

## Kiwi Blokes

Recontextualising White New Zealand Masculinities  
in a Global Setting

By **MATTHEW BANNISTER**

[1] Writing in issue 38 of this journal, Debali Mookerjea-Leonard suggested that Hindu nationalists in pre-Independence India engaged in "a process of myth-making whereby feminine sexual purity was endowed with the status of *the* transcendental signifier of national virtue ... embedded in a mosaic of macrosociological dynamics of colonialism and culture". In this essay I examine how a parallel or complementary set of cultural dynamics produced a similar association of gender with emergent national identity in another (post)colonial culture, Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, the dominant iconography of New Zealand identity is masculine. Explaining this requires an examination of the different experiences of colonisation in relation to emergent nationalisms: India was a colony of "limited settlement" or occupation, where a small group of white Western colonists dominated a large indigenous population; whereas New Zealand is/was a "settler" society marked by mass migration of usually white settlers (Pearson 2001, 4-5; Ashcroft et al, 211). The emergence of dominant narratives of nationalism is thus associated primarily in the former case with indigenous groups' struggle to throw off foreign domination; in the latter more to settler attempts to assert an identity distinct from both the coloniser and the indigenous peoples. These differing narratives of national identity in turn generate sets of gendered identifications: India and a number of other anti-colonial nationalisms established "a correlation between feminine purity and the vulnerable nation", Hindu woman as "uncolonized sacred national space" (Mookerjea-Leonard). But for settler societies it was the opposite – national identity was associated with the act of colonization, with "stamping" an identity on the land (and marginalising its indigenous inhabitants in the process). However, both schemes are patriarchal in their association of masculinity and femininity with divisions of activity and passivity, and public and private space. Both work as highly charged cultural signifiers that seek to reconcile the many paradoxes and tensions in emergent cultural formations of identity, and produce unified narratives of nationalism (often repressing alternative narratives in the process) through gender.

[2] In an autobiographical passage of his 1987 history of masculinity in New Zealand, *A Man's Country?*, Jock Phillips refers to "a powerful legend of pioneering manhood ... a model of courage and physical toughness" that shaped his view of what a man should be (3). This model, as described on the book sleeve, is of a "rugged practical bloke - fixes anything, strong and tough, keeps his emotions to himself, usually scornful of women". It is based on a puritan work ethic allied to an ethos of exclusive masculinity based on "mateship" - the male camaraderie of pioneers united by common physical struggle against the elements, in war or sport, all cemented in the pub. Both men and women have attested to the power of this archetype. Prominent New Zealand feminist author Sandra Coney writes of her father's generation:

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They would be muscled, sinewy and tough; not effete, weak and bookish. They would be practical men; doers not thinkers. They expressed their culture not in theatres, galleries or pomp, but on the rugby field, in the backblocks [sections of rural land] in the great outdoors. It was a culture of the body, rather than the mind (23).

Like many other "settler" cultures (Australia, Canada), New Zealand has historically identified itself with a model of tough, rural, "pioneering" white masculinity whose presence is naturalized by association with the landscape and a "frontier" model of pragmatic, physical industry (Pearson 2001, 7). In turn, discourses of masculine homosociality, male autonomy and independence from the "feminising" influences of domesticity, "polite" society and imported mass culture have been central to the construction of pakeha cultural identity. (Pakeha is a Maori term that refers to white settlers. Not all white New Zealanders accept the term, however [Spoonley; King 1999, 10]). "The Kiwi bloke", as I will henceforth term him, has a long history of representation in local culture, from literature to film, TV and popular music. Historically, the country's national heroes and popular cultural icons, from sportsmen like the All Blacks rugby team and mountain climber Sir Edmund Hillary to war heroes (Sir Charles Upham), writers (Barry Crump), actors (Bruno Lawrence) and even scientists (Sir Ernest Rutherford) have been placed in a "history" of pioneering, usually white males. This history came under increasing attack in the 70s and 80s from feminism and indigenous groups (Maori), especially in the controversy surrounding the 1981 Springbok rugby tour, which questioned the centrality of rugby (and hence masculinity) to national identity (Perry 1994, 17; Phillips 262-3, 270-1). In concluding his book, Jock Phillips suggests that the "bloke's" days are numbered, a sentiment also expressed by others (Phillips 288-9; Campbell, 2-9; Awatere).

[3] However, this eagerly anticipated demise has not occurred. In a 2004 ethnographic and semiotic study comparing concepts of national identity in the US, Australia and New Zealand for advertising agency FCB, researchers noted the continuing "blokishness" of Kiwi culture: "When we looked at all the symbols for what is New Zealand ... men and women all bought the same ... symbols: rugby, All Blacks, barbecues ... gumboots, tractors ... In America ... the female symbols ... apple pie, friendship diaries, are different to the men's" (Jacqueline Smart of FCB, quoted on [Campbell Live](#)). "Local" culture – TV programmes, advertising, sport and writing – continues to identify the local with a discourse of white masculinity, even though most New Zealanders live in cities, come from increasingly diverse cultural backgrounds, are not necessarily male, and therefore have little in common with this national archetype (Perry 1994, 41; Longhurst and Wilson, 218). "The Kiwi bloke remains the most visible representation of New Zealand masculinity. In cartoon, film, TV and literature he performs the strange magic of rendering invisible the variety of ways in which masculinity is constituted, contested and co-opted by both men and women in New Zealand" (Law, Campbell, Schick, 15).

[4] Why has this association of certain types of masculine representation with national identity continued for so long? And why does it continue to thrive? In this essay I want to review past approaches to pakeha masculinity and national identity, suggest some new possibilities, by drawing on theoretical perspectives from media studies, gender theory, postcolonial studies and post-

Freudian psychoanalysis, and demonstrate with examples from local media, for example, advertising, pakeha writing, film and popular music. Most saliently, I want to problematise the masculinised, Freudian notion of identity as essential, autonomous and self-generated and instead emphasise how it is constructed in relation to others – in the case of the "national", this involves developing an understanding of how "the Kiwi bloke" has functioned within a globalised economy of representations. The implication, therefore, is that this representation is not simply to be understood as serving a local patriarchy.

[5] In media studies terms, the Kiwi bloke is a representation. Media do not simply reflect reality; they represent it through codes and languages which are socially constructed and privilege certain points of view, often associated with hegemonic groups. Discourses of the Kiwi bloke do not arise "naturally", as Phillips has suggested, from our pioneering past – they serve a hegemonic function (26). They have a history, which is anything but a "natural evolution". Benedict Anderson argues that nationhood as we understand it today is an "imagined community" constructed through mass media (44). Media do not simply reflect the nation that is; they also help bring it into being, by reproducing ideologies of identity, for example the Kiwi bloke.

[6] Gender theory increasingly recognises that patriarchal power is not monolithic, but is made up of many different social groups, ideologies and hierarchies. For example, RW Connell differentiates between hegemonic, complicit and subordinate masculinities (Connell 1995, 76-81). He points out that the most visible bearers of (masculine) hegemony may not be (politically) powerful in themselves - for example, sports heroes, rock musicians or, for that matter, Kiwi blokes. Such representations do not always serve the interests of the social group they seem to represent (for example in the way that multinationals like Toyota or McDonald's use images of "blokes" in local TV advertisements, as discussed below). Patriarchy may also be articulated differently in different national contexts. For example, the UK is a patriarchal society, but arguably does not have quite the same emphasis on gender as a means of social stratification or masculinity as a symbol of national identity; rather class is foregrounded (James and Saville-Smith, 12). The Kiwi bloke, in a UK context, would be marginalised because of his class identity, which is proletarian. He could not therefore function as a symbol of UK national identity as unambiguously as in the New Zealand context (another theme I will explore in more detail).

[7] Local studies of masculinities also need to address "the large historical context, the big picture, [which] is essential for understanding ... ethnographic detail ... We must pay attention to very large scale structures", what Connell refers to as "the world gender order ... hegemony... connected with patterns of trade, investment and communication ... in turn historically based on Colonialist expansion of the West" (2000, 39). That is, settler/postcolonial societies' ideology of rough male camaraderie has some relation to colonial and imperialist discourses of domination (Connell 1995, 185-194; Segal, 106-7). Mrinalini Sinha has noted how in colonial India, representations of white "manliness" acted as a rationale for domination of indigenous groups, which in turn were perceived as effete and feminised. The Kiwi bloke may have functioned similarly in relation to white colonisation of New

Zealand. However, my argument focuses more on the construction of hierarchies of difference *within* white colonial patriarchy, how white colonisers were also themselves constructed as inferior in relation to the centres of imperial power in Britain, and how this "inferiority complex" is both articulated and disavowed through the identification of the Kiwi bloke with New Zealand national identity.

### **Foreign influence and local culture**

[8] Both local popular and academic accounts of Kiwi masculinities and national identity have tended to ignore global context, constructing New Zealand as separate and isolated – "a destiny apart" (Sinclair 1985). "Aotearoa, rugged individual/Glistens like a pearl, at the bottom of the world" (Split Enz). New Zealand's first "national" poet, RAK Mason, writes in his "Sonnet of Brotherhood" of "this solitary hard-assaulted spot/fixed at the friendless outer edge of space" (Sinclair 1959, 231; Muldoon, 31; Murray, 62; O'Sullivan, 42). This "isolationist" approach associates developing identity and autonomy with separation and independence from influence. In 1981, conservative New Zealand Prime Minister Robert Muldoon stated in his book *My Way* that "New Zealand is unique and ... policies and theories that work in other countries will not necessarily work [here]" (31). Muldoon was a complex figure. A patriarch and bully, he was notorious for his rhetoric of "ordinary New Zealanders" and his demonisation of "trendy lefties", effete intellectuals, "beady-eyed" feminists, "radical" Maori and anyone else who threatened the status quo with their "imported" ideas (Muldoon, 50, 125, 72). However, as Minister of Finance, he also did his best to insulate the country's economy from global change in the 70s (the oil crisis, UK joining the EEC) with tariffs, price freezes and other forms of state intervention (Jesson, 37-41; 44-5). Later commentators referred to this as the "Fortress New Zealand" approach (Russell, 9-18). The example of Muldoon connects dominant masculinity with a paternalistic concern to insulate New Zealand from global change. New Zealand author Maurice Gee's *Sole Survivor* features a ruthless Muldoon-like politician (Duggie Plumb) who employs a similar rhetoric of local pragmatism, defining it against the foreignness of communism, to justify his actions: "The masses? What the hell's masses? That's not kiwi talk" (Gee, 132).

"What's your philosophy in politics?"

"I don't have one of those. I leave the airy-fairy stuff to Latham [Labour politician, Plumb's political opponent]. He's got a philosophy ... and it comes from Russia" (Gee, 131).

This discourse of isolation manifests itself in a suspicion of "imported" theory and a tendency to underestimate the importance of external factors, foreign influences and global tendencies in the shaping of local identities (Horrocks 1984; During).

[9] For example, Phillips' *A Man's Country*, although a valuable resource for studying pakeha masculinities, has been criticised for its theoretical shortcomings, such as confusing representation and history and using outmoded concepts such as sex role theory (Jensen, 10-11). Even sociologists Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith's more theoretically sophisticated feminist-Marxist approach still tends to assume that New Zealand's "gendered culture" (as they describe it) came about primarily through internal causes, in this

case the Liberal government reforms of 1880s and 90s, largely bypassing the influence of global structures of power (in this case the British Empire) on political and social change (14-15, 29-64).

[10] In literature, Kai Jensen sensitively traces interactions between pakeha male writers and writing within New Zealand from the 1930s onwards, suggesting how discourses of national autonomy became associated with masculinity through the trope of self-sufficiency. A strong male iconography of national identity is by implication free of influence, and this connects to discourses of pakeha masculinity, for example the DIY (do it yourself), "number eight fencing wire" approach. "Doing it yourself" implies that one does not need to be told how to do it by foreign experts and intellectuals. The rise of a self-consciously "national" school of writing from the late 1930s, based around a small group of white male writers (Allen Curnow, Frank Sargeson, RAK Mason, John Mulgan, ARD Fairburn), reflected these concerns. Writers theorising New Zealand identity in literature eulogised form and content which attempted to document the "real" language and lives of working men - "muscular", "vigorous", "realistic" or "objective" writing (Jensen, 72-78). These writers favour a self-consciously simple, "plain" and realistic style: short, non-periodic sentences, little plot, repetition, limited vocabulary, minimal reflection or imagery (Jackson, 161-3; Wevers, 226-7). Their technique of presentation is often a first-person narrative by an "ordinary bloke", without authorial comment (which could be seen as intellectualising) (Chapman, 77; Copland, 46-7). Feminist critics later characterised it as "that harsh, laconic, bitten-off masculine dialect that [Frank] Sargeson and [John] Mulgan ... installed as the dominant discourse of New Zealand fiction" (Bunkle et al, xxiii).

[11] Debates about national identity in writing repeatedly took the form of a gendered conflict, in which a strong, masculine ideal functioning within a patrilineal tradition fought against foreign "femininity", as can be seen in Sargeson's patronising treatment of Katherine Mansfield (arguably New Zealand's best-known writer), and his invention of an alternative "source of authority from which [male writers] might derive [their] own powers", a father figure such as Sargeson identified in his farmer uncle (Murray, 51, 150; Sargeson 1983, 28-33; Jensen, 72-78; Williams, 21). "The emerging arguments about what ... New Zealand articulated in its writing ... were conceived of within a distinctively male paradigm ... misogyny ... should be viewed ... in this light of the national need to administer difference through strong oppositionality" (i.e. to reject alternative narratives of national identity) (Murray, 88). Feminine writing's perceived intertextuality and subjectivity proved its permeability to influence, specifically Victorian sentimentality. So it was not truly of the nation. "Objective" (male) writing dealt with local matters in a "realistic" fashion: "Whatever is true vision, belongs here, uniquely to New Zealand" (Curnow 1987, 17). Local writers and critics such as Allen Curnow saw replacing overseas theory with local "reality" as a central aim of New Zealand art (Horrocks 1984; Stead, 55).

[12] The association of man and the land, another central trope in masculine pakeha writing, is another way of making local culture "organic". The landscape is uniquely "of this place" - hence the man in the landscape partakes of this uniqueness. The growth of local identity in literature was often figured in organic terms, like a plant (Murray, 81). This had the effect, again, of disavowing foreign

influence, and identifying writing with male rural production. Indeed, this connection to landscape remains central to pakeha concepts of identity today (*Campbell Live*). An example is the "man alone" trope, named for John Mulgan's novel, which deals with a male immigrant in the Depression who "goes bush" (hides in the countryside) to escape authority. New Zealand poet JK Baxter adopted it as a leitmotif of pakeha literature - a preoccupation with the experiences of isolated, anti-establishment male anti-heroes, a theme also taken up in 1970s and 80s New Zealand cinema (see below) (Baxter, 70-72; *Cinema of Unease*).

[13] However, Stuart Murray suggests that discourses of literary cultural nationalism and masculinity formed in a much broader context, reflecting the impact of contemporary transnational artistic theory. Pastoralism, "realism", objectivity and preoccupation with proletarian masculinity were leading themes in contemporary US and UK writing (George Orwell, Louis MacNeice, Ernest Hemingway, Sherwood Anderson), as were modernist discourses of "objectivity" over Romantic effusion (for example, TS Eliot's "objective correlative") and minimalism - "less is more" (Murray, 126-132; Abrams, 123-4; Green, 27, 35). Murray surmises that national identity, far from being an organic emanation of a developing New Zealand culture, was constructed in a global context (31-47). Local writers would have been more likely to emulate TS Eliot than local "tradition" (Murray, 126-134). Admission of influence compromised artists' perceived originality.

[14] A similar local/global dichotomy and "anxiety of influence" occur in discussions of local popular music: some claim that the global overwhelms the local, so that there is "nothing distinctive" about local music: "New Zealand rock music displays at best a creative tension between imitating Anglo-American forms and playing with their conventions. With the exception of certain forms of Maori music all New Zealand music is derivative" (Geoff Lealand, quoted in Shuker 1994, 68). On the other hand, the 1980s "Dunedin Sound" was seen by some as evidence of a distinctively local popular music (Shuker 1998, 103-4; Bannister, 191-212). Commentators claimed that the Dunedin Sound was about musicians "just doing it", in isolation from contemporary trends (Robertson 9). Here, the local is a site of authenticity/identity that offers resistance to global hegemony: "the Dunedin Sound was generated through a cultural geography of living on the margin, producing 'a mythology of a group of musicians working in cold isolation, playing music purely for the pleasure of it'" (Shuker 1998, 103-4; McLeay, 39). Despite referring to it as a "mythology", neither commentator questions it. Craig Robertson refers to the sense of community and "family atmosphere" of the Dunedin scene (38-9). The ideologies of isolated community, of "art for art's sake" and low-tech production values all contribute to Shuker and McLeay's definition of locality in Dunedin - distinctiveness constituted by difference from the commercial international scene, embodied in those same ideologies (Mitchell 1996, 224).

[15] This isolationist stance is also reflected in the way New Zealand history has been written. "Classic" New Zealand histories such as William Pember Reeves' (1898) and Keith Sinclair's (1959) push a strongly nationalistic agenda of equating "isolation" with emerging identity, as if the former was somehow a prerequisite for the latter

(Belich [28-29] critiques Sinclair, as does Gibbons).

"New Zealand", whether as noun or adjective, is a privileged sign in the dominant narrative about the local past. Reeves and so many of his successors have sought to reveal the "New Zealandness", the "New Zealandicity" of the local past. "New Zealand" is the explicandum, the thing which is to be explained. The dominant historical narrative seeks to construct "New Zealand" as a "transcendent referent", if there can be such a term (Gibbons).

Such approaches assume a Freudian ideology of identity as individuation – that only by becoming free of other influences, that is, autonomous, do we emerge as "individuals". However, relational psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin argues that identity needs to be understood as constructed through relationship, not opposition, as does RD Laing (19–24; 26). In this sense their perspective is similar to social construction theory in rejecting the Freudian emphasis on individuating, discrete selves (Henriques et al, 203; Ashcroft et al, 71). Benjamin suggests that Freud's concept of individuation is also gendered, because "influence" is identified with passive dependence on the mother, while individuation and identity are achieved through identification with the father (as was illustrated in the section on the development of national identity in literature) (Benjamin, 46-7). Such insights lead towards theories that seek to locate New Zealand identity in a global context rather than as an autonomous discrete monad. However, it is also suggested that repression of global context and foreign influence cannot be explained only in terms of a local patriarchy.

### **The global/historical context**

[16] Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory offers one way of understanding the situation of colonies and colonial nation-states in a developing world economy. Wallerstein argues that modern nation-states are not autonomous, but parts of a larger economic, indeed capitalist system, which is "larger than ... any political entity can totally control" (348). The world-system's "core" is the First World. Colonies, created primarily by First World economic expansion, are basically peripheral, not always geographically, but economically and culturally. This relationship also operates in terms of a division of labour, engendering a social hierarchy that operates across as well as within national boundaries: "the range of economic tasks is not evenly distributed throughout the world-system" (349). Wallerstein views capitalism as a developing global system: the relation of core and periphery is broadly similar to that of the ruling class and the proletariat. New Zealand's historic situation in the British Empire could serve as an example.

[17] The internationalization of labour is a much remarked-upon feature of the period in which New Zealand was colonised: "Population movements and industrialization go together, for the modern economic development of the world both required substantial shifts of people [and] made it technically easier and cheaper" (Hobsbawm, 228). Immigration is partially determined by economic imperatives, and within the British Empire, the white settlers of New Zealand had an important role to play as suppliers of primary produce (mainly meat and wool) to Britain (Hawke, 412-3). "[New Zealand's] dependence upon the rural sector derives from the

way in which the structure of the economy and the development of the nation were decisively shaped by its role as a British colony" (Perry 1994, 41; Belich, 29-30). The export of refrigerated meat (and later, dairy products) to Britain, commencing in 1882, was basic in providing the prosperity necessary to make pakeha New Zealand a viable economic entity (Sinclair 1959, 164-65). This relationship continued more or less unabated until the UK joined the EEC in 1973. Therefore the characterisation of pakeha masculinity as a rural workforce was necessary and desirable, given the UK's need for primary produce: "Their whole place in the British Imperial structure defined them as primarily rural" (Schick, Dolan, 59). Nick Perry states that "New Zealand as a country derived from the expansion of British cities; geographically it may have been in the Pacific, but structurally it was part of Britain's rural hinterland" (1994, 46). Indeed, displaced British agricultural labourers formed a substantial proportion of immigrants from 1870-1885 (Simpson, 155).

[18] The labour power (manpower) of New Zealand was also exploited in other areas, such as military action (Phillips, 132-216; Sinclair 1985, 125-173). Phillips notes how British generals in the Boer War remarked favourably on the physical size, health and attitude of New Zealand soldiers – in this respect settler colonies "answered" contemporary British concerns about the health and ethnic purity of their working classes (Phillips, 144-146; Belich, 79-80). New Zealand was constructed as a nursery of healthy fighters for the Empire and this had an effect on its self-consciousness as a nation. Sinclair and others remark that war was the first sphere in which New Zealanders became "aware of differences between men from Great Britain and from the several colonies. They came to consider their identity self-consciously" (Phillips, 152; Sinclair 1985, 125; Pearson 2001, 64). So the characteristics favourably remarked upon by British generals were similar to those that formed the national archetype of masculinity. Hence the idealisation of the "Kiwi bloke" fitted with New Zealand's role within the Empire.

### **Homosociality, egalitarianism and authority**

[19] Having argued that "Kiwi blokes" are a proletariat, I want to examine how the common association of working-class men with homosociality, as in Paul Willis, functions not only as "male power" but also confirms its subordination in the hierarchy of (global) capitalism (Jensen 6; Willis, 13-35). Homosociality is a male-defined social hierarchy based around susceptibility to accusations of homosexuality, policing and censoring expressions of "feminine" subjectivity, for example in relation to cultural production (Sedgwick, 1-2; Easthope, 6). Historically, in pakeha New Zealand, the "traditional male stereotype ... raised questions about the masculinity of artists and intellectuals ... there was the view that the emotional intensity of the artist was a peculiarly feminine quality" (Phillips, 282). Sandra Coney observes that "academics and artists were stereotyped as bearded, sandalled beatniks - failures when it came to the real business of being a man" (24). Writers felt obliged to emulate the dominant culture, by stressing non-literary accomplishment, attempting to normalise writing as an activity by proving writers' solidarity with "ordinary blokes". The artist has to be "one of the boys" and "shout his round" (buy everyone drinks), poet ARD Fairburn for example: "he'd get drinking with miners in the King Country, bush-whackers, a gang of loggers. He could drink most of



them under the counter. These chaps would have been amazed to discover he was a serious poet" (McNeish, 135; Murray, 36; Jensen, 3, 50-56). One significant role of homosociality within pakeha New Zealand was to repress evidence of cultural activity. It was hostile to art (Pearson 1952). However, the Kiwi bloke was also produced within an international context in which the "blokey" egalitarianism of working class masculinities signalled their incorporation and subordination into the hegemony of modern industrial societies (Connell 1995, 75-76, 109; Hearn, 98-100). Working class homosociality is also constructed in terms of the interests of dominant groups.

[20] Local discourses of homosocial mateship connect to the ideology of New Zealand as a "classless" society, where bourgeois concerns about social standing are generally attributed to women (Sinclair 1959, 276; James and Saville-Smith, 9-10, 85; Phillips, 26-38). But this classlessness, trumpeted by historians Sinclair and Reeves as proof of New Zealand's socially progressive "uniqueness", is also in many ways a product of global conditions (Sinclair 1959, 169-185).

[21] From the beginning of colonisation, New Zealand was constructed as an egalitarian Arcadia, a "workers' paradise", a triumph of social engineering and an escape from the oppressive British class structure (Belich, 21-22). Egalitarianism functioned both as socio-political ideal in the colony, and as a discourse of male working-class solidarity. Politically, New Zealand egalitarianism was based on and reflected in the social reforms of successive Liberal/Labour governments as a response to economic depressions of the 1880s and 1930s. These basically acted to provide men with job security and encouraged women to stay at home. James and Saville-Smith view this legislation as founding New Zealand's "gendered culture" (14-15).

[22] White settlers typically hoped to "better themselves" materially and leave their (often miserable) pasts behind. But they also, arguably, left aspects of traditional working class culture that would have been important to a sense of counterhegemonic cultural identity or class consciousness (Simpson, 130; King 1985, 16; Chapman, 79; Hoggart). The length of the sea passage from Britain tended to mean that most immigrants were single, and some historians have also suggested the importance of "atomization" - that the pioneer lifestyle was based at least initially around individuals, isolated family units and small communities rather than Old World-style conurbations (Fairburn; Simpson, 11). The prominence of Puritanism in the new colony may have contributed to this individualism (Chapman, 79-80; Sargeson 1983, 47). These factors may have weakened ties of class association.

[23] Organised sport largely took the place of traditional forms of working class association, a tendency that commentators on other modernizing Western societies have seen as a primary mechanism for producing the disciplined labour force required by industrial capitalism (Phillips, 86; Bourdieu 1993, 340-55; Fiske, 79). Rugby, which in the UK had been largely an upper-class game, became a powerful national symbol of collective, egalitarian masculine action. The All Black "Invincibles" 1905 British tour advertised the colonial lifestyle, making teams of men in action the main public signifier of New Zealand "nation" and "culture" within New Zealand and Britain

(Phillips, 108-122; Belich, 386-388). Locally, rugby "fostered strong feelings of community and egalitarianism among men of differing social and economic positions" (James and Saville-Smith 41). Sport was an important field for the naturalisation of social inequality. Maori men, for example, though socially disadvantaged, competed "as equals" on the field (88). Sporting skills were seen to epitomise differences created by "nature". Rugby articulated the values of egalitarianism and homosociality, and depoliticised male collective action.

[24] Hence the working class overtones of the Kiwi bloke were untainted by any hint of radicalism or opposition: male solidarity and egalitarianism had the effect of repressing rather than encouraging dissent (Jesson, 20-1). For example, it was claimed that New Zealand soldiers needed less discipline because bonds of mateship meant that there was less dissent within ranks - mateship functioned as a type of internalised authority, echoing Foucault (Phillips, 149, 182; Foucault, 202-3). Other forms of masculine association such as trade unions have been unwilling to oppose the government, in fact entering into a compact with it, "the historic compromise" and helping suppress radical action (Jesson, 14-21). Bruce Jesson argues that compulsory unionism, established in the first round of Government reforms in the 1880s, effectively depoliticised unions and made them complicit with the Government (91-5). There was no sense that the right to collective organisation had been won through a history of struggle.

[25] Psychologically, local egalitarianism seems to relate more to a fear of standing out than a positive belief in consensus. "Kiwis have deeply ambivalent attitudes about challenging authority. They support authoritarianism in everything from corporal punishment to our style of leadership. This provides an inbuilt rationale for ... 'not getting involved'" (Coney, 167). Bill Pearson suggests:

The reason why the New Zealander is willing to invest ... in a strong ... leader is that he ... is afraid of responsibility. He especially fears any position that raises him above "the boys". How many of us refused stripes in the army, just out of that fear ... "being different" in New Zealand means "trying to be superior". I know of no other country in the world where this is so (202-6).

New Zealand "egalitarianism" was based on the apparent absence of immediate authority rather than a socialist commitment to eradicate hierarchy. Hence there are some grounds for seeing pakeha as a social group that combine a sense of working-class egalitarianism with a materialist bourgeois individualism which disdains political and communal ties of solidarity important to traditional working class groups: in other words, an ideal workforce, lacking revolutionary potential. So it seems that Kiwi egalitarianism is not so much a means of organising dissent as repressing it.

[26] This theme of egalitarianism as uniformity rather than equality is still important today: "While Kiwis want all their mates to be equal, we're also uncomfortable with differences" (Campbell Live). In turn, suspicion of "superiority", popularly known as the "tall poppy syndrome", may suggest a conflicted attitude towards authority. Traditionally, the UK symbolised authority: "Think of the sneers we have for the clipped polite speech of the English ... we can only

stand it when he speaks to us from a platform ... We sneer at English customs, yet from every visiting Englishman we exact words of praise and are offended if he criticizes us" (Pearson 1952, 205-6). Pearson suggests that pakeha despise the upper-class pretensions of the English, but also defer to them as authority figures. This suggests a working-class "ressentiment" (as Nietzsche would term it) that confirms the slave morality of the complainant. However, it also relates to New Zealand's historic position as a UK colony.

[27] The "man alone" discourse epitomises many of these concerns about authority. Already mentioned above in relation to local literature, the man alone resurfaced as a central character in 70s and early 80s New Zealand films like Sleeping Dogs, Beyond Reasonable Doubt, Goodbye Pork Pie, Bad Blood and Smash Palace. These films share with the western a concern with pioneering men - unlike the classic western, however, they are always pessimistic or tragic - the main character dies or is removed from society. The Kiwi bloke is represented as anti-heroic. His forms of rebellion in these films: "going bush", running away, drinking and going mad represent no lasting threat or contribution to society, because they are individualistic – masculine collective action, identified with mateship, is confined to leisure and physical labour. There is no sense that the "man alone" can be a hero, and save his society, as in the western.

[28] Authority, in the western, resides with the hero – as John Wayne says: "I'm the law" (Easthope 20; Wright). But in New Zealand film, the main character is "on the run" (this could also relate to the influence of road movies and male anti-heroes from 60s US popular culture. But it held a special resonance for pakeha). This outlook is consistent with pakeha New Zealand's colonial history – "authority" is always somewhere else. The man alone trope demonstrates the ambivalence of a central masculine mythology in pakeha society – the "bloke" not only symbolises the local; he is also a doomed outsider in an international tradition of modernist alienation, an area of continuity between pakeha masculine iconography and cultural self-doubt (Baxter, 70-72). Without his "mates" to reflect him, he is an empty cipher.

### **Kinship**

[29] Male homosociality can also be interpreted in terms of Levi-Strauss's concept of kinship, as a triangular (oedipal) structure by which male–male bonding is valorised as long as it is mediated through a third party, archetypally a woman, but also a goal-oriented enterprise or common activity, like rugby (Rubin, 169–182; Sedgwick). This avoids the possibility that the men might desire each other and directs desire down more socially "useful" channels (Segal, 159; Easthope, 15). Kinship is based around the male gaze – men look at and objectify women (Mulvey). The masculine body is not available "to-be-looked-at" in the same way as the female, because of the possibility of arousing or becoming the object of male homosexual desire (Easthope, 121). A strong masculine iconography resists scrutiny – "what are *you* looking at?" - in that sense it is profoundly ideological. The association of such gender discourses with the "national" thus discourages too close an examination of their construction within a larger system of authority. Rather it presents national identity as self-generated and autonomous. Representations of "tough" masculinity can also

function themselves as a defence against anxiety about identity - because it is dangerous to question them. This defensiveness coincides with ideologies of male working-class bodies as hard and impenetrable, allied with emotional reticence, laconicism, repression – men "who keep it all inside".

[30] Jensen, in a chapter entitled "The feelings, of course, were there" questions the extent to which that which is not expressed (male subjectivity) can be said to exist (19-42). In other words, perhaps the bluff male exterior hides a void - there is nothing to express. Here the link with national identity becomes important. Perhaps pakeha New Zealand has "no culture" (an Oxford don noted that New Zealanders "were all alike: tall, craggy-featured, nothing to say") (Mitchell 1972, 47). The Kiwi bloke reconfirms cultural marginality, but also acts as a defence against admitting it, because we're not supposed to be examining him in the first place: "To question masculinity is to be critical of our national ethos" (James and Saville-Smith, 64). Expression and sensitivity are signs of femininity but if "real" blokes aren't expressive, then where does this leave "pakeha culture"? So, homosocial policing of cultural expression – the association of masculinity with inexpressivity - may be self-defeating in terms of a project of identity.

### **Cultural anxiety and settler society**

[31] Cultural identity problems in settler societies also arise from the ambivalent position of settlers as both agents of exploitation, a colonial elite (relative to indigenous groups), but also no longer part of the core: "displaced from their own point of origin ... [they] may have difficulties in establishing their identity in the new place ... They are frequently constructed within a discourse of difference and inferiority by the colonising power and so suffer discrimination themselves ... at the same time they act as the agents of that power ... they are both colonised and coloniser" (Ashcroft et al, 211-212; Anderson, 93). The postcolonial model places pakeha within a colonial hierarchy, in which they both dominate and are dominated, as both colonised and coloniser, marginalising and oppressing Maori, but at the same time themselves marginalised and oppressed by the "mother country".

[32] Increasingly, liminality, migration, diaspora and transience are features of modern global culture, and postcolonial cultures have a particularly strong history of such phenomena (Doring). "The world we live in now seems rhizomic, even schizophrenic, calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation and psychological distance between individuals and groups" (Appadurai, 325). Diaspora theory has been more often used in relation to socially marginalised groups and ethnicities, but given the complexity of modern global relations, it may be possible to describe some "dominant" diasporas in similar terms: David Pearson describes settler societies like Australia, Canada and New Zealand as products of an Anglo-Celtic, English-speaking diaspora (14-16). So although they are agents of "the core", they still share in some of the identity problems that Appadurai describes.

[33] However, arguably pakeha New Zealand has had the closest relationship with the UK, and thus its identity problems may be more acute (Belich, 279-309). Canada was colonised by two main groups,

the French and the British, and Australia, as well as being founded as a penal colony, has always had a much higher and more influential proportion of Irish Catholics (Pearson 2001, 52-64). Canada and Australia have also had more historically diverse patterns of immigration, whereas New Zealand immigration policy was strongly UK-oriented until the 1980s, so its white population displays greater cultural homogeneity than other settler nations (Pearson 2001, 82-89). New Zealand had universal male conscription in both world wars, whereas Australia did not and Canada had a relatively limited participation. Economically, the UK joining the EEC affected New Zealand more than other settler colonies, which were not as dependent on the UK as a market (Sinclair 2000, 297, 313).

[34] Moreover, the linkages run deeper: world-systems theory's economic emphasis may underestimate the importance and complexity of cultural relationships: "Globalization studies, on the other hand, has developed by continually rethinking the relationship between economies, cultures, commodities and social behavior, and by focusing carefully on how systems of commodity exchange are also systems of cultural exchange" (Jay). New Zealand has always exported primary produce and imported value-added products such as technology and culture, another example of global imbalance, because culture has a much greater influence on social ideology (Hawke, 416-7; Belich, 311-2). In important respects, London was (is?) "the cultural capital of New Zealand" (Belich, 30). This is not to say that the US is not also important, but that UK influence is naturalised to a greater extent than the US (Lealand).

[35] The cultural dominance of the UK was, until recently, taken for granted by pakeha (Belich, 11). Even recent celebrations of local culture, such as Sam Neill's film documentary Cinema of Unease, have an Anglicised frame of reference (Neill narrates from a street in central London). The British in turn continue to view New Zealand as culturally retarded (Levenson; Theroux, 7-13). Class is structured at least partially through cultural capital, and the working class are constructed in such a system as lacking. The most obvious evidence of this is local reliance on imported culture – for example, New Zealand has one of the lowest proportions of local content on TV in the developed world (25%), and lacks the quotas of other settler societies (Australia and Canada) (Horrocks 2004, 10; Perry 2004, 85). Accordingly pakeha identity is marked by unease, uncertainty, and that peculiarly colonial inferiority complex: "cultural cringe". Exacerbated by an indigenous culture (Maori) which arguably offers a far more variegated and authentic local identity than displaced Britishness, Pakeha culture has drawn on discourses of local uniqueness and isolation primarily as a way of denying or disavowing British cultural hegemony (Mita). The Kiwi bloke acts both to disavow and indirectly to confirm this anxiety.

### **Cultural schizophrenia**

[36] Identification of Kiwi bloke masculinity with the national represents an example of how postcolonial diasporas create schizophrenic subjects, split by dislocation between the "homeland" and the new place. Pakeha New Zealand's peculiar dependence on the UK, and its ambivalent position as coloniser and colonised has exacerbated this split and given rise to a state of national "ontological insecurity". RD Laing describes how the schizoid

subject responds to insecurity, trying "to be omnipotent by enclosing within his own being, without recourse to a creative relation with others, modes of relation that require the effective presence to him of other[s] ... The imagined advantages are safety for the true self, isolation and hence freedom from others, self-sufficiency and control" (75). This model provides a useful way of interpreting the production of Pakeha cultural identity as marked by ontological dependency – continually seeing itself as under threat, so that isolation is seen as the only way of avoiding engulfment by the (foreign) other (53). Laing claims that such ontological problems originate in formative relationships (for example, parent/child) where excessive control or neglect prevents the child from becoming a healthy functioning being. This is analogous to pakeha New Zealand's relation to the "motherland" UK. Pakeha's long history of unequal association with the UK has given it a massive inferiority complex. Although some might question the use of psychoanalysis here, I would argue that its emphasis on identity formation is useful, as long as we reject the dominant Freudian emphasis on identity as individuation, which Laing saw as perpetuating rather than ameliorating the radical isolation of the schizoid subject (19-25). Instead he suggests that identity is created through (meaningful) relations with others. In the same way, dysfunctional relationships create dysfunctional identities. British cultural hegemony has created pakeha New Zealand as a schizoid subject.

[37] Laing goes on to describe how the schizophrenic creates a false self which stands in for interaction with others. It is structured similarly to Sartre's concept of "bad faith" in that it does not serve as a vehicle for fulfilment or gratification (of the self), but is primarily a means of compliance: "a negative conformity to ... the other's standard ... a response to what others say I am" (Laing, 98). Again this can be related to local discourses of egalitarianism and fear of authority, as constructed in relation to an other. The Kiwi bloke is a state of being for the other, a self-consciousness that "depends on the gaze of others to confirm his existence ... but also hates being looked at" (106). In the same way Bill Pearson describes how the upper-class Englishman is both despised and revered – he is the hated other whose legitimation is still sought. The Kiwi bloke is a false self in a number of ways: it expresses a role (imposed by someone else) rather than an identity, it acts as a front or defense to deflect investigation and it has a kind of rigidity that Laing argues compensates for a corresponding shakiness in the foundation (77). What it conceals is a deep, "despairing aloneness and isolation" and an inner impoverishment (17).

[38] Most obviously this expressed in the deep darkness and pessimism that afflicts local pakeha cultural production, what has been described as the "Kiwi gothic" (Lawn). Themes of madness, isolation, despair and violence recur in pakeha culture (as in recent local films Heavenly Creatures, Scarifies, Rain, and In My Father's Den). Maori filmmaker Merata Mita comments that this pessimism is a direct result of a failure of pakeha to "analyse the colonial syndrome of dislocation ... what appears on the screen are the symptoms of a deeper malaise represented as matters of the heart, acts of rebellion, insanity and misunderstood genius ... white New Zealanders never question their survival on a political level, only a personal one" (47-8).

[39] The land, on the one hand idealized as a natural source of

masculine identity, suddenly switches personality to become a "heart of darkness", anonymous and hostile (Cinema of Unease). In literature, the use of a laconic, matter-of-fact, "masculine" tone often hides a complex of possibilities which become manifest through a sudden and inexplicable act of psychotic violence, as in "A Great Day" (Sargeson 1965, 80-87). "The narrators' starkly limited point of view" suggests imminent "emptiness and loneliness" (Robertson and Wattie, 474). More recently, Owen Marshall's short story "Coming Home in the Dark" deals with a family on a picnic outing, hijacked by thugs who methodically slaughter the family as they drive through the empty countryside (399-411).

### **Globalization**

[40] So far I have argued that the association of "bloke" masculinity with national identity is related to New Zealand's historic position in the British Empire. However, New Zealand has been an independent nation since 1947, and as I outlined at the start of the essay, many commentators, writing in the 80s, believed that the colonial legacy and its accompanying cultural baggage were increasingly irrelevant, and looked forward to newer, more multicultural and diverse representations of identity. So why then does the Kiwi bloke still exist? I have already suggested the continuing importance of cultural links with the UK. But the second point is that imperial structures of power are now re-articulated and further developed through global capitalism.

The rise of the multi-national corporation ... has transformed Wallerstein's world system by decentering the role of the nation-state. Indeed, more and more, Wallerstein's world system, tied as it is to the dominance of the modern nation-state, looks like the last phase of an age in eclipse, since under globalization the nation-state is being undermined by transnational forces that threaten its traditional power to regulate subjectivity and determine what constitutes cultural belonging. Where Wallerstein's world system depends on the controlling force of the nation-state, globalization depends on the steady diminution of its power by multinational corporations, which increasingly operate outside the interests and boundaries of the nation state (Jay).

In 1984, Muldoon lost the election, and the new government introduced neo-liberal market policies (paralleling similar moves in the US and the UK), deregulating financial markets, abolishing many import controls and strictures on foreign ownership, and selling off, privatising, deregulating or restructuring State corporations.

[41] State-owned television (TVNZ) was restructured - under the 1986 State Owned Enterprises Act, such organisations were either sold off or expected to turn a profit. Foreign-owned competition (TV3, Sky) was introduced - the National Government legislated in 1992 to allow 100% foreign ownership of media, a highly unusual situation (Spicer, 152-3). Levels of advertising increased: television ad breaks increased by 50% from 1988-1992 (Glaser, 9). This was due to increased competition for markets, to promotion of consumer lifestyles and to the increased presence of global corporations and foreign capital in New Zealand. Rugby, which Phillips claimed was losing its grip, became hugely resurgent through the All Blacks' 1987 World Cup campaign and with professionalisation in the 90s became

increasingly associated with media hype (Phillips, 270; Perry 1994, 88-93). Sports broadcasting was sold off to the highest bidder (Sky), which meant that live rugby largely disappeared from free-to-air television. So the All Blacks, the ultimate symbol of national identity, were no longer available to a national audience. New Zealand's lack of anti-siphoning laws, which guarantee free broadcast of culturally significant events, is another example of its shaky grip on its national identity.

[42] We might expect that globalisation would challenge traditional representations of national identity, by opening up nations to global economic, cultural and even demographic flows and creating continuities that erase local difference. But global capitalism is not only about homogeneity; it is also about the continuing production of local difference, albeit within limits largely determined by the "core". For example, increased "branding" or commodification of New Zealand was deemed necessary in order to be internationally competitive. Such branding tended to construct New Zealand as a primarily rural, "clean green", scenic wonderland in line with its traditional role as a primary producer, and this identification with landscape and nature tended to foreground traditional concepts of identity. Similarly, local growth in advertising drew upon the very images of the local that had been dismissed as outmoded.

[43] Hence it was to advertising that the Kiwi bloke migrated. Corporate interests have associated themselves with Kiwi masculinity and its association with national identity as a way of normalising and legitimising their activities, through sport, for example (brewer Lion Nathan and the All Blacks, financiers Fay, Richwhite and the America's Cup) (Perry 1994, 28-33). Multinationals such as Toyota, McDonald's, Sky and TV3 (CanWest) use representations of Kiwi blokes to naturalise their products in a local setting, as for example Barry Crump's notorious 1980s Hilux ads for Toyota. Crump is well known in New Zealand as a modern exemplar of the pioneer tradition, having written numerous novels of male hunting exploits, such as *A Good Keen Man*. The Hilux is a "ute" (utility vehicle), such as pakeha working men often use. The ads contrast an urban but effete and naive character played by former *Playschool* presenter Lloyd Scott, who is gushingly enthusiastic about the product, with "bloke" Crump - a sardonic, laconic rural type who establishes his domination by verbal sarcasm undercutting Scott, and physical accomplishment, in the form of his hair-raising driving exploits (Perry 1994, 55-61). Clearly viewers are expected to identify with Crump. But this gives rise to a paradox: that rural masculinity is being used to sell products to a largely urban audience. A key to understanding how these ads negotiate such a contradiction is in their parodic tendencies, for example, Crump driving his Toyota up an almost vertical incline. They self-consciously highlight an incongruity between their rural archaism and the urban audience they are selling to. But this irony ultimately confirms the "sophistication" of the urban audience. Crump, unlike Scott, seems to share the joke with us - most of his dialogue consists of asides to the camera. The fact that we can see these ads' parodic tendencies is a confirmation of our judgement, and thereby we are drawn into a complicity with the makers of the ad, but also with Crump and the ideology he represents. An ideology of rural masculinity is being used as a way of legitimising the market: selling cars and other products to city dwellers - the final irony is that the vast majority of Toyotas sold here are not "utes", but ordinary



family cars. The ad is a branding exercise that employs the normalising tendencies of the rural myth to enforce its own hard sell. The Good Keen Man is complicit with the good keen manager. So the Kiwi bloke now serves new masters – not colonial, but multinational.

[44] Toyota has since conducted at least two more "local" advertising campaigns: "Welcome to Our World" (1990), which featured the Jim Reeves' song and shots of iconic New Zealand landscapes, and the "Bugger" campaign, which featured comic mishaps of rural farm workers and their "utes", each ad culminating in said expletive (Aldridge). Ironically, Toyota closed its last local assembly plant in 1998, so the ads' matey rhetoric was precisely the opposite of what was occurring at the everyday local level (Du Chateau). This shifting offshore of manufacturing and heavy industry, traditionally associated with proletarian masculinities, is a feature of globalisation more generally (Faludi, 39, 43, 51–74). It suggests that global capital's employment of representations of working men and appeals to local nationalism in its sales rhetoric are not underlaid by any material commitment to such groups. Moreover, if, as I have argued, the "bloke" as a representation of locality was to some extent created by New Zealand's historic position in the global economy, then it should not be surprising that he and his related tropes have continued to be relevant in the "branding" of New Zealand.

[45] It may seem paradoxical that pakeha New Zealand, represented as isolated and suspicious of foreigners and intellectuals, should suddenly "flip" and adopt wholesale New Right economic theories, but it is also an example of how hegemonic ideology can change and contradict itself without relinquishing its power (how apt that it should begin in 1984!). The anti-intellectualism of New Zealand society, strongly associated with bloke masculinity, offered little ideological resistance to change (Jesson, 12). This anti-intellectualism should be read as a perceived lack of cultural capital, which the "bloke" acts to perpetuate. The second point is that that these reforms were not represented to the public as theory; rather the government used a rhetoric of expediency and crisis, called TINA (There Is No Alternative) (Kelsey, 91). This "naturalisation" of theory parallels similar earlier moments in pakeha culture, for example the way nationalist writers used but did not acknowledge imported discourses of modernism, realism and objectivity, to make a claim for originality. Finally, we can also read such oscillation between extremes as characteristic of the schizoid subject: "the antithesis between complete loss of being by absorption into the other ... (engulfment), and complete aloneness. There is no safe third possibility of a dialectical relationship ... [and] what at one moment is most dreaded and strenuously avoided can change to what is most sought" (Laing, 44; Benjamin, 47).

## **Conclusion**

[46] In this essay I have tried to show how repositioning the Kiwi bloke and his association with national identity in a global context results in a rather different understanding of his importance. I have also repositioned him in other ways: as a mediated representation rather than a historical or social fact, as a social construction rather than a fixed identity, as a postcolonial subject rather than an autonomous entity, and as a masculinity that is both dominant and

subordinate within patriarchy. I have shown how such representations of masculinity reproduce discourses of domination (of women and ethnic minorities) but also of subordination (as working class manpower fulfilling the economic needs of colonising powers). It is not my intention to suggest that the Kiwi bloke is the only possible model of local identity; rather I suggest that he has lasted precisely because he serves global hegemonic interests. This hegemony has shifted over time from a basically colonial model to one of global capital. The postcolonial heritage of "the bloke", with its connotations of isolation, autonomy and DIY (do-it-yourself) "uniqueness", masks a profound indebtedness to the economic and social conditions of globalization.

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Kiwi Blokes-Recontextualising White New Zealand Masculinities in a Global Setting. Oct 2005. M Bannister. Bannister, M. (2005) Kiwi Blokes-Recontextualising White New Zealand Masculinities in a Global Setting, *Genders OnLine Journal*(42). Available HTTP: (accessed 18 October 2011).  
The shifting power relations in China after the global financial crisis are redefining masculinity for both Western and Asian men. Connell (1995) argues that in most societies a hegemonic masculinity usually exists that privileges heterosexual middle-class and economically successful men who exhibit characteristics associated with being masculine. The global financial crisis has led to a new