Curnow in an extended essay on the 'fate of intellectual and imaginative excellence in a welfare state' (1973:155) remarked:

[the *Listener*] correspondence columns have been the nearest thing to a national intellectual forum the country has ever had. But those columns also contain remarks like "let us hope that literature never goes all modern"!, and regularly. By and large Holcroft was an admirably adroit editor; for he did occupy one of those places upon which amateurism and versatility converged with frightening insistency (W. Curnow, 1973: 164).<sup>221</sup>

Both Williams and Curnow are suggesting that *Landfall* and the *Listener* helped to entrench a particular way of writing and a way of critiquing that writing in New Zealand, and while this is one explanation for the persistence of the mode of social realism and an unwillingness to experiment with alternative critical theories, it should not detract from the achievement of the 'long fifties'. It is unfortunate that Brasch and *Landfall*, even during the post-war years, were to dominate and direct New Zealand letters to the extent they did; however, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* along with the

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<sup>220</sup> Whilst he was not opposed to those with academic qualifications, he did expect that many of the essays to be published in *Landfall* would be by well-read laymen whose view he felt 'may frequently be more penetrating than the view of professionals who are too immersed in detail to be able to see the subject as a whole' (1947: 5) However, this position was undermined by his tendency to give review work to academics and especially to have non-local material reviewed by European immigrants or New Zealanders with University experience from abroad, suggesting he clearly realised where the skill level lay and distorting his perception of just who the 'well-read laymen' actually were.

<sup>221</sup> For the junior Curnow the focus had shifted from a lack of literary-cultural participants to an over-run, where those involved in literary-cultural enterprises showed to a far greater degree a variety of competencies or interests; and opting to do everything a little, rather than one thing exceptionally well. Wystan Curnow believed this was responsible for 'dumbing down' cultural production. Ironically Allen Curnow was an early convert to the role of poet-professor, taking up a position in the English department of Auckland University College in 1951.

‘little magazines’, were attempting to disperse the conversation and contest the *Landfall* meta-narrative. While it possible to claim that in New Zealand “‘criticism” in the local context has for so long meant reviews in the *Listener* and “serious criticism” has meant anthology introductions’ (Williams, 1991:206), indisputably during the ‘long fifties’ there was a ready supply of criticism and multiple sites in which it was presented; the journals were a ‘crowd of voices’ (Paul Carter, 1991:91). The journals reveal evidence of a conversation, which while led by the culture-critic had the expectation that an audience was an active participant; therefore literature and the visual arts had a social and educative function within the matrix of national identity.

A multiplicity of texts makes for a greater public conversation. It is the role of the periodical to create a society of ‘cultural omnivores’ (Richard Peterson, 1997, quoted by Jacobs, 2007:107). A cultural omnivore consumes both high culture and popular culture, a “pick n mix” approach, and believes they can appreciate culture better with knowledge of a variety of genres (107). The *Listener* was, and remains, New Zealand’s most culturally omnivorous periodical. This is in no small part due to its inception as the state publisher of public broadcasting programmes, thus ensuring the presence of the popular or mass culture component comprising film reviews and populist cultural events – interviews with programme celebrities, recipes – alongside copious advertising for the banal, practical and slightly absurd. However, during Holcroft’s stewardship high cultural offerings gained a prominence with essayistic book reviews and articles in which the arts were considered an active and necessary component of society. By the conclusion of Monte Holcroft’s tenure as editor<sup>222</sup> each weekly issue was an amalgamation of high and popular culture; an omnivorous publication and true to the spirit of one of his early editorials: ‘Some of us can enjoy ourselves at both levels; but democracy in the arts can exist only where the way is open for us to move from one level to the other’.<sup>223</sup>

Fairburn the culture-critic has been neglected in recent years and yet he did seem to understand and foresee, prophetically, the ramifications of state patronage or more precisely the dangers of mixing art and culture with bureaucracy and national aims (140). Lauris Edmond described him as an ‘artist-citizen’ as opposed to a high

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<sup>222</sup>Holcroft was to be editor for 16 years until his retirement in 1967, after the dismissal of Alexander McLeod he would spend another year 1972-73 in the role of caretaker editor.

<sup>223</sup> (vol. 21, no. 532)

culture guardian, and while his writing is recognisable for its use of invective, Fairburn was just as preoccupied with standards and excellence as Brasch. Although it is Fairburn as poet or satirist that literary histories most commonly focus on, Fairburn was one of our most prolific freelance journalists. With the initiative of the literary-cultural journal post-war his output of critical prose increased and his poetry declined. The growth in periodicals is commensurate with the burgeoning interest shown by the public for culture in tandem with the state's willingness to promote culture as part of a project to strengthen national identity. While Fairburn may have been highly critical of these later developments, nonetheless, this public interest and an instrumentalist approach by the state to culture did ensure that he and other culture-critics had regular outlets for their prose criticism thanks to the specific conditions of the 'long fifties'.

Significantly, *Landfall*, *Here & Now* and the *Listener* introduced the function of the literary-cultural journal into local journalism and this intervention destabilised the primacy of the newspaper. Not only did the quality and scope of the articles increase but so too did the correspondence, Brasch writing in his 'Notes' sums up the frustration felt by the culture-critics:

The level of argument in them is low, and commonly reduces most subjects to triviality. Editors make no effort to separate letters which present a serious point of view from those which have nothing worth saying or are too confused to know what they want to say. [...] The correspondence column has become a senseless free-for-all instead of being a place for the more or less rational exchange of views on public matters. Hence the confusion these columns present; hence the reluctance of responsible citizens to write to newspapers which, they know only too well, will prevent any reasonable discussion by allowing the argument to be swamped by (usually anonymous) irrelevancies (160-161).<sup>224</sup>

Correspondence was important as this was how a conversation would occur and it was part of the responsibility of the reader to actively participate, not just to passively consume. In many respects it was Holcroft who acted upon his criticism of New Zealand life most fully; the structural changes he called for in the trilogy of essays which comprise *The Discovered Isles* he was able to initiate during his editorship of the *Listener*.

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<sup>224</sup>*Landfall* 27 (1953).

A myth has been created around Brasch which has entrenched the view that *Landfall* is the sum of literary achievements of the post-war years. This is not assisted by the fact that in the context of the years he spent in New Zealand, they coincide with his editorship of *Landfall* and culminate in his premature death in 1973. Assessments of *Landfall* have suffered from the tendency to dissolve the journal into the editor's personality (Carter, 1991:2).<sup>225</sup> Therefore, what Baxter referred to as *Landfall's* 'mood of sober, critical liberalism' (1951:8) is taken as reflecting the overall character of literary production in the post-war period. And while a strong editorial conviction is central to the success of any periodical the content and temper of *Landfall* was an extension of the man. *Landfall* was in many ways the life of Brasch, it is a blueprint of his interests and enthusiasms and his conviction that the arts and intellectual life were an integrated whole (Oliver, 2003:117); and while his autobiography *Indirections* ends as his editorship of *Landfall* is about to commence, *Landfall Country* (1962) his selections of the best published by him in *Landfall* over the past fifteen years, can indeed be read as a type of autobiography.<sup>226</sup> While Brasch's breadth of interest shaped *Landfall* his dogma limited it; Anido claims the 'durability of *Landfall*' as an outcome of the 'editor's moderation' (1972:234), however, the pay-off for a continuous outlet for cultural production was a very narrowly defined expression of the imaginative in New Zealand.

The last word goes to *Here & Now* and their apt summary of the protagonists of this chapter:

Even poets can gang together:  
Three polite intelligent cheers  
While Charlie Brasch by *Landfall* steers.

And, while in intellectual mood,  
Let's say the *Listener* does us good –  
Pity that the taste's so ghastly –  
Tripe well stewed and served with parsley.  
Never mind, there's Baxter's verses  
(Jim's not K. McL's), small mercies:

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<sup>225</sup> Francis Mulhern states that the same tendency existed with *Scrutiny* and the 'persistent emphasis on the individual figure of F. R. Leavis' (1979: viii). Mulhern argues that the prominence accorded as individual is misleading and that he is a product of a 'whole cultural current' (viii).

<sup>226</sup> I am grateful to Michael Grimshaw for this insight.

Cheers for Jim, Keith Sinclair, Glover,  
The poets and the sins they cover:  
Fairburn's still a handsome creditor,  
Mostly for Letters to the Editor.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Lines taken from 'A Merry Christmas – and all that', *Here & Now*, December 1951, unsigned.

## Postscript

For cultures, like individuals, can become prisoners of images of themselves, lulled by the sheer repetition of a few pat phrases into believing that they have identified their distinctive nature.<sup>228</sup>

In 1999 New Zealand entered a phase of renewed cultural nationalism as the Labour-led coalition government took power. During the eight years the coalition government was in power they implemented policies that were based on an enlarged definition of culture that refigured the role of the state in funding and promoting culture. The period 1999-2008 was defined by a noticeable shift in the focus and form of policy direction as the government exhibited ‘a growing ingenuity and resourcefulness in applying the term culture to new purposes and incorporating it into policy discourses’ (Goldsmith, 2003:280). Government policy under the Labour-led coalition was informed by a spirit of cultural nationalism, the contemporary ‘dictatorship of taste’ required of the arts to propagate a strong consistent image of national identity. As Skilling observed in 2005, ‘[a]rts and culture policy under the current labour government cannot be understood apart from the government’s overarching goals of economic growth through innovation and social cohesion’ (2005:28). The ‘assumption that culture produces the nation’ (Wevers & Williams, 2002:16) was reminiscent of the cultural institution-building enacted by the Labour governments of 1935-49.

Just as the initiatives of the 1930s and 1940s were the result of a clearly identified ideological position concerning the role played in a society by culture and the arts, so too were the policies of the Labour-led coalition informed by a particular political philosophy; this philosophy was known as the Third Way. Throughout the 1990s a new discourse arose in many western democracies as centrist-left leaders sought an alternative to the political philosophies of Left and Right and the creation of an economic model with free market and interventionist tenets. Internationally, the adoption of a set of policies that sought to promote growth, entrepreneurship, wealth creation, social justice and strong community were described as the Third Way. The Third Way was a response to globalisation, which had rendered the nation state conversely too large and too small; as a response it promoted a model combining

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<sup>228</sup> *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*, Stefan Collini (2006) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

strong government and planning with an acceptance of devolution. The ‘reconciliation of a dynamic economy and a cohesive society is one of the major tropes of Third Way political thought’ (Skilling, 2005:20) and aligned to the creation of a strong national identity. Culture – in both the anthropological sense of a whole way of life and in the sense of products (visual art, literature, dance, music) of artistic labour – was identified as providing the means through which to define and unite increasingly diversified populations. Governments set out to *brand* the nation.

The election of the fifth Labour Government in 1999 saw the introduction of Third Way political models that fundamentally altered existing ideas of the nation and the role of the state in the formulation of cultural policy. Governments now engage ‘culture’ in the day-to-day undertakings of the populace in an unprecedented manner. Ideas of culture inform a vast array of policy areas; ‘cultural policy becomes almost indistinguishable from say, urban policy, welfare policy, environmental policy or indigenous policy [...] it is no longer a minority specialist concern but a mainstay of government policy’ (Craik, 2005:11). Helen Clark reflected this in a speech given in 2006:

Many of you here will be aware that national identity is close to the government’s heart – enhancing national identity is one of the three key goals chosen by government for the next ten years [...] our local communities’ sense of identity and our understanding of our culture also support government’s two other key goals for this decade: economic development and transformation; and families – young and old.<sup>229</sup>

Miller and Yu-dice provide a useful definition that appears applicable to what occurred in New Zealand, suggesting that culture is connected to policy in two registers, the aesthetic and the anthropological, and that current policy is about reconciling artistic output from creative peoples with the idea that culture is how we live our lives; it is the articulation of ‘difference *within* a population and the differences *between* populations’ (2002:9). During the period 1999-2008 the Labour-led coalition governments sought to lessen the differences within a bicultural society through specifically nationalistic sentiment, and enlisted creative products to promote the bicultural distinctiveness of New Zealand society internationally. Cultural policies can potentially ‘provide a means of reconciling contending cultural identities by

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<sup>229</sup> Speech on ‘Cultural Well-being’ delivered to an audience at the Suter Art Gallery, Nelson on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

holding up the nation as an essence that transcends particular interests' (Miller & Yüdice, 2002:8). Culture as an expedient (Yüdice, 2003:1) was central to the Labour coalition government's policies and explains why culture was a triptych of economic, national identity and social cohesion factors. Culture had become a resource, and therefore was something to be managed:

Labour has demonstrated its strong commitment to arts, culture and heritage. The sector is thriving as never before. It is having a very positive impact on New Zealand's economic, cultural, and social life. Its success builds national identity and pride; brings pleasure to diverse audiences; enables New Zealanders to develop their creative talent; and secures economic advantage in the twenty first century.<sup>230</sup>

The document Heart of the Nation (HOT Nation) was commissioned by the Clark government to develop a strategy for the cultural sector, and as a means for the new government to declare their focus and ideological intention for culture and the arts. It was not an unusual initiative for a government with Third Way leanings to unveil a new mandate for the cultural sector, and many of the Clark government ideas were inspired by the success of Tony Blair's "Cool Britannia" policies in Britain. However, the HOT Nation document did not satisfy the expectations of the government which criticised it for failing to fulfil its terms of reference. 'The Government wants to play a supportive role in relation to the cultural sector, but to do this most effectively, we believe the sector must have a clear sense of its own vision and strategies to achieve it'.<sup>231</sup> The state was seeking to devolve greater structural responsibility to the sector itself so that less development was dependent on government action. However, the HOT Nation panel had concerned itself with initiatives that involved major government restructuring (for example, proposing a separate Ministry for Maori Heritage, Arts and Culture and the abolition of Creative New Zealand), rather than the provision of strategies and vision statements called for by the government. the HOT Nation document produced a multi-sector manifesto, or in the words of the document itself: 'An Overhaul not a Tune-up'. Although the document and its strategies were rejected, the arts sector did receive a major injection

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<sup>230</sup> [www.labour.org.nz/policy/arts\\_and\\_culture/2005policy](http://www.labour.org.nz/policy/arts_and_culture/2005policy) accessed 26/03/2008.

<sup>231</sup> Report to the Minister on the Heart of the Nation Document, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 13 July 2000.

of funding in 2000 and did enjoy the stewardship of the prime minister herself, Clark appointing herself Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage.

Like Peter Fraser before her, Helen Clark possessed a genuine interest in, knowledge of, and enthusiasm for the arts. Furthermore, like Fraser's government the Clark-led coalition adopted policies that would define cultural production in an explicit relationship to the expression and creation of national identity. During the 1930s this represented the development of a foundation to encourage and enable local creative output; imaginatively the nation would no longer have to reference itself through the lens of Britain. However, in 1999 a specific outward gaze was revealed whereby New Zealand needed a 'brand' to attain international distinctiveness. A significant component to this brand was the employing of Maori culture, as Alison Richards notes; '[biculturalism] offers a clearly defined image of a future New Zealand and has an almost unanswerable imaginative appeal as a corporate sign of an overall 'Kiwi identity' (2005:102).<sup>232</sup>

In her comments in an interview on preparations for the Venice Biennale in the *Listener* in 2001,<sup>233</sup> Jenny Gibbs is representative of those who see great advantage in employing Maori culture to brand New Zealand culture. For Gibbs, Pakeha art practice gains an exotic and historic indigeneity through association with Maori culture; her suggestion to have a waka of Maori warriors paddling down a Venetian canal is to signify permanence far longer than Pakeha settlement of 165 years. The discourse of biculturalism has allowed Maori culture to act as a souvenir to the world; visitors take greenstone or bone trinkets back home and New Zealanders living abroad symbolically brand themselves with Maori derivative patterns; Maori culture is mnemonic for the experience of New Zealand.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Throughout the Labour coalition's time in government Te Papa become another site for debate and contest regarding the intersection of national identity, a bicultural partnership and the and the discourse surrounding the visual representation of the nation's history. Te Papa, Wedde suggests, is a 'national institution of culture, in the market for leisure and education dollars, and charged by the state with the duty to tell the nation's stories' (2005:76). However, while Te Papa is a concrete testament to the legal and cultural redress that is at the heart of biculturalism, as the quote from Wedde suggests it encapsulates all of the conflicting expectations and the mandate that is now attached to national identity and presentation of the cultural. The excerpt from the novel *The Fainter* by Damian Wilkins illustrates the ambivalence Te Papa has engendered in sections of the New Zealand public: 'Large parts of Te Papa had always reminded him of a bar entered during the day; it had an indefinable malevolence perhaps to do with the dark marble floors, the appearance of hosts, often with brochures to get rid of. It was a reflex among his set to bag the place. As someone had dryly pointed out, Te Papa wasn't for them, it was for all New Zealanders', (2006:263).

<sup>233</sup> April 14, 2001 (vol 178, no. 3179) p. 50.

<sup>234</sup> The haka is a well-known example of the idea of Maori culture as a souvenir; Pakeha New Zealand has fetishized the haka, using it to celebrate international sporting success and to transcend

However, the bicultural partnership and its deployment as a method to brand New Zealand was not the only example of cultural products being used in an explicit manner during the term of the labour-led coalition. The period 1999-2008 is notable for the number of individuals employed in positions of power and influence who displayed an obvious awareness of the cultural nationalism of the mid-twentieth century. These men and women were at university in the years when New Zealand writing and painting meant the innovations of the 1930s through to the years of consolidation in the ‘long fifties’; and they employed a very specific expression of cultural nationalism to explain the introduction of a similarly ideological variant.<sup>235</sup>

Although Peter Biggs was a last minute appointment by the outgoing National Government, throughout his tenure as Chairman of Creative New Zealand (CNZ) he proved himself a valuable asset to Helen Clark’s programme of rebranding the function of art and culture, and, significantly, he understood the nationalism which had come to define the role accorded art and culture. Biggs’s background in the advertising industry allowed him to utilise visual and written material with confidence; his time at CNZ resembled a multi-episodic advertising campaign, the storyboard featuring a kaleidoscope of mid-century poets stalking across the page and pulling after them the festering carcass of cultural myth. In his speeches Biggs employed a technique which I describe as cut-and-paste nationalism: the interpolation of poetry into speeches prophesying Third Way cultural economics.

At a speech delivered in New York City, for the opening of the exhibition, *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific*,<sup>236</sup> Biggs displays most obviously this idea of cut-and-paste nationalism. For every statement he makes about New Zealand he appends a line of poetry or an excerpt from a playwright. For example, he quotes the following line from Louis Johnson; ‘[h]ow many capitals are so human?’ to capture the experience of 30,000 people lining the streets for the premiere of *The Lord of the Rings*. Although this was a speech for the opening of an exhibition of Maori and Pacific Island artists, Biggs did not recite poetry from Jacqui Baxter or

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homesickness when drunkenly performed on the streets of international capitals. Trilling may have stated ‘[e]very country has its false language of at-homeness’ (2000:277), but it would seem that New Zealand takes its imagery and symbolism as a travelling road show.

<sup>235</sup> For example: Peter Biggs, Chair of Creative New Zealand, BA (Hons) in English; Ruth Harley CEO New Zealand Film Commission, PhD in English.

<sup>236</sup> This exhibition held in New York from February to May 2004, was the first major showing of contemporary art from the Pacific in the US and showcased 45 works by 15 artists from New Zealand and the Pacific ([www.thebigidea.co.nz/article](http://www.thebigidea.co.nz/article)) accessed 03/04/08.

Hone Tuwhare or read an excerpt from Patricia Grace or Witi Ihimaera; the only reference made to Maori culture in Biggs's speech was the obligatory welcome and farewell in Te Reo Maori. This speech is full of the imaginative writing of Pakeha, and most are mid-century men, the landscapes sketched by their metaphors at odds with the art on display, which was addressing issues relating to 'migration and Diaspora, indigenous land rights, cultural heritage and environmental landscape'.<sup>237</sup> The speech entitled 'Islands of Imagination', illustrates how adept Biggs was at utilising the poetry and prose of the 'long fifties' as a warehouse of cultural scenarios (Appadurai, 1996:30); however, Biggs's address privileged an imaginative expression that seemed curiously at odds with the content of the exhibition he was opening. For him, though, the mid-century men are a perfect fit having undertaken a similar project of cultural nationalism some fifty years earlier.

As this thesis has argued, a significant partner to the cultural nationalism of the 'long fifties' was the critical conversation contained in the journals. Therefore, an obvious question during this most recent phase of cultural nationalism concerns the function of the culture-critic. The *Listener* and *Landfall* are still published and both publications featured material that responded to the issues raised by what Wedde refers to as 'an officially mandated culture' (2005:10). Furthermore, he notes there exists now a tension between 'risk-managed public culture and the subsidised creative freedoms of individuals and social groups' (2005:10). Artist Andrew Drummond and writer/critic Tim Corballis both articulated this tension in articles published in the *Listener* in 2006, Drummond stating that his belief that during this resurgence of nationalism we have become more 'risk adverse [with] bureaucrats filling a brief to what the state thinks is appropriate cultural production'; the end result, he argued, is too many artists supported by a bureaucratic system with the expectation that they 'have to act as good citizens [and] that is the antithesis to good art'.<sup>238</sup> As James K. Baxter stated in 1951: '[o]ne of the functions of artists in a community is to provide a healthy and permanent element of rebellion; not to become a species of civil servant' (1951:15).

Corballis, in his interview, was shown to be wrestling with the urge to leave behind the writing of fiction for that of the essay, the article noting his concerns that there does not exist a culture of debate in New Zealand and that although he might

<sup>237</sup> [www.asiasociety.org/pressroom/rel-paradise](http://www.asiasociety.org/pressroom/rel-paradise) accessed 13.02.07.

<sup>238</sup> 29 October 2006 p. 38

like to develop it, ‘that’s not a one-person crusade, unfortunately’.<sup>239</sup> It is this final comment that seems to emphasise the fundamental difference between the two periods: the dearth of a critical conversation. Individually, artists and writers were expressing their concerns, but their views were unable to be presented as part of an ongoing critical conversation; it seemed all that was occurring were occasional, and, therefore, seemingly unrelated comments on the position of art and culture under the policies of the government. Although Corballis had published an essay in *Landfall*<sup>240</sup> three years earlier, for example, there is no suggestion in the *Listener* article that his comments in 2006 related to those he expressed in 2003. A further difficulty is that although the *Listener* featured ongoing articles examining the ideological position of the coalition government toward culture, these articles were predominantly written by staff writers and did not seem to reflect anything more than weekly columns on economics or politics. It was not that there was an absence of comment on the cultural agenda of the government, just that much of it had the appearance of more or less *ad hoc* commentary<sup>241</sup> and not the writing of culture-critics. Furthermore, some of the most robust criticism of cultural nationalism under the Labour-led coalition occurred in book format and, therefore, was never going to encourage a critical conversation.

Ian Wedde – poet, novelist, critic and ‘occupational intellectual’<sup>242</sup> – emerged from the public sector in 2004 (for ten years he worked in Te Papa as a member of the conceptual team) but he had begun disassembling this experience in the poetry collection *The Commonplace Odes* (2001): recalling ‘[...] spiteful tiredness brought on by the knuckle-/Cracking Cotton Mathers of cultural bureaucracy.’ (15).<sup>243</sup> In 2005 a selection of lectures he delivered while working for Te Papa were collected in *Making Ends Meet*. However, while the essays are clearly the work of a culture-critic, they have not been written with a general audience in mind and bear the mark of having been written to address other cultural insiders; they presume the reader

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<sup>239</sup>29 October 2006 p. 40

<sup>240</sup> ‘Against Creativity’ *Landfall* May 2003, no. 205 pp. 53-65. Previously, in November 2002 *Landfall* published an article co-authored by Lydia Wevers and Mark Williams, ‘Going Mad without Noticing: Cultural Policy in a Small Country’; Corballis’s article is clearly part of the conversation initiated by this earlier article and yet nothing else was to follow.

<sup>241</sup>Roger Horrocks, in an essay published in *Speaking Truth to Power*, places the columnist within the same category as the politician and comedian; as those renowned for espousing the anti-intellectual tradition in New Zealand (2007: 29).

<sup>242</sup> Brian Easton’s term for those with specialist knowledge who become ‘brain’s for hire’ in the public service, from Auckland University Winter Lecture Series (1996) ‘Philosopher Kings and Public Intellectuals’ [www.eastonbh.ac.nz/article157](http://www.eastonbh.ac.nz/article157). Accessed 12 May 2008.

<sup>243</sup>‘To my mirror’

understands Wedde's highly specialised ideas and possesses a more than working familiarity with postmodern cultural criticism. Consequently, these essays lack one of the most fundamental aims of the culture-critic: to engage the reader in a conversation. In short, they serve primarily to exclude rather than include; the conversation, such as it is, is that of a culture-ghetto. Therefore, the challenge is only on the cultural margins and too easily ignored by the general public or dismissed by the state.

The contemporary 'dictatorship of taste', it seems, is created by 'mass-marketed narratives of history' (Marris-Suzuki, 2005:16) that have as their objective state-mandated 'brand' creation; we are repeatedly directed to a familiar set of images that seem to signify 'a human landscape whose survival seems doomed by scenery'.<sup>244</sup> There is no conversation of the sort that distinguished the 'long 'fifties', and, most importantly, no sites for any such conversation to take place. *Here and Now*, of course, is long gone; *Landfall* and the *Listener* remain part of the periodical landscape but in much altered forms, neither journal seeming quite sure what to do, in the period 1999-2008, with the partnering of the critical with the imaginative that was part of their founding mandate. During this period the *Listener* introduced a specific section entitled 'culture' within which were slotted the usual reviews of theatre, books and music (the practitioner arts), but also featuring evangelizing articles on cultural industries: the logical end-point to an instrumentalization of the arts. What was initially a critical engagement with the policies of the state saw the format of the magazine adopt a position increasingly like the state-mandated function for the arts. Consequently, the contents of the journal became highly prescriptive; a topic was either political or economic or a book review. The journal moved to a format of shorter articles and to writing that adhered to easy categorisation. There was no room for an essay that sought to engage with the mind of the public as the writing became 'issue-oriented' rather than 'idea-orientated'. *Landfall's* response during this period of renewed cultural nationalism was more mixed. Under Justin Paton, who succeeded to the editorship in 2000, there was a clear attempt to redirect the journal to a more edgy and intellectual discourse with a particular focus on the visual arts. Under Paton

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<sup>244</sup>Ian Wedde *The Viewing Platform*, p 124. The novel is a critique of the landscape bias in tourism and the nationalistic embrace of the natural by the state as a tool to represent and market New Zealand internationally. The novel traces the tour of New Zealand's GIAs – Grade One Attractions – by local and international cultural amateurs and one character tellingly titles her paper 'Branding With Beauty' p243.

*Landfall* did construct an internal conversation; the essays, reviews and imaginative writing exhibit a clear engagement with art and culture in the twenty-first century and how literature is conceptualised under a market orientation. However, increasingly, *Landfall* seemed less and less like a journal that was attempting to create and engage with an informed public and increasingly as a space for intellectuals to speak amongst themselves.

If a nation's shared memory is constructed out of a composite of fact, fiction and myth, the narratives that dominate our social memory still exhibit the habit of 'forgetting'.<sup>245</sup> In the absence of a conversation we have regressed to a mid-twentieth century 'land and the people' discourse, forgetting Bill Wilson's challenge:

New Zealand doesn't exist. Not even a long white cloud, just erewhon. Somehow life escaped, slid out of the real world into the Dream. Dream, Symbol, Ideal, ESCAPE, these our beginning, our past, our present: Nightmare or Representation. [sic]<sup>246</sup>

More than fifty years later we have accepted the state's explicit reassertion of the empty landscape with its beauty and severity as our national statement of intent and consciousness; as a nation we appear unable to articulate ourselves without resort to the 'Dream'.

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<sup>245</sup> For a detailed account of New Zealand's post-colonial literary culture see *The Long Forgetting* Patrick Evans.

<sup>246</sup> Bill Wilson, *Kiwi*, 1948 reprinted in *New Dreamland*

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