

INTRODUCTION

Looking east

Changing the focal length

Julianne Schultz

FOR a number of years I travelled on a New Zealand passport. It wasn't so much that I identified with the land of my birth, but for pragmatic reasons: when I first needed a passport to travel – fittingly to the Pacific – I was a student, and a New Zealand passport cost less than half an Australian one, and lasted twice as long. Even if I hadn't been back since I left at age four, for a penurious twenty-year-old, this was as good a reason as any to identify internationally as a Kiwi.

In the 1970s the boundaries between being a Kiwi and being an Aussie were blurred, and had been for half a century. Citizenship seemed interchangeable, with accompanying rights and responsibilities. My Australian parents happened to be living in Hamilton when I was born, so I was entitled to both, before opting to be officially stamped Australian.

Long before the formal free trade agreements, which focused on goods, services, capital and quarantine, there was effectively a free movement of people that bound the countries together. It was an uneven trade that benefited Australia, as more left New Zealand than arrived – Australians flocked to even more distant shores.

The movement of people has continued, although the rules have changed – official Australian Government web pages bristle with daunting category classifications – but seem to have done little to stem the flow. More than 650,000 New Zealanders call Australia home, while 60,000 Australians have made a permanent journey east across the Tasman.

The dream of a united Australasia may have withered in the nineteenth century, but the sense of interchangeability lingers – like cousins who keep in touch, but keep a distance – bumptious and pushy city types on the western shores of the Tasman, versus the kids from the bush on the east.

NEW ZEALAND REMAINS Australians' preferred holiday destination, and as they pour off the planes, will readily agree it is arguably, inch for inch, the most beautiful country in the world. Green, watery, hilly, lush – the opposite to the ancient, flat, dry plains of Australia.

When they notice the country at all, Australians still tend to talk down to New Zealand, imagining we are in the big league; a continent, rather than a sparsely populated country on the edge of Asia. So while Australians were busy looking north and west, to the east something changed. New Zealand not only made a virtue of its environment, but became home to some of the best wines, movie directors, writers, footballers, sailors, scientists, educators and female leaders in the world.

It not only maintained, but developed its history of social innovation. It found new depth in the richness of its human and environmental capital. It continued its evolutionary path – since seafaring Polynesians followed the stars and currents to arrive in Northland about a thousand years ago, followed hundreds of years later by settlers from Europe, Asia and the Americas – to become an even more innovative, humane society at the crossroads of the Pacific, Tasman and Great Southern Oceans.

In an evolutionary sense, modern Australia and New Zealand grew out of similar stock. Notwithstanding a very different Indigenous history and the legacy of convict settlement in Australia, a hundred years ago they were recognisably similar, inheritors of the Enlightenment, and southern outposts of the British Empire. Despite close economic ties, they have now diverged in ways that to Australian eyes are unexpected and rewarding and truly original. New Zealand is not a depleting white society, as Australians may once have thought, but an emerging polyglot nation of four and half million people where all children learn Māori in school, where cultural diversity has taken deep root, where the natural environment is a resource to be treasured and there is water everywhere.

This edition of *Griffith REVIEW* has been shaped by Lloyd Jones' passionate connection to his country, and showcases some of the best writers a highly literate society has produced. It does not shirk from the challenges, but celebrates the evolution of New Zealand into a truly connected hub more than able to provide imaginative sustenance and hold its place in the global village.

From an Australian perspective this edition has provided a wonderful opportunity to change the focal length in the way we see New Zealand. It jettisons the old clichés, and even more recent ones – there is not a sheep, hobbit, bottle of sauvignon blanc, ski field or rugby player to be found – displaced by something that is surprisingly rich, sophisticated and passionate.

From a New Zealand perspective, I hope that this edition provides a mirror on the evolution of a remarkable and resilient society through the eyes and words of your own; we are just holding the mirror so you can see from a slight distance. And from my point of view, I am pleased to synthesise these two elements of my own life.

Sydney, 2 December 2013

At the crossroads

Winds of change

Lloyd Jones

THE oldest highway across the Pacific is perhaps as old as the planet. A jet stream circles the Pacific Rim. The amazing godwit hurtles along at an airborne speed of five hundred kilometres an hour on its journey from Siberia along the western littoral of the Pacific to a landing strip on Christchurch's Brighton Beach – one of the longest non-stop flights of any migratory bird. Each spring, until its near destruction in the 2011 earthquakes, bells from the cathedral would ring to announce the arrival of the godwits.

The highways favour one species or another. Eels slither out of farm creeks, cross fields, wriggle and worm their way through shingle to reach the sea where they ditch their land-crawling apparatus and take on seafaring equipment to swim thousands of kilometres to their breeding ground south of Tonga. Secondary lanes of importance conduct crayfish on their long distance crawl.

Sea lanes had to be invented with the assistance of the stars; the Southern Cross caught the eye of the earliest navigators and led them to imagine pit stops across the length and breadth of the Pacific. Around these pit stops are smaller local lanes and off ramps, minor traffic, inter-island causeways. Crays on their marathon crawl often encounter cables. These highways of chatter connect every point around the Pacific Rim and beyond. Tidal movements push flotsam around the Pacific. Hitchhiking species jump from one pit stop to another. Sailing ships were blown on and off course; some crashed ashore.

On the beach new communities grew; a mix of journeying and settler genes. Colours were mixed and new breeds took to sea lanes to continue the journey. Gradually, over a period of thousands of years, a facial *moko* with its origins in modern-day Taiwan appear on faces dwelling on the two largest southern-dwelling islands in the Pacific.

Names are conveyed along the same route. Words are dropped on this island, and are carried on to the next. Along the Pacific highways landmass and sea and air are not considered to be separate entities, but one big soup of dynamic exchange of people, language, custom and memory.

WATER IS A reflective substance, and New Zealand abounds in lakes, rivers and coast. Many of our legends and histories speak of watery origins. No town or farm in New Zealand is more than a couple of hours' drive from the sea. But our sense of place is informed by more than what greets us out the window.

However secure and deep-rooted we may feel about this place we are a nation of immigrants. Elsewhere is reflected in our faces. One decade into the twenty-first century New Zealand is more diverse than ever before.

Thinking about who we are and where we live requires that we consider *who* lives here, and *who* gets to say. And, which places does memory hark back

to? The answers were different in my parents' day, as they are in my children's lifetime. The story of departures and arrivals is ongoing. New arrivals set about modifying and fitting into it; the country makes its own adjustments.

In the imagination of the northern hemisphere geography has always placed New Zealand at a disadvantage, on the edge of the planet and its consciousness. Present, but slightly out of view. A destination, but not necessarily one for tomorrow or the next day; a popular choice on some bucket lists along with riding an elephant and seeing the Taj Mahal.

IN THE TWENTY-FIRST century New Zealanders have less reason to think of themselves as marginal – they are present and noted everywhere.

Auckland took three decades to become the city with the largest Polynesian population of any in the Pacific. In little over a decade it has become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Australasia, boasting 160 ethnicities – 40 per cent of the city's residents were born overseas. Change to the composition of the population inevitably delivers new cultural reference points, new interpretations of history. We see ourselves in relation to new places; the gaze travels in new directions: north and east as well as the time-honoured gaze west across the Tasman.

This issue of *Griffith REVIEW* attempts to track some of these changes and to position New Zealand in the more exciting place it now occupies. One where it is possible to think of New Zealand as a hub in a mesh of highways spanning the littoral of South America, Asia, and Australia. There lies the future, as economists used to say.

Perhaps it is time to acknowledge what is even more obvious. The future is here.

Wellington, 2 December 2013