

Surface / Depth: Staging a Pākehā World-view

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This paper is concerned with how the post-colonial identity, Pākehā may be expressed in a group of performance works.¹ Based on ideas developed in my doctoral thesis, 'Seeing Ourselves on Stage: Revealing Ideas about Pākehā Cultural Identity through Theatrical Performance' it considers performance from the specific perspective of Pākehā New Zealanders in Aotearoa/New Zealand.² As such, this paper is part of a wider group of works that consider this post-colonial identity. John Andrew's work *No Other Home Than This: A History of European New Zealanders* and Patrick Evans's *The Long Forgetting: Post-colonial Literary Culture in New Zealand* consider the post-colonial European New Zealand identity (the identity Pākehā) in art (especially painting and literature), and Glenda Ruth Keam's doctoral thesis 'Exploring Notions of National Style: New Zealand Orchestral Music in the Late Twentieth Century' considers the landscape in painting and music.³

This paper does not consider the concept of bicultural theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand, which Hilary Halba defines as "a territory occupied by two forces – theatre practice and Māori (sic) cultural enactments, protocols and ceremonies" nor transcultural theatre defined by Erika Fischer-Lichte as the interweaving of "texts, acting styles, artistic devices and artists" which can tour "from one international festival to the next."⁴ The focus is on Pākehā theatre, which, like bicultural theatre, stems from two sources: the forms of the European theatre tradition, and the Pākehā experience of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The proposition is that the selected Pākehā artists have imbued European performance structures with sufficient local ideas and images to create a truly local representation.

A phenomenological interpretation, based particularly on the work of Bruce Wilshire and Bert O. States underpins this paper.⁵ Close readings have been applied to the four performance works examined in this paper, and these readings are supported by information obtained through the sociological method of the semi-structured interview and an audience survey.⁶

The moment that initiated my research into the representation of Pākehā cultural identity in artistic space was the experience of seeing myself - a Pākehā New Zealander - culturally represented in the dance theatre work *Fishnet* (2004).⁷ *Fishnet* explores what it means to be female, middle-aged, and all but invisible, in a society that devalues older women.⁸ In this exploration, local objects such as *harakeke* (flax), *ti kouka* (cabbage tree) are brought onto the stage. Often the dancers execute the birdlike step used by the warrior who issues the challenge to *manuhiri* (guests) on the *marae*. The use of this particular step and of native plants, places what could be a general Western concern, an examination perceptions of women, in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This experience led me to look for other performance works that specifically dealt with what it meant to be of European descent in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was important that these works were not simply polemical recitations of cultural experience but unselfconscious representations of culture that reached to the heart of the experience of being Pākehā. This direct connection with a Pākehā representation of experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand was repeated as I listened to Andrew London perform his satirical works with the Hot Club Sandwich rhythm 'n blues group.⁹ I also looked at Chris Blake and Stuart Hoar's opera *Bitter Calm* (1993), a work that deals straightforwardly with the clash of the settler culture with Māori.¹⁰ Finally, I chose Gary Henderson's play *Home Land* (2005), which deals with the Pākehā sense of belonging and relationship to the land.¹¹

Cosmology, myth and the Other

Worlds presented in performance are grounded in the world-view or cosmology¹² of the people who make them. A cosmology is, states Yi-Fu Tuan, “a people’s more or less systematic attempt to make sense of environment” and is constructed from how a culture sees itself as a distinct entity.¹³ It is given expression in mythical stories that contain both its positive and negative aspects. Honko Lauri labels myths “superstories” as they are timeless composite creations “of oral tradition, folk poetry and ritual” containing “simultaneously the worldview and the religion of a culture.”¹⁴ Such stories are handed down through generations, being reshaped as they are retold.¹⁵ Carolyn L. Vash notes “the function of myths and sacred stories may be less to convey information than to evoke recognition of levels or aspects of reality that cannot be put into words.”¹⁶ In the Post-Enlightenment world where mythmaking is no longer religious and communal, film, television, and theatrical performance provide experiences where individual, personal exploration of myth can take place.¹⁷

Myths exist, and theatre takes place, in what Victor Turner and Richard Schechner call the subjunctive mood.¹⁸ This is, writes Turner, the mood opposite to the indicative mood that “presents itself as consisting of acts, states, occurrences, that are factual.”¹⁹ The subjunctive mood “expresses supposition, desire, hypothesis, possibility.”²⁰ Within the subjunctive mood a culture can create “worlds that never were on land or sea but that might be, could be, maybe.”²¹ Turner suggests that people flee to the subjunctive world to consider the problems of their lives because “a problem [...] staged in liminal surrounds ‘entertains’ rather than threatens.”²² Artistic creations in this mood allow societies to examine dominant cultural ideals and to reassess their continuing currency.

Within this subjunctive world a society can express aspects of its ‘psyche’ that it may not wish to acknowledge in everyday life in the form of an Other who is often characterised as a foreign, strange, or magical being.²³

Mita Choudhury writes that the theatre of eighteenth-century London characterised the Other as Persian or African, and suggests that for the eighteenth century London audience, the sense of being who one was and where one was (English in England) “could never be fully understood without an instinctive knowledge of physical and metaphorical, real and imagined borders.”²⁴ Stephen Turner observes that “the origin of anthropology is entangled in the European relationship with other peoples,” and Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks note that eighteenth and nineteenth century European cosmologies were imaginatively envisaged in opposition to what were perceived as the repressive and backward systems of other regimes.²⁵

Stuart Hall suggests that a relationship of definition through difference still exists for modern cultural identities noting that “it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, [...] [that identity] can be constructed.”²⁶ Lawrence Grossberg terms the Other the “supplement.”²⁷ In using this term Grossberg refers to Edward Said’s concept of the “exotic Other,” in particular the idea that the dominant culture constructs the Other as both a “repressed and desired difference.”²⁸ Grossberg suggests this simultaneous response occurs because an ‘exotic Other’ has mysterious and outlandish attributes that the dominant group lacks, which it simultaneously desires and repudiates.²⁹ The Other thus appears unfamiliar and possibly dangerous— simultaneously attractive and repellent. In the nineteenth, and certainly for the first half of the twentieth century, Māori were thought of as the exotic Other against whom the (Pākehā) settlers defined themselves. Indeed, the Māori chorus in *Bitter Calm* appear in this role of ‘exotic Other’.

While the four performance works covered in this paper present a cosmology of Pākehā cultural identity each work creates a unique performance world representing, through differing material, different views of Pākehā.

Pākehā: A people changed by their environment

Like all peoples who have come from diverse origins, Pakeha are still, in Stuart Hall's words, "in process."³⁰ The original European settlers came from a range of cultures, particularly Scots, Irish and English, but also others such as Yugoslav, Dutch, Danish and French. Over generations these distinctions of origin have been blurred. This process is also true for Māori who, before they came into contact with European settlers, thought of themselves in terms of their iwi rather than as a nationwide group of people. As these two groups lived side by side, each produced changes in the other. Incorporation of the attributes of one group by a different group is a characteristic of modern cultural identities. For example, Edward Braithwaite notes that living in the West Indies engendered a marked change in the thinking, attitudes, and customs of the peoples who resided, generation after generation, away from their original homelands.³¹ In Jamaica these people "contributed to the formation of a society which developed [...] its own distinctive character or culture which, in so far as it was neither British nor West African, is called 'creole'."³²

In a similar manner, Pākehā were formed by the mutual responses of two peoples initially "cultural strangers to each other."³³ As Paul Spoonley notes "the word Pākehā denotes those dominant group members who are of European descent but whose values and practices are a product of their New Zealand location."³⁴ While the landscape, New Zealand's isolation, and the process of settlement affected the values and practices of the settlers from Europe, living alongside Māori has also been a major influence. Historian Michael King stated in 2007 that he believed that some Pākehā characteristics owed much to generations of interaction with Māori, and John Andrews writes, "understanding Maori (sic), their culture and world view, and a shared sense of belonging to this country are now part of being Pakeha (sic) [which is ...] a state of mind including Maori and the land in the sense of place and identity."³⁵

This change in perspective can be observed in the shifting use of language on the part of Pākehā. While Pākehā speak English, they borrow many words from Māori. Waaka Vercoe writes that, “we all speak Pakeha (sic) English, a version of English that has borrowed at least 4000 words from Maori (sic) thereby making it unique to the people of this country.”³⁶ Joan Metge notes that “[s]ince 1980 in particular, a significant number of words for Maori (sic) cultural concepts and practices have come into English,” and as Raymond Williams notes, new ways of speaking facilitate new ways of thinking.³⁷ An example of this change is the now common use by Pākehā of the Māori the word *mana*, a term that can mean status, prestige, lineage, honour, and charisma.³⁸ The cultural way of being and behaving that King labels *Pākehātāngā* can exist only in relation to *Māoritāngā*.³⁹

Not only have Māori words been incorporated into New Zealand English but certain Māori rituals have become familiar to Pākehā in a similar way to that in which certain Pākehā rituals (such as Christian baptism) are now used by Māori. For example, the inaugural meetings of new organisations are often blessed by a kaumatua (male elder) with appropriate *karakia* (invocation/prayer). These changes demonstrate the truth of Homi Bhabba’s observation that “the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; [...] even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.”⁴⁰ Cultural theorist, Stephen Turner, questions this Pākehā use of Māori ritual as an “effort to indigenize themselves— to establish their own cultural authority,” noting that “[i]ronically Maori (sic) culture has become a new high culture in ceremonial displays of New Zealand nationalism.”⁴¹ The question of whether or not the use of Māori culture in New Zealand ceremony is appropriate is complex, and will not be further addressed here. I will simply state that although such incorporation is not always well received by both parties, it does acknowledge, and display, a world-view on the part of Pākehā that, while it descends from a European world-view, is now subtly different.⁴² As Turner

also notes “[i]t is becoming increasingly apparent to Pakeha (sic) that to [...] some extent their sense of identity has been shaped by the Polynesian presence, not just by European activity [...] [w]ithin New Zealand, for instance, the very word *Pakeha* (sic) is the only term that distinguishes white from Maori (sic) New Zealanders.”⁴³ The move to incorporate a certain percentage of Māori language and activity into Pākehā culture has been accompanied by a corresponding move away from Europe. In support of this idea, Turner offers a quote from John Greville Agard Pocock. “Pakeha (sic) may be from Europe but they are not of it. Their cultural identity and cultural authority, is dependent on a history which does not coincide with that of Europe.”⁴⁴ Therefore, though it is problematic to try to precisely define a developing identity, this paper offers the definition of Pākehā culture formulated by Michael King: that it is a distinctive white New Zealand culture significantly different from its European roots. He states that: “to be Pakeha (sic) [...] is to be a non-Maori (sic) New Zealander who is aware of and proud of my antecedents, but who identifies as intimately with this land, as intensively and as strongly as anybody Maori. It is to be, [...] another kind of indigenous New Zealander.”⁴⁵

While under the Treaty of Waitangi all people who are not Māori are called Pākehā, this paper does not consider whether all people in Aotearoa/New Zealand who are not Māori (such as Chinese, Indians, and Pacific Islanders) are culturally Pākehā, but notes that as the cultural identity, Pākehā, has been produced in the past by living in the land of Aotearoa/New Zealand and that it may continue to change as new groups of people arrive. In this way, Pākehā identity is like the Pacific identity described by anthropologist Alan Howard as developing not by lineage, but by living in the land, and acting in the place where one lives.⁴⁶

Using illusion to present a cultural world

While this paper briefly considers the third space of cultural construction in which Pākehā find themselves located, its primary concern is theatrical third space, the liminal areas between the everyday world and fiction, and between the performers and the audience.⁴⁷ Like children's play, theatre is an attempt to bring order to what would otherwise be the random experience of the constantly changing world of space and time. Benjamin Hunnigher observed that play brings "a certain part of the chaotic world under control," and according to Wilshire theatre also creates a bounded space in the chaos of existence in which we can observe ourselves.⁴⁸ "[W]e must try – and fail – to bound the boundless if we would reveal it," he writes.⁴⁹ In the ordered psychic liminal space created by performance people can contemplate both their personal strengths and weaknesses, and those of their society.⁵⁰

Theatre achieves this aim by creating an illusory world through the use of theatre technology, lights, costumes and flats, and through a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience which allows the illusory world to 'stand in' for the real world. This allows the imaginative illusion to have a reality for the duration of the event, permitting performance to "unmask" everyday life as it holds the audience in "a real world and the illusion of an unreal world" simultaneously.⁵¹ During the two hour running time of a live performance the audience and the performers are 'really present' to each other and engaged in the 'real' moment of performance. Peter Brook's definition of theatre as a man, an empty stage, and a watcher encapsulates this concept of presence.⁵² During a performance all the participants, both audience and actors, become mimetically involved with all the other person(s) on and off the stage. As the theatrical world temporarily becomes the 'real' world it reveals the participants' complex natures to themselves by disclosing what is hidden in everyday life.⁵³ For Wilshire this disclosure is the ultimate role of art and an antidote to the

everyday experience of modern society that “allows no room for serious consideration of legend, communal memory, fantasy, and mythical time ‘timeless’ time .”⁵⁴

Pākehā and an artistic representation of culture

Michael Taussig asserts that human beings express a “social life” through art and Williams defines the artist’s restatement of the world as embodying the “common meaning of the society” at the same time as it is “literally a way of seeing new things and new relationships.”⁵⁵ John Bluck writes that the clearest expression of constantly evolving Pākehā identity is found in the arts, and “the more confident our artists, poets, writers, dancers, musician, film-makers grow, the harder it is to compose any reliable checklist of features for those who are not Māori but belong here before anywhere else.”⁵⁶

The question of whether or not Pākehā theatre can speak truly about itself if it remains within the forms it inherits from Western theatre is important. Turner, examining the problems for critical discussion about New Zealand cultural issues targeted at audiences beyond New Zealand, suggests that once a society begins trying to speak of itself in international terms it loses its sense of its own localness. He terms this loss of localness the “metropolitan effect” and suggests that if you live at the border, as New Zealanders do, then your ideas about yourself are always related to the ideas that radiate from a force-field, that “does not seem to come from anywhere” but that makes “everything [...] subject to this projection, as if there is no difference between here and there, you and me.”⁵⁷ As Pākehā do not have a local language, discussion about Pākehā identity, what Turner terms “local knowing” cannot be phrased in a local idiom but must use imported concepts.⁵⁸ Similarly, Pākehā theatre can take local concerns and reconfigure them within the forms received from Europe, but the question remains as to whether or not such forms accurately represent the Pākehā

experience. Hilary Halba (writing of bi-cultural theatre, not Pākehā theatre) wonders, given the Eurocentric origins of theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand, “whether bicultural theatre provides yet another form of oppression whereby Māori (sic) culture might only ‘speak through’ the Pākehā (sic) (theatre) forum, and self-articulate only as that forum articulates.”⁵⁹ Although at first it may not seem obvious, Pākehā theatre faces a similar difficulty. The form and forums of Europe have long dictated the shape and matter of theatre works produced by Pākehā artists in Aotearoa/New Zealand. By using these forms Pākehā theatre also may be ‘speaking through’ Europe.

The isolation of Aotearoa/New Zealand can be a mixed blessing. While it can encourage an independence of thought, as the “first to confront the new, the not-yet-known” an inverse result of this is the phenomenon known as ‘the cultural cringe’.⁶⁰ The term refers to the mind-set that New Zealand artists are not as good as foreign artists, who are perceived as being more talented, better informed, and able to speak from a place of greater artistic authority. It is perhaps slightly tangential to quote Homi K. Bhabba in relation to Pākehā, yet the following description of colonised people touches on a very real experience for the settler. He notes “[i]t is as if the very emergence of the ‘Colonial’ is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the authoritative discourse itself.”⁶¹ Self-representation of the colonisers within a post-colonial society can also be inhibited by the prohibition (real or perceived) imposed on them by the country of origin. This sense of inferiority is similar to, if not the same as, the limitation on self-representation and actualisation discussed by Bhabba. The Pākehā artists discussed in this paper work against the background of persistent ‘cultural cringe’ yet David Novitz offers hope for an acceptance of the importance of local self-representation, noting that that “the search for cultural distinctiveness and identity is, in the broadest sense, a political, but not a scientific quest [that] sets its own criteria of success.”⁶²

The European influence is most clearly present in the forms of opera, dance theatre, and dramatic play, which remain substantially unaltered in Pākehā theatre. This makes Pākehā theatre structurally unlike bicultural or Māori theatre, which has developed new forms, such as Theatre Marae where “tikanga Māori (sic) is audibly, visibly and spatially given primacy.”⁶³ The local influence is apparent in the themes of the works. While only *Bitter Calm* explicitly deals with the relationship between Māori and Pākehā, this relationship lies in the background of all the works. *Home Land* traces the history of one Pākehā family’s ownership of their land, but while it is never stated in the play, a New Zealand audience would know that prior to the Pākehā occupancy the land would have had Maori owners. *Fishnet* brings the images of the primeval land onto the stage through indigenous plants *harakeke* (flax) and *ti kouka* (cabbage tree) and the farmed land via the animal bones. These symbolic local items also represent the integration of the tāngāta whenua in the consciousness of the Pākehā performance. A further integration is embodied in the tongue-tied goddess who carries *harakeke* and a broom – images of the land and a mother/housewife. This oblique reference to Papa-tu-a-nuku can be read as an acceptance of the importance of the land and its people.⁶⁴ There is a progression from rejecting the tāngāta whenua, the Other, as totally alien in *Bitter Calm*, through a shadow presence in *Home Land*, to an integration of some of the Otherness of Māori in *Fishnet*.

Peter Ackroyd writes of the English relationship to the land that “we owe much to the ground on which we dwell. It is the landscape and the dreamscape.”⁶⁵ This is equally true for Pākehā. The works deal with the process of coming to terms with the ‘other’ quality of a land that is very different to Europe. As much of the land mass was covered in virgin bush when settlers arrived it retained its primeval aspects. Even today, the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand inhabit a space that, in terms of Western iconography, is the-end-of-the-earth, a site that has long been considered

mythical. Pākehā live alongside a people who have a relationship with a land that is Papa-tu-a-nuku, the earth mother who gives birth to all living things. *Bitter Calm* is set in a world that has the characteristics of a potential Eden. A sense of awe and enchantment can be associated with such a place, and the idea of mystery is evident in the opera where the trees, lying across part of the front of the stage, create a physical barrier between the world of the audience and the world of the opera, suggesting a sense of looking in on something beyond the reach of the audience.

The Pākehā relationship with the land means that it is treated both as a love object, something to bond with, and something that needs to be battled to bring it under control. The climate of Aotearoa/New Zealand can be harsh and unpredictable, and much of the farmland requires care and attention to keep it in production. *Home Land* concentrates on this ambivalent love-hate Pākehā relationship to the land by evoking cold weather that keeps the characters inside during the action. The play centres on the last two days that the character, eighty year old Ken Taylor, spends on the family farm. The family have assembled to take Ken to a retirement home, but Ken does not want to leave the place that, as his home land, is the basis of his identity. Though unlike the characters of *Bitter Calm* these characters are Pākehā, as they are firmly rooted in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the play uses personal responses to examine a generalised Pākehā sense of dislocation. Ken is about to be torn from the farm that has been his life. His son, Graeme, suggests that he might sell the land, while Ken's daughter Denise cannot face the prospect of its being sold, protesting that "It's always been here."⁶⁶ Her brother Graeme tartly observes "It hasn't been your home for thirty years."⁶⁷ The ambivalent relationship that the post-settler Pākehā (represented in the Taylor family) have to the land finds expression in the comment by Sophie, Ken's young grand-daughter. She tells him she "found where we carved our initials. I found Mum's and Uncle Graeme's, too. That hayshed must've been there forever."⁶⁸ This verbal image is a sign of the attachment the previous

generations had to the land, however Sophie's parents (Denise and Paul) do not want to be farmers. Thus, just as Sophie comes to realise the history of the farm and the fact that she is part of its story, the family's physical tie to the land is to be broken. This change makes the home land of the future an uncertain place that will depend on relationships rather than place. Denise's statement, "I know where I want to be. [...] Home." elicits the response from her husband, Paul "Ah ... but where's that?" She then asserts that 'home' is "[i]n the right place with the right people."⁶⁹

By giving physical form to abstract concepts through the use of indigenous plants, *Fishnet* represents a Pākehā relationship of an ongoing connection to the land that it continues in the lighting design. A dark stage is spotted with pools of light, reminiscent of the movement through light and dark experienced in the dense bush of Aotearoa/New Zealand. In this symbolic and illusory work the lighting states continually vary the intensities of brightness in the lit areas, invoking a sense of borderland, a quality which can be seen as referencing settler contact with the tāngāta whenua and their culture. In keeping with the mixed heritage of Pākehā, the work combines local and European production elements. For example, the music is Baroque and the sparse and economical set and tightly targeted lights reflect modern European production values.⁷⁰ This fusion of theatrical elements enables *Fishnet* to reflect the world-view of the post-settler generations of Pākehā culture with its ongoing connection to Europe and its growing appreciation of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The Representation of Pākehā and their 'Other'

In *Bitter Calm* the focus is on love and death. Matiu, John Robertson's illegitimate son by a Māori woman is accused of murdering Catherine, Robertson's daughter by his wife Elizabeth. The hired-hand Thomas Bull confesses to the murder, but Elizabeth refuses to believe that Matiu is innocent. The opera ends with the prospect of a further confrontation

between Matiu, supported by his iwi, and the Pākehā settlers. The opera manifests ideas of a cultural other in the 'exotic Māori Other' of the character of Matiu, the young Māori hero, and the 'lover', who is classically both desired and repudiated by the settlers. *Bitter Calm* also provides a personal border against which the central (settler) characters define themselves. This border is presented through the character of Thomas Bull, who has many of the traits of a classic melodramatic villain, a role in which the feared dark side of the self is embodied in a character. The task of the opera is to consider the nature of the society that produces it, therefore the characters in the opera, though settlers in 1841, reflect contemporary concerns.⁷¹ As the work moves to a presentation of Aotearoa as not 'home' but the "place where you die," it reveals a fracture in the relationship of Pākehā and Europe, highlighting that while Pākehā settler society has a likeness to its place of origin (Europe) that likeness has become unlike through its relationship with Māori.⁷²

Andrew London of the group *Hot Club Sandwich*, like the characters of *Home Land* speaks from a position of embeddedness in Pākehā society. The Other of his work is the other of everyday difference, those outside of London but with whom, in Wilshire's terms, he is mimetically involved.⁷³ Although London critiques the Pākehā world, unlike the characters of *Bitter Calm* he does not question his place in it—thus his stance can be seen as a (temporary) end position. He is not considering the process of adjustment to a new place, but unselfconsciously satirising the everyday world of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Confidently ridiculing his own culture through his satiric rhythm 'n blues style his ironic songs deal with love, money, rugby, the roles of men and women, and middle-class Pākehā angst. An example is the song 'Middle Class White Boy Blues' (2005) which in looking at the difficulties of being a well-fed blues player both enshrines and satirises the 'good life'. The propelling idea of the song is 'Godzone'—a name New Zealanders give their country.⁷⁴ It suggests New Zealand is a land of

continuous plenty where life is easy for all. To live in such a place is a Pākehā cultural aspiration. In reality, although the country has provided great opportunity for some, the idea of a 'Godzone' has never applied to all citizens of Aotearoa/New Zealand. From the earliest days of European settlement, the poor did not experience this country as a land of plenty. European settlement deprived Māori of their sovereignty, their land, and for many, their language. The ironic contrast drawn in the title between the world of the blues, with its poverty, violence, and drug abuse, and the detached, complacent, and comfortable lifestyle of middle-class life mocks the audience. The hyperbole of the following statement indicates that the list of possessions belonging to the storyteller of 'Middle Class White Boy Blues' is not so much a celebration of success as a critique of material culture.

Hey I got a five-bedroom house in Brooklyn
A double garage for the Porsche
Got a weekend bach in Taupo
And a jet-powered motor launch.
(Play some middle class white boy blues chaps)⁷⁵

Speaking from the perspective of the post-settler occupant, London reveals that a portion at least of Pākehā New Zealand has come of age and is no longer afraid to talk critically about itself.

Difference

An important question for Pākehā is: how do they differ from other cultures, including their ancestral cultures? Difference from their European ancestors may be expressed as a liminality between two cultures, a border or an estuary or third space.⁷⁶ Writing of an "inter national culture, based [...] on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*," Bhabba stresses that it is the "*inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture."⁷⁷ Currently Pākehā find themselves in the inbetween space of who they were originally and who they are now. Paul Spoonley suggests that

while Pākehā are happy to “explore their cultural heritage and how it might have been shaped by its New Zealand location, an important element has been the way in which the label has come to signify a particular position within debates about biculturalism,” and he wonders how willing Pākehā New Zealanders are to explore their relationship with Māori.⁷⁸ The works discussed present the problems that face the Pākehā members of the community of Aotearoa/New Zealand. They creatively consider the ongoing difficulties in the relationship between Pākehā and Māori. *Bitter Calm* deals with early conflicts between settlers and tāngāta whenua, but also suggests that living alongside a different people has affected the post-settler population. In drawing a parallel with the conditions of 1841, *Bitter Calm* asks its audience to consider what has changed since then and what remains the same. *Home Land*, *Fishnet* and London’s song examine contemporary Pākehā issues of land, the role of women, and a materialistic culture.

Music

While the total experience of *Bitter Calm*, and Andrew London’s songs depends as much on the music as from spoken/sung texts, it is the verbal content of the works that interest me. The European forms of pitch, tempo scale, and rhythm on which the music is based contribute to the syncretic blend of the local and the imported. The music of Andrew London, which is a vehicle for the words, is simple in structure and based on the harmonies of Rhythm 'n Blues. The music of *Bitter Calm* is complex at times, enhancing the action, at others, working against the text and the activity on the stage. Blake’s post-graduate musical training in Europe means this music is based on a recognisably western classical model.

It is through the story and the imagery of the lyrics, not the music that Blake “will hook into a New Zealand environment.”⁷⁹ For example the actions of the Māori chorus bring the living presence of the strange Pacific world in which the settlers found themselves, to the stage and their presence

creates a point of conflict for the settler characters. Blake also found the Māori chorus a point of anxiety because, as he explains, they “felt that they should be doing waiata [Māori traditional song],” but not being Maori, Blake didn’t think he “had any validity in putting one into it. So we ended up then with quite a large Māori presence in the opera, that was [largely] silent.” However in terms of the discussion of Pākehā cultural identity, it was important that the chorus were a visible presence and were not completely silent. “There’s a whole undercurrent of Te Reo being dotted through some of the noisy bits of the drama.”⁸⁰ As a group they could not be ignored, as they commented among themselves on the action, and interjected when they saw fit. Thus they vividly represented the reciprocal, if at times strained, relationship between Māori and Pākehā through a vocalised, if not sung, presence in the opera.

What the development of a distinctly Pākehā music might be is unclear. Blake suggests it might be a music based on the tradition of Western classical music, but subtly infiltrated with Southern Pacific resonances. In *Bitter Calm*, “there were some sounds that maybe more uniquely sound [...] New Zealand. There is a log drum that’s used occasionally, [...] so that was an interesting artistic decision.” He is excited by the fact that “there’s all these experiments being tried on a scale and blending things in a way that didn’t happen ten years ago or twenty years ago.” Recalling his own heritage “I’m descended from English settlers”, he adds that as Pākehā music develops,

[y]ou’ll slowly incorporate more and more Polynesian and Māori elements into these bigger inherited [European] forms, until you end up with something that might be uniquely New Zealand.⁸¹

While London expresses frustration that as yet “there’s not a lot of Pākehā culture in song, maybe because we’re just too young,” he says that since the 1980s the trend for New Zealand songwriters to focus on international models to the detriment of local forms and sounds is changing,

though this “of course, is only [...] the blink of an eye ago.”⁸² Lyne Pringle, choreographer of *Fishnet*, is also excited by the possibilities for performance inherent in Pākehā history and experience as “there’s all the stories that haven’t even been told yet.”⁸³

Performance as an agent for change

Rob Baum writes “to the degree that they are used or thought [...]; one might say that metaphors define culture.”⁸⁴ (2003 18-19). Theatre is built on metonymy and metaphor and theatrical performances do not represent everyday recreations of identity, but the embodiment of mythical worlds that set forth idealised archetypes and the ideas that a culture holds about itself—its ideas of greatness and failure. Wilshire proposes that as

“theatre [...] is the theory of acting and identity [... its job is] to recreate the world in a ‘world’ of theatrical imagination [which] makes us aware of conditions of the world’s being and meaningfulness that had before lain in the obscurity of the ‘taken for granted’.”⁸⁵

Or as States puts it, “theater is the one place where society collects in order to look in upon itself as a third-personal other.”⁸⁶ Through its creation of catharsis in the spectator (and the performer), serious theatre offers a purging of “the menace of successiveness.”⁸⁷ It achieves this by stopping the fleeting action of daily life through offering familiar objects and events in “a defamiliarized way so that they are ‘uplifted to the view’.”⁸⁸ Important works of theatre struggle with the questions of whether or not “the individual can authorise themselves,” and the problem considered is “*par excellence* of our own identity as selves.”⁸⁹ Thus, by involving performers and audience in the lives of the characters, theatre reveals the human ability to ‘stand in’ both for psychic aspects of the self, and for aspects of a society. Theatre is, writes Wilshire “the domain of tragic freedom, self-deception, and engulfment in others and the world. It is the mission of art – particularly the theatre – to reveal this offstage reality.”⁹⁰

It is not only the metaphorical aspect of theatre, but the immediate, actual presence of both audience and actors in the same space that makes theatrical performance a profound experience. In the liminal world, the third space between performer and audience where the meaning of performance occurs, we encounter the greatness and the problems of becoming ourselves through the representation of both positive and negative aspects of a society. In this way theatre transcends the limitations of any one person, creating its 'truth' from the multiple attentions and imaginations in the space between the performer and the audience, while at the same time being concerned at an individual level with the nature of personal and cultural identity. In the authorisation that Pākehā, as members of the audience, give to the actors to stand in for them on the stage, and the agreement that they undertake to become an aspect of that standing in through their participation in the character, they authorise themselves as themselves.⁹¹ Though as States notes,

the theater (sic) tells only marvellous lies. Here there is absolute certainty of a beginning, a middle and an end, [...] This much, at least, is far from life, which is lived in the mean regions of high probability: normal events, unevents, subliminally (even) disappointments.⁹²

Therefore in this sense, the identity created on the stage is more 'complete' than any identity in everyday life could ever be.

In Pākehā theatre the works pose the unspoken question: how can Pākehā become themselves except through seeing others (the actors) as they stand in (as characters) for the character types of Pākehā society, and thus stand in for those of the audience who are Pākehā? Rather than offering solutions these works present problems, challenges to ideas, traditions and modes of thinking. The mythology they embody is, a complex mix of good and bad. As an aspect of being, and of being-in-the-world these performance works, by imitating the everyday Pākehā express the Pākehā world-view.⁹³ They question interracial and interpersonal relationships and in their exploration of the social interactions of Pākehā in Aotearoa/New Zealand

through the mechanisms of the stage, give a presence on the stage to the Pākehā “imagined community.”⁹⁴

Adriann Smith completed her PhD in Performance Studies at the University of Otago. Her research background includes investigative documentaries for Radio New Zealand. She is interested in how Pākehā make stories about themselves, and her PhD thesis is titled ‘Seeing Ourselves On Stage: Revealing Ideas About Pākehā Cultural Identity through Theatrical Performance’.

¹ Māori words in this paper, including the word Pākehā, which are in common use in New Zealand English like 'kōwhai' the name of a yellow flowered tree, are not italicised. Other words such as *wairua* are used when naming a particular Māori concept and are italicised. The word 'iwi' used when the work refers to Māori characters and the term 'tangāta whenua' an acknowledgement of the First Nation status of Māori are not italicised.

² Smith, Adriann A H. "'Seeing Ourselves on Stage' Revealing Ideas About Pākehā Cultural Identity through Theatrical Performance." University of Otago, 2010.

³ Andrews, John. *No Other Home Than This a History of European New Zealanders*. (Nelson New Zealand: Craig Potton Publishing, 2009).

Evans, Patrick. *The Long Forgetting Post-Colonial Literary Culture in New Zealand*. (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2007).

Keam, Glenda Ruth. "Exploring Notions of National Style: New Zealand Orchestral Music in the Late Twentieth Century." Doctoral thesis, The University of Auckland, 2006.

⁴ Halba, Hilary. "Aspects of Bicultural Theatre Praxis in Aotearoa/Te Waipounamu " unpublished M.A., University of Otago 2006, 51

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. "Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being in-Between." *New Theatre Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2009): 391-401, 397

⁵ Wilshire, Bruce W. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.)

States, Bert O. *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms on the Phenomenology of the Theatre*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985)

⁶ Spurlin, William J, and Micheal Fischer, *The New Criticism and Contemporary Literary Theory : connections and continuities*. Edited by W. Cairn, *Wellesley Studies in Critical Theory, Literary History, and Culture*. (New York, London: Garland, 1995), 365

Eight Pakeha performance artists were interviewed in depth. The group included those people who made or directed the selected works and also an actor and a dancer. Conversations with these artists revealed the depth of their personal reflection on, and experience of, the making of local works. Excerpts from interviews with Chris Blake, Andrew London and Lyne Pringle are included in this paper.

⁷ Pringle, Lyne. *Fishnet*. Wellington, 2004.

⁸ Pringle, Lyne. "Interview." In *video*, edited by Adriann Smith. Wellington, 2005.

Quotations from taped interviews that are not publically available.

⁹ London, Andrew. "Middle Class White Boy Blues," Wellington, live performance, July, 2005.

¹⁰ Blake, Chris. *Bitter Calm*. Wellington, 1994.

¹¹ Henderson, Gary. *Home Land*. Wellington: Play Market, 2004.

¹² "contemplation of the world itself, and of the way life is lived in the world" Oxford Dictionary on Line." (*Oxford Dictionary On Line*, 2007 [accessed June 2008]. Available from www.oed.com)

¹³ Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place the Perspective of Experience*.)Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 88.

¹⁴ Lauri, Honko. "The Kalevala and the World's Epics: An Introduction ". In *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epic: The Kalevala and Its Predecessors* edited by Honko Lauri. (Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990), 3.

¹⁵ Turner, Victor Witter. *The Anthropology of Performance*. (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 41.

¹⁶ Vash, Carolyn L. *Personality and Adversity Psychospiritual Aspects of Rehabilitation*. (New York: Springer, 1994), 81-82.

¹⁷ Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1995), 16.

¹⁸ Turner (1986), 41.

Schechner, Richard. *Between Theatre and Anthropology*. (Philadelphia, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 38.

¹⁹ Turner (1986), 41

²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ Turner (1986), 26-27.

²² *Ibid*.

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- ²³ Jensen, Minna Skafté. "The Homeric Epics and Greek Cultural Identity." In *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epic: The Kalevala and Its Predecessors*, edited by Honko Lauri. (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990), 36.
- ²⁴ Choudhury, Mita. *Interculturalism and Resistance in the London Theatre 1660 -1800, Identity, Performance, Empire* Bucknell Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture. (London: Lewisburg [Pa.] : Bucknell University Press ; London : Associated University Presses, 2000), 123.
- ²⁵ Turner, Stephen. "A Legacy of Colonialism: The Uncivil Society of Aotearoa/New Zealand." *Cultural Studies* 13, no. 3 (1999 a): 408-22, 414.
- Pearson, Mike and Shanks, Michael. *Theatre/Archaeology*. (London, New York: Routledge, 2001).
- ²⁶ Hall, Stuart. "Who Needs Identity?". In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay. (London and California: Sage Publications, 1996), 4-5.
- ²⁷ Grossberg, Lawrence. "Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?". In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay. (London and California: Sage Publications 1996), 90.
- ²⁸ [...] there was a Near Orient and a Far Orient, a familiar orient, [...] and a novel orient. The orient therefore alternated in the mind's geography between being an Old World to which one returned, as to Eden or Paradise, there to set up a new version of the old, and being a wholly new place to which one came as Columbus came to America, in order to set up a New World [...]. Certainly neither of these Orients was purely one thing or the other: it is their vacillations, their tempting suggestiveness, their capacity for entertaining and confusing the mind that are interesting" Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. Verso), 58.
- Grossberg, 90.
- ²⁹ Grossberg, 89.
- ³⁰ Hall, 2.
- ³¹ Braithwaite, Edward. *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1170-1820*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
- ³² Braithwaite, xii.
- ³³ Braithwaite, 296.
- ³⁴ Spoonley, Paul. "The Challenges of Post-Colonials." *Sites* n30, no. Autumn (1995): 53-63, 55.
- ³⁵ "Michael King." www.writerscentre.org.nz/michael_king.php. 2007
- Andrews, 14.
- ³⁶ Vercoe, Waaka. "Maori Pakeha Relationship in Aotearoa." *Panui: Newsletter on Maori Activities within the Bay of Plenty Regional Council*, 2004, 2-3, 1.
- ³⁷ Metge, Joan. "Words Escape Us." *NZ Words - the NZDC Newsletter*, May 2009, 1-2, 2.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. (London Chatto & Windus, 1961), 23-24.
- ³⁸ Macalister, John. "A Dictionary of Māori Words in New Zealand English." (Melbourne, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65.
- ³⁹ King, 2007.
- Māori cultural beliefs and practices-- Macalister, 70.
- ⁴⁰ Bhabha, Homi K. "The Commitment to Theory." In *The Location of Culture*. (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 38.
- Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace Journeys To Los Angeles and Other Real-And-Imagined Places*. (Cambridge Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996), 6
- ⁴¹ Turner (1999), 414
- ⁴² I acknowledge that Māori still have many grievances over land, language and the loss of other cultural taonga (treasures) as a result of the colonisation process which have not been adequately addressed by Pākehā.
- ⁴³ Turner (1999), 412
- ⁴⁴ Pocock in Turner(1999), 412.
- ⁴⁵ King, Michael *Being Pakeha Now- Reflections and Recollections of a White Native*. (Auckland: Penguin, NZ, 1999), 239.
- ⁴⁶ Howard, Alan. "Cultural Paradigms, History, and the Search for Identity in Oceania." In *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, edited by Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poyer. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 256-267.
- ⁴⁷ Bhabha (1994), 36-38.
- ⁴⁸ Hunningher, Benjamin. "The Origin of the Theatre." In *Perspectives on Drama* edited by James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 540.

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- ⁴⁹Wilshire, Bruce W. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 201 .
- ⁵⁰ Turner (1986), 26-27.
- ⁵¹ States, 154.
- ⁵² Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 11.
- ⁵³ Wilshire, 48.
- ⁵⁴ Wilshire, 48.
- ⁵⁵ Taussig, Michael. *Mimesis and Alterity a Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, Chapman Hall, 1993), 83.
Williams, 30.
Williams, 24.
- ⁵⁶ Bluck, John *Killing Us Softly Challenging the Kiwi Culture of Complaint*. (Christchurch: Shoal Bay Press, 2001), 88-89.
- ⁵⁷ Turner, Stephen. "Why I Can't Think Where I Am" In *Derrida Downunder*, edited by Laurence Simmons. (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2001), 69.
- ⁵⁸ Turner (2001), 69.
- ⁵⁹ Halba, 51.
- ⁶⁰ Turner (2001), 69.
- ⁶¹ Bhabba, Homi K. "The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis* October Vol. 28 no. Spring (1984): 125-33, 127.
- ⁶² Novitz, David. "On Culture and Cultural Identity." In *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, edited by David Novitz and Bill Willmott. (Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1989), 26.
- ⁶³ Halba, 52
- ⁶⁴ Earth Mother and wife of Rangi-nui the Sky Father. All living things originate from them. (Te Māhuri Study Guide (Ed. 1): 39-42;) accessed 20/08/08.
- ⁶⁵ Ackroyd, Peter. *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002), 449.
- ⁶⁶ *Home Land*, 82-83.
- ⁶⁷ *Home Land*, 83.
- ⁶⁸ *Home Land*, 91.
- ⁶⁹ *Home Land*, 104.
- ⁷⁰ Johann Sebastian Bach, Menuetto I& II from Sonata No. 4
- ⁷¹ The opera is set in 1841, one year after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, which promised Māori the rights of British subjects but, as opera demonstrates, the settlers were not prepared to treat Māori as equals. The need to come to terms with historic injustice is an un resolved contemporary issue.
- ⁷² *Bitter Calm*
- ⁷³ Wilshire, ix.
- ⁷⁴ New Zealand term for [God's country](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Godzone) <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Godzone> [accessed 13/12/13]
- ⁷⁵ London, 2005
- ⁷⁶ Grossberg, 91.
- ⁷⁷ Bhabba (1994), 37.
- ⁷⁸ Spoonley, 55.
- ⁷⁹ Blake, Chris "Interview 2005." In *video*, edited by Adriann Smith. Wellington, 2005.
- ⁸⁰ Blake, 2005.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸² London, Andrew. "Interview [Hot Club Sandwich]." In *video*. Wellington, 2005.
- ⁸³ Pringle, 2005.
- ⁸⁴ Rob Baum, *Female Absence Women, Theatre, and Other Metaphors*. Edited by Marc Maufort, Dramaturgies Texts, Culture and Performances. Brussels: P.I.E. - Peter Lang S.A., Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes, 2003.
- ⁸⁵ Wilshire, 91.
- ⁸⁶ States, 390.
- ⁸⁷ States, 49.
- ⁸⁸ States, 37.

⁸⁹ Wilshire, 135

Wilshire, 43.

⁹⁰ Wilshire, 24.

⁹¹ Wilshire, 23.

⁹² States, 155.

⁹³ Wilshire, 199.

⁹⁴ An imagined community as described by Edward Soja (1996), and Benedict Anderson (1999), is one that is physically separated but held together by a communication medium.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London, New York: Verso, 1991.)