Cultural Colonization and Textual Biculturalism

JAMES BELICH AND MICHAEL KING’S GENERAL HISTORIES OF NEW ZEALAND

IN THE 1970s A COMPLEX MOVEMENT entered into Pakeha national consciousness through such spectacular and seminal events as the hikoi led by Dame Whina Cooper and the occupation of Bastion Point as well as ongoing protests at Waitangi Day commemorations.¹ The movement was composed of many parts and was known as, but by no means restricted to, the Maori renaissance, the land rights movement, the Maori Organisation on Human Rights (MOOHR) and Nga Tamatoa. It made a number of claims and challenges, both about racism and the legal status of Maori in the present and, perhaps as importantly, about the colonial narrative that comprised Pakeha history. While it is difficult here to characterise the complexities of the claims made by the diverse groups involved in the movement it is important to note that these claims included MOOHR’s accusation of ‘cultural murder’ in the education system ‘for its denial of the Maori language of a rightful place in the schools of the nation’,² as well the claim made at the 1981 Waitangi Day celebrations that ‘the Treaty is a Fraud’. Miranda Johnson contends that such a claim ‘undermined the legality of the establishment of the British colony in New Zealand and therefore the “New Zealand nation”’.³ As Malcolm MacLean points out, ‘the land rights movement assert[ed] a different history of Aotearoa/New Zealand’, a history which challenged both the dominant interpretation of New Zealand history as the establishment of a nation based around the civilizing effects of a modern economic system, as well as the contemporary, though long-running, myth which held that New Zealand enjoyed ‘the best race relations in the world’.⁴ This protest movement rewrote Keith Sinclair’s narrative of the burgeoning of New Zealand nationalism from a Maori perspective.⁵ The new narrative challenged the naturalness and justness of the Pakeha New Zealand nation by challenging the historical basis of New Zealand’s colonization. Ranginui Walker argues that this protest moved into mainstream politics in November 1979 when Matiu Rata resigned from the Labour Party: ‘Rata portended his resignation by expressing his disenchantment with Pakeha politics when he delivered his Maori policy report in May. He rejected the one-people ideology as an abject failure.’⁶

As Johnson argues, Maori protest resulted in a ““dislocation” [that] marked a disjunction between Pakeha and their “normal” connection to New Zealand that was traumatic and multi-faceted”.⁷ Johnson writes that the assertion of a new New Zealand history during the period of unrest in the 1970s was not solely undertaken by Maori. Anti-racist organizations overturned the ‘one-New Zealand’ trope and its narrative of civilization, progress, racial harmony
and equality. These ‘anti-racists’ created a new ‘anti-colonial’ narrative of ‘unmitigated oppression’ of Maori by Pakeha. The discourse of progress was called into question, as was the morality and humanitarianism that had long been associated with the colonists of the nineteenth century. While historians such as Johnson and MacLean have only recently begun to explore the dimensions and character of this trauma, the results of the reassertion of Maori identity and history are already apparent.

Maori protest rested on claims that were legal in the sense that they pertained to land ownership, but also non-legal and cultural. These claims posited another place in New Zealand that was not New Zealand, but Aotearoa, which MacLean describes as the ‘Maori cultural and historical space within [the archipelago known as New Zealand]’. The subaltern spoke, and in doing so profoundly unsettled the discursive structure by which Pakeha New Zealand knew itself.

Johnson notes that the discourse of ‘one-New Zealandness’ gave way to ‘biculturalism’, which ‘emerged from that discursive turn to “difference” by acknowledging two heritages in New Zealand, Maori and Pakeha’. The Waitangi Tribunal was set up in 1975 (for Maori) to address Maori grievances against the Crown, and in 1985 the Labour government allowed the Tribunal to hear historical claims. Biculturalism became the Labour government’s official policy at the same time. As the Labour government radically restructured the New Zealand economy through deregulation and the sale of state assets, so too was discourse about New Zealand being restructured. Given the ongoing process of colonization, anti-colonial narratives, despite their complicity in the colonial counterparts they opposed, were ultimately and quite obviously unsuitable as an ongoing framework for constructing identity in New Zealand. Simply put, the project of Pakeha settlement in New Zealand was unlikely to sit comfortably with a narrative that saw Pakeha as nothing but oppressors of indigenous people. Biculturalism which demanded equal recognition of the roles of two different peoples in the construction of New Zealand and focused on the role of identity and culture in this process, provided a much more attractive alternative to both ‘one-New Zealandness’ and ‘anti-colonialism’.

As well as being a government policy and a model for recognizing Maori claims in the juridical realm, biculturalism was and is a theory of history. It is a term that describes the nation in the present, and does so through invoking the moment of contact between cultures and the development of a bicultural nation over time. Beyond identifying the historical component of bicultural discourse and the bicultural nature of recent histories one must ask how biculturalism structures history writing.

This article examines the two most prominent Pakeha-authored general histories of the bicultural era. Rather than being a traditional intellectual history that might investigate, for instance, an author’s biography or intellectual heritage, this article focuses on a close reading of the histories themselves. It will pay particular attention to the narrative structure of the texts and the textual strategies through which the authors structure New Zealand in the bicultural era. Engaging with the historical arguments of these texts and their literary elements — their narratives and metaphors — demonstrates how they
are not just accounts of the past but are part of the ongoing project of ‘cultural colonization’. Because of its special place within public discourse, the national general history is a useful place to investigate the intellectual culture of a settler nation. The general history is the history that seeks to make the place into an object which can be described; it is ‘general’ in the sense that it is totalizing but also non-specific — it is not centred on one topic (a particular war, political movement, or cultural construct such as masculinity, labour, leisure, or any number of objects studied by academic historians) and logically subsumes all other histories to do with that place into it. The general history seeks to contain within it the whole of a place and the whole of the past of the place. However, the ‘whole past’ cannot be encompassed by the general history — it is, of course, impossible to include absolutely everything that happened. Rather than arguing a particular case, as subject-specific monographs do, the general history takes as its object the nation, the ‘imagined community’, constructed through public discourse and knowledge, and creates a narrative to account for this construction. But because it takes the nation as found in the present as its basis, and writes to the dominant ideological framework that informs that nation, every moment of the history is deeply concerned with making the nation in the present. The general history, therefore, is in every sense a history of the present.

Another way in which the ‘general’ in ‘general history’ can be understood has to do with readership. These histories are written for general audiences, rather than for professional scholars. Because these books are histories for the ‘lay-person’, the non-historian has a stake in them in the sense that they play a role in the identity formation of the nation, and thus in the identity formation of those individuals who imagine themselves to be a part of that nation. Insofar as one subscribes to the notion of the ‘New Zealander’ as a meaningful identity, one might read these texts to know what it means to be a ‘New Zealander’, and how the idea of an individual who can be described by the collective term ‘New Zealander’ came to be. As imagined through these texts this category ‘New Zealander’ is shaped through ongoing public discourse, and is largely informed, I argue, by New Zealand’s status as a colonial settlement. The canonical status that many of these texts achieve in New Zealand is a testament to their function in society as much as the literary skills of any individual author.

Since 1991, Peter Gibbons’s ‘cultural colonization’ thesis has played a role in intellectual and cultural histories of New Zealand. In an attempt to situate New Zealand historical discourse outside of a framework of ‘cultural nationalism’ and the search for identity, Gibbons argues that ‘writing in and about New Zealand [is]… involved in the processes of colonization, in the implementation of European power, in the description and justification of the European presence as normative, and in the simultaneous implicit or explicit production of the indigenous peoples as alien or marginal’. As well as colonizing with tools, weapons and laws, settlers colonized New Zealand through naming, textualizing and producing knowledge. Like deforestation and the conversion of bushland into productive agricultural spaces, the textualization of the archipelago prepared the ground for the making of New Zealand. Production of knowledge was intimately bound up in the production of the place itself.
Thus, cultural artifacts can be read as part of a canon of colonization as much as they can be read as a body of ‘national literature’, with an emphasis on the trajectory of development from derivative colonial writings to ones that display uniquely ‘New Zealand’ attributes. By placing New Zealand textual production in the context of colonization, Gibbons provides historians with tools to explore New Zealand history outside of the narrative of nationalist development, and to profoundly unsettle our ideas about what New Zealand history is, and might be.

The question of cultural colonization has been taken up by a few New Zealand historians, particularly at the graduate level. However, those historians have, to a large extent, neglected Gibbons’s suggestion that ‘cultural colonization’ is an ongoing activity. Those who have engaged with the idea of ‘cultural colonization’ seem, thus far at least, to have looked at the idea’s implications only up until the 1950s, and at best have simply stretched the ‘colonial period’ by adding a few decades without accepting the full ramifications of writing history in a present that remains colonial. Nevertheless, the assumption that colonization is not just a phase of history but a discursive practice suggests that it might be taking place even in a New Zealand which, since Keith Sinclair’s seminal History of New Zealand, has been thought of as a nation whose colonial history was somehow over.

In the two decades that followed the formation of the Maori protest movement and the fourth Labour government’s reforms two general histories were published which sought to reconstitute New Zealand history within a bicultural framework. The first of the texts was a two-volume history by James Belich, comprising Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders: From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century (1996), and Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders: From the 1880s to the Year 2000 (2001). Belich’s approach, particularly in his first volume, radically revised the traditional structure of the general history in New Zealand, and did so in a way that created a narrative that is almost uniquely bicultural. Rather than narrating the ‘becoming’ of a nation, Making Peoples takes as its subject the development of two immigrant cultures from their respective ‘mother-cultures’. The narrative depicts these cultures developing as fragments of the ‘old’ cultures. While Belich’s narrative suggests the development of these ‘peoples’ was shaped by environmental and economic factors, its structure posits the attainment of two distinct and knowable cultures as the driving force behind change, as well as the ‘end result’ for both Maori and Pakeha. This narrative is complicated in the middle section of the book; as the first culture interacts with the second, it is changed, but it also changes the other. In Making Peoples, Belich makes a serious attempt to include Maori in the text not as passive victims of the British Empire, but as active agents in their own fortunes.

The second volume of Belich’s work did not continue the experiment with this structuring of New Zealand history. Instead, Paradise Reforged traces the development of Pakeha from the late nineteenth century up to the end of the twentieth century. Organized into pairs of chapters describing ‘over-’ and ‘under-history’, Paradise Reforged focuses as much on the social and cultural
aspects of New Zealand history as the political. It also constructs a narrative arc tracing the process of ‘progressive colonization’, ‘recolonization’, and ‘decolonization’. Belich’s argument is that the 1880s, when New Zealanders began to identify as ‘Better Britons’, saw the end of ‘explosive’ colonization. The rapid growth in Pakeha colonization slowed down and links with the imperial centre were strengthened during the two decades on either side of the turn of the century. Then, from the 1920s to the 1960s, New Zealanders’ links with Britain ‘tightened’, both economically and culturally, as New Zealanders became more reliant on Britain as a marker of identity as well as an economic safe haven. Belich ends *Paradise Reforged* with a discussion of the period from the 1960s to the year 2000. He argues that this period was one of ‘decolonization’: the shackles of the colonial era were cast off and New Zealanders emerged with an independent, though shaky, culture and identity.

For the most part this article focuses on *Making Peoples*. The reason for this is twofold: as Belich points out, ‘together the two books … comprise the largest interpretive single-author history of New Zealand yet written’, and it would be difficult to do justice to both works in the limited space available here.\(^{21}\) The second and more important reason is that, as outlined above, by its very structure *Making Peoples* enacts biculturalism, and attempts to know New Zealand history in a new way. It is in *Making Peoples* that the bicultural narrative is most strikingly present, and thus it is in *Making Peoples* that new strategies for ‘cultural colonization’ can be detected.

The second history published in this era adheres more closely to the received format of general histories in New Zealand. Michael King’s *Penguin History of New Zealand* was conceived of as ‘a new book for a new century’, intended to supersede Sinclair’s *History*.\(^{22}\) King’s *History* sold at a phenomenal rate after its release in late 2003, during controversial debate over ownership of the foreshore and seabed, when pressure was once again being placed on relations between Maori and Pakeha through the Treaty claims process. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pace at which the new *Penguin History* sold was astonishing. Book stores quickly ran out of stock, and a reprint was necessary almost immediately. Sales continued into the new year and through the aftermath of National Party leader Don Brash’s Orewa speech, in which Brash called for an end to ‘Maori privilege’, arguing that ‘the Treaty did not create a partnership: fundamentally, it was the launching pad for the creation of one sovereign nation’.\(^{23}\) As the Leader of the Opposition challenged the bicultural formation of New Zealand that had been orthodoxy for nearly two decades, and sought a return to the ‘one-New Zealand model’ of previous decades, King’s *History* went on to sell 189,000 copies, an unprecedented figure in the sale of New Zealand history books.\(^{24}\)

Both Belich’s and King’s texts enact biculturalism, and so it remains to be seen how this biculturalism plays out in each book. The stories that they tell are stories of equivalence. Moreover, they both seek, in various ways, to erase the act of settlement and the colonization of Maori. Reading these texts it soon becomes clear that the impulse towards indigeneity seeks to make Maori and Pakeha, if not the same, then at least roughly equal in the narratives that make the newly conceived Aotearoa/New Zealand.
As Stephen Turner points out when commenting on King’s quest for indigeneity par excellence, *Being Pakeha: Reflections of a White Native*, ‘once the settlers are indigenous there can’t really be “natives” anymore. Just different kinds of New Zealanders… . This follows because the decisive claim, for Maori, on which being Maori depends — the claim to be tangata whenua (people-land) — is no longer exclusive (settlers are somehow tangata whenua too).’\textsuperscript{25} The quote to which Turner refers contains the line ‘like the ancestors of the Maori [King’s ancestors] came as immigrants; like Maori too, we became indigenous at the point where our focus of identity and commitment shifted to this country and away from our countries and cultures of origin’.\textsuperscript{26} This is one of the less subtle assertions of indigeneity made by Pakeha, claiming that both cultures have at least some abstractly recoverable point, when they ceased to be migrants and became ‘native’. The two cultures are presented as roughly equivalent; and, even if the manner of settlement was less than ideal, the emergence of a distinct Pakeha culture provides a teleological justification for a past that has been problematized by the first group of ‘natives’. History, then, gets written in a way that makes peoples; the narratives of Aotearoa/New Zealand become the narratives of how two peoples became native in New Zealand.

Belich begins *Making Peoples* with a passage that clearly sets out the bicultural programme of his text: ‘Four centuries after the death of Jesus Christ, two migrant ships pushed through dangerous seas. Strong men and women tended oars and sails; children crouched amidst livestock and household goods. Each crew valued kin above all, walked with live gods — Tu and Thor, Woden and Tane — and lived and died for weregild and utu. Each crew headed for a place of which little was known and a great deal hoped. Too much can be made of their similarities, but they did have one thing in common: both were forebears of the New Zealanders.\textsuperscript{27} The romantic narrative of settlement is immediately invoked in a struggle against the elements on a long journey to a distant land. While neither of the migrant ships Belich is writing about is headed directly for the archipelago now known as New Zealand, the equivalence of the two cultures, Viking and Polynesian, and thus Pakeha and Maori, is, for Belich, a deep-rooted one. Importantly, it is also cultural. In this quote, Belich blends the religious figures of both groups, so that Tu, Thor, Woden and Tane not only commingle in a sentence but share equivalent space in the minds of each people. The ‘Great Fleet’ myth — the original, though now undermined, orthodoxy that accounted for the arrival of Maori in New Zealand — is then deployed to describe the Norse fleet that carried the ancestors of the ‘English’ to Britain. The Anglo-Saxon kings trace their ‘whakapapa’, and the whole story is placed under the heading of the mythical Polynesian homeland, ‘Hawaiki’. In a dramatic reversal of the myths of the previous century which speculated that Maori were originally Aryan, or a lost tribe of Israel, Belich places Pakeha within the context of Maori mythology. The text at once recognizes the prior-ness of Maori, and defuses that prior-ness by knowing Pakeha through a Maori lens, invoking Pakeha within the discourse of tangata whenua.

King, on the other hand, negotiates the question of a prior culture in quite a different manner. His narrative, like Belich’s, is motivated in the first instance
by migration. King states in his introduction that his volume ‘identifies the myths that have shaped New Zealand cultures and provided them with cohesion and coherence’, and confirms ‘that the basic needs driving human history are the search for secure places in which to live, eat, shelter, reproduce and practise cultural or spiritual values’. The motivation for migration for King is a pre-cultural trait that exists before any other part of human existence. King elevates this to an even greater status at the end of the first chapter, when he writes that ‘history occurs only because humankind has, for hundreds of thousands of years, sought congenial and secure places in which to live, eat, shelter, reproduce and build cultures’. As if to forestall any claims about the justness of Pakeha settlement in New Zealand, King places the issue at the root of history itself. At once, King reduces humanity to a basic materialism and elevates that materialism to a kind of metaphysical imperative. Without the process by which both Maori and Pakeha came to New Zealand, there would be no history. If it is this drive that cultures are built on, then this drive seems to exist beyond any moral question. At the outset, King seeks to stabilize Pakeha New Zealand by anchoring its foundation at the basic level of human experience and human history. In constructing bicultural narratives, both Belich and King begin their stories deep within history. Belich does this by marking a point in time. King by making claims as to what history is.

Rather than beginning, as Belich does, in the far reaches of human history, King’s story begins with a description of the land as ecosystem, imagining a New Zealand prior to human intervention in its development. Beginning with Joseph Banks’s description of ‘the dawn chorus’ of birdsong, King invokes a New Zealand ‘surrounded by 18,000 km of coastline that hosted fish, shellfish, seabirds and marine mammals, developed over a period of 82 million years’; a New Zealand where, ‘as an early geographer put it, “a land without people waited for a people without land”’. King points out the ridiculousness of this phrase, but it, along with the presence of the ‘land without people’ at the beginning of his book, suggests a New Zealand that indeed waits for those seeking a secure place ‘in which to live’. New Zealand, then, comes to us as a near-empty object, consisting only of an ecosystem awaiting human occupation. If history is the history of migration, then at the beginning of King’s book there is a stage awaiting a history to play out on it. This stage is empty, both of Europeans and Maori, so that the prior existence of the Maori is itself faced with a prior existence. An unpeopled place — New Zealand — is arrived at by different groups, so that the status of tangata whenua not only can be, but has to be made in that place.

For Belich and King, this becoming is based primarily on culture, particularly on the dominant myths of both Maori and Pakeha society. After briefly outlining the theories of how Maori came to be in New Zealand, King addresses what he calls ‘the great New Zealand myth’. This ‘great myth’ is the discovery of New Zealand by Kupe, a myth that King describes as ‘Pakeha in origin rather than Maori’. He goes on to describe the origins of this myth in the School Journal, and argues that the myth’s telling ‘was part of a process that fitted Maori tradition into the cultural patterns of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Pakeha New Zealand, which was looking for stories of resonance and nobility to make the human occupation of the country seem more deeply rooted and
worthy of pride than it might by virtue of its (at that time) rather thin European heritage'. Here, King hints at the ‘cultural colonization’ that was occurring during that period, but it is the phrase that appears in parentheses that is of interest here. The words ‘(at that time)’ suggest that there is no longer any need to sustain these myths; the ‘European heritage’, in the present, is no longer thin. ‘Cultural colonization’ is thus fixed in the past through a phrase that is within the text, but also outside of it, providing a commentary on the present through a commentary on the past and foreshadowing King’s peculiarly titled final section, ‘Posthistory’. Here, the ideological function of King’s debunking of this myth is revealed: by exposing as myth one of the key narratives of colonization in the New Zealand past, King is asserting a settled Pakeha New Zealand present.

This debunking, with its attendant assertion of the New Zealand present, continues throughout the chapter, undermining the name Aotearoa (which King attributes to William Pember Reeves), the ‘Great Fleet’ and the myths surrounding Moriori. These myths, King asserts, were all created by Pakeha and later adopted by Maori as markers of identity. The function of this debunking is not, as it may first appear, the undermining of Maori claims to culture. One might read King’s assertion that, for instance, New Zealand ‘is called [Aotearoa] now by most Maori in the modern era’, as articulating Maori culture that is modern and equally engaged in Pakeha mythmaking, and unable to claim traditional or real knowledge of the place outside of Pakeha descriptions of it. Although this suggests an epistemic violence inherent in bicultural discourse, it seems to be a side effect of King’s claims to a new Pakeha culture rather than the motive. King’s debunking is designed to signal the end of old myths, which existed precisely because of a vacuum in Pakeha culture. Now that Pakeha culture exists, the colonial culture that perpetuated these myths can be displaced.

For Belich, the arrival of Maori in New Zealand is not a myth to be debunked, but a moment that can be recovered. Through a complex series of calculations involving birth rates and protein booms, Belich first finds that Maori arrived in New Zealand in 1066 and that the Hawaiki from which Maori came may have been an island in the Bismarck Archipelago called New Britain. As he points out, though, his aim is to encourage reflection on the function of history and mythmaking in producing cultural categories: ‘It is probably unnecessary to say that pinning down the precise place and time to New Britain and 1066 is not quite serious. Both are perfectly possible, but such coincidences are not important in themselves. What they highlight, however, is the role of history in history, retrospectively linking and distinguishing peoples in the past for the purposes of the present. Old Britain, New Britain and New Zealand are all artificial labels. It is myth and history that shape and reshape their contents.’

While on a first reading the meaning of this paragraph is unclear, on reflection it seems that Belich is constructing a vision of history with an extremely relativist approach to the ‘truth’ that history can access. What have long stood as units of understanding in historiographical practice become ‘artificial labels’, whose contents are reshaped by a combination of ‘myth and history’ so that, it seems, the premise on which Making Peoples, and indeed any other general history of New Zealand, is based — that is, that there is a place called New
Zealand and it is both possible and desirable to write a history of it — becomes thoroughly undermined. The bicultural voyage narrative that Belich deploys at the beginning of *Making Peoples* itself becomes mythic, being shaped and reshaped by, and in turn shaping and reshaping history. Where King tries to describe a materialist core on which culture is built to his bicultural narrative, Belich attempts to place myth at the heart of history and find history at the heart of myths throughout his text.

This mythology becomes a motivating force for migration. The ‘ethos of expansion’ is, for Belich, one of the keys to understanding Pacific migration; this ethos is to be understood as ‘primarily a system of ideas — the assumptions, hopes and fears of colonists — but it also has important social, technological and economic elements and implications. It helps to trigger colonisation, to determine its direction and form, and influences its development in the new land’.

Although much of Belich’s argument regarding Polynesian settlement is predicated on material access to ‘resource islands’, the use of this material is mediated by this ‘ethos’, which is ‘the missing link in the study of the formation of new societies’. Where for King material need drives migration and cultural practice and new culture is built on top of that, for Belich cultural practice plays a major role in migration and the cultural practice of migration continues to inform the behaviour of the people in the new place, as they themselves become new. Mediating between the ‘fragment’ of the home culture and the material circumstances of the ‘frontier’, this ethos places cultural values at the centre of societal development.

These cultural values govern material practice. When describing the gardening of the early Polynesians, for instance, Belich argues that although gardening did not contribute much to diet during the moa-hunting period the survival of unused species ‘suggests that the maintenance of gardening was a strong cultural imperative …. Perhaps [the ethos of expansion] insisted, through tradition, that gardening be maintained as insurance.’ Belich argues, through this and other examples, for a Maori economy based on cultural practice. It is not only migration but also the way migrants develop in their new homes that is governed by culture.

King’s approach places material conditions before cultural ones. The climate, in particular, ‘would influence which of the crops [that] they brought with them could grow, and where, and which they would have to discard. Climate would also determine what garments they would need to wear … what natural materials they would choose to make them, what technical skills they would have to invent … and what kinds of houses they would need to build for shelter and warmth.’ Indeed, it is ‘adaptation to the new environment of the concepts and practices they brought with them … that transformed East Polynesian island culture into that of New Zealand Maori’. This is not to say that King has more in common with Sinclair than with Belich. On the contrary, although their accounts of what preceded what are different, both King’s and Belich’s primary concern is the location of culture in the development of Maori as an immigrant group.

The same issue is also central to the later discussions of Pakeha settlement in New Zealand. For Belich, Pakeha migration was based in cultural practice,
so that ‘Pakeha myths of settlement were the New Zealand variant of a wider British or neo-British ethos of expansion, a sort of momentum between push and pull. The myths began as bait for migrants; they became the prospectus New Zealand was considered obligated to fulfil, a history written in advance.’

Like the Polynesian settlers, Pakeha settlers were acting in accordance with, and had their actions mediated by, an ‘ethos of expansion’. Like the Polynesian voyagers who were to become Maori, settlement for the British who were to become Pakeha was a cultural imperative.

This link that Belich draws between the two groups creates a biculturalism much more deeply rooted, and indeed much more plausible, than that which originates in the suggestion that Eastern Polynesians left New Britain in 1066, or the Thor and Tane narrative that begins Making Peoples. While the first part of Making Peoples can seem like an attempt ‘to know about the bit before you came’ on a scale and in detail not seen before in a general history of New Zealand, in fact it exists to complement the final part, in which Pakeha are ‘made’. Thus, the paradigms that Belich uses in ‘periodising’ Maori prehistory, some of which ‘delay the transformation of East Polynesians into Maori unacceptably long’, are as much about describing the possibility of generating a new culture in a new place as knowing about prehistory. In locating change from Polynesian to Maori through the locus of culture, Belich is able to locate change from Briton to Pakeha, particularly in Paradise Reforged, for which ‘Making Pakeha’ lays much of the foundation.

In order to articulate that cultural shift, Belich engages with an aspect of New Zealand history that usually lies well outside the scope of national general histories. Belich not only looks at the ‘bit before’ of Maori, he also looks, in detail, at the ‘bit before’ of Pakeha. Referring to Britain as ‘the New Zealand of the North’, a ‘people market’ and, tellingly, ‘the Pakeha Hawaiki’, he evokes an eighteenth-century Britain intriguing in the ‘sense in which it did not exist’. Belich paints a picture of a fractured, regionalized Britain, ‘more linguistically diverse than the Polynesians as a whole, let alone the Maori’. Belich then proceeds to describe a Britain made outside of the British Isles, where diverse groups abroad mixed ‘more than they did at home … forming a new “Us” through confronting a shared “Them”’. British identity is created not in Britain but in the colonies, so that even at its earliest stages Pakeha identity is being formed in New Zealand, rather than being carried from home. The ‘Britain of the South’ becomes the ‘organising principle behind New Zealand myths of settlement’, reflecting the ‘ethos of expansion’ that characterizes the Polynesians. Thus, the ‘Better Britons’ and ‘the Great Tightening’ of Paradise Reforged are as much a part of the creation of national identity as Pakeha ‘decolonization’. The narrative which spans the two volumes is the narrative of Pakeha settlement, and the Maori ‘prehistory’ provides a kind of prelude to that settlement, establishing the themes, and the logic, by which settlement can take place. Read in this light, what appears to be a radical inclusion of Maori in a general history plays the same structural role as the Maori prologue that is more or less standard in these general histories. By prioritizing the culture of Maori, and the means by which that culture developed, Belich is able to make claims for a distinct Pakeha culture.
Although King gives precedence to material need over culture, he too makes the processes of Maori and Pakeha settlement analogous. In the chapter entitled ‘New Settlers Take Control’, King notes that ‘as Maori had done before them, Pakeha colonists set out to make the unknown known and to discover for themselves the country’s physical resources’. Although he does not acknowledge it, King seems to be alluding to Giselle Byrnes’s work on land surveying and its ideological relationship to the colonial project. Byrnes argues that the process of surveying and naming the landscape is part of the process of ‘cultural colonization’. It is, however, the phrase ‘as Maori had done before them’ that reveals King to be engaged in the process of ‘cultural colonization’, rather than a critique of it. For King, it seems, there is little difference between Maori settlers naming something for the first time, and Pakeha renaming it. The human imperative for migration circumvents any such critique and discussion instead turns to the details of who carried out which surveys, followed by which flora and fauna were introduced. Here, there is little distinction made between the import of the Polynesian kiore and British livestock; both are implicated in the ‘traumatic impact’ on the New Zealand ecosystem, so that it is the land that is colonized, not the people on it.

Of course, a discussion of the appropriation of Maori land is unavoidable in any general history of New Zealand; it is, however, what sits outside of the text that reveals most about the ambivalence of the bicultural text towards that process. For King, the massive influx of ‘tangata tiriti’ that followed the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi meant that ‘the character of New Zealand was changed for ever. Those who had to relinquish ground, literally and metaphorically, for this influx of “foreign” people were the first New Zealanders, the indigenous Maori. And, in relinquishing ground, they would lose it.’ Similar to the ‘(at that time)’ that appears in King’s debunking of Pakeha myths about Maori, the word ‘foreign’ which appears in quotation marks here sits outside the text, at odds with the narrative. By making British settlers “foreign”, rather than ‘foreign’, King lifts the term outside of the text. In this way, he undermines any objection to the settlers’ appropriation of the land by making their status within the narrative ironic — they are ‘foreigners’ but they are to become indigenous through the migratory process. Maori, then, are shifted off their land textually by King, becoming the first New Zealanders; the second New Zealanders becoming so even as they begin to settle. In this passage, King stabilizes the colonial process within a bicultural framework, even as he writes of land acquisition. As colonization is enacted, it is erased.

Indeed, erasure of the colonization of peoples is common to both Belich’s and King’s texts. While King erases this colonization through naturalizing the migration process and constructing a narrative that makes Pakeha indigenous, Belich does so by defining the terms of the discussion. Early in Making Peoples, Belich discusses the Anglo-Saxon colonization of Britannia: ‘The Anglo-Saxons “colonised” Britannia in two senses. First, they formed a new people from an old through a process of migration and settlement. Until the twentieth century, this was the main meaning of “colonisation”, a method of reproducing peoples, and it is a key meaning used in this book. Second, the Anglo-Saxons subordinated the natives, a process for which this book prefers the label “imperialism” or “empire”.'
Defining these terms in these ways serves a number of ideological functions. Firstly, it continues to construct equivalence between Maori and Pakeha. Under this definition, both Maori and Pakeha can be regarded as colonists, as both were involved in a system of reproducing people through settlement. More importantly, however, are the implications for Pakeha history. By defining ‘empire’ and ‘imperialism’ as the subordination of ‘natives’, Belich is able to distance contemporary Pakeha society from that process; as the narrative arc of Belich’s volumes is concerned primarily with the shift away from the British identity to a new Pakeha cultural identity, Pakeha, who are no longer part of the British Empire, are no longer implicated in that ‘subordination’. The end of the British Empire logically entails the end of the subordination of Maori, so that the process of Maori and Pakeha decolonization that Belich relates in *Paradise Reforged* is also the absolution of Pakeha responsibility for injustice. This definition has a third, structural front. While ‘colonize’ is a verb, there is no equivalent verb form of ‘empire’ or ‘imperialism’. The latter, therefore, are not actions that were or can be performed by someone; rather the terms describe a series of actions, obscured by the terms themselves, which make up a process that simply exists. Pakeha could colonize New Zealand, but empire just was. It had causes and effects that can be investigated by a historian, but in this context it belongs properly to the past. Subordination might have occurred, but through Belich’s definition, no one caused it, not least Pakeha.

Although this shift to a Pakeha identity is, for Belich, something of a *fait accompli* due to the nature of Britishness and the process of settlement, it is a prolonged process, complicated by the ‘recolonization’ of the 40 years spanning the middle of the twentieth century. ‘Recolonization’, which Belich also calls ‘the Great Tightening’, is the strengthening of ties to Britain that Belich claims occurred in this period. He likens this to ‘snapshots of … clinging to mother being displayed at the twenty-first birthday party … [and] the snapshots were taken at age nineteen’. Belich’s narrative concludes with the end of ‘recolonization’, with the emergence of a people culturally distinct from the British. Although Belich argues that this emergence was much delayed by ‘recolonization’, as with King’s *History*, it is this new people who are the final object of the text. As mentioned above, this ‘decolonization’ was concurrent with Maori ‘decolonization’, although for Belich, ‘decolonization’ for each group is only ‘partial’. Indeed, despite Pakeha undergoing ‘decolonization’, Belich expresses doubts over the strength of this culture.

The terms Belich uses present an interesting problem when considered in conjunction with the definitions he provides in *Making Peoples*. If both Maori and Pakeha are to ‘decolonize’, then the sense in which either group was ‘colonial’ is called into question. Pakeha ‘decolonization’, as Belich argues, means the end of ‘recolonization’ and the ties to ‘mother Britain’, and the final making of the people. Clearly, ‘decolonization’ cannot mean the same thing for Maori. Maori ‘became’ — by developing a culture distinct from Eastern Polynesia — in *Making Peoples*, and thus their period of being colonial was over before Pakeha arrived. The context in which Maori ‘decolonize’ in *Paradise Reforged*, then, reveals the inadequacy of Belich’s definition of colonization. If one were to extend Belich’s logic over the course of both texts, Maori should, strictly speaking, ‘de-empire’. The incongruity of this phrase...
reveals both the illogic of Belich’s definitions, which are, after all, keys to the structure of *Making Peoples*, and the tension inherent in bicultural discourse. The story of equivalence that forms the heart of biculturalism — at least in the context of general histories — seeks to elide the uneven power relations between Pakeha and Maori, and thus sits uneasily with its own self-conception. When Belich seeks the endpoint of colonialism, the moment at which both Maori and Pakeha emerge from the colonial process, the structural flaws of the bicultural narrative and the colonial intent of Pakeha discourse in the bicultural era are revealed.

King’s narrative pursues similar ends to Belich’s, but once again it builds on material conditions to define cultural practice. Following the nineteenth-century New Zealand Wars, Maori and Pakeha live in separate New Zealands. King writes that in the late nineteenth century, ‘most Europeans, unless they had married into Maori families, rarely distinguished one Maori from another … one of the reasons for this was that most Pakeha living in, say, the four main centres were by this time unlikely to come into direct contact with Maori … those few Europeans who visited a Maori community were very much aware that they were glimpsing a world very different from their own’.\(^5^7\) It is at this point that the bicultural narrative begins to take shape in King’s text. Land has been confiscated, and Maori and Pakeha live in different worlds, sharply delineated by geography and cultural practice. The remainder of King’s narrative describes a reconciliation between the ‘two worlds’, whereby, through the development of a culture of their own, Pakeha are able to accept Maori, and thus create a bicultural model of New Zealand.\(^5^8\)

It is the basis upon which this ‘reconciliation’ proceeds that is important in understanding King’s narrative. Following the ‘winning’ of the land by settlers, King’s narrative becomes one of settlement. He describes the establishment of the political parties, the effects of the world wars, the political importance of the farmers and the impact of the depression of the 1930s on New Zealand society. Throughout this, the ‘two worlds’ model of New Zealand is maintained: ‘Maori and Pakeha societies, running on separate but parallel tracks in New Zealand in the years preceding World War II, each displayed considerable internal cohesion and conformity. Each also served as the “exotic other” to highlight and confirm its own identity and distinctiveness.’\(^5^9\) Here, King alters the colonizer/colonized relationship into one in which each group equally constructs the other as ‘other’. The relationship between the two societies is, at this moment in King’s text, founded on a narrative of equivalence in much the same way as Belich’s; the societies may exist in different worlds on the same land, one in Aotearoa, the other in New Zealand, but they are, nevertheless, ‘running on separate but parallel tracks’.

Perhaps it is this metaphor that most clearly highlights the way in which this ‘two worlds’ model erases the colonial relationship between the two groups. The ‘tracks’ on which Maori and Pakeha societies run are part of one of the major tools of colonization: the train. As Belich argues, in the late nineteenth century rail ‘had great symbolic significance: paths of civilisation, bringing order and doom to natives and nature; huge, smoking, iron engines leading the charge of progress’.\(^6^0\) While Maori and Pakeha might be on ‘parallel tracks’,
those tracks are tools of Pakeha colonization. Even as King attempts to bring Maori into the history of twentieth-century New Zealand in a way that his predecessors have not, he is unable to escape from the language of colonization and domination. The Maori train may, for King, be heading towards political and cultural revival, and the Pakeha train toward cultural confidence and indigeneity, but both are nevertheless bound up in a colonial metaphor.

Although these tracks are parallel, they nevertheless meet at a significant junction. The penultimate section of King’s *History*, ominously titled ‘Unsettlement’, narrates the shifts New Zealand society and culture underwent in the post-World War II era. These shifts, which include the Maori activism and subsequent bicultural policy of Aotearoa/New Zealand, begin for King in the Pakeha relationship with the land. King invokes New Zealand’s general historian of the late nineteenth century, William Pember Reeves, writing that: ‘In Reeves’s view, Maori had been and still were irrelevant in the development of the land. That task was being undertaken by Pakeha settlers who were in combat with nature, and their ultimate mission was to turn as much of New Zealand as possible into an agricultural landscape, thus realising Julius Vogel’s vision for New Zealand as the “Britain of the South”.’

For King, the colonial period is marked by the destruction of the landscape and the remaking of it into productive agricultural farmland. The settlers’ approach to the land reflects, and is in turn reflected in, their attitude towards Maori, who are marginalized and whose relationship with the land as tangata whenua is ‘irrelevant’. The colonial process was a matter of erasing and making over the landscape of New Zealand, so that ‘mature native forest was regarded both positively as a source of timber or firewood and negatively as an impediment to agriculture’. The ‘native’ is being overridden by the forces of colonization which are devoted to economic and not cultural concerns. The distance between the two worlds is marked for King by the colonists’ destructive attitudes towards, and thus impact on, the environment.

For King, then, the colonial era, or at least that period when Pakeha culture still kept ties to ‘mother Britain’, ends, and the two worlds begin to come together, when Pakeha begin to develop new attitudes towards the land. It is ‘not until the middle years of the twentieth century … [that] serious questions [would] be raised about whether the strategies New Zealanders had adopted to generate food, shelter, income and energy from their country made the best possible use of the land’. The motives for migration, which for King stand at the base of history, here begin to be called into question. It seems that for King, the ‘unsettlement’ of this era is based on unease as to the impact of settlement on the land being settled. The continuing negative impacts of settlement mean a need for new policies towards the land, policies which take environmental, rather than just economic, impacts into account.

King’s concerns for the land as an environment are claims towards a Pakeha culture. King notes a few ‘cautionary and prophetic voices’ that began to warn of problems with an attitude towards the land driven purely by economic needs. Those voices for King are writers’ voices. As evidence for this change in attitude, King notes a preface by Herbert Guthrie-Smith to his environmental history, *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*, a reflection by
writer Helen Wilson, and, perhaps most significantly, Frank Sargeson’s visit to his uncle’s farm in the King Country, where he found his uncle:

full of doubts as to whether [breaking in the farm from bush thirty years earlier] had been worth it. The grasses he had sown so carefully were being overrun with weeds. Land at the back of the property was being recolonised by bracken fern and scrub … . The fences on steep slopes were being wrecked by landslides. ‘And from the high boundaries [Sargeson writes] there were long, long views across the waves of ridges with more bush removed, and more faces grassed, and more, many more scarrings from slips and slides … [All], as my uncle remarked, challenging us to take note that the big question of grass-farming country of such character was still not answered, let alone understood. Or even asked.’

The question Sargeson hints at here is not asked or answered by King. In this important passage in an important chapter of King’s *History*, the question of what the effect, or meaning, or use of the British colonization of New Zealand was and is, and perhaps more importantly, the question of what was lost and what was destroyed in the colonial process, is introduced and given shape, yet remains unspoken. This major shift in the bicultural narrative is announced by a writer who for King embodies the tradition of ‘cultural nationalism’ which began to have an impact on New Zealand culture and identity when it ‘began to feature … in secondary and tertiary curricula in the 1960s’. At the same time as Pakeha New Zealand began to forge a new relationship with the land, it began to articulate a new, “New Zealand-centred” view of the world in place of that which had preceded it*. Pakeha culture and ecology are intertwined in the bicultural narrative of New Zealand.

This intertwining of culture and ecology is important because it makes claims for Pakeha ceasing to be a colonial people, and it does so on two fronts. As I have argued above, the bicultural narrative is concerned with making stories of the equivalence of Pakeha and Maori. The ‘prehistory’ of the Maori, in the bicultural episteme, seeks the point at which a Maori culture is formed in New Zealand as distinct from the Polynesian cultures from whence Maori came. This, as well as the Maori relationship with the land, is what makes Maori into tangata whenua, people of the land. King argues in his chapter entitled ‘First Colonisation’ that ‘the Maori colonial period appears to have lasted between 100 and 150 years. After that relatively short period, the big game was all but exhausted. The northern seal rookeries were deserted … . Moa became extinct because of the profligate manner in which this resource too was exploited’ and species’ habitats were destroyed through deforestation. For both Maori and Pakeha, then, the colonial period lasts for about 100 to 150 years, and ends because of an unsustainable attitude towards the environment following settlement, and a newfound need to live sustainably within the environment. At the same time as Maori undergo this ecological transition, they also shift their consciousness away from the ‘cultural and physical landscapes they were leaving behind in Island Polynesia’, to a ‘singular awareness of and commitment to the adopted homeland’. The result of this dual shift towards ecological awareness and a culture focused on Aotearoa ‘all added up to … the process by which an imported culture, that of East Polynesians, left to develop
in isolation, became an indigenous one: Te Ao Maori’.\(^7^0\) Although King is not explicit about it, the implication is that similar developments in New Zealand in the second half of the twentieth century led to the development of a new indigenous people: Te Ao Pakeha.

From here, King outlines the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, which alongside the Green movement sees a peace movement, women’s liberation, a new cultural confidence and, finally, ‘a gradually stronger commitment to biculturalism in Maori-Pakeha relations, and to multiculturalism’.\(^7^1\) Simultaneously, Maori begin to reassert their political rights and a new bicultural era is born. This opening up of New Zealand culture proceeds from the point at which Pakeha become indigenous by fulfilling the requirements of the bicultural narrative and finally bringing the colonial era to an end. In his ‘Posthistory’ conclusion, King demonstrates the ways in which history resonates within contemporary Pakeha cultural practice, arguing explicitly that Pakeha culture ‘like that of Maori, is no longer the same as the cultures of origin from which it sprang … it has become, in fact, a second indigenous culture by the same processes by which East Polynesian people developed Maori culture’.\(^7^2\) The ‘parallel tracks’ of Maori and Pakeha have come together, and the bicultural nation consisting of two indigenous cultures has been made.

In conclusion, the major national general histories of New Zealand’s bicultural era rest on claims of indigeneity for Pakeha. Rather than situating New Zealand history in a post-colonial context by restoring Maori to their proper place in the narrative, both Belich and King reshape the colonial narrative, so that the story of Maori cultural development in New Zealand becomes a model for the development of Pakeha culture. The new Pakeha narrative does not articulate a New Zealand nation, but the creation of both Maori and Pakeha cultures within New Zealand. The bicultural narrative of New Zealand history centres on narratives that make Maori and Pakeha equivalent, and thus equally valid, cultural forces within New Zealand. Thus, the bicultural narrative is concerned to know about the ‘prehistory’ of New Zealand in order to know at what point one can do the impossible and become indigenous. However, despite the ‘restorative’ and ‘reconciliatory’ rhetoric associated with biculturalism, the facts of the colonizing process — alienation, dispossession, marginalization — remain embedded in these narratives of equivalence. Belich cannot escape the logic of empire and King can only discuss biculturalism within the terms of the major tools of colonization. These bicultural narratives, finally, rest on claims to indigeneity which diffuse and displace Maori claims to tangata whenua status in New Zealand. By claiming that Pakeha can be and are indigenous, Pakeha historians appropriate the claims of the Maori as tangata whenua so that those claims become a part of the end of the colonial process rather than a critique of it.

JACOB POLLOCK  

*The University of Pittsburgh*
NOTES


5 Keith Sinclair’s 1959 general history was seminal in the discourse surrounding Pakeha identity in New Zealand, particularly as it sought security in the nation beyond its colonial ties with Britain. See Keith Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, Harmondsworth, 1959, reprinted 1960. See also Jacob Pollock, ‘From Colony to Culture: Historiographical Discourse and Historical Identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1883–2003’, MA thesis, The University of Auckland, 2005, pp.60–91 for an analysis of the ‘One New Zealand’ paradigm that preceded biculturalism, as exemplified in the general histories of Keith Sinclair and W.H. Oliver.

6 Walker, p.227.

7 Johnson, p.3.

8 ibid., pp.70–81. Johnson gives an excellent account of the parameters and development of the anti-colonial narrative.

9 MacLean, p.59.


11 Johnson, p.6.

12 ibid.

13 ibid., p.88.

14 This issue has been covered at length by Hayden White. White argues that historians use narrative devices that have much in common with those deployed in fictional writing and that without these devices historians would have no mechanisms by which to select some and exclude other material. The historian would produce a chronicle in which all facts must be included and no ‘story’ could be told. Further, White argues, this process has the effect of eliding, distorting and occluding elements of the past so that the story might be told. While this article does not aim to recover those facts that have been elided by historians and thus to erect a counter-history, the ‘creative’ and selective nature of history-writing should be borne in mind when considering the argument in these pages. See Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe, Baltimore and London, 1973, and Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism, Baltimore and London, 1978, especially pp.109–111.


19 In fact a number of general histories were published in this period. Ranginui Walker’s Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou was a landmark publication in that it put forward a Maori-centred narrative.


21 Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, p.11.


23 While the scope and implication of Brash’s speech and its effects on New Zealand political discourse fall outside the scope of this article, needless to say it demonstrated that there is far from consensus on biculturalism in New Zealand. An excerpt from Brash’s speech was published in the *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 28 January 2004, p.A18. The full text can be found at http://www.nzherald.co.nz/omdex/cfm?ObjectID=3545950 (viewed 20 April 2007).


29 ibid., p.25.

30 ibid., p.23.

31 ibid., p.38.

32 ibid., p.40.

33 ibid., pp.38–47.

34 ibid., p.42 (emphasis in original).


36 ibid., p.36.

37 ibid., p.37.

38 ibid., p.38.

39 ibid., p.45.


41 ibid.


45 ibid., p.287.

46 ibid.

47 ibid., p.297.

48 ibid., p.299.


52 ibid., p.178.


55 ibid., p.475.

56 ibid., pp.539–43.


63 ibid., p.434.

64 ibid.

65 ibid., p.435.

66 ibid., p.383.

67 ibid.

68 ibid., p.66.

69 ibid. The quotes are on pp.73 and 74 respectively.

70 ibid., p.74.


72 ibid., p.514.