

“WRONG WHITE CROWD”

New Zealand¹. Aotearoa². The Land of the Long White Cloud.

The 1970s satirists had fun, declaring it “The land of the Wrong White Crowd³”.

Self-deprecating humour, with a sharp edge. We share the problems

Implicit in colonisation, and the social divisions.

Even with humour, we can feel their sting.

Those were the lost,

I-have-no-idea-where-I’m-going-days.

The trip wasn’t for recreation;

It was a voyage of discovery:

a stranger in my own country.

It was in the 1970s,

an appropriate time for doubt and analysis.

The character of a city,

A country is complex:

its history, its ambience,

Its sense of community.

This is not a geography lesson;

this is personal.

This is the country I was born in,
Where I grew, matured,
and will most probably die in.

The geography, culture and history of this country
Has shaped and defined who I am, how I perceive the world.

Consider this an examination of a microcosm.

Aotearoa: the land of the long white cloud.

The Maori name (and translation) for New Zealand.
Geographically isolated we might be, we have played
our part in world affairs: first as the far-flung outpost
of the British Empire, then as part of Pax Americana.

You're still there, my long-suffering audience; I thank you;

With all my heart; the end is getting closer.

How to end a journey, a poem; an exploration?

In LOTR: The Return of the King, Peter Jackson

Let us see them all. Oscar Wilde observed,
“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery
that mediocrity can pay to greatness.”

(Ouch!!). Mr Jackson, I follow your lead.

My reasoning goes like this: if I can understand my role in a microcosm
(so to speak I might be better able to comprehend my role in a macrocosm)
on the basis that the same principles apply. It is a methodical analysis
(I could not say 'scientific'): via the use of poetry as a medium

2.

Traditionally, New Zealand society falls into two camps;
Of which the borders are fiercely protected.
The Conservative camp, moneyed, privileged
(keep your eyes off my stack⁴);

The progressive side is more fun (personal observation?);
Innovative, experimental, developmental.
The two feed off each other in strange, frightening ways
(a universal problem? For sure.). Result? An armed truce?

3.

By historic links, technology and an insatiable curiosity,
we individually and collectively are part of the global village.
An increasingly cosmopolitan and polyglot society that searches
for a sense of collective identity. This is my world, my laboratory

from which my words flow. Words might have universal meaning;
their use is context-bound. Poetry is a celebration of universal themes;
its expression is born of experience and exploration. There is one level
in which we can meet as equals; another in which our similarities and differences

become an issue; not always easy to tell. So, here we are; here I am,
I say, 'kia ora, greetings and welcome to my world'; this is my world view.
I pause, I ponder; the question goes like this: how do I identify myself?"

I hesitate to use the title, ' New Zealand poet';

Kia ora, I am a poet from New Zealand.

Leslie Bush

© 9 July 2021

¹ The name New Zealand – Nova Zeelandia in Latin, was first used in Franz Visscher's chart of the discoveries made by Abel Tasman during his 1642–43 and 1644 voyages through the southwest Pacific.

² The use of Aotearoa is generally attributed to Kupe, (according to some tribal narratives), the first Polynesian to discover the islands of New Zealand. It is said that his wife devised the name of Ao-tea-roa ('long white cloud') [on seeing the North Island for the first time.]

³ This was applied to an open examination and questions of what it meant to be a New Zealander.

⁴ from "Money", by Pink Floyd, Dark Side of the Moon