Promoting Paradise

UTOPIANISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NEW ZEALAND, 1870–1930

A NUMBER OF COMMENTATORS have identified a correlation between aspects of utopianism and New Zealand's past. Miles Fairburn, for example, has emphasized the power of an arcadian myth in nineteenth-century New Zealand.[1] James Belich entitled the second volume of his history of New Zealand *Paradise Reforged*.[2] And Lucy Sargisson and Lyman Tower Sargent's work on intentional communities (or communes) argued that New Zealand 'has a special place in the history of utopianism'.[3] As Sargisson and Sargent note, though, there has not been any extended discussion of the association between utopianism and New Zealand's national identity. Fairburn's work comes closest, but the 'governing category' of his landmark study was 'the colony's social organisation' rather than arcadian myths.[4] Furthermore, Fairburn's work stops in the 1890s, ignores ideal visions of cities and towns, disregards utopian fiction, and does not take into account 'race' and politics and the impact which these had on images of arcadia. While 'race' and politics are central to Belich's work his study remains first and foremost a general history. The use of the descriptor 'paradise', like his term 'recolonization' (which is used to signify New Zealand's apparent return to the British imperial fold), works primarily as 'a heuristic device … to give pattern'.[5] Belich also overlooks utopian and science fiction (SF) literature, focuses on the printed word and skips over 'booster' sources, namely those civic and commercial publications produced locally to promote settlement and investment. Even Sargisson and Sargent's work, which identified this *lacuna* in scholarship, pays scant attention to the origin of the image.[6]

This article re-examines the relationship between utopia and New Zealand, going beyond Fairburn's 1890s cut-off date and also taking into account a wider array of sources than earlier works. Utopian and SF literature, as well as booster periodicals, are used to demonstrate that the imagining of the country, both by New Zealanders and those on the outside looking in, was driven by dreams about finding and building a better new world. Contrary to Fairburn's assertion that a conservative arcadian myth was the reason that 'New Zealanders evolved neither a strong nor a distinctive sense of national identity',[7] I argue that utopia was central to the nation's culture and resulted in the paradise myth emerging as one of its dominant tropes.

The sources for this paradise myth were many. They included the country's island status, distance from Old World Europe, rich and varied beautiful topography, late settlement *vis à vis* other settler societies, healthy climate, impression as a destination where social and economic advancement was possible, reputation for radical political experimentation, presumed 'racial'

superiority (of both Europeans and Maori), and supposed better history of contact between colonized and colonizer. A further significant factor was the country's extensive and *avant-garde* practice of utopian writing. This literary tradition has not received the attention it deserves, especially given that it may have had a direct impact on New Zealand's radical political experimentation. As the early twentieth-century New Zealand publicists Robert Irvine and Oscar Alpers stated: 'There seems to have existed in New Zealand at one time a taste for books depicting "ideal commonwealths". The same taste exists today … but finds expression in utopian legislation rather than in utopian literature.'[8] This utopian interest was not merely the preserve of a colonial élite. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), which is generally agreed to be one of the most significant utopian works ever, 'sold out in days' once it had arrived in the colony. Indeed, Sargent identified over 100 New Zealand-related utopian works which were published between 1778 and 1930.[9] Little wonder that contemporary critics noted the nation's interest in such writings, with one 1882 Dunedin reviewer commenting that, 'the minds of most … [were familiar with] this sort of literature'.[10] The existence and pervasiveness of such texts helps to undermine another generalization about national myths. Peter Gibbons once dismissed New Zealand's artistic output in this period as 'the age of the cow-cockies' in contrast to Europe's 'era of futuristic … art'.[11] Similarly, Russell Brown noted that many former critics viewed the country's inhabitants as uninspiring and too practical.[12] Yet, as the references below indicate, New Zealand's cultural outlook was not necessarily always quite so backward, or pragmatic, as has been generally assumed.

As 'people disagree on what constitutes utopia' and impressions of ideal societies can differ widely, the term utopia will be used here to describe the mythical and rural, enchanted and/or religious ideal societies, such as arcadia, cockaigne, promised land, fairy otherworld, Eden, earthly paradise, or Godzone, all of which were the product of extra human agency.[13] Sargent labels these 'utopias of sensual gratification or body utopias'.[14] Fairburn has identified many of these expressions as relating to New Zealand, as well as others such as 'the Middle Class paradise' or 'the Labourer's paradise'. Variations which also could be added to this typology include 'The Happy Colony', 'Islands of the Blest', or 'The Fortunate Isles'.[15] What makes any definition of utopia difficult to pinpoint, however, is that such classifications can change and merge over time. As Sargent points out, there 'remain some fundamental disagreements … on the shifting boundaries of the definition of utopia … [suggesting] we should not expect that a single definition will fit all times and places'.[16] According to Fairburn this same situation affects New Zealand's utopias: 'At least one or two of the themes will be found in the same text, sometimes three, less often all four, with variations in explicitness and emphasis from source to source'.[17] A 'bewildering array of heavens on earth' seemed to operate simultaneously in New Zealand.[18]

Further complicating the issue of defining utopianism is the fact that utopias can also depend on human factors. This is in contrast to arcadia which is pastoral, cockaigne which is magical, and the idea of a promised land/Godzone which is divinely inspired. Politics was central to New Zealand's utopian paradise

myth. 'Race' was also important, hence terms such as 'Brown Britons' and 'Better blacks' pepper the paradise discourse. Utopia can be distinguished from arcadia and other varieties of 'body utopias' in one further way, a factor that both Fairburn and Belich overlooked: utopia can be 'a city … [expressing] a human ascendancy over nature'.[19] Sargent calls this emphasis upon social organization 'the utopia of human contrivance or the city utopia'.[20]

The focal years for this article are 1870–1930, a period that Fairburn suggested was relevant to the paradise image, especially for its cities and towns, but one which he did not elaborate upon.[21] The general starting point of 1870 is significant for a number of reasons. It was the year in which the New Zealand Immigration and Public Works Act created the post of Agent-General in London to promote the colony: '[t]he Arcadian tradition was obviously useful in boosting capital investment and immigration, thus enhancing New Zealand's "development".'[22] The need to improve the image of New Zealand was vital during this period since '[p]eople were put off by the bad reputation of … [the country's] dangerous "natives" and the high costs and perils of the journey'.[23] The 1870s also happened to coincide with New Zealand government efforts to encourage tourism, an industry that was conceived as increasingly important as the century drew to a close.[24]

The utopian myth was not just about bringing people to New Zealand, though. While migration, investment and a handful of tourists did follow, attracted in part by the opportunities afforded by gold and borrowing, during the late 1880s credit, access to land and migration flows were drying up. Some New Zealanders left this utopian 'Greater Britain' for the apparent opportunities afforded by the Australian convict dystopia across the Tasman: 'This was the unkindest cut of all to the ultimate immigrants' paradise'.[25] A period of retrenchment followed, the Long Depression, which in turn proclaimed a more uncertain period in the nation's history. This downturn explains why concerted efforts continued to be made to attract settlers and investment and also to keep migrants in the country. So desperate was this situation that communities competed with each other for the meagre number of settlers. According to the *New Zealand Times* in 1890, 'Town rivals town, and hamlet, hamlet, each one fights to the bitter end'.[26] This

Figure 1: John Kinder, *Dunedin* (1890), watercolour. Courtesy of Auckland City Art Gallery/Toi o Tamaki. Gift of Harry Kinder, 1937 [1937/15/97].

inter-urban competition helps to explain why cities and towns so frequently sought to portray themselves idealistically using a utopian vocabulary.

Long before the downturn in migration, though, utopian vocabulary was being used to describe New Zealand's distance from Old World centres.[27] According to Marian Minson this very isolation proved appealing to early European artists: 'Even before they got there, visitors and immigrants tended (and still tend) to see New Zealand as the farthest promised land'.[28] The Reverend John Kinder's *Dunedin* (1890) epitomizes such an approach, with Otago's premier city nestled within a tamed colonial *pastorale* [Figure 1].[29]

Another reason why New Zealand enjoyed a reputation as a paradise was its late European settlement. It was hoped that its belated European discovery might allow the young country to avoid the pitfalls which had plagued the Old World: 'Progress in New Zealand was to avoid the price that marred it in Old Britain: a loss of rural virtue, the vices of industrialisation, and class tension'.[30] So Beatrice Webb celebrated Christchurch as a place 'without the grinding poverty or the aristocratic and ecclesiastical pretensions' which blemished Britain.[31] Likewise Christchurch's promoters praised their planning for avoiding 'mistakes perpetrated in other places'.[32] New Zealand was certainly not the only New World to promote itself in this way: 'In describing Canada's qualities to prospective immigrants, propagandists often spoke of their country as a utopian version of Britain and France where the errors committed by the mother countries had not yet been repeated'.[33] Likewise Australia had been 'depicted in the same romantic language as New Zealand'.[34] Many early seventeenth-century Puritan colonies in the United States had also begun from utopian foundations. Yet what particularly enhanced New Zealand's utopian image is that the country was perceived to be the *newest* New World. It was envisioned as a place where the mistakes of even other Neo-Europes could be avoided. Unlike the United States of America which had developed too many Old World problems, Canada which was too cold and French, South Africa which was black and Boer, and Australia which had begun as a dystopian penal settlement, New Zealand still had utopian potential.[35] In a 1904 promotional work the American C.W. MacMurran favourably contrasted Christchurch with New York: 'I one day noticed the employees coming out of these woollen works [in Christchurch] and could not help contrasting their rosy, rugged, happy, round faces and neat attire with the pale cheeks and oftentimes poorly dressed factory-workers in New York City, where … the unfortunate toilers are obliged to stow themselves away in overcrowded tenement-houses'.[36] Similarly, Napier's climate was celebrated for its 'pure ozone' as opposed to the unhealthy toxins of major European manufacturing centres.[37] An image of the country as an 'invalid's paradise' was duly cultivated, with wealthy visitors invited to 'take the waters' amongst the colony's thermal regions.[38] The country even had its own equivalent to the Horatio Alger myth. Alger, an American minister, had written a series of rags-to-riches inspirational novels which had garnered the US a reputation as a land where anyone could prosper through hard work. Whilst much of New Zealand's mythology was as equally invalid as America's,[39] promotional works such as *The immigrants* [sic] *prospects in New Zealand* (1883) still praised the colony for being 'the poor man's paradise'.[40]

New Zealand's professed history of radical politics was a further contributing factor to its utopian image. The Treaty of Waitangi was heralded by some, on the basis of its provision for a relatively peaceful legal framework for British governance, as 'an exemplar to the international community' with regard to fostering 'an image of racial equality'.[41] Undoubtedly the highlight of this political experimentation came during the Liberal era of 1891–1912. It began with Premier John Balance, whose 1892 Land for Settlement Act and graduated land tax, both indebted to American economist Henry George's utopian-like call for land nationalization, were aimed at reducing the number of large estates in the hands of a small wealthy élite. Following the death of Ballance and his replacement by Richard John Seddon, New Zealand became the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote (1893), to provide a compulsory apparatus for the negotiated and peaceful settlement of industrial disputes (the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1894) and to pioneer attempts to alleviate old age misery by the introduction of old age pensions (1898). In 1901 New Zealand also created the first national government tourist department in the world. Leading politicians, proud of their achievements, proclaimed that 'New Zealand leads the world'.[42] A small invasion force of visiting European and American commentators subsequently began to visit and see for themselves the extent of these measures. They included Keir Hardie, Henry Demarest Lloyd, Ramsay MacDonald, Tom Mann, George Bernard Shaw, André Siegfried, Ben Tillett, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Many came specifically with the intention of proselytizing the colony's successes when they returned home, for they 'had a vested interest in capitalizing on the supposed success of the New Zealand experiments'.[43] Yet their celebratory findings only served to further the nation's reputation as a promised land. Frank Parsons, the American who wrote *The Story of New Zealand* (1904), stated: 'During some years past we have been hearing strange and interesting reports from the progressive commonwealths … particularly New Zealand'.[44] Compatriot David Gooding's *Picturesque New Zealand* (1913) applauded the colony similarly: 'New Zealand has long been singled out as a striking example of the utopian tendencies of this age.'[45] According to Peter Coleman there was so much talk about the country in America in the early twentieth century that it led one commentator to label the phenomenon 'the New Zealand fever'.[46]

This iconic, New World status also evolved from a 'rich tradition … both in writing by New Zealanders and by others using a New Zealand setting' of utopian fiction.[47] It additionally reflected the emergence of a 'quite significant genre of New Zealand literature', SF.[48] Despite SF sometimes being distinguished from utopian literature on the basis that utopias do not always involve 'some notion of scientific advancement', these genres are related. Both are 'speculative statements about real future possibilities'.[49] Darko Suvin even contends 'that utopias are a sub-genre of science fiction'.[50] Putting aside theoretical arguments on the relationship between SF and utopianism, what is important is that some of these works not only highlight New Zealand's relationship with utopia but are also nationally and internationally significant. Therefore, any analysis of the country's paradise myth should include them as a key part of the investigation; however, with a few notable exceptions, they have generally been ignored.[51]

After Thomas More's imaginary Renaissance protagonist Raphael Hythloday accompanied Amerigo Vespucci to the New World and encountered Utopia, distant new worlds and undiscovered islands such as New Zealand became the favoured locales for utopian writing. So prior to Abel Tasman an imagined version of 'New Zealand' had already sprung up fully formed in the West's imagination. Even before the new country had been fully explored by Europeans the fictitious Hildebrand Bowman, who claimed to have travelled with James Cook on the *Adventure* in 1773, published *The Travels of Hildebrand Bowman* (1788). According to Bowman, after wandering the country he arrived at the island of Bonhommica, 'a land … very much like some ideal Britain'.[52] The theme of newly discovered New Zealand offering the chance of utopia emerged soon after. Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), however, 'is generally regarded as ranking with More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* as an ironic fiction of lasting importance', one that would place New Zealand firmly on the map as a landscape associated with utopian fiction.53

Another significant New Zealand SF/utopian work was former New Zealand Prime Minister Sir Julius Vogel's *Anno Domini 2000; Or, Woman's Destiny* (1889). With regard to female suffrage, electricity, email, air conditioning, a discussion of European federation (minus the UK), and a situation for New Zealand in the year 2000 wherein both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition were women, his novel has been credited as coming 'nearer the mark than George Orwell'.[54] It is also recognized as being revolutionary in terms of its female protagonists: the women of the future participated in nearly all aspects of political and business life.[55] That said, there were limitations as to just how far Vogel appeared willing to go. *Anno Domini 2000*'s somewhat Shakespearian multiple wedding ending, involving no less than the pairing of five couples, suggested that marriage was still the only viable option for women. The Homeric plot revolving around a war between the United States and the British Empire on account of the 'chagrin of the [US] President at the [British] Emperor's rejection of her daughter's hand', was also rather traditional.[56] Furthermore, owing to their supposed nurturing qualities women were not allowed to join the armed services, suggesting that Vogel's assertion that 'the last disability under which the female sex laboured' had been removed was simply not the case.[57] Last but not least, Hilda, the central female protagonist, had to be rescued by the dashing Colonel Laurient, and was not thus the Lieutenant Ripley figure of later feminist SF films.

One of the most significant nineteenth-century SF and utopian works to come out of New Zealand was *The Great Romance* (1881), a little known novella about travel through time and space involving the planet Venus. Written under the pseudonym of The Inhabitant, the work stands out for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is possible that this novella was the frame story for Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Not only are the storylines similar, involving nineteenth-century protagonists going to sleep and waking up in the distant future, but the characters are virtually identical.[58] Bellamy's story about nationalization is considered to be one of the most widely read of all utopian works. It went on to directly inspire the Fabians, Russian revolutionaries,

Zionists and labour leaders, as well as Anton Chekhov, Maxim Gorky, Leo Tolstoy, Gilbert and Sullivan, and H.G. Wells. *The Great Romance* is also important for its technical sophistication. Not only does it provide a quasi-accurate account of the absence of gravity on a spaceship and a discussion about the need for astronauts to exercise to prevent muscle fatigue, it is also the first ever work to describe spacesuits, spacewalks, airlocks and the concept of a shuttle craft/planetary rover.[59] *The Great Romance* was also groundbreaking in its 'realistic' depiction of an alien species. It was the first work to consider the colonization of other planets by human beings, and treated the alien 'Venuses' as sympathetic creatures instead of the Bug-eyed Monsters which evolved into the dominant trope for most early novels of this kind.
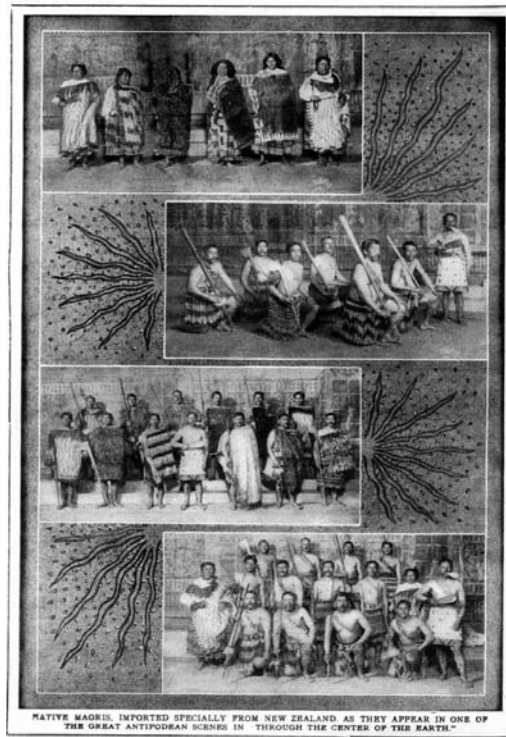

Figure 2: 'Native Maoris. Imported Specially from New Zealand.' Taken from *Souvenir Book From The New York Hippodrome … Inside the Earth: A Marvelous Scenic and Dramatic Representation of Antipodean Wonders*, New York, 1909, n.p. Courtesy of Ian Conrich Collection of New Zealand Film and Visual Culture.

Just as the political hyperbole of visiting international reformers dramatically increased New Zealand's global reputation as a utopian locale, the same was true of the impact of the country's SF and utopian writings. On occasion — as in George Bell's *Mr. Oseba's Last Discovery* (1904), the story of an inhabitant from the centre of the world discovering utopia in New Zealand — the association of the nation with the fantastic seems to have been deliberately made to promote the country. It has been said that this text, with its fulsome landscape descriptions, praise for New Zealand's trailblazing politics

and inclusion of photographs of some local politicians and scenic sites (most of which were entirely unconnected to the text), gives the impression that it may have been underwritten by New Zealand's Tourist and Publicity Department to encourage visitors.[60] Paradise was not only promoted in novels. *Inside the Earth*, a five-scene play performed at the New York Hippodrome in 1909–1910, although written and produced by Americans, presented the tale of Maori and Pakeha allied against miscreant dwarf creatures inside the planet.[61] The setting of this story in New Zealand and the participation of 'authentic' Maori 'imported especially', suggests that the nation's reputation as a fantastic realm was ensconced in the minds of a wider public [Figure 2]. The same argument with regard to a link between utopian literature and national promotionalism has been made for *Anno Domini 2000*. It has been alleged that Maori might have been omitted from the novel to play down the 'native' while hoping to attract settlers in a post-New Zealand Wars climate.[62] Vogel, who had been New Zealand Agent-General in London, would have been familiar with the wealth of publicity emanating from his former office. Little wonder that parts of the text read like an advertisement for the country, especially those describing the country's hot springs as an 'invalid's paradise'.[63]

Considering that 'utopias have usually been identified with the "left"', and that a wealth of famous socialist utopian works was being produced internationally, what is unusual about some of the New Zealand-related utopias is that they promoted capitalism.[64] Although socialist utopian works were being written and read in the colony, the presence of a number of anti-left publications makes the history of New Zealand utopian writing unique. The capitalist utopia is a relatively rare phenomenon.[65] Two instances of this subgenre include Anthony Trollope's *The Fixed Period* (1882) and the aforementioned *Anno Domini 2000*.

In *Anno Domini 2000* Vogel declared that he 'hates the idea of anything approaching to Communism'.[66] He subsequently imagined that a threatened global insurrection in 1920, not that far off from the 1917 Russian Revolution, would result in the leaders of the world's richest companies planning to introduce a series of business–government co-operative measures to reform the world's economy. These measures included old age pensions, disability insurance, and price and wage increases, and do 'not appear that far removed from … FDR's first New Deal'.[67] Trollope's New Zealand utopian novel, *The Fixed Period*, in which élite white New Zealanders in the mid-twentieth century settled the beautiful but fictional island of Britannula, located just off the coast of New Zealand, is also a capitalist utopia. Britannula remained a free-enterprise economy with private property in which 'no attempts have been made towards communism'.[68] This support for traditional capitalism may have been the result of Trollope's Arnold-like concerns over the potential bitter consequences of progress. Certainly New Zealand's high level of debt was something that also worried Trollope, so much so that the protagonist of his novel, President John Neverbend, pushed through a compulsory euthanasia Bill for those over 68.

Trollope's euthanasia premise is particularly interesting for a study of utopian fiction. Historically, the killing grounds of Britannula's 'Necropolis',

the euthanasia crematorium described as 'a graceful building surrounded by growing shrubs', is harrowingly similar to the potted geraniums that disguised Treblinka's role in the Final Solution. The habit of tattooing all Britannulans with their birthdates in order to identify their ages for extermination is also similar to Nazi policy. And from a literary perspective, Trollope's 'Final Solution' resembles the 'Human Delineation Act' in Janet Frame's dystopian novel *Intensive Care* (1970), a piece of futuristic legislation introduced to weed out the supposed outcasts of society. Leaving aside euthanasia, Britannula was undoubtedly based upon a New Zealand model. The names of the island's settlements, such as Little Christchurch, resemble their larger Pacific neighbour, and Britannula's inhabitants are described in the same language that Trollope had reserved for previous descriptions of New Zealand. In his account of a visit to the South Pacific, *Australia and New Zealand* (1873), he wrote that 'New Zealand considers herself to be the cream of the British Empire'. Similarly, Neverbend said his people 'were … peculiarly intelligent … the very *cream*'.[69] While Trollope and Vogel are not the only New Zealand-related examples of an anti-communist utopian tradition, these publications support Pat Moloney and Kerry Taylor's assertion that socialism has 'been portrayed as a dangerous … menace to New Zealand'.[70]

If SF and utopian literature have been ignored as New Zealand literary genres the situation is more extreme for fantasy. While the former do at least get their own entries in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, there is no similar category for fantasy, with the works of Maurice Gee and others being subsumed under SF. In terms of promoting New Zealand,

Figure 3: Local Wellington women dressed up as wood nymphs. Taken from *Wellington the Capital City of New Zealand*, Christchurch Press, 1902, p.11. Courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library [C 16289].

however, supernatural faery images were as prolific as the fantastic 'Land of Cockaygne' conventions identified by Fairburn, and as such deserve mention. According to Sargent, since utopianism 'includes elements of fantasy', fairy tales also form an essential part of his utopian taxonomy.[71] Not surprisingly, therefore, we see Waikato endorsed as 'El Dorado', Palmertson North as 'a picture fairy realm', Nelson as the embodiment of Samuel Johnson's Happy Valley, the Waitomo Caves as 'fairy palaces', the Pink and White Terraces as 'fairyland', and Auckland as 'the abode of fairies'. Christchurch, according to Thomas Bracken, was equated with 'Fairy-land'.[72] Indeed, the contracted title of Bracken's 1870s anthem, 'Godzone', became a well-known utopian descriptor.[73] This romantic realm of the fantastic was further encouraged by Wellington's promoters in a 1901 photograph depicting young local women dressed up as wood nymphs[74] [Figure 3].

Cockaigne itself, however, also remained a significant component of New Zealand's supernatural utopian image. It is revealed in a personification of Zealandia with a cornucopia that appeared as the cover for the 1913–1914 Industrial, Agricultural and Mining Exhibition at Auckland[75] [Figure 4]. The underscoring of 'Men's appetites' implied in cockaigne suggests that there was a strong sexual allure to this type of ideal society; and it was certainly the case that women figured prominently in some of the promotional
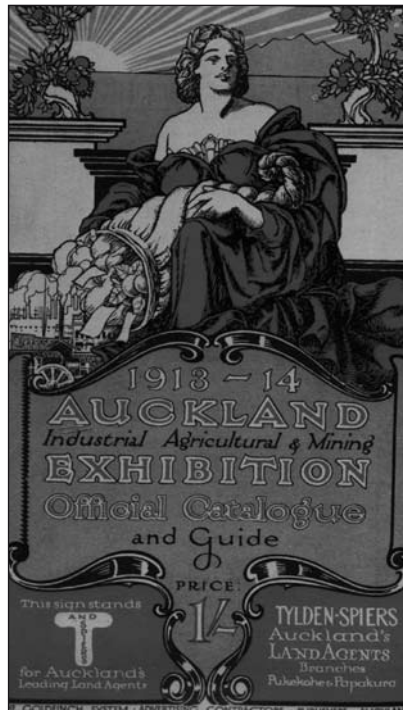

Figure 4: Zealandia with cornucopia. Taken from the cover of *Auckland Industrial, Agricultural & Mining Exhibition 1913–14, Official Catalogue and Guide*, Brett Printing, Auckland, 1913. Courtesy of the J.C. Beaglehole Room, Victoria University of Wellington Library [DU436 A2 A A898 03].

imagery. In the Government Tourist and Publicity Department film *Magic Playground* (1928) a European woman was shown naked, preparing a bath on a hot-water beach. In the *Souvenir of the Visit to Dunedin, 'The City Beautiful', by the American fleet* (1925), a page was devoted to the metropolis's women posing in bathing suits.[76] New Zealand's Department of Tourism also made extensive use of Maori women. Margaret McClure writes that thermal Rotorua's government-run tea houses employed '"prettily dressed" Maori girls'.[77] So frequent was this practice of using Maori women as sexual objects that John Duthie, MP for Wellington, 'thought it was a mistake and degrading to allow a Government advertisement of that sort to appear'.[78] While sex was not by any means the only draw card in the paradise image, it was a significant factor for a few, indicating that Ronald Hyam's thesis that 'sexual dynamics crucially underpinned the whole operation of the British empire' applies to some extent in New Zealand too.[79]

Although not unique to New Zealand, eugenicist and racialist utopian ideals played a role in the paradise image, with a 'White New Zealand' policy being seen as 'instrumental in the formation of New Zealand's national identity'.[80] As there had been warnings about the decline of the white 'race' and concerns about immigration, Vogel's future utopia was peopled not only by super-fit Anglo-Saxons but was 'averse to giving employment to the peoples of foreign nations'.[81] Even visiting commentators praised the colony's racially exclusionist policies as an example of the country's forward-thinking approach: 'the national aim of New Zealand is to keep the Dominion … free from the taint of coloured races'.[82] Nevertheless, Pakeha New Zealand's history of racial attitudes remained exceptional in two ways. Firstly, while white New Zealanders held themselves to be superior to non-whites, some also held themselves to be a notch or two above other Anglo-Saxons on the metaphorical racial ladder. Secondly, in spite of 'considerable private prejudice', Maori, in stark contrast to their Aboriginal counterparts in Australia, were paradoxically incorporated (when mentioned) into official New Zealand discourse as 'brown Europeans' and 'honorary whites'.[83] These simultaneous 'better British' and 'better black' tropes assisted in the creation of a racialized utopian episteme that appeared to make the country's settler history distinct from that of convict/Aboriginal Australia, French/Métis/First Nation Canada, black/Boer South Africa, or rebel/black/native America.

In *Paradise Reforged* Belich placed significant importance for the emergence of the New Zealand paradise myth upon the materialization of a 'better British' ideology. For Belich this viewpoint surfaced from a complicated composite of mid-Victorian notions, including a supposed racial superiority based on a myth of 'better stock' and a variant of climatic determinism.[84] This emphasis was also part of a desire by New Zealanders to distance themselves deliberately from Australia's overtly dystopian convict legacy. It has been suggested that this was one reason why New Zealand did not join the Australian Commonwealth.[85] This 'better British' idea also reflected historical attempts to settle New Zealand with a 'superior quality' emigrant, which in turn helped to fuel the utopian myth. The numerous early efforts at systematic colonization over the course of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, such as Edward Gibbon Wakefield's

Church of England development at Canterbury, are a case in point, even if their screening processes were 'perfunctory' and the overall numbers were never large.[86]

Not surprisingly, the utopian and SF literature of the period placed a degree of emphasis upon 'race' and the 'better British' ideology. As seen in *The Fixed Period* Britannula was peopled only by the best New Zealanders. Likewise, themes of racial superiority played a role in *Anno Domini*. The anti-Australian elements, when contrasted with the glowing descriptions of the New Zealanders, resulted in the text reading like a proto-nationalistic diatribe. Yet New Zealanders in Vogel's work were also favourably compared with their British counterparts. Not only did they save the empire and live a more egalitarian lifestyle, but they appeared less decadent too. Maori, though, received short shrift. The reason for this omission, according to Vogel, was that Maori 'are not, as a rule, industrious'.[87] Trollope too left out an indigenous presence on his South Pacific utopia. Whilst Vogel's novel was innovative for challenging patriarchal bias and for running contrary to some pejorative attitudes towards 'race', especially in its positive depiction of Jews, *Anno Domini 2000* remained a pigmentopia, a utopian discourse with a strong or prevailing racist worldview.[88]

This negative view of Maori, and the absence of Maori exemplified by Trollope's work, reflects a complex inter-relationship in New Zealand between 'race' and utopia. One potential solution to the perceived 'problem' of Maori and Pakeha in New Zealand's paradise image was the route taken by Vogel and Trollope, namely to dismiss or ignore the indigenous presence altogether. An explanation for this 'colour-blindness' resided in a belief prominent at the time that Maori were dying out.[89] From a pigmentopian point of view, a native-less New Zealand was certainly seen by some Europeans as a positive sign of progress. According to the *New Zealand Times*, 'the beach where the Maori landed in his canoe is now thronged with people born of another race'.[90]

However, an entirely different response saw the celebration of Maori as 'better blacks' or 'Brown Britons', much like Pakeha were seen to be 'Better Britons'. Belich labels this the 'White Maori' stereotype. The stereotype was given a boost after Edward Tregear, the head of New Zealand's Department of Labour, published the influential *The Aryan Maori* (1892), which argued for a European Aryan ancestry for the Maori. By elevating Maori, supporters of the White Maori belief were suggesting that New Zealand's indigenous inhabitants could be easily assimilated into a dominant Pakeha culture and that Maori did not threaten 'the notion of New Zealand as a paradise of racial harmony'.[91] An additional contributing factor in the emergence of this racialized ideal was the country's slightly better history of relations between the colonizer and the colonized: 'Maori were thought to have had an exceptionally benign relationship with their neo-Europeans, so much better than that of Australia, South Africa and the United States … New Zealand was "a paradise of racial harmony, a racial utopia"'.[92] In this way New Zealanders got one better on Australia yet again, which was now seen to be populated not just by the worst whites but by the worst Aboriginals as well. Australians, in other words, were damned twice over. As the *New Zealand Herald* stated: 'Owing to his

exceptional characteristics, the Maori interferes in no way with our national homogeneity'.[93] Similarly, in *Oceana* (1911) Sir Frank Fox reproduced a French comment applauding the position of Maori as a sign of New Zealand's distinctive status: 'There are Parliaments where sit, eloquent and correct, men who used to be cannibals'.[94]

While blacks were still considered inferior to Europeans in The Inhabitant's *The Great Romance*, the description of friendly and sympathetic alien 'Venuses' mirrors this more positive Maori outlook: 'Since alien species in science fiction tend, parabolically, to displace the Other (read indigenous Maori in *The Great Romance*), the attitude toward aliens and colonization presented in the text serves … to illustrate … the unique attitude of Pakeha … toward the Maori'.[95] This more tolerant attitude explains why the protagonist of *The Great Romance* considers the possibility of sexual intercourse with the Venuses. This marked the first of a number of very rare occasions in the early history of SF when the act of cross-species sex was considered. Not surprisingly, given the existence of this more tolerant attitude, a sexually explicit cockaigne-like 'Maori maid' was included in the promotional pages *New Zealand the Wonderland of the Pacific*.[96] Likewise, the camera focused upon beautiful Maori women in the Government Tourist and Publicity film *Magic Playground*. While similar images of naked, posing Zulu girls were common in British photographs of this period, the uniqueness of a 'Better Brown' mentality explains why intermarriage between Pakeha and Maori was never illegal in New Zealand, in contrast with much of the rest of the empire. In part this attempt to portray Maori positively was the result of necessity, especially as the country hoped to attract potential immigrants and tourists. The New Zealand Wars were still fresh in the minds of many; the White Maori stereotype may have been intended to help assuage European fears about being 'eaten by blacks'.[97] Ethel Vincent, in her published memoirs, reported the concerns of one local woman who was apprehensive about the barbaric image of the colony overseas: 'I believe they think at home that we are living in the midst of cannibals'.[98]

A distinct Romantic tradition in European literature specific to New Zealand may have also been a decisive dynamic in the tendency to depict Maori in a positive manner, most especially when positing them at some distant date in a SF-like future history. In what is probably the earliest example of this trend, Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* drew parallels between the Picts and the Maori, in particular 'the pleasing hope that New Zealand may produce, in some future age, the Hume of the Southern Hemisphere'.[99] Thomas Babington Macaulay also expressed his expectations about a future Maori New Zealander. Macaulay predicted, on the basis that the Roman Catholic Church had continued to thrive in the mid-nineteenth century, that the Roman Church might yet survive at some future date when London lay in ruinous neglect: 'And she may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's'.[100] This image of 'the New Zealander' became more prominent when it was encapsulated in Gustave Doré's *The New Zealander* (1872) [Figure 5]. Just as *Roma Latina* had civilized *Prydain Celtaid*, the implication in this image was

that Britannia would civilize the tangata whenua of Aotearoa. While other New World travellers to Europe from places as far afield as Peru, Australia, Canada and the United States would undertake similar future journeys to a ruined Old World, the image of the Maori New Zealander was the first of its kind and the most prolific.[101]

Figure 5: Gustave Doré, *The New Zealander* (1872). Taken from Jerrold Blanchard and Gustave Doré, *London: A Pilgrimage*, Grant & Co., London, 1872. (Reproduced by Wordsworth Editions, 1987, 188.)

By the turn of the twentieth century various manifestations of utopia were imbricated in the representation of New Zealand. According to Fairburn 'conditioning in the Arcadian vision' led many Pakeha to believe in these bucolic clichés.[102] In the late 1920s the Department of Tourism and Publicity in its London bureau window promoted the country as 'A Paradise For Tourists and Sportsmen'[103] [Figure 6]. Local civic government bodies, in association with New Zealand publishing companies such as the Tanner Brothers, Duncan Frank and Company, the Howe Brothers, Muir and Moodie, Ferguson Limited, and Whitcombe and Tombs, commissioned celebratory albums full of photographic and lithographic images of urban, sunlit streets, prosperous villas, busy ports and ornate offices, many of which were accompanied by glowing prose. Publications such as *Beautiful Napier* (1900), *Beautiful New Zealand: Cities, Townships and Beauty Spots* (1905) and *Auckland the Beautiful* (1926), lauded the ideal qualities of the neighbourhoods there described. Sometimes individual immigrants to New Zealand reflected utopian aspirations in their letters, although a few of these, especially those republished in newspapers, could have been written by 'colonization companies rather than by actual settlers'.[104] Herbert Sprackman, in a series of unpublished letters to his fiancée back in Britain, praised the cultural wealth of New Zealand in an attempt to

convince her to follow him: 'New Zealand is more go-ahead than many parts of England. Three daily papers here and one weekly, in a town of less than 9000 inhabitants!'[105]

Figure 6: London bureau window of New Zealand Department of Tourism and Publicity, High Commissioner's Office, 1928. Courtesy of Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Wellington Office
[Archives reference: TO 1, 28/22 part 1].

Eric Hobsbawm once warned about the need to carefully avoid the construction of 'political and social myths dressed up as history'.[106] The emphasis upon utopia in this article is not the same as saying that New Zealand is, or has been, a paradise. As Jock Phillips has pointed out, historians should be 'sceptical of national identity as an analytical category'.[107] Fairburn's work ably shatters any such mythology, arguing that colonial society was far from ideal. Surviving records from disappointed visitors such as Lottie Wilmot and immigrants such as 'Hopeful' further disparage the myth. Moreover, post World War II a tradition of dystopian New Zealand writing began to emerge, as demonstrated in Janet Frame's *Intensive Care* (1970) and C.K. Stead's *Smith's Dream* (1973). And, of course, one person's utopia could be another's dystopia. The pigmentopias of Vogel's *Anno Domini 2000* and Neverbend's Britannula are cases in point. Nevertheless, as Sargent has argued, 'utopianism is central to the New Zealand experience and has helped create the nation that exists today'.[108]

The penetration of the paradise myth at so many different levels of New Zealand life explains why, Vogel aside, other politicians wrote utopian fictions. The former New Zealand Agent-General William Pember Reeves, in

co-operation with the poet George Phipps Williams, published 'Farming in the Future' (1891). Tregear, the proselytizer of the Aryan Maori thesis, also wrote utopian fiction and was the author of *Hedged with Divinities* (1895). The former Premier Alfred Domett wrote the utopian romantic poem *Ranolf and Amohia: A South-Sea Day-Dream* (1872), which gained him acclaim by Robert Browning and Henry Longfellow.[109] In 1919 George Warren Russell, New Zealand's Minister of Internal Affairs and Public Health, wrote *A New Heaven*. Last but not least, Seddon popularized the phrase 'God's Own Country' to describe New Zealand. Although Seddon was not a utopian writer the expression which he coined demonstrated 'obviously utopian overtones'.[110] Similarly, Robert Stout, another Prime Minister, described the country as a land of 'eternal spring'.[111] If a nation is an 'imagined political community', to borrow Benedict Anderson's dictum, then New Zealand was a community of the fantastic imagination, with a panoply of influential political, literary and artistic figures, not forgetting the many settlers who, having made the dangerous and long sea crossing to New Zealand, were inclined towards a utopian dream.[112] Taking into consideration this wealth of utopian references it becomes apparent that New Zealand, like America, was imagined as an *Ultima Thule* par excellence. As such the relationship between New Zealand and its utopias, in all their different forms, deserves far more attention than has been received thus far.

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