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Approaches to Pakeha Identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract

In the 20th century, the breakup of the British Empire and a subsequent immigration-driven shift towards multiculturalism has thrown the identity of New Zealand Pakeha (non-indigenous New Zealanders) into uncertainty. In this article I examine three ways Pakeha have sought to formulate more stable models of national identity: the reactionary, the revisionist, and the progressive. The reactionary, associated with white nationalism, has sought to re-forge psychological connections with the now-defunct Empire. The revisionist, existing at the fringes of white nationalism, has attempted to create a stronger link between Pakeha and New Zealand through radical reinterpretations of history that claim Europeans colonized the archipelago before Maori. Finally, the progressive has sought to integrate respectfully with indigenous Maori culture while at the same time attempting to embrace multicultural and transnational modes of being. All these diverse approaches circle the question of just what it means to be indigenous, and raise the issue of just who—Pakeha or Maori—should determine such postcolonial identity.

Key Words

New Zealand culture, Pakeha identity, indigeneity, white nationalism, reactionism, transnationalism, postcolonialism

Contents

Approaches to Pakeha Identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand
The question of Pakeha identity
Reactionary identity
Historical revisionism
Progressive Pakeha identity
Conclusion

Approaches to Pakeha Identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand

A New Zealand passport is a thing of beauty: intricate symbolic patterns scroll across every page, referencing both colonial European and indigenous Maori history and culture. Maori *koru* motifs (a spiral design resembling an uncoiling fern frond) merge into cartological grids and compass roses, amongst which sail *waka* (Polynesian ocean-going canoes) and the tall ships of the Dutch and British empires. The matt-black cover features an embossed coat-of-arms that includes both European and Maori human figures; alongside this is the silver-fern silhouette that has become a trademarked emblem of New Zealand sport, trade, and tourism.

Yet for many non-Maori New Zealanders, this vivid iconography masks a profoundly uneasy sense of national identity. Settlers from Polynesia came to the islands of Aotearoa approximately 700 years ago: the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman first visited in 1642, and over the course of the 19th century waves of European colonists transformed the region, under the name New Zealand, into part of the British Empire. Yet just as European colonization radically changed the Maori world, so has the 20th century breakdown of the Empire made the very concept of a South Pacific "European" nation problematic. For many Pakeha[1)] New Zealanders a stable national identity has been replaced with a distinctively postcolonial sense of fluidity and rootlessness.

There have been a variety of responses to this question of identity. Lacking a secure national identity in the present, some Pakeha of European descent have turned back towards the past, seeking stability in an idealized vision of British colonial culture. A minority have looked even further back, attempting to alter the narrative of European colonialism through historical revision. Other, more progressive Pakeha have attempted to develop concepts of identity in which immigration can be seen as feeding into a new form of indigenous culture, while still others—primarily intellectuals and the literati—have turned in more abstract directions towards a form of identity that rejects nationalism and instead finds new roots in literature and global culture. All such approaches exist in problematic relationships with the issue of Maori sovereignty, with many Maori activists and scholars arguing that these questions of Pakeha identity are, even in their most progressive forms, ultimately part of a struggle for cultural and political power. In contemporary New Zealand, these approaches to identity continue to shape national discourse, sparking and perpetuating debates that, as New Zealand moves deeper into a multicultural 21st century, show no sign of resolution.

The question of Pakeha identity

In 1993 Jim Bolger, then Prime Minister of New Zealand, gave a speech in Tokyo to members of the Asia Society. The New Zealand media reported that, during the speech, Bolger referred to himself as an "Asian leader" and to New Zealand as an Asian country.[2)] Most New Zealanders were surprised to learn this. Helen Clark, the then-leader of the opposition party, stated unequivocally that the statement was "hyperbole and a very generous interpretation of what constitutes Asia" (quoted in Laffey, 1999, p. 241). Yet New Zealand occupies such an ambiguous geographical and cultural position that such a statement does not seem as implausible as, for example, an Icelandic politician declaring her nation a part of Africa. Geographically, the islands of New Zealand are part of Polynesia, a roughly equilateral triangle with New Zealand at the south-west corner, Hawaii and Easter Island respectively occupying the north and east corners. Ethnically, however, the country is predominantly European: in the 1991 census, two years before Bolger's speech, the population was 78.77% European, while in 2013 (the date of the most recent census) that figure was 74%. Maori currently account for 14.9% of the population (Stats NZ, 2013). As Japanese academic Mitake Kamiya put it in 1995, "in the eyes of the Asian people, New Zealand is still an enclave of Europe in the deep south Pacific" (quoted in Mark Laffey, 1999, p. 237). Indeed, this holds true not just in Asian eyes, but in the eyes of many Pakeha.

For the first century of European settlement, New Zealand self-identity was cast firmly in the colonial mold. The colonizer does not go somewhere to form a new cultural identity: rather, they go to transform the Other, the colonized, into their own likeness. When Europeans formally established New Zealand as a self-governing nation in 1852, it was, for them, already part of a much older entity: the United Kingdom. Immigrants from England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, having undertaken a voyage of between three to four

months and with little chance of ever returning to their birthplaces, nonetheless continued to think of themselves as essentially British. This Pakeha attachment to an imagined colonial homeland shaped the nation's culture for the first three-quarters of the 20th century. During my own childhood in the 1980s, New Zealand-born television and radio presenters still spoke in BBC English, while popular media was dominated by British and North American products.

Yet in the 1990s significance increases in immigration from non-European countries changed this cultural landscape. Writing of the year 2003, the year in which those increases brought the population of the country for the first time to four million, the Pakeha historian Michael King describes a sense of "cohesion" being "lost when they dismantled so many of the traditional certainties which had laid a foundation for a coherent and national view of the world." He also describes a desire—even an expectation—amongst Pakeha for those old certainties to be replaced by a new sense of national identity (2003, p. 505).

This desire was vividly articulated, over half a century earlier, in Allen Curnow's 1942 poem "Landfall in Unknown Seas." So culturally resonant was this piece that, in 1947, Charles Brasch—one of the preeminent literary figures of the time—would name the literary journal *Landfall* after it, a journal that continues to dominate intellectual culture in New Zealand. While a product of literary high culture, the themes and rhetoric of the poem capture broader Pakeha concerns with the issue of cultural identity. The poem, which was commissioned by the Government's Department of Internal Affairs to mark the 300th anniversary of the European discovery of New Zealand by Abel Tasman, famously begins "Simply by sailing in a new direction / You could enlarge the world." The "you" of these opening lines is implicitly European; there are references to exploring "in the Name of God," as well as a rhetoric of canons and captains that evokes the age of European sail. Polynesian settlement of the Pacific is briefly mentioned in lines near the end of the poem's first section: "There, where your Indies had already sprinkled / Their tribes like ocean rains, you aimed your voyage." Then comes a comparison between the European and the Polynesian: "Like them [you] invoked your God, gave seas to history / And islands to new hazardous to-morrows." (p. 103) The equivalence, however, is cast in distinctly Eurocentric terms, subsuming Maori polytheism into the more Judeo-Christian singular "your God," while the very term "history" resonates more with the European tradition of historicism than it does to Polynesian oral tradition.

A more substantial attempt at including the indigenous Maori viewpoint comes in section two of the poem:

> Always to islanders danger
> Is what comes over the sea;
> Over the yellow sands and the clear
> Shallows, the dull filament
> Flickers, the blood of strangers. (p. 104)

Significantly, Curnow here moves away from the inclusive "you." Despite the attempt at a Maori perspective (the "islanders" here are Maori, the "strangers" Europeans), Curnow does not address the poem to them in the same way he addresses the European explorers. These lines with their "yellow sands" and "blood of strangers" reference one of the first moments of contact between Europeans and Maori, a brief yet bloody skirmish between Maori canoes and Dutch boats that left four Europeans and one Maori dead (Karen Stade,

2012). While this might seem as an inauspicious start to the Pakeha experience in New Zealand, Curnow does not linger over it. He portrays the violence attending first contact as a minor occurrence—to use his imagery, a stain upon the waters—that does little to halt or even impede the colonizing process.

With this moment of contact complete, the third section of the poem rapidly moves to grapple with what seem to be more profound issues. It is here that Curnow's narrative turns away from the past and focuses on the present. Yet the present is depicted here as a location of uncertainty: the past is done, "a chapter / In a schoolbook," yet the future seems something unknowable. Whereas the European explorers could simply sail "in a new direction," modern New Zealand seems lost in more ambiguous waters. The poem asks:

> Who navigates us towards what unknown
>
> But not improbable provinces? Who reaches
> A future down from us from the high shelf
> Of spiritual daring? Not those speeches
> Pinning on the Past like a decoration (p. 105)

These lines articulate a twinned sense of expectation and unease. They imply a new future, one radically different from the past (the events of which are mere written accounts and rhetorical decorations), yet they simultaneously find themselves lost as to what that future might, or indeed should, be. More significantly, they pose the vital question of just *who* is to decide on the nature of that future. The authority of the Empire is gone: who then is to fulfill that guiding role?

Reactionary identity

This uncertainty is the beginning of what King describes as the Pakeha search for a "new sense of national identity." The term "new," here, however, is open to more than one interpretation: for some white-skinned Pakeha, in fact, identity lies not in the future, but in the past. U.S. historian of ideas Mark Lilla has described how many political and social movements around the world are founded upon reactionism, a term that Lilla defines as founded upon "an assumption about history: that the past comes pre-divided into discrete, coherent ages" (2016, p. 132). In a postcolonial world in which the British Empire has long since fallen, attempts at maintaining colonial identity pair such reactionism with an analogous assumption about national identity: the belief that, just as England was once a monoculture, so New Zealand, despite political, social, and demographic changes, should maintain a single cultural identity modeled closely on its British colonial past.

Such was clearly the view of the anonymous writer of a piece titled "New Zealand's British Destiny," originally published in the white nationalist newsletter *Counter Attack* and excerpted (as part of a 1970 feature on far-right groups in New Zealand) in Victoria University's student magazine *Salient*. The tract is a warning against the dangers of Asian influence ("the poisonous doctrine of an Asian Destiny") upon New Zealand. The piece unabashedly subscribes to the colonial notion of identity, claiming that while "the British are scattered about the earth, yet there is but one British nation, one destiny." It attempts to override any prior claim to sovereignty by Maori by asserting Pakeha demographic and cultural superiority, claiming that "the history

of the majority of New Zealand's people is inextricably bound up with that of their British ancestors and kinsfolk," those ancestors having established political and social structures that enable contemporary New Zealanders to "live in freedom under British Justice" (p. 14). The piece portrays the South Pacific enclave as beset by dangers: not only the influence of Asia but also the "trans-Atlantic master, the usurers of New York." According to the writer, post-War Britain had already been corrupted by such mercantile powers: significantly, New Zealand "British Destiny" thus becomes a kind of idealized vision of the British Empire in its prime. Its destiny, then, lies not in the future, but deep in its colonial past. At the same time, New Zealand in the present takes on a messianic role: it is the colony's duty, the writer implies, to revitalize the "fine qualities of courage, steadfastness, and endurance" that "still resides [sic] in the British people" (p. 14). To do this, the piece advocates that New Zealand forge bonds not with its geographic neighbors, but rather with those other colonized nations with which it shares British heritage.

The *Salient* feature also excerpts from a pamphlet titled *New Zealand's Asian Destiny*, written by J.F.L. Hartley in 1960. Hartley was a member of "The League of Empire Loyalists", a white nationalist group founded in English in 1954 and extended to New Zealand in 1957. While the League is commonly associated with fascism, historian Robert Eatwell has argued that they lacked true fascism's revolutionary orientation, instead being a fundamentally reactionary group. As he puts it, the primary motivation of the group's English founder Arthur K. Chesterton "seems to have been to reconcile the classes and to re-create the community that he had found so consoling while serving in World War I" (2003, p. 334). While the precise psychological motivations for Hartley's own reactionary views are unknown, his writings show a clear desire to retain and strengthen cultural bonds with Great Britain.

While Hartley may have shared few political beliefs with Allen Curnow, *New Zealand's Asian Destiny* has something in common with "Landfall in Unknown Seas." Both texts focus on a moment of European first contact with the islands of Aotearoa. Hartley, in grandiose if somewhat awkward prose, imagines the British Captain James Cook's 1769 arrival in the archipelago, just prior to his claiming of it for Great Britain:

> He came in the spring, when the honey-scent of manuka was on the hills, and the kowhai was a golden glory in the valleys. In the magic of sunset perhaps he heard the distant toll of the bell-bird, liquid, rich, talismanic. Was Destiny his companion as he stood beneath [the] Union jack [sic] to watch the approaching shore? (1970, p. 15)

Significantly, this vivid imagery is completely non-human. Hartley populates the scene with birdlife, flowers, and scent, yet there is no mention of the Maori inhabitants. The landscape Hartley paints in such garish colors is best summed up by the term the British Empire used to describe pre-colonial aboriginal-inhabited Australia: *Terra nullius*, "nobody's land." Like Hartley's description, this term is a rhetorical sleight-of-hand: it attempts to empty the landscape of indigenous occupants, this rendering the way open for the colonizer to assert their dominance.

Historical revisionism

This, then, is one tactic in forging a Pakeha identity: to turn back towards an idealized vision of Britishness while simultaneously denigrating the significance of indigenous Maori. Another more recent tactic is to

attack Maori's very claim to indigeneity. The issue of Maori sovereignty in New Zealand centers, in large part, on the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, a pledge between Maori tribal authorities and the British Government. Since the 1970s there has been significant debate as to the meaning and legal ramifications of the Treaty, with differences between the English and Maori versions of the document resulting in significant ambiguity. Since the 1975 Treaty of Waitangi Act, the overall trend in Treaty interpretation has been in favor of Maori land-rights and sovereignty (though these interpretations have not always carried across into government policy). In 2014, the Waitangi Tribunal (the commission of inquiry that issues recommendations to the government on treaty matters) ruled that "the rangatira [Maori authorities] who signed te Tiriti o [the treaty of] Waitangi in February 1840 did not cede their sovereignty to Britain" (p. xxii).

This increased focused on indigenous rights has provoked anxiety amongst some Pakeha and, at the extremes of white nationalism, caused a drive towards somewhat fantastical historical revisionism. One of the more vocal proponents of such reinterpretations of history is the One New Zealand Foundation. A nationalist organization founded as a political party in 1999, the Foundation has, since deregistration in 2006, focused on activism and advocacy. The Foundation claims that "the part-Maori population of New Zealand now enjoys privileges which by-pass democratic principles of one nation in law and Government" (n.d., para 3). The Foundation's use of the term "part-Maori" here is significant: the implication is that, after over one hundred years of intermarriage between Maori and Pakeha, Maori have somehow invalidated their indigenous status. Another more ambitious approach the Foundations takes (detailed on the website in an article titled "Proof of Pre Maori") is to claim that Maori have never been truly indigenous: that the generally accepted historical account of initial Polynesian migration to these islands is false, and that early European voyagers were the true indigenous inhabitants (Ross Baker, 2004).

As journalist Scott Hamilton has recently pointed out, the first claim of this nature was made by Kerry Bolton—one of the founders of the far-right New Zealand National Socialist Party —in his 1987 book *Lords of the Soil*, in which he argued that Europeans had dwelt in New Zealand since "ancient times" (quoted by Mike Barrington, 2017, para. 19). Bolton drew upon Maori oral accounts of a since-extinct tribe known as the "Ngāti Hotu," arguing that this group was, in fact, a white-skinned precursor to the Maori that was subsequently wiped out by the aggressive Polynesian newcomers (Hamilton, para. 10–11). As Hamilton somewhat facetiously puts it, this "fantasy of a white tangata whenua is the work of Europeans marooned a long way from Europe." More substantially, Debbie McCauley has described a broader cultural rise in what she terms "Celtic resistance identity" (2011, para. 23). McCauley uses the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castell's term "resistance identity" to mean a sense of self that emerges as part of "building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis on principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society" (Castell, 2009, p. 8). According to McCauley, for Bolton and the One New Zealand Foundation this oppositional selfhood rests upon a "pseudo-historical identity" that posits a long sequence of waves of pre-Polynesian arrivals in New Zealand, beginning with the Phoenicians 2666 years ago and including "Mauryans [a civilization in India over two thousand years ago], Greeks, Celts, Arabs, Tamils, Portuguese, and Spanish" (McCauley, para. 23).

Such revisionist theories have also been discussed by Ken Ring, an author and astrologer who has received some small fame in the New Zealand media for his claims that the cycles of the Moon profoundly influence both weather patterns and the occurrence of earthquakes. In 2004, Ring published an article on his

website that included speculation about the pre-Maori colonization of New Zealand. Ring has since taken the article down, however it continues to be quoted on message boards around the internet. In it, Ring finds evidence for pre-Maori European colonization of New Zealand in archeological sites such as "the large ancient stone circle at Mangonui [sic] Bluff near Dargaville which" he claims "displays the same diameter dimensions as Stonehenge (288 feet), which some claim could be further proof of the existence of the Indo/Egypto/European culture in NZ many thousands of years ago" (2004, para. 11). Ring also reinterprets Maori legends of the *patupaiarehe*, a race of spiritual beings analogous to the elves and fairies of European folklore. According to oral tradition the patupaiarehe, lacking the divine powers of gods or demi-gods, lived in their own communities separate from areas frequented by humans. The stories describe them as pale skinned with blond or reddish hair, some with pale blue eyes. Unlike the Maori, they did not tattoo themselves (Martin Wikaira, 2007, para. 1–4). Ring suggests that these legends may be grounded in historical fact, the patupaiarehe being an actual human tribe with links to a pre-Maori culture (para. 11). Pointing out that the patupaiarehe "are mentioned from the north of NZ to the Ureweras [a mountain range in the east-central North Island] in Maori oral tradition," he goes on to claim that "it seems along with other now-vanquished tribes they were hunted to extinction" (para. 12).

Ring cites American historian Charles Hapgood's 1966 book *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings* that "there were maps of the southern ocean in existence 20,000 years ago. . . . stored in the libraries of Alexandria" (para. 15). Hapgood's theories are given little credit by most contemporary authorities. They were, however, used by Erich von Däniken to back up his claims of extraterrestrial intervention in world history (1973, p. 15). There is also a suggestion of cultural superiority here: by suggesting that Maori came to the islands of the Pacific as the "work gangs" of "Euro/Indy traders," Ring shifts their historical identity from an explorative seafaring people to that, as he puts it, "slaves." He does claim, however, that he does this "not to denigrate present-day Maori status, but simply to accord Maori a rightful place in the nation's history" (para. 15).

Irrespective of Ring's own views on Maori, this kind of revisionist approach to history does fuel attempts to delegitimize the cause of Maori sovereignty. If Pakeha settlement predates Maori in New Zealand then, in a sense, European colonization of these islands was actually re-colonization, a return to a place already made home. Furthermore, the idea that the patupaiarehe or Ngāti Hotu were the victims of Maori genocide can be made to alleviate Pakeha guilt over the violence inherent in British colonization. Thus, whereas the imposition of *terra nullius* attempts to remove indigenous claims simply by ignoring them, the revisionist attempts, through the reinterpretation of history, to appropriate the term *indigenous* for their own use.

Progressive Pakeha identity

If we examine the issue of Pakeha identity as conceptualized by more progressive, less nationalistic Pakeha thinkers, we find a similar fixation on the meaning of *indigenous*. There is, of course, an alternative to fixing one's sense of cultural identity to a historical model: that is to focus not on the past but on the present. The progressive approach considers Pakeha identity as something multiplex and evolving, a product of the past but not determined by or beholden to it. Such an approach moves away, by necessity, from the monocultural frameworks of both colonialism and Celtic-prehistory. Instead, it views contemporary culture as something formed from a multiplicity of cultural strands: something new born from combinations of the old.

This approach can be found in the work of the late New Zealand historian Michael King, who claimed that

he identified, as a Pakeha, "as one who has always taken it for granted that I belonged in this land." He goes on to claim that his "people, predominantly remnants of the Irish diaspora, came here to a country where the first indigenous people had made a treaty with the Crown that permitted colonisation and gave us those two streams of people with rights to be here, tangata whenua [people of the land] and tangata tiriti [people of the treaty]" (n.d., para. 15). Elsewhere, he argues that the racial and cultural identity of Pakeha "could only accrete in New Zealand from the Maori, European and wider human ingredients that History has cast up on these shores . . . what we are acknowledging here is not something foreign: it is a second indigenous New Zealand culture" (2011, p. 40).

Others, however, have rejected such claims for an indigenous Pakeha culture by questioning whether Pakeha are truly committed to such a new identity. Donna Awatere Huata does this, in her seminal 1984 book *Maori Sovereignty*, by denying that Pakeha have made New Zealand their cultural home. In her book, she sets out "to show the lie of multiculturalism by pointing out how the Pakeha does not culturally co-exist with the tangata whenua" (p. 8). The argument here is that Pakeha culture is too anchored in European identity to truly constitute a new indigeneity. As Bruce Jesson put it in 1982, "Pakeha New Zealanders, even radical Pakeha New Zealanders, seem reluctant to renounce their British heritage in favor of an unambiguously New Zealand identity" (quoted in Laura Kamau, 2010, p. 26). Sociologist Avril Bell has made a similar argument, stating that "if Pakeha are to be indigenous [then] they are cut off from their history as the descendants and inheritors of the privileges of the colonisers of Aotearoa." They must, she goes on, abandon that history "as Pakeha are 'born' post colonization" (1996, p. 156). For these thinkers, indigeneity cannot be grounded in a prior identity: there can be no origin elsewhere that predates the indigenous identity. King's vision of Pakeha indigeneity, therefore, is invalid in that it attempts to incorporate into itself a distinct European thread.

Sheilagh Walker furthers this vein of argument. Like Bell, Walker attacks the assumption, implicit in King, that Pakeha "have been removed from their historical, cultural, and colonial roots." Walker goes on, however, to analyze the structures of power implicit in such debates over cultural and national identity. Whereas King's claim is essentially an attempt at legitimizing the psychological attachment—the feeling of belonging—of Pakeha New Zealanders to their nation of birth, Walker adds to this a Foucauldian analysis of how such questions of identity are part of the power dynamics of New Zealand society. Arguing that "many Pakeha . . . deny their dependence on Maori identity as a referent for their own identity," she goes on to claim that "King's claim that Pakeha culture is a 'second indigenous culture'" is problematic because it "takes the potential power of Maori critique out of Maori hands," the status of Maori as *tangata whenua* (people of the land) "belittled by his co-opting of the term" *indigenous* (1996, p. 18). The implication here is that the very term *indigenous* is itself a manifestation of resistance identity and that as such its meaning must be tightly controlled so as to prevent the power of that resistance from being weakened.

For Ani Mikaere, an academic specializing in Maori law and philosophy, the dynamics of this Foucauldian power-struggle is central to the issue of Pakeha identity. She views the Pakeha desire for self-determination as unjust in that "it is the wronged party [Maori] who is being expected to submit to terms imposed by the wrong-doer [Pakeha]" (2004, p. 18). She goes on to argue that "for Pakeha to gain legitimacy here, it is they who must place their trust in Mäori, not the other way around." Like Walker, Mikaere views indigeneity as a legitimization of power, claiming that "it is for the tangata whenua to determine Pakeha status in this land" through "a process of negotiation" done on Maori terms. "Nothing less will suffice," she concludes, if Pakeha

"truly want to gain the sense of belonging they so crave, the sense of identity that until now has proven so elusive" (p. 19).

Mikaere points out that many Pakeha will resist surrendering even a part of their right to self-determination to Maori. Indeed, recent writing from a diversity of Pakeha has expressed a desire to integrate respectfully with Maori culture while at the same time resisting any externally-imposed identity. Airini Beautrais, who won the prestigious 2016 *Landfall* essay competition with her piece "Umlaut," an examination of the author's own sense of European Pakeha identity, concludes the essay with a litany of self-definition: "I was born here, and I have come here from somewhere else. I have brought a few treasures with me." Beautrais's European heritage is represented here not as something that determines her identity but rather as a "treasure," something that enriches her present self rather than molds it into a specific shape. She goes on: "Some of my waka were sailing ships. . . . Some of my waka were steamships." Beautrais's use of the Maori term "waka" is part of her broader attempt at engaging in the kind of negotiation with Maori culture that Mikaere advocates. There is deference to indigenous authority when she writes: "I know where I am from. I know whose land I live on . . . I will say bird names, tree names, place names as the first people gave them" (para. 30). Yet at the same time, Beautrais attempts to hold elements of her identity back from anything that might be imposed upon her by others. In the final sentence of the essay, Beautrais articulates a more ambiguous sense of belonging, writing that "I carry all this with me at home, and at my other homes, and when I pass ports" (para. 30). This rendering of "homes" as plural leads into another approach to Pakeha identity: one that neither seeks to return to a European foundation nor attempts to construct a new indigeneity. Instead, we can see here a sense of the self as fluid and resistant to categorization. In this approach, self-identity becomes delocalized, dispersed across a multiplicity of cultures and histories. Jahan Ramazani, writing in a non-New Zealand context, has described such an identity as "floating free in an ambient universe of denationalized, deracialized form and discourses" (p. 350). Salman Rushdie, also writing in a more global context, has also described such a state. In his 1999 novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* Rushdie—a Indian-born, British-educated writer who famously broke with his Muslim heritage early in life—describes the experience of the denationalized individual, which is "to go through the feeling of being lost, into the chaos . . . to accept the loneliness, the wild panic of losing your moorings, the vertiginous terror of the horizon spinning round and round like the edge of a coin tossed in the air" (p. 177). Despite the "vertiginous terror" of this experience, there is a strong sense here that the fluidness of such a state is liberating and ultimately positive.

The desire for such a fluid form of self-identity is a persuasive one. It is articulated especially vividly throughout Andy Xie's recent essay "The Great New Zealand Myth," which won the 2017 *Landfall* Charles Brasch Young Writers' Essay Competition. In the essay, Xie, who came to New Zealand as a small child, describes how "growing up in a new country . . . immigrant children have no consistent model of identity to follow." However, he goes on, they "are all free to create and to become ourselves" (para. 12). For Xie, this act of self-creation is fueled by literature, which offers a utopian model of cultural and racial transcendence: as he puts it, in books he encountered "an infinite number of human voices calling to me, inviting me to enter into their worlds" (para. 8). Through the process of engagement with these voices, he goes on, immigrants "make New Zealand—which we first encounter as a formless land, obscured by a long white cloud of uncertain possibility—our home, which can become anything and everything that we want it to be" (para. 12). This world of unfettered potential sits as uneasily with the sovereignty concerns of indigenous activists as it does

with this reactionary revisionism of white nationalist Pakeha. There is an additional problem with such ideas in that they tend to appeal most to the intellectual and the literary-minded. The majority of New Zealanders—like the majority of people in most nations—do not live in the imaginary homelands of literature. To them, identity is something less abstract and more localized. For those whose sense of identity is grounded in the more concrete bedrock of family, community, and shared historical narrative, there seems little consolation in the more cerebral sense of identity evoked by writers such as Rushdie and Xie.

A Pakeha writer of Chinese heritage, Tze Ming Mok, has penned a description of the experience of minority immigrants that, at first glance, resonates with the vertiginous energies of fluid identity. As she puts it, immigrants "are magical people . . . [with] the power of flight, the power of shrinking, and of invisibility." In Mok's description, however, there are multiple levels of irony. By "invisibility" she is referring specifically to the way Chi Phung, a Vietnamese-born immigrant, lay injured and ignored on a Christchurch street after being assaulted by white supremacist skinheads. On a broader level, she is referring to the pressure immigrant minorities feel to assimilate into—or at least avoid challenging—the dominant culture. As she puts it, immigrant survival in "New Zealand has historically been a matter of assimilating into a culture that is unquestionably white." The magical powers she poetically assigns to immigrants, then, are not liberating powers of self-transformation; they are, rather, a drive towards self-denial and cultural surrender. Removal of one's cultural inheritance is seen not as a positive shift into "some impossible idea of a 'colour-blind' nation free of ethnicity," but rather as a surrender to another, more powerful culture (2004, p. 22). Thus, for Mok, the fluidity of the immigrant experience is dangerous; in that state, the potential for self-realization is matched, if not overwhelmed, by the potential for dissolution. Ultimately, it may be this sense of danger that drives both non-European and European Pakeha to search for new forms of self-determination, attempting to solidity their identities—at least to some degree—before they are swept away in the flux of broader cultural forces.

Conclusion

Such are the energies that have fueled, and that continue to fuel, attempts to define Pakeha identity in New Zealand. As we have seen, there are many polarizing ways to make this definition, some of which turn backward into the past, others that seek to form new concepts of identity itself. There is, however, no easy resolution to the question of just what it means to be Pakeha. On the contrary, increased immigration seems sure to complicate the issue, with more and more New Zealanders bringing with them identities linked to regions far removed from both Polynesia and Europe. When Abel Tasman coined the name *New Zealand* in 1642, he drew that name from a small region in Holland: Zeeland, literally "sea land," a term refering to an area of land surrounded on several sides by sea. In the 21st century, New Zealand is a different, metaphorical kind of sea-land: it is a nation in flux, an oceanic zone traversed by varied and frequently conflicting currents. In the future, it may orient itself towards older models of European or Maori hegemony, or it may arrange itself into more multiplex transnational modes of being. For the moment, though, Pakeha continue to remain poised (to appropriate Curnow's phrase) before those "unknown / But not improbable provinces" of postcolonial identity.

Since the writing of this article, the One New Zealand Foundation website has gone offline. The reference list refers to

archived copies of the website.

Notes

1) Pakeha is a Maori word referring to New Zealanders of European descent: more recently, it has been used to mean any non-Maori New Zealanders. In this article, I use the term in the second, broader sense.
2) in a 2016 interview with Duncan Campbell the speech-writer, Christopher Elder, would claim that Bolger simply referred to New Zealand as "part of the Asia-Pacific" (2016, para. 23)

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