

Pakeha and River Spirituality

A Contextual Study of the Hutt River

By

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A Thesis

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Dedicated to my father, Brian Bramwell Scott Noakes, 1921-2008.

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Introduction

The Hutt River, known by Maori as Te Awa Kairangi or Heretaunga, originates in the headwaters of the Tararua, Akatarawa and Rimutaka Ranges. Arising at the confluence of the Western and Eastern Hutt Rivers, it is fed by several major tributaries: the Pakuratahi, Mangaroa, Akatarawa and Whakatiki plus a number of smaller streams including the Moonshine, the Mawhaikona, the Whirinaki and the Belmont. In total the river is some 54 kilometres long and drains a total area of 655 square kilometres.¹ Above Mangaroa, the Hutt is an almost pristine area flowing through established and regenerating native bush. The high quality values of this environment have made it the source for much of the fresh water needs of the Wellington region. Further downstream below Mangaroa, the Hutt flows through rural farmland and a golf course before encountering the urban areas of Upper Hutt and then Lower Hutt. In its lower reaches the river is briefly surrounded by industrial build up before it empties into the Wellington Harbour between Petone and Seaview. Relief maps of the area show that the various tributaries also flow through a range of environments: regenerating and exotic forest and farmland for the Pakuratahi, farmland on the Mangaroa, exotic and regenerating native forest on the Akatarawa and the Whakatiki.

The river follows the Wellington fault line which operates as an active and unpredictable determinant in the river's life. Major earth events have taken place in

¹ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River: Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan* (Wellington: Wellington Regional Council, 1996), 2.

1060, 1460 and the latest in 1855 which raised the river by one and a half metres.² Fortuitously for the early European settlers, this event also drained the Petone and Waiwhetu swamps and raised a road platform along the harbour shoreline to Wellington.

In human geographical terms, the Hutt River remained largely untouched prior to the arrival of Europeans.³ The local iwi at that time, Ngati Ira, had originated from the Hawkes Bay/Heretaunga area and had kainga and pa at the river mouth, Silverstream, Maoribank and Mangaroa as well as around the wider Wellington area. Their impact on the Hutt Valley landscape was not substantial apart from the need to grow kumara on sunny plots, and gather and hunt food from the harbour, river and surrounding bush. Ngati Ira suffered grievously at the hands of Ngati Toa taua (war parties) before the arrival of the New Zealand Company as a result of the massive tribal displacements of the musket wars. Another iwi grouping from the Taranaki area, Te Ati Awa, also on a heke (migration) assumed residence in an uneasy relationship between Ngati Toa at Kapiti and Ngati Kahungunu in the Wairarapa. It was with Te Ati Awa that the New Zealand Company entered negotiations for the purchase of land in 1839-1840,⁴ which the iwi initially regarded as a means of strengthening their tenuous position.

² J. Easter, *The Hutt River: A Modern History 1840-1990* (Wellington: Wellington Regional Council, 1991), 11; Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 5.

³ Easter, *The Hutt River*, 21.

⁴ D. McGill, *Lower Hutt: The First Garden City* (Wellington: GP Publications, 1991), 21-22.

The arrival of European settlers forever changed the nature of the Hutt River and valley. The surrounding bush in the lower valley was largely cleared between 1850 and 1880. The process took longer in the upper valley but the consequences were devastating. Always prone to flooding, the threat of the river was now compounded by the removal of the natural vegetation because runoff was accentuated when it rained.⁵ Until the beginning of the twentieth century the Hutt Valley remained vulnerable to inundation and kept the resident population small. Lower Hutt was only a small borough of about 2,000 people at this time although Petone had begun to develop some momentum from 1880 with industrial development and railway access to Wellington.⁶ The ability to control flooding as the twentieth century unfolded was the key factor which explains the situation today. The inhabitants of two major cities live on the flood plain which bestrides the Hutt River. Within these urban areas some 70,000 people are at risk of flooding.⁷ The changes brought to the river through flood control and urbanization have been substantial as the river has been confined to a humanly determined channel and undergone major alteration. To the first European settlers who were able to row up the river as far as Taita surrounded by dense, impenetrable and majestic bush, the Hutt would be unrecognizable today.

⁵ C. Treadwell, *The Hutt River: Its History and Conquest* (Lower Hutt: Hutt River Board, 1959), 14-15.

⁶ S. Butterworth, *Petone; A History* (Lower Hutt: Petone Borough Council, 1988), 107.

⁷ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 38.

Thesis Overview

As a keen fresh water angler who has regularly visited and then lived near the Hutt River and its tributaries for over 30 years, I have watched with interest the changes which have occurred in human interaction with it. As a student of New Zealand history I was already keenly aware of the story of European settlement under Wakefield's New Zealand Company, the struggles of the first settlers and the disturbances which had taken place in the Hutt Valley with Maori in events like the military skirmish at Boulcott Farm. From my frequent visits to the river I observed the ongoing works programme to manage and control the ravages of its floods. I noted willows being planted to stabilize the river berms as older trees were removed once they had outlived their usefulness. Over time, stop banks have been re-aligned, stone groynes constructed, and long stretches of river bank lined with extensive rock faces. On occasions I have been annoyed to arrive at the river with fly rod in hand only to find the waterway unfishable, muddy and silt laden because huge bulldozers have cross bladed the river to help ensure unobstructed flood flows into Wellington Harbour. On the other hand, I have also observed changes along the river margin. When I first started to visit the river this was often used as a dumping ground for car parts and other unwanted refuse so that it resembled something of a wasteland. Today, all that has changed as throngs of people walk the river trail and use it as a popular destination for relaxation and enjoyment.

Whilst I had observed these and other developments taking place on the river over these years, changes had also been taking place in my own outlook as a Pakeha New Zealander. I became increasingly aware of Pakeha spirituality grounded in the land of Aotearoa New Zealand. Commentators like Michael King, John Bluck and Neil

Darragh were articulating emerging understandings of New Zealanders and the existence of Pakeha spirituality grounded in the land. Darragh labelled this as an earth centred spirituality.⁸ King, in describing the estuarine outlook from his front window on the Coromandel Peninsula of recovering bush and bird life opined that he discerned God in the “regenerative power of the natural world” and that in the experiences of the earth he was able to see and reflect on the “deepest mystery and the sustaining patterns of life.”⁹

No longer were non-Maori New Zealanders looking to a culture half a world away to answer the deep questions of who they were. Rather, Pakeha were apparently developing a distinct spirituality, forged in connection with the landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand; the physical environment was developing deep meaning and significance. Bluck testified that as a Pakeha he chose “to be defined by all the rivers and mountains I have met.”¹⁰ Rob Steven, in his essay on “Land and White Settler Colonialism: The Case of Aotearoa,” readily acknowledged the land as the key to a New Zealand identity.¹¹ Phillip Temple suggested that a growing confidence was evident among New Zealand writers and poets on the subject of nature spirituality, and went so far as to claim that Pakeha understanding of the land was as valid and as robust

⁸ N. Darragh, *At Home in the Earth: Seeking an Earth Centred Spirituality* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2000), i.

⁹ M. King, *Being Pakeha Now: Reflections and Recollections of a White Native* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1999), 240-241.

¹⁰ J. Bluck, *Waking Up in Strange Places: Where do New Zealanders Belong?* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1989), 9.

¹¹ R. Steven, “Land and White Settler Colonialism: The Case of Aotearoa,” in *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, ed. D. Novitz and D. Willmot (Wellington: GP Books, 1989), 30.

as that of Maori.¹² Bluck called for a “stronger, less tentative voice” with respect to Pakeha nature spirituality.¹³ Temple went a step further and declared the need for such a call had passed because a more mature Pakeha tradition of nature spirituality in the land had already been established.

Various commentators offered explanations for this emergence of Pakeha earth centred spirituality. Neil Darragh explained the development of Pakeha nature spirituality as a linear progression which started as a Theocentric outlook and moved to Anthropocentric priorities before evolving into the current Cosmocentric emphasis, but also points out the limitations in this approach.¹⁴ Susan Smith identified various forms of Pakeha nature spirituality, which she characterized as Kingship, Stewardship and Kinship models.¹⁵ These coexisted, rather than developing in a lineal progression. Tim Flannery depicted the initial arrival of settlers as a kind of “cultural maladaptation” which over time gave way to adaptation as the culture set about coming into equilibrium with the landscape and environment.¹⁶ Flannery was not speaking in terms of spirituality but his observations provide an important insight into an underlying assumption within the overall discussion about the development of Pakeha spirituality.

¹² P. Temple, *Lake, Mountain, Tree: An Anthology of Writing on New Zealand Nature and Landscape* (Auckland: Godwit, 1998), 11.

¹³ Bluck, *Waking Up in Strange Places*, 9.

¹⁴ Darragh, *At Home in the Earth*, 4-6.

¹⁵ S. Smith, “The Healing of our Land”, in *Land and Place: He Whenua, He Wahi: Spiritualities from Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Helen Bergin and Susan Smith (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2004), 135-136.

¹⁶ T. Flannery, *The Future Eaters* (Chatswood: Reed Books, 1994), 344.

Over time I had felt an affinity with the Hutt River as a spiritual resource in my own thinking from a Christian perspective. This was not an easy phenomenon to describe, but I found that in the midst of a busy and demanding lifestyle I returned home from my time fishing on the river feeling refreshed and renewed in spirit. The values framework I was taking to the river could be best described in Elizabeth Julian's terms of "the landscape as a spiritual classic,"¹⁷ meaning I was able to read the natural world of the river and its margins and environs as an expression of God's presence and handiwork. The river was a highly modified feature in human terms and yet aesthetically it was important and meaningful to me. As my attachment to the Hutt River grew as a place where I could come to reflect and recharge personal batteries, I pondered whether Pakeha over the decades had developed a river centred spirituality as they had with the land. How did the changes I had observed on the river relate to the dynamics identified by King, Bluck, Steven, Temple, Darragh, Smith, Flannery and others? Was it possible to identify evolving river centred nature spirituality just as it was possible to refer to an earth centred nature spirituality?

This thesis therefore seeks to identify expressions of spirituality that have been evident in Pakeha interaction with and reflection upon the Hutt River since 1840. To achieve this, an historical-contextual approach has been adopted using Claire Wolfteich's premise that "spirituality must be analysed through a historical-contextual approach

¹⁷ E. Julian, "Landscape as Spiritual Classic: A Reading from Paekakariki," in *Land and Place: He Whenua, He Wahi: Spiritualities from Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Helen Bergin and Susan Smith (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2004), 165.

which can uncover the contours of a community's spiritual practice in relation to a given time and place."¹⁸ It is important to note here that the historical-contextual approach does not treat spirituality as purely metaphysical and therefore extraordinary to human experience or history. Instead, it recognizes social context as the very environment in which spirituality is located and found.

Using this approach the thesis uncovers expressions of nature spirituality that have been operative in relation to the Hutt River since the arrival of the first European settlers. It demonstrates that a range of these spiritual expressions have always existed, and highlights the way that these spiritualities have been shaped, in varying degrees, by religious, economic, political and aesthetic factors. The evolution, accommodations and adaptations which have occurred amongst expressions of nature spirituality present a scene of diversity, complexity and variegation.

Overall, this thesis therefore argues that various expressions of river spirituality are clearly evident in Pakeha interaction and relationships with the Hutt River. These expressions are complex in make up and how they interrelate with each other. River spirituality exists with its own unique set of dynamics within a wider discussion of Pakeha earth centered spirituality.

¹⁸ C. Wolfeich, "Spirituality and Social Sciences," in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 69.

Rivers and Spirituality

This thesis is the first study to examine formations of Pakeha spirituality in relation to a specific river. Indeed, within the New Zealand context, there has been little research on rivers and spirituality, much less from a Pakeha perspective. With respect to the Hutt River itself, the ecologist Geoff Park came the closest to writing about it from a perspective of spirituality. Writing in “The Perfect Vale”, Chapter 2 of *Nga Uruora: The Groves of Life*, Park despaired of early settler activity in the Hutt Valley which he said was driven by destructive Christian values. He then asked whether, amidst the roar of traffic and glass clad businesses now dominating the valley in places like Petone, there was still a life force residing in the land.¹⁹ Park becomes an important reference point in the analysis that follows.

Bluck, Darragh and others have written on the subject of Pakeha nature spirituality more broadly, but not in relation to specific locales, although Bluck suggests the need for a more specific reappraisal of local contexts to take place. He notes that Kiwi spirituality “has to revalue the ground under its feet”²⁰ and “has to be grounded in concrete realities rather than abstractions, in ordinary everyday things, events that belong in everyones experience.”²¹ The focus on wider Pakeha nature spirituality has militated against reflection on long-term changes grounded in the particularities of

¹⁹ G. Park, *Nga Uruora: Ecology and History in a New Zealand Landscape* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995), 82.

²⁰ J. Bluck, *Long, White and Cloudy: In Search of a Kiwi Spirituality* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1998), 95.

²¹ Bluck, *Long, White and Cloudy*, 12-13.

place. There has been no literature taking a long term historical approach focused on a specific physical New Zealand context.

The lack of literature on the subject is surprising on several levels. Rivers and waterways have been a consistent and important factor in New Zealanders' lives since the first settlers arrived. David Young articulates this concisely where he notes that "most New Zealanders have a river that runs through their childhood."²² It is a statement echoed by Eileen Duggan in her poem *Cloudy Bay*:

I was born inland between the creek and the river
In the heart of paddocks troubled by their stir.²³

Since settlement, Pakeha have relied on rivers like the Hutt to provide water to drink, wash, clean and bathe in, to drive industry, provide transport and to dispose of human and industrial waste. Continual interaction with the river in these ubiquitous forms is what makes the apparent lack of a strong river consciousness surprising. One reason for this absence, according to Young, is the sheer effort required in earlier times to keep their "capricious flows under control". More recently, urban living has created the illusion "that we owe little to nature and are 'safe as houses' from its excesses."²⁴

²² D. Young, *Faces of the River: New Zealand's Living Water* (Auckland: TVNZ Publishing, 1986), 7.

²³ E. Duggan, "Cloudy Bay," in Temple, *Lake, Mountain, Tree*, 110.

²⁴ Young, *Faces of the River*, 7.

The lack of attention to rivers in nature spirituality literature in New Zealand has been further highlighted by the appearance of some recent international literature. Sandra Postel and Brian Richter, for example, have argued the recent emergence of new values in a wider global context which recognise rivers as sources of deep cultural and spiritual importance which significantly enhance the quality of human life. According to Postel and Richter, rivers are sources of inspiration, beauty and life fulfilling values.²⁵

Other international literature depicts rivers playing an important role in framing spiritual values in personal terms. American writer Mark Wallace, in his relationship with the Crum Creek in western Philadelphia, is an example of this kind of individual self conscious reflection. Crum Creek, like many New Zealand rivers including the Hutt, is an ecologically degraded place. Nevertheless, it performed critical ecological functions, and for Wallace still possessed enough life and magic to be a “sacred place... where I am refreshed and affirmed in my religious quest, a place where I find God.”²⁶ Pakeha nature spirituality is not normally as explicit as this, but it is nonetheless real and tangible. Some New Zealanders are now consciously beginning to “see in the ordinary commodity of water something special and necessary.”²⁷

²⁵ S. Postel and B. Richter, *Rivers for Life: Managing Water for People and Nature* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2003), 8.

²⁶ M.I. Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 145.

²⁷ H. Bergin, “The Waters of Aotearoa: Experience of the Holy Spirit?” in *Land and Place: He Whenua, He Wahi* ed. Helen Bergin and Susan Smith (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2004), 181.

Other rivers could lend themselves to case studies of the kind undertaken in this thesis. New Zealand is replete with significant waterways, each with their own patterns of settlement and consequent modes of human engagement. The Waikato flows through the heart of Hamilton, though connection to that river is somewhat restricted by its steep banks, depth, rapid flow and danger to human life. Pakeha interaction with the Whanganui occurs primarily in the urban spaces around its lower reaches; transportation features more prominently in its history than was the case with the Hutt. Both the Waikato and Whanganui rivers hold deep significance for local Maori, but have also historically been sites of considerable conflict. In recent times this has extended to competing claims as demand for hydro-generation and other uses has increased.

In Christchurch, the Avon flows gently through the outskirts and central business district, but it is a small river and now falls more into the category of a tourist attraction. The Manawatu, on the other hand, carries a significant river water volume but flows around the outskirts of Palmerston North. This explains Jill White's comment that "the Manawatu, in comparison, does not feature prominently in Manawatu and Palmerston North websites, apart from fly fishing... and jet boating and kayaking in the gorge."²⁸ The Manawatu closely parallels the Hutt in matters of flooding and river control, but unlike the Hutt it is primarily a rural river which has greater implications for the farming sector. All of this suggests that if certain generic qualities are apparent

²⁸ J. White, "An Uneasy Relationship: Palmerston North City and the Manawatu River 1941-2006" MA Thesis in History, Massey University, 2007, 18.

in Pakeha nature spirituality, these will also be shaped by local variation. To some extent, all rivers have their own spiritual histories.

Notwithstanding the potential of other rivers, the Hutt River provides a particularly good case study for an historical exploration of nature spirituality in relation to rivers. The Hutt has the longest history of sustained Pakeha settlement of any of the major rivers in New Zealand, which allows for insights into changing influences over the longer term. It is also a river that is easily accessed, and has hence been subject to diverse forms of interaction with it. The cities of Lower and Upper Hutt have grown around the river and access to it has been unrestricted by private land ownership. The river has been a tangible and integral part of these communities in both negative and positive terms.

Significantly, the Hutt River is not a candidate for a scenic post card or coffee table picture book, although there are very attractive spots in its upper reaches. It was never a candidate for protection as part of the scenery preservation movement, which emerged in the late nineteenth century and fostered a sense of spiritual connection to nature through admiration of its untouched grandeur. Indeed, the Hutt has been significantly altered and impacted by Pakeha activity. It has been subject to unbroken, continuous and unremitting development. This intensive interaction provides further opportunities to assess changing modes of interaction, and the way these have been driven and influenced by different spiritual outlooks. In short, the Hutt's watercourse and surrounding environs have been determined by a range of human decision and activity. Its landscape and ecosystems have been altered drastically. In this sense, the Hutt River

and floodplain of today is very much a human project revealing a range of nature values at work.

Definitions

Some clarification needs to be made with respect to definitions. First and foremost it is important to identify and clarify what is meant when the term “Hutt River” is used. Reference to the Hutt River in this thesis is not restricted to the actual waterway or watercourse itself. This is because it is not possible to isolate the water from its margins or the surrounding environs: the bush, the valley floor, urban areas, hills, mountains, valleys and tributaries which flow into it. All these elements are intricately interconnected as an ecosystem in which one impacts and affects the other. The Hutt River is an encompassing concept beyond the waterway itself.

Additionally, Maori spirituality is not a direct focus although it is recognized that it has had impact on the outlook and thinking of some Pakeha specifically and in a more generalized sense of sensitizing towards nature spirituality and the land. The very use of the word “Pakeha” accentuates the point.

The necessary task of defining spirituality for the purposes of this thesis is also important but it is not simple or straightforward. The term “spirituality” is used in a wide range of contexts and possesses different meanings and connotations for different people and groups. It is, so to speak, a very fluid and liquid concept. David Tacey notes: “In the past spirituality was felt to be the living, emotional core of religion, and

those who were ‘very’ religious were often said to be spiritual.”²⁹ However in the 1970s and 1980s a new discipline, which is not tied to Christian understandings and was seen as an intrinsic part of human experience rather than linked to institutional forms, began to gather momentum and acceptance.³⁰

The fluidity of the concept is noted by Philip Endean, who contends that “there is a widely acknowledged controversy about what spirituality means.”³¹ Writing from the New Zealand context John Bluck suggests this lack of clarity has created “unease” on the subject, a lack of identifiable language and symbols and a refusal to be “too confident”.³² Pearson has also noted that Pakeha spirituality is a “notoriously elusive” concept.³³ It is important therefore to clearly delineate what spirituality refers to in relation to the discussion on the Hutt River to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

This thesis employs the term spirituality according to a widely accepted usage as self consciousness and the sum of our basic perspectives. In this sense, spirituality refers to the ideas and outlooks from which people draw meaning and personal understanding and through which they integrate their lives. Spirituality may draw on avowedly

²⁹ D. Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2003), 30.

³⁰ S. Schneider, “Christian Spirituality: Definition, Methods and Types,” in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 3.

³¹ P. Endean, “Spirituality and Theology,” in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 75.

³² Bluck, *Long, White and Cloudy*, 106.

³³ B. Pearson, *Fretful Sleepers and Other Essays* (London: Heineman, 1974), 159.

religious frameworks and convictions, but this may be the exception rather than the rule.

Spirituality has been variously described therefore as an “inclusive, tolerant and flexible canopy under which to pursue the mysteries of the human spirit,”³⁴ as an “ongoing experience or life project [whose] ultimate purpose is life integration,”³⁵ and “that which gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the larger whole.”³⁶ Tacey writes: “spirituality now refers to our relationships with the sacredness of life, nature and the universe,”³⁷ while Sheldrake proposes that “spirituality belongs to the deepest values and meanings by which people seek to live.”³⁸ Writing from the New Zealand context Neil Darragh defines spirituality as the “whole combination of beliefs and practices which animate and integrate people’s lives.”³⁹

Spirituality therefore comprises those elements from which societies and individuals achieve significance and personal understanding. This thesis assumes that all people look to something to “animate” and “integrate” their lives, even though there may often be paradoxes, inconsistencies and an apparent lack of intentionality in the ways that this process unfolds.

³⁴ V. Lesnik, “Contemporary Christianity,” in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 8.

³⁵ Schneider, “Christian Spirituality,” 1.

³⁶ J. Shea, “Spirituality, Psychology and Psychotherapy,” in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 49.

³⁷ Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, 38.

³⁸ P. Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 1-2.

³⁹ Darragh, *At Home in the Earth*, 1.

Underlying this newer understanding of spirituality is the move to “anthropological models” which has taken the focus away from the transcendent to locate meaning and significance increasingly in immanent and cultural elements.⁴⁰ Anthropological models are concerned with the roles of social context, social dynamics and social institutions as the major elements affecting spirituality.⁴¹

Because of this, culture and spirituality are also somewhat overlapping terms, since social context and therefore culture are sources of spirituality. Paul Morris acknowledges spirituality as being cultural and constituting personal and collective identity. He stresses that spirituality makes cultural and communal claims and that in many ways spirituality and culture are similar.⁴² Corkery goes further in stating that the two are “never actually separate and it is an abstraction, a falsehood of reality, to imagine them separated.”⁴³ The task of attaining personal and social significance is a cultural project, transmitted from generation to generation and absorbed naturally. In this sense culture can often be taken for granted because it is held in common by a group of people who hold certain shared worldviews and outlooks. Spirituality may be intentional and include aspects of volition but often is accepted in a subconscious way so that the “role of culture remains decisive in the generation of any ‘spiritual’ quest.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ J. Corkery, “Spirituality and Culture,” in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 28.

⁴¹ Shea, “Spirituality, Psychology and Psychotherapy,” 69.

⁴² P. Morris, “New Zealand Spirituality: A time for re-enchantment,” in *Spirit in a Strange Land: A Selection of New Zealand Spiritual Verse*, ed. Paul Morris, H. Ricketts, M. Grimshaw (Auckland: Godwit, 2002), 182.

⁴³ Corkery, “Spirituality and Culture,” 26.

⁴⁴ Corkery, “Spirituality and Culture,” 27.

The critical role of social context and culture is another foundational premise undergirding the exploration of Pakeha nature spirituality in this thesis.

Spirituality also needs to be discussed in relation to the use of the term “religion” as distinct yet overlapping terms. A religious person is also a spiritual person. Religion consists of an externally imposed worldview and an accompanying set of creeds, doctrines, practices, governance structures and behaviours. It speaks to a worldview which is handed down by tradition and a recognized body of ordained truth.

In contemporary usage, spirituality denotes an integrating focus which does not usually refer to the religious because it does not subsist on doctrines, structures or even expected behaviours. Instead, it extends beyond the boundary lines of the religious to include anyone and becomes a much larger field of human activity.⁴⁵ Bluck locates spirituality in the secular as well as the sacred areas of society noting that it is not the necessary preserve of “the religious, good or pious.”⁴⁶ This observation has important ramifications, and becomes particularly relevant when it comes to discussing the religious outlooks of the very first settlers and interpreting those outlooks and values within the context of nature spirituality in Chapter One.

⁴⁵ Corkery, “Spirituality and Culture,” 38.

⁴⁶ J. Bluck, quoted in *God of the Whenua: Rural Ministry in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. B. Bennett (Wellington: Phillip Garside, 2005), 84.

Finally, Neil Darragh notes that spiritual values should not always be regarded in positive terms simply because they are “spiritual”.⁴⁷ It is just as possible for a spirituality to have negative overtones as it is for religion. Darragh’s point is a pertinent one when it comes to discussing various forms of nature spirituality in the historical context of the Hutt. The thesis confirms that some expressions of nature spirituality on the Hutt are distinctly more negative in terms of their impact on the river, especially where they have been shaped by overwhelmingly utilitarian motivations. Other spiritual expressions have been more positive insofar as they have recognized the significance of interactions framed by values other than utilitarian or economic imperatives.

These are the parameters and understandings around which the term “spirituality” is used in this thesis. Spirituality is what integrates and animates people’s lives, granting meaning and understanding of self and the world. It is primarily used here from an anthropological perspective in which people find significance in immanent and cultural elements as the expression of deep values, located in particular social contexts. Nature spirituality is addressed primarily from the standpoint of the various ideas and values which individuals and social groups have used to both understand and interact with the physical world around them. As McFarlane observes with respect to landscapes, “our responses are for the most part culturally devised... we interpret their forms in the light of our own experience and memory and that of our cultural memory.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Darragh, *At Home in the Earth*, 2.

⁴⁸ R. McFarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (London: Granta Books, 2003), 18.

Nature spirituality can therefore encompass a wide range of human responses, and may be either conscious or subconscious. It may or may not contain religious elements, or be linked to processes of either disenchantment or re-enchantment. Even when essentialist understandings of nature are involved, nature spiritualities are still involved to the extent these are derived from human perceptions and values. Nature spirituality may simply be absorbed unquestioningly as part of the cultural milieu, but may also emerge much more consciously and deliberately. Nature may be viewed in a transcendent manner, in the sense that nature is believed to be a signpost pointing towards something greater, or simply as an end in itself waiting to be exploited for utilitarian ends. Alister McGrath delineates a number of possible models of nature spirituality, identified variously as a living organism, a book, a mirror, a theatre, a woman and nurturing mother and a clockwork mechanism.⁴⁹ His description of “the changed meanings of physical objects through the beliefs of those who behold them” accurately sums up the approach to identifying forms of river spirituality in this thesis.⁵⁰

Thesis Sources and Outline

This thesis identifies and explores the shape and contours of various river spiritualities which can be identified from Pakeha history in the context of the Hutt River. There are however, certain challenges and problems associated with the research sources. These

⁴⁹ A. McGrath, *The Re-Enchantment of Nature: Science, Religion and the Human Sense of Wonder* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), 102.

⁵⁰ McGrath, *Re-Enchantment*, 146.

challenges focus on a lack of explicit language in discussing Pakeha river spirituality. The lack of language and of a tradition to address the subject has required the employment of a methodology that extracts spiritual understandings through the use of a range of sources. Challenges therefore arise with respect to a wide variation in literary genres which are used as viable references. The sources used need careful utilization when it comes to the task of identifying and interpreting spiritual values. They also require careful analysis when different genres of literature are used as sources of information for different periods of history of the Hutt River.

For the period from 1840 to the turn of the century, a range of primary sources, including biographies, diaries, and autobiographies, as well as the published works of poets and writers, have provided important insights into the river itself and the steps taken to control it. The challenge in using these sources lies in discerning values and worldviews in ways which do not misconstrue or misrepresent what people have written about themselves, their forebears or their environment. The focus of much of this kind of material is on individual's values and outlooks. The subject of spirituality and especially nature spirituality is a particularly elusive and fluid one which requires careful interpretation and a clear awareness of the pitfalls involved. The sources used however have been chosen because they present the nearest and closest lenses possible in discerning the nature spirituality used by previous generations of Pakeha inhabitants of the Hutt Valley.

During the next six decades, histories of the Hutt Valley, and of the relevant local bodies charged with overseeing the development of the river and its valley, have

provided a significant source of information. These have included material relating to the Upper Hutt, Lower Hutt and Petone boroughs and more latterly city councils in the case of Upper Hutt City and Hutt City as well as the Wellington Regional Council, currently known as the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

For the latter period from 1960 the sources used tend to focus around mechanisms of local government and associated reports, submissions, policy documents and various government documents including legislation and charters. The Wellington Regional Council has published a number of reports on the Hutt River indicating the ways in which people are now interacting with it. Some of the Regional Council's more significant documents include *Living with the River* (1996) the *Hutt River Environmental Strategy* (2001), and the *Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan* (2001).

As the functions of local bodies and councils have expanded there has been a corresponding increase in the significance and impact of their written material, reports and policy documents. These have provided a rich resource for examining contemporary patterns but they also present challenges in terms of being a very different kind of research material from that used in the earlier period. They also are problematic in the sense that they were written with the intention of reflecting on significant issues which would not be normally termed as spiritual. They are nonetheless highly instructive, not necessarily in disseminating the outlooks of individuals, but rather of public opinion and of broad outlooks within sections of the community and beyond.

In broad terms therefore, the lack of language and tradition around the subject area has necessitated the generalized use and interpretation of individual's reflections on the river for the first six decades of settlement, historical works for the following sixty years and public policy and other documents for the period up to 2011. Throughout the thesis the literary work of the ecologist Geoff Park is frequently used as a focal point of interaction and discussion. Park is the sole source who attempts to understand the Hutt River in spiritual terms and it is his own particular outlook which often is used as a vehicle for discussion.

The thesis comprises four chapters and a conclusion in total. In Chapter One the clearance of the river environs driven by the dominance of Christian religious influence amongst the first European settlers is discussed with major sets of values and ideas conflated under the umbrella of "Christianity". Park becomes a major reference point in this chapter and a multiple set of river spiritualities becomes evident in this early period.

Chapter Two introduces a prolonged period when the river was regarded as a menacing threat and marked by a growing emphasis on technological values. These technological approaches reached their full potency from around the beginning of the twentieth century as financial resources were made available to enable greater control of the river. The river spirituality expressed during this period was that of utilitarian thinking and economic priorities where the river was subjected to invasive and damaging intervention for human benefit and ends. These utilitarian/economic priorities formed a robust and long lasting set of values which proved to be resilient on the one hand but

destructive on the other. The concept of stewardship emerged during this period and its significance is discussed both in the economic priorities of governmental policies but also in its wider ramifications as understood by other groups and individuals.

Chapter Three reflects back on the utilitarian and Christian periods to identify various aesthetic responses to the river amongst a range of artistic, literary and other aesthetic responses to the Hutt which reflected the influence of yet more nature values throughout the period in question. The numbers and groups of people bringing these spiritual viewpoints to the river were never large but they nonetheless represent important dynamics which further add to the complexity at work.

Chapter Four highlights the process by which utilitarian and management agenda were mitigated and deliberately balanced by the need to develop the river in line with new emerging environmental outlooks. These environmental values reflect the emergence of a new form of river spirituality that received political endorsement, especially through the local government bodies.

The final chapter concludes that the historical-contextual analysis of the Hutt River reveals a rich and varied expression of Pakeha nature spirituality confirming that it is possible to speak of an established and long standing river spirituality in the New Zealand context and to draw conclusions about its changing character, shape and operation on the Hutt River.

Since the first arrival of European settlers under the auspices of the New Zealand Company in 1840, the population of the Hutt Valley has mushroomed from a few hundred to the current situation in which over 130,000 people live in close proximity to the Hutt River. This thesis traces this period of history to uncover and explore the expressions of river spirituality used by Pakeha throughout this time. These expressions have been influenced to varying degrees by religious, economic, political and aesthetic factors which have entered into various degrees of accommodation with each other. They provide an insight into the diverse, complex, variegated and adaptable dynamics of river spirituality on the Hutt River and other rivers within New Zealand and possibly the wider literature on Pakeha earth centred spirituality.

The first part of the story commences with the widespread influence of Christianity upon the early settlers.

Chapter One- Christian Values

The arrival of the first European settlers represented the beginning of a significant new period in the history of the Hutt marking the foundation of Pakeha interaction with the river and the introduction of nature spiritual values that rose and ebbed in efficacy and importance over the following years.

This early period is commonly understood to have been dominated by Christian thinking. To speak of spiritual values here refers to prevailing religious views and outlooks and it is within the historical context of the early settler period that “religion” plays its most important part. Geoff Park has reflected back negatively on this influence. In particular, he criticized Christian thinking and outlooks for contributing to unprecedented change and environmental damage in the valley the Hutt River bisects.

This chapter assesses the nature spiritual values of migrants to the Hutt in the early years of European settlement. It begins by examining Park’s influential interpretation and his critique of nature values grouped under the encompassing umbrella of Christianity. The chapter then explores nature spiritualities in three case studies of early settlers in the Hutt. These provide a point of comparison and contrast with Park’s claims. The case studies demonstrate that diverse expressions of river spirituality were evident from the very beginnings of Pakeha settlement and that broad characterisations have their limitations.

The Arrival of Christianity

From early 1840 the European settlement of the Hutt Valley began in earnest. The settlement began as a planned migration from Great Britain under the umbrella of The New Zealand Company. Established in 1839 as a restructured form of the earlier New Zealand Association, the company advocated a systematic colonization of New Zealand by replicating English society in the new land. The founder of the New Zealand Company, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, had been able to secure backing, both financial and moral, from a number of wealthy financiers and members of the British Parliament. The plan was to establish a settlement based on a number of gentlemen settlers who would on-sell land purchased from Maori and who would in turn benefit from the profit. These gentlemen farmers were to be supported by a large pool of labourers who in time would themselves be able to purchase their own land.⁵¹ By the end of October 1839 five emigrant ships containing over 800 emigrants had set sail for Petone and by 1842 a further 3,500 had arrived,⁵² although the focus of settlement had by this stage moved from the Hutt Valley to Thorndon.

Wellington was the first of the Wakefield settlements. In seeking to pre-empt the Government's intention to establish British rule through a treaty with Maori, the New Zealand Company dispatched the ships *Tory* and the *Cuba* to Wellington (Port Nicholson) under Colonel William Wakefield, Wakefield's younger brother, in advance

⁵¹ W. Tyler, "The New Zealand Company," in *New Zealand's Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, ed. Ray Knox (Sydney: Hamlyn House, 1971), 331-334.

⁵² A. H. Carman, 'The Settlement of Wellington', in *New Zealand's Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, ed. Ray Knox (Sydney: Hamlyn House, 1971), 342-343.

of the immigrant ships that were to follow soon afterwards. William Wakefield negotiated the purchase of vast areas of land around Port Nicholson but the Company was to be soon hampered by a mandate on land sales imposed by the newly installed Governor who reserved the right to authenticate all sales which had already taken place. Events proved later that the purchases from Maori were by no means clear cut or well understood by Maori, nor were the intricacies of Maori land ownership understood by the Europeans. Conflict ensued between Maori and Pakeha settlers. These included a number of skirmishes in the Hutt Valley, culminating in larger scale military encounters at Boulcott Farm and in the Horokiwi Valley.

One of the first actions of the New Zealand Company settlers in the region grants an insight into the religious values they brought with them. According to Susan Butterworth, a church service was held by the Presbyterian Minister John McFarlane on 23 February 1840, which she has described thus:

The background consisted of tall flax and feathery toi toi which was then in full bloom. Adjoining, and a short distance from Petone Beach there was a small clump of karaka trees, under the shade of which the settlers gathered to worship God. There was no Sabbath bell to call the congregation together, but the song of the bell bird could be heard above all the songsters of the grove. There were about thirty or forty persons [present].⁵³

⁵³ Butterworth, *Petone: A History*, 6.

The early settlers were awed by the beauty of the bush enveloping the Hutt River. In July 1840 Dr G. S. Evans, a barrister and founder member of the New Zealand Company, described “colossal timber and the hills on each side elevated from 500 to 1500 feet all covered with the same evergreen forest... with mountains beyond to the distance of 40 miles, all distinctly visible in their sharpest outline and all covered with this rich velvet mantle of foliage.”⁵⁴ This appreciation of the river and its valley was a common feature of the first Europeans’ response, and represents an initial expression of nature spirituality discussed further in Chapter Three. It was a Christian response, coloured by the strong romantic ideas and sentiments of the period. Ironically, within a few short years the bush around the river and surrounding hills was gone in a concerted effort of clearance by fire and settlers’ axe which later commentators like Park labelled as inexcusable. Christianity, which had given rise to feelings of awe and majesty in the natural world of the Hutt Valley, had also paradoxically been widely held to be responsible for the values system which motivated and justified the destruction and change of the river and valleys ecosystems.

The Park Thesis

As an ecologist, Geoff Park’s influential interpretation provides a good example of how Christianity is commonly viewed in terms of the environmental impact of religious outlooks. Park was one of the leading voices condemning what occurred during the early settler period generally, but also specifically in the Hutt Valley. He had played a

⁵⁴ McGill, *Lower Hutt: The First Garden City*, 11.

key role in conservation ecology in various parts of New Zealand, including the South Island and the Hutt. His concern for New Zealand's threatened lowland environments led to a landmark book in 1995, *Nga Uruora: The Groves of Life*, followed in 2006 by a collection of essays entitled *Theatre Country: Essays in Landscape and Whenua*.⁵⁵ To Park's mind, Christianity had played a negative role and was largely responsible for the thinking and response to the natural order in New Zealand which gave justification for wholesale clearance and destruction of the land.

Park readily recognized Pakeha nature spirituality as a phenomenon, the importance of places and the urge to have "profound ties with them [as] one of the needs of the human soul, probably the hardest to define, but the most important."⁵⁶ He concurred with Flannery's process of time, adjustment and coming into equilibrium for colonizing cultures when it came to the land, and identified what occurs when landscapes become "saturated with memories of birth, childhood, love, poverty and war."⁵⁷ Park's ecological vision emphasized the sacredness and spirit of place. This spiritual outlook on the land was significantly influenced by Maori nature values.

Park's statement that Pakeha are still an adjusting people "and on a steep learning curve"⁵⁸ is easily understood when one considers his dismay and anger at the loss of New Zealand's lowland ecosystems at the hand of European settlers. He lamented the

⁵⁵ G. Park, *Theatre Country: Essays in Landscape and Whenua* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006).

⁵⁶ Park, *Theatre Country*, 47.

⁵⁷ Park, *Nga Uruora*, 306.

⁵⁸ Park, *Theatre Country*, 49.

relentless clearing of bush, swamp and wetlands and the devastating and ongoing effect this had on intricately balanced and connected ecosystems. On reflecting on the loss of primeval bush in the Hutt Valley he asked: “Why, with their arrival in 1840, was... biologically perhaps the richest component of New Zealand’s ecosystems excised so rapidly and meticulously?”⁵⁹

The answer, he claimed, lay at the feet of three culprits, all Christian in a broad and inclusive sense, and each expressive of nature spiritualities.

First was the impact of Christian missionaries, whom Park roundly condemned for undermining traditional Maori outlooks on the land which were essentially animist in character.⁶⁰ According to Park, the missionaries introduced a new world view and spirituality which rejected the primordial, and “spirit” of place. He quotes the Whanganui-based missionary Richard Taylor who urged his newly Christian ‘natives’: “Every valley shall be made plain, every hill shall be laid low... for our God.”⁶¹ Park does not identify which particular group or iwi of ‘natives’ was being addressed, or the context in which Taylor said this. His intent was rather to illustrate the agenda of the missionaries in overcoming the Maori spiritual world. In *Theatre Country* Park wrote: “Maori expression of mauri has suffered enormously ever since European missionaries broke the back of the laws of tapu last century and began the process in which law,

⁵⁹ Park, *Theatre Country*, 36.

⁶⁰ Park, *Theatre Country*, 25.

⁶¹ Park, *Nga Uruora*, 304.

public policy and science have denied Maori spiritual knowledge of the natural world.”⁶² According to Park, the missionaries religion effectively detached the physical landscape from the guardian spirits and gods which inhabited it.

The missionaries outlook represents a particular spiritual response to the natural world. However, it is worth noting that while the missionaries were apparently suspicious of Maori spirituality and introduced a totally different faith structure, their influence in this area was also complex. Numerous missionaries sought to protect Maori possession of the land. They supported Maori in retaining their natural resources, and were instrumental in the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi,⁶³ believing that in light of the pending invasion of settlers, this was the best means for Maori to retain their mana and whenua. The Church Missionary Society missionary Henry Williams had arrived in Port Nicholson ahead of the arrival of the New Zealand Company ships in an attempt to buy up land from Maori to forestall the establishment of the colony. The plan however failed because the tribes wanted resident Pakeha because of the mana and trade they brought with them rather than absentee landlords.⁶⁴ Paradoxically, the Te Ati Awa chiefs were to soon express dismay at the large numbers of settlers arriving at Petone as the realization dawned that they had granted entry to something far greater than a handful of settlers. Had the missionaries plea for Maori to retain the whenua been

⁶² Park, *Theatre Country*, 25.

⁶³ A. Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington: New Zealand Education for Ministry, 1997), 24.

⁶⁴ E. J. Wakefield *Adventure in New Zealand* (Auckland: Golden Press, 1955), 23,81-82.

heeded then paradoxically the impact of European settlement and acquisition of land would have been more limited.

A second 'Christian' culprit in Park's thinking was the New Zealand Company and the "imaginative dreaming and capitalist confidence" of its founder, E.G. Wakefield.⁶⁵ Park argued that Christianity extinguished the spirit of place: "Invaders use the garden to express their intentions and accomplishments," he claimed, "and from the Edenic propaganda of the New Zealand Company, the idea of New Zealand as a garden grew like a virus."⁶⁶ In *Theatre Country* he expounded further on this:

William Wakefield equated the soil of the Hutt River with that of an English garden. And as I argue in *Nga Uruora*, he and his land company had plenty of encouragement to do so. Religious encouragement; to work with nature, to consider what they were about to create as akin to a gardeners 'grafting of a gentler scion upon the wilder stem. New Zealand was wild, nature in its primeval state. Their task, they were told, was a divine one. God had empowered man... to fashion nature as to draw from her hidden elemental forms of far greater beauty and utility than, in her present state of imperfection, are offered to us by nature herself.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Park, *Theatre Country*, 36.

⁶⁶ Park, *Nga Uruora*, 324.

⁶⁷ Park, *Theatre Country*, 41.

A prolific number of books and pamphlets bear evidence to the New Zealand Company's use of Christian imagery to advance its claims.⁶⁸ Wakefield was a total pragmatist; some would argue he was callous.⁶⁹ Allan Davidson and Peter Lineham note that he would equally have been happy to have created a Buddhist settlement if the opportunity had allowed.⁷⁰ At one point he had approached the Chief Rabbi of England in an effort to promote his settlement schemes.⁷¹ Key phrases, widely popular and religious in their connotation, feature frequently in the promotional material: Arcadia, Utopia, Eden of the World, Earthly Paradise, Land of Milk and Honey.⁷² For Park, the New Zealand Company was an integral part of the Christian problem and represented the amalgamation of Christian and capitalist enterprise.

The third culprit was the particularly strong Darwinian influence amongst New Zealand's scientific community in the late nineteenth century. Park regarded Darwinian Theory and influence as part of the Christian project and Darwin's theories had been re-interpreted as justification for British superiority and its progress around the globe under the Union Jack accompanied by a powerful civilising agenda. He noted that *The Origin of the Species* went well beyond the modest intention of convincing everyone of the power of natural selection. What he called 'evolution' came to mean progress along a predictable course toward modern civilisation as its ultimate goal, which had widely

⁶⁸ J. Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Allen Lane, 1996), 280-282, 299.

⁶⁹ Belich, *Making Peoples*, 280.

⁷⁰ A. Davidson and P. Lineham, eds, *Transplanted Christianity: Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1989), 73.

⁷¹ Belich, *Making Peoples*, 73.

⁷² Belich, *Making Peoples*, 299.

been promulgated as part and parcel of the Christian project.⁷³ He ruefully comments that “to most [the disappearance of the New Zealand bush] was simply evolution in action, albeit as dramatic an example as anywhere in the world.”⁷⁴

Park’s critique delineates three settler spiritual values under the broad and undifferentiated use of the term “Christianity”. His analysis reflects a similar argument to that of Lynn White. Writing in the 1960’s, White argued that the ecological crisis invading the world, including the plight of rivers, could be attributed to “a dynamic technology and science... which cannot be understood historically apart from distinctive attitudes toward nature which are deeply grounded in Christian dogma. The fact that most people do not think of these attitudes as Christian is irrelevant.”⁷⁵

Park’s analysis cohered with White’s construal of a broadly Christian outlook, and White’s estimation of its impacts. What happens, however, when these generalized interpretations are subjected to closer evaluation? The experiences of three early Pakeha settlers reinforce some of Park’s observations, but also highlight other Christian values shaping early Pakeha responses to the river. Some of these were more positive in outlook than Park’s interpretation suggests.

⁷³ Park, *Theatre Country*, 85.

⁷⁴ Park, *Theatre Country*, 213.

⁷⁵ L. White, Jr, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967): 1207.

William Golder

William Golder was a dedicated disciple of the New Zealand Company's cause and if Park needed a model example to justify and support his critique of early settler Christianity then Golder fitted the bill well. He arrived in the Hutt River valley in 1840 aboard the *Bengal Merchant* at the age of 29 years.⁷⁶ On board, en route to New Zealand, he had written a poem called "Celebratory Ode" extolling the virtues of the Wakefield enterprise. He had no difficulty linking Christian ideas into the settlement scheme.

Life beside the Hutt River was not easy for Golder from the start. He clearly possessed some financial resources because with his wife and two children he built a house on the edge of the river. This was promptly lost along with his crops to a disastrous flood. His second house called Sylvan Grange was also built near the river on stilts, but a large tree demolished the house in a storm.⁷⁷ His third home, Petoni, was built in higher bush but had to be abandoned temporarily because of tensions with local Maori over land issues whilst Golder and his family sought shelter in Fort Richmond. Facing significant challenges, Golder, like many of the settlers, had to put his hand to a range of activities – bush clearing, farming, house building, swamp drainage and cutting timber for sale, but he also built a school house and taught in the valley.⁷⁸ His most enduring

⁷⁶ G. Kaye, *Bygone Days in Lower Hutt* (Lower Hutt: Lower Hutt City Council, 1987), 28.

⁷⁷ Kaye, *Bygone Days*, 29.

⁷⁸ Kaye, *Bygone Days*, 29.

contribution was as a prolific poet. He was a founder of New Zealand poetry, and in his poetry it is possible to discern a rich panoply of spiritual values.

Golder was a product of the nineteenth century adherence to belief in Anglo-Saxon progress. James Belich states that the progress phenomenon reached its zenith with the Great Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1851. He notes the existence of widespread belief in a “broadly continuous upward development attributed to God... called progress.”⁷⁹ Progress saw a “second important collective identity... Anglo-Saxonism – the belief in a distinct race superior to others and uniquely addicted to liberty and justice.”⁸⁰ It was this same outlook which was given later impetus by Darwinian Theory as referred to earlier in Park.

Golder was heavily influenced by an early nineteenth-century Scottish expression of the progress phenomenon known as the “popular enlightenment”.⁸¹ Emerging from the small towns and villages of the Scottish lowlands, the popular enlightenment was an amalgam of convinced evangelical Christianity and belief in human progress and science. It was a widespread movement, and has been described as a “distinctive Scottish contribution to social development in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the conception of the ‘democratic intellect’ and the expansion of

⁷⁹ Belich, *Making Peoples*, 290.

⁸⁰ Belich, *Making Peoples*, 295.

⁸¹ Brian Opie, “Futurity and Epic: William Golder’s the New Zealand Survey (1867) and the Formation of British New Zealand,” 2. URL: www.nztec.org/projects/golder/biography (accessed September 21, 2009).

opportunities for self and collective education by working class people through the libraries and the lectures of the Mechanic Institutes.”⁸²

Golder was a living example of Anglo-Saxon progress doctrine. He had advanced from being a weaver employed in factories of industrial Scotland through self education to become a teacher. Having lost his teaching position when his wife converted to Roman Catholicism, he immigrated to New Zealand. The New Zealand Company accepted his application on the basis of some farming experience he possessed. Notions of self advancement, Anglo-Saxon progress and popular enlightenment thinking all shaped his attitude to emigration. His “Celebratory Ode” in honour of the New Zealand Company revealed a natural affinity between his own ideals and Wakefield’s philosophy of settlement and British social advancement. In Golder’s world, religion, science, politics and morality were an integrated scheme of belief and thinking. In his Christian beliefs, a providential future lay in the realm of technological, commercial, scientific and moral progress.

This spiritual worldview shaped Golder as a settler to the Hutt Valley. It influenced his career and poetry and is replicated in his copious and lengthy poems which focus at length on the Hutt River, or the “Erratonga” as he called it as a derivation of the Maori name Heretaunga. In one poem titled simply “Erratonga” from *The New Zealand Minstrelsy* written in 1852 we find an admiration of the valley, river and bush which he

⁸² G. Davie, “The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century,” cited in B. Opie, “Futurity and Epic.”

describes with a descriptive use of words and rich imagery characteristic of all his poetry:

Through Hutt's vale the Erratonga
Smooth and clear meandering glides,
Where wild nature blooms in beauty,
Clothes with grandeur both its sides;
While the lofty mountain ranges
All around their pride declare,
Forests evergreen displaying,
Fragrant shrubs perfume the air.⁸³

The poem continues on to express the pain of separation from loved ones in Scotland ending with the hope that there will be a reunion “when we meet to part no more”. On the one hand it expresses longing and loss for what has been left behind, whilst on the other hand there is an appreciation of the local natural landscape.

There is a similar dynamic at work in “Evening Industry” which depicts the task of clearance that lay before Golder as a settler on the banks of the Hutt. The poem describes the challenge facing early settlers in clearing the land bringing it into subjugation with “prostrate logs” to be dealt with by axe by means of the moonlight. The depiction of this activity at night reveals romanticized ideas of toil and industry, but also the urgency of the task that lay before the settlers if they were to ever hope to make headway on the huge challenge which confronted them.

The moon had filled her horn on high
And pour'd on earth her silv'ry sheen,
A still and cloudless azure sky
Proclaim'd her nights own radiant queen.

⁸³ W. Golder, *The New Zealand Minstrelsey* (Wellington: R. Stokes and W. Lyon, 1852), 9.

The clearing, round beneath her smile,
Seem'd gladdened as by day's bright noon;
The eager bushman, late at toil,
Rejoiced at having such a boon.

'Mong prostrate logs his work he plied,
His axe disturbing nights dull ear,
To breathe, an axe he lean'd and eyed,
The moon, whose smile his heart did cheer.

The thoughts of home, and former joys,
Insensibly stole o'er his mind;
And fond remembrance drew a sigh
For friends, endear'd, he left behind.⁸⁴

Golder's spiritual worldview is articulated most clearly in a later and lengthy epic dedicated to the Governor, Sir George Grey, entitled "The New Zealand Survey". The poem was written in April 1865 during a break from swamp clearing in the Mangaroa valley in an old whare in a corner of the swamp.⁸⁵ Brian Opie describes the moment of composition "as the moment of settlement, marked out in the physical, technical, imaginative and intellectual work of bringing nature into line with conceptions of human progress and their social embodiments."⁸⁶ The first canto depicts the magnificence of the river and its environs in its untouched state, which Golder describes as "pleasant," and "delights the eye." The "variegated beauties" of the river are "a soothing influence" and provide cause for reflection:

How pleasant 'tis, when all appears serene,
Beneath the sunshine and an azure sky;
When the green forest, in its various shades
Of vernal livery, much delights the eye

⁸⁴ Golder, *The New Zealand Minstrelsey*, 23.

⁸⁵ B. Opie, "Futurity and Epic."

⁸⁶ B. Opie, "Futurity and Epic."

With variegated beauties; and effects
A soothing influence on reflective minds.⁸⁷

Golder, like many of the first European settlers, readily drew personal consolation and reflection from the Hutt's scenery. Again, his spiritual values included an appreciation of nature in the Hutt Valley in its "raw state", which Golder describes as "well set music...which charms the ear," "enchanting to the eye" and a "soothing balm to "grieving hearts."

But Canto I reveals another aspect to Golder's worldview. The natural world also contains latent potential which is, as yet, untapped. At some point in the future it will undergo a dramatic transition at the hand of humankind in the name of progress and development:

Now see yon long ravine, that winds afar
Among the hills – this no doubt leads the way
To fertile valleys, hitherto unknown,
As hill from view in lonely solitudes
Untrod by man; but yet the time will come
When such must be explored, when enterprise
Fresh scope demands!⁸⁸

The 'fresh scope' Golder refers to here is the 'enterprise' of an industrial society striving to become a new economic powerhouse, and a major centre of commerce and trade based on the Pacific and South East Asia. Golder continues to elucidate what

⁸⁷ W. Golder, *The New Zealand Survey* (Wellington: J.C. Stoddart and Co., 1867), 7.

⁸⁸ Golder, *The New Zealand Survey*, 4.

would eventuate. Britain for him is the model and example to which the Hutt Valley will one day aspire:

Tread close
The heels of mother country.

The contrast depicted here is therefore a stark one. A few lines earlier he refers to: “These cascades of solitude, which long have spent their force in vain, as having none to guide.”⁸⁹ It confirms Golder’s healthy respect for the river’s disastrous power in flood, and, true to his scientific impulse, awareness of the geological forces which created the river. This appreciation is also part of his progressive world view in which history, knowledge, human effort, divine intention and providence provide the pattern of advancement for the world. For Golder there was a new order to be established and nature could not attain its full and intended potential until it was subjugated by humanity. There was no contradiction between the two views for him. Golder’s spiritual values allow for the natural world of the Hutt River to inspire and nurture him, but always with another ultimate aim and goal in view of “labourious enterprise” and “lively industry” which was to be the source of a “new inward wealth.”

Be brought in requisition yet, to aid
Laborious enterprise, or be the scene
Of lively industry, in busy mills
Engaged in various labours, as the source
Of inward wealth?⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Golder, *The New Zealand Survey*, 5.

⁹⁰ Golder, *The New Zealand Survey*, 5.

Golder knew the demands of physical labour. He reflected elsewhere in *The New Zealand Survey* on whether later generations would appreciate the cost to the early settlers of “breaking in” and “taming” the wilderness of the Hutt Valley. His own labour and that of the other settlers has a very definite purpose in view:

Of civilisation, and improvements vast
Affecting much the southern world at large.⁹¹

There is a providential trajectory to the Hutt River and a progression in nature which reaches its fulfillment in the preordained end product of civilisation and human domination “like Britain in her rise”. Golder depicts this in biblical images of light, darkness and goodness in which darkness reigns until the growing light of progress radiates:

In various way! - As when a light appears
Where darkness reigned, and in the farthest reach
That light is seen, though dimly, yet it bears
Its true proportion, to the good designed!-
So may this land take up improvements work
Become the centre, whence may radiate
Much good around, like Britain in her rise,
Yea, ev’n surpass her with achievements great!⁹²

He picks up on the ‘Erratonga’ again in Canto IV and repeats the same dynamic using the metaphors of sand and an hour glass to depict the same theme of inevitable advancement and change:

So Nature’s loneliness – her first debut-
Has also got its time glass, where the sands
In constant running order soon may cease,

⁹¹ Golder, *The New Zealand Survey*, 5.

⁹² Golder, *The New Zealand Survey*, 5.

And show her liable to other change!
The change, no matter when it may occur –
Tomorrow – or, may hap, a thousand years –
Yet still ‘twill come, and so perform its work,
Indicative to some future good...⁹³

And again in Canto V Golder reminds his readers that this foreseen conclusion and destiny is not some passing whim in his thinking:

Now we see the work of bliss begun...
The ultimate design of providence.
In peopling earth, subduing desert wilds,
Is now in progress... so future things
Indicative of great things to come.⁹⁴

The New Zealand Survey and its dialogue with the Hutt River grant a unique insight into Golder’s nature spirituality. Opie argues that the very structure of the writing reflects various stages in the development of the landmass towards its final and intended destiny.⁹⁵ Hence nature is depicted as both a pleasant and powerful force in Canto I, and in terms of the geologically formative forces of the land in Cantos I and III. In Canto IV Golder returns to the Hutt River where he emphasizes the function of science in interpreting nature and in Canto V he outlines his theory of progress in which nature attains its final potential at the hands of humanity and more specifically Anglo-Saxon civilisation.

⁹³ Golder, *The New Zealand Survey*, 36.

⁹⁴ Golder, *The New Zealand Survey*, 62.

⁹⁵ See B. Opie, “Futurity and Epic.”

Golder epitomises Park's critique of Christianity in the sense that a range of values have been accommodated under the heading of 'Christianity' in a broad and encompassing amalgam especially focused on progress. He represents an early New Zealand settler who is a convinced Christian, steeped in the notion of mankind's divinely ordained right to dominate the environment. He is a product of the Enlightenment and a convert to the notion of the progress of humanity and technology. A waterway in its natural wonder and splendour exists to be subjugated to the purposes of civilisation. Golder retains a kind of Christian view of the Hutt River as a natural wonder to be tamed, managed and controlled, as well as deep trust in science and Anglo-Saxon progress and technology. He is Park's stereotypical early Christian settler. But he is not totally representative.

William Swainson

William Swainson brought a scientific and Christian view to the Hutt Valley before the general acceptance of Darwinism. In some respects, William Swainson was quite similar to Golder. Not to be confused with the civil servant of the same name and era, Swainson shared Golder's Christian beliefs, though he came from a more exalted social position and was able to employ servants and workers to help run the home and farm in Lower Hutt.⁹⁶ The depth of Swainson's Christian commitment is revealed in several aspects of his life. Swainson was an Anglican, but not narrowly so. On at least one

⁹⁶G. Swainson, *William Swainson, FRS, FLS: Naturalist and Artist: Family Letters and Diaries* (Palmerston North: Swift Print, 1992), 92.

occasion he asked his son not to reveal to Bishop Selwyn, Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, that he had attended chapel rather than the parish church for worship. His depth of evangelical Christian conviction is revealed in his entertaining the idea of joining the Church Missionary Society effort in New Zealand. He was also a hymn writer. In 1830 he had dedicated to his daughter Mary:

O make our weary members blest,
With sweet refreshment in their rest.
And in the hours of darkness spread
The guardian arms around our head.⁹⁷

Swainson's gravestone in St James Church cemetery in Lower Hutt declared that "he considered the highest glory that he was a member of the Church of Christ."⁹⁸

Like Golder, Swainson was heavily influenced by the scientific thinking of the time but his particular passion was as a naturalist. He lived and died just before Darwinian thinking on natural selection had taken hold, and has been somewhat overlooked because much of his work took place just before the emergence of modern natural science. He was however author to a number of publications, a fellow of the Royal Society with three species of bird named after him. Whilst Swainson's work and thinking took place before the widespread awareness of Darwinian Theory, his biographers, who were also his descendents, also saw him as a man before his time.⁹⁹ His primary point of difference with the scientific world of his time lay in his strong

⁹⁷ S. Natusch and G. Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove: The Anatomy of a Nineteenth Century Naturalist* (Palmerston North: Swift Print), 75.

⁹⁸ Natusch and Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove*, 170.

⁹⁹ Swainson, *William Swainson*, 187.

commitment to what was known as McLeay's Quinary System of natural classification in preference to the more established and accepted Linnaean system.¹⁰⁰ The Quinary system worked on a circular arrangement clumped into groups of five and for Swainson it was "like a divine revelation. For him it was part of God's truth and must as such be preached."¹⁰¹

Swainson's interest in New Zealand included his belief that the new settlement "would be all the better for the distinguished presence of one useful and ornamental scientific man."¹⁰² He was elected as a member of the New Zealand Land Company, one of the successors to the New Zealand Association that became the New Zealand Company. As a person of means and letters he was a significant asset to Wakefield and he registered for five land orders before arriving in New Zealand.¹⁰³ Swainson first resided in Wellington and took up a lease in the Hutt Valley. By July 1843 he and his family had moved to Hawkshead on the banks of the Hutt River where uncertainties beset them in the form of river floods, unrest over land issues with Maori and pending adjudication on land purchases by the colonial government.¹⁰⁴

Swainson had integrated the scientific thinking of the period into his framework of meaning and understanding. Like Golder and other new settlers he was awed at the sight of the rivers environs. He wrote: "The new Hutt Road, independent of its utility,

¹⁰⁰ Natusch and Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove*, 53.

¹⁰¹ Natusch and Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove*, 56.

¹⁰² Natusch and Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove*, 93.

¹⁰³ Natusch and Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ Swainson, *William Swainson*, 127.

has opened to the artist, an entirely new field, of the most magnificent forest scenery I ever beheld.”¹⁰⁵ His art work and collecting focused strongly on the river and valley in which he made his home. Swainson also understood the significance and importance of the surrounding natural order in a way which Golder didn’t. He doesn’t enthuse over the advance of civilisation and progress like Golder. His scientific view of the world demonstrated empathy for and understanding of the environment, exhibited in an appreciation that went well beyond the expectation of what it may offer in terms of human advancement and progress. His extensive art works and sketching recorded the fauna and flora of the natural world around him in a desire to measure, quantify, collect and organize specimens. Furthermore, his daughter Mary wrote of Swainson and the Hawkshead property he had developed alongside the river: “Many think ours is the prettiest place on the river. Papa has taken a great deal of trouble with it – indeed, I think he has too much taste for a colonist, for he cannot bear to see the beautiful trees and tree ferns cut down.”¹⁰⁶ This was not an isolated observation from his daughter. She wrote elsewhere in her diary of an incident in which “The clearing of Hawkshead was all done by labourers.... Papa gave E Kuri [the local Ngati Tama chief] a good drubbing for cutting down some trees he particularly wanted to preserve.”¹⁰⁷

Swainson therefore not only appreciated the flora of the Hutt Valley but also sought to preserve it. This suggests that Park’s depiction of the early settlers’ destructive

¹⁰⁵ Natusch and Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove*, 139.

¹⁰⁶ Natusch and Swainson, *William Swainson of Fern Grove*, 118.

¹⁰⁷ Swainson, *William Swainson*, 92.

influence is not true for all of them. Swainson's worldview did not envision the subjugation of the natural order for the progressive and technological demands of society as Golder's did. There is very little evidence of this kind of outlook in his diaries. Whereas Golder may have served well the stereotype which blamed Christianity for the clearance of the river valley Swainson does not so readily fit the argument.

James Brown

Like William Golder, James Brown came from Scotland (Glasgow specifically) and was attracted by the New Zealand Company's offer of a free passage to New Zealand. The prospects for Brown, aged 28, Mary his wife, and their four children, were not bright in Scotland. A weaver, like Golder, and facing difficult social conditions, the possibility of labouring in New Zealand and then being able to buy land was a very attractive proposition. Brown signed up.

Brown is representative of the bulk of New Zealand Company settlers in that he came from a working class background. The vast majority of these labourers lacked the skills, time, wherewithal or inclination to diary their experiences. There is evidence that many of them could not read or write and that Maori possessed higher rates of literacy than many of the settlers.¹⁰⁸ This was not the case with settlers like the Swainsons, and

¹⁰⁸ B. Elsmore, *Like Them That Dream: The Maori and the Old Testament* (Tauranga: Moana Press, 1985), 24.

others not discussed in this thesis like Henry Petre and Eleanor Petre. Petre was the younger son of Baron William Petre of Thorndon Hall in Essex and became a significant first landowner in the Hutt. He returned to Britain and came back to the Hutt with his new wife Eleanor in 1843. The pair came from affluent and landed Catholic backgrounds and wrote accounts and diaries of the early years of settlement in the Hutt Valley.¹⁰⁹ Whilst these more affluent settlers left considerable literary evidence of their experiences it is difficult to discern the full shape and influence of Christian outlooks and values on a great many of the poorer early settlers because of the nature of the extant source material and their lack of literary skills. What is recorded from their descendents does, however, give some insight into the values which impacted their attitude to the river.

The Brown family arrived in Wellington in 1841 and the local newspaper, the *Spectator*, in its first edition welcomed the new arrivals with some ominous words: “A few hills or gales of wind will not frighten these sturdy men out of their propriety. They are just the men to war with a New Zealand forest and in a few years to bring to market in abundance fine grain such as may now be seen on the Hutt.”¹¹⁰

Brown was first employed in road making and six weeks later moved to Petone from Kaiwharawhara to continue road work and surveying in the Hutt Valley. For two years

¹⁰⁹ Henry Petre wrote a glowing account in *The Settlements of the New Zealand Company* (Christchurch: Capper Press, 1971).

¹¹⁰ J. Kelleher, *Upper Hutt: The History* (Upper Hutt: Cape Catley, 1991), 28.

the family lived in a 15 by 10 feet raupo whare and without other financial means to support themselves life was difficult.¹¹¹ James Brown Jr noted that “for two years my mother and the boys used to thresh the wheat and winnow it with the wind. Then my mother, like many another, would take half a bushel on her back, and carry it from Alicetown to Petone Beach, grind it, and take it home again to be made into porridge and brown bread.” He also wrote that “all the land, for many years, was done with a spade and a hoe.”¹¹²

The Browns faced considerable hardship. “Many a time when my mother put on a pot of potatoes to boil, I have gone down to the river to catch some fish”.¹¹³ The other major food sources were wood pigeon (kereru), which were plentiful in the bush, or else wild pork which supplemented the potato staple which at first had to be purchased from the neighbouring Te Atiawa.¹¹⁴ Elsewhere, James Brown Jr wrote:

The mothers used to take the children outside and roll them in a shawl or an old blanket. They would put them in the shelter of a tree while they cultivated the land. When the Browns cleared the land sufficiently to harrow it, the father made harrows of pieces of 4 by 2 timber fastened together. He drove 6 inch spikes through the timber, hooked on a rope and attached it to a sapling about

¹¹¹ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 29.

¹¹² Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 32-33.

¹¹³ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 33.

¹¹⁴ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 23.

four feet long. The parents would take hold of this sapling and draw the harrow all over the land.¹¹⁵

The Browns' experience was typical of the many settlers who lacked the luxury of personal capital. Later, Brown joined Golder in a timber milling operation transporting pit-sawn timber down the river to Wellington for sale.¹¹⁶ This expanded into a small carrying business, starting with a handcart and moving in time to bullock and horse drawn cart before adding a farm lease to his enterprise near Boulcott.¹¹⁷ He was an example of those settlers who were able to progress into small businesses and later the dream of land ownership. When the lease to the Boulcott property was invalidated he made a successful claim for land in Upper Hutt where he became one of the founding settlers.

Survival was an overriding concern for most of these settlers. James Brown was a Catholic and he hosted the first visiting priests to the valley in his Upper Hutt home.¹¹⁸ He was not party to the influences of the evangelically-based popular enlightenment. His motivation rested in a desire to better the lot of his family and himself. Life presented its challenges in the Hutt Valley environment and certain things had to be done or else face the prospect of starvation. Several commentators have noted this

¹¹⁵ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 33.

¹¹⁶ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 41.

¹¹⁸ B. Cullinane, *Mission to the Hutt River: A History of the Catholic Church in the Hutt Valley 1850-2000* (Lower Hutt: Parish of S Peter and S Paul, 2002), 20.

reality for the early settlers in commenting on just how tenuous life was for them. Those settlers who could get out did so. After eight years of the settlement of Wellington in 1840, only 85 of the original 436 migrants remained:¹¹⁹

They had been sold the dream of an idyllic new existence on the lush and bountiful banks of the Heretaunga River. After a very short time most of the would-be residents packed up again and headed for Thorndon.... Some brave and hardy souls, willing to keep a small boat tied to their back doors, remained, and small communities grew over the next 60 years. Significant growth... was hampered by the river which flooded frequently and dangerously.¹²⁰

A number of ideas have been postulated for the wholesale clearance of river and valleys like that of the Hutt. Edward Wilson points to the role of ‘biophilia’ in settler attitudes, an evolutionary preference for savannah, or park-like habitats, which emanates from a fear and aversion of the dark, uncertain and threatening woods.¹²¹ Rob Steven suggests that the notion of land as capitalist wealth was important,¹²² while Park emphasizes the role of a spiritual/religious worldview justifying human domination and exploitation of the land from Biblical texts.

The reality, however, for James Brown in the Hutt River context was that simple survival for his family remained at the forefront of his life for a considerable period of

¹¹⁹ W. Tyler, “The New Zealand Company”, 336.

¹²⁰ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 57.

¹²¹ E. Wilson, *The Future of Life* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2002), 134.

¹²² R. Steven, “Land and White Settler Colonization”, 21.

time. Brown was not driven by biophilia or the immediate prospect of gaining capitalist wealth. He could be labelled as an example of the spiritual/religious worldview justifying human domination of the land, but he was also typical of the greater number of people who had to fall back on the skills and knowledge they had brought with them and to try and progress their lot through trial and error. Their worldview was dominated by Christian responses, with strong utilitarian understandings drawn from the general cultural milieu which were to determine attitudes to the river for many decades. The Christian element was not overt, however. In Brown's reaction, Christianity is more implicit than explicit. The bush of the river valley was an impediment to planting food crops and grazing stock. It had to be cleared. Surviving evidence of the Browns' interaction with the river and its surroundings may have been dominated by a Christian outlook, but it lacked the romantic elements of admiration and the emphasis on wider advancement of society and civilization evident in other forms discussed in this chapter.

Summary

Early European settlement on the Hutt River and its margins constitutes the foundational period in the introduction and establishment of patterns of Pakeha nature spirituality. Under the broad and generic rubric of Christianity, various expressions incorporating a range of understandings and ideas fed the river spirituality of the settlers during this time.

According to Park, these Christian expressions were all overwhelmingly negative and destructive. They included the missionary's distinct view of the landscape; the

amalgamation of private enterprise and Christian ideas by the New Zealand Company; the advent of Darwinian thinking as a feature of the latter part of the century and the ongoing belief in the march of British progress and civilisation.

Three early Hutt settlers examined in this chapter provide partial confirmation of Park's description in terms of the role played by Christian religion, in the broad sense in which the term is used. William Golder clearly exhibited a Christian faith that cohered strongly with commitment to the New Zealand Company's amalgamation of Christianity, private enterprise and industrialization. He was committed to the idea of a Christian mandate for progress and civilisation.

Such expressions of nature spirituality were not, however, fully representative. Thus, William Swainson's scientific response was developed within a Christian framework in the period before natural history came to be dominated by Darwinian Theory. There were preservationist and conservationist aspects to Swainson's outlook which do not fit Park's schema. He shared an admiration and appreciation of the untouched scenic qualities of the river and its environs in this early period which did not necessarily conclude with the inevitable subjugation of the natural landscape to the call of progress. Socio-economic background, class and wealth were also major determinants in dictating specifically which Christian values were invoked by individual settlers' expressions of nature spirituality. James Brown may have been party to a utilitarian response to the valley but he had no choice in the matter.

The values driving the settlers' nature spiritualities were therefore imported and not unique or inherent to the Hutt itself. They were distinctively European and Christian in origin and they impacted settler nature values in various ways. From the beginnings of settlement, there was already considerable evidence of diversity, variety, and complexity in the Pakeha settlers' river spirituality.

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Chapter Two - Utilitarian Values

European settler interactions with the Hutt River and Valley were profoundly influenced by a Christian view of the world which encompassed various spiritual values of Christian religious conviction and the Enlightenment. The latter, with its emphasis on technology and progress, led to ‘hydraulic’ and ‘utilitarian’ approaches to waterways and dominated Pakeha response to the river until at least the 1960s. Certain Christian modes of thinking lost traction, but not the belief in progressive advancement through the application of technology. While practical interventions on the river initially stalled for want of resources and political motivation, by the beginning of the twentieth century this situation had changed and the effective management of the river begun in earnest.

Richter and Postel invoke the idea of a ‘hydraulic tradition’ to describe the more intrusive practices of river management that have existed in the past. They define this in terms of the patterns of governance reflecting the utilitarian mindset of the twentieth century “which focused on the engineering challenges of bringing rivers under control for society’s economic advancement.”¹²³ In this context, utilitarian values refer to the use and transformation of natural resources purely for human benefit and advancement, usually on the basis of an economic imperative. As a term it implies social advancement involving exploitation, control and utilization of a non-human resource. It

¹²³ Postel and Richter, *Rivers for Life*, 168.

points to a natural resource's instrumental value as something to be managed for human ends.

The utilitarian values the settlers brought with them regarded rivers as mechanical challenges needing to be brought under control, and as opportunities for accessing cheap drinking water, flushing waste and facilitating transportation. As Europeans arrived in ever growing numbers after 1840 they brought these new attitudes and technologies with them. Only some of their uses of waterways were distinctive, but the means and ends to which they applied them were shaped by cultural priorities derived from Europe. This chapter examines the nature spiritualities evident in the century from the 1860s when individual settlers made their first attempts at mitigating flood risk to their properties.

A Malevolent Threat

The initial Wakefield settlers who set up Britannia on the banks of the Hutt River quickly discovered how unpredictable the river could be. Colonel William Wakefield, the Company's representative on site, understood that the river was prone to flooding but believed it could be controlled and confined. On 2 March 1840 the river rose and flooded the colonists' huts so that the Cornish settlers had to relocate on higher ground, appropriately called "Cornish Row". A few weeks later their raupo huts were all razed

by an uncontrollable fire worsening their already precarious financial plight.¹²⁴ The arrival of more settlers in March served to highlight the exposed location of Britannia and after some significant agitation from the settlers, Wakefield agreed to transfer the settlement to Thorndon.¹²⁵ With all hope of establishing the township in the Hutt Valley now gone, the task of settlement was left to those settlers who were trying to make some headway clearing bush for farms and those people employed in running associated services. From analysis of the first available jury list, Susan Butterworth notes that by 1844 just 11 labourers, 2 farmers, 6 sawyers, 1 shingle splitter, 1 shoemaker, 1 baker, 5 carpenters, 1 agriculturalist, 1 carter and 2 storekeepers still resided in the Petone and Hutt areas.¹²⁶

The river flooded again in 1849 and in 1852. In the winter of 1855 a flood carried off 300 sheep but in January 1858 the largest flood the settlers had yet encountered brought devastation to the valley.¹²⁷ A report in the *New Zealand Spectator* outlined the damage to livestock and properties and then stated: “we are concerned to add that news has this morning been brought of lamentable loss of life, the bodies of seven persons have been recovered, several other persons are reported to be missing. The unfortunate sufferers are, it is said, mostly new comers who have settled in the district”.¹²⁸ In fact nine people had drowned, including a new born baby and three other children. The article went on to say that “to witness the havoc and destruction which the flood had caused is most

¹²⁴ Butterworth, *Petone*, 38.

¹²⁵ Easter, *Hutt River*, 25.

¹²⁶ Butterworth, *Petone*, 66-67.

¹²⁷ Easter, *Hutt River*, 31.

¹²⁸ The New Zealand Spectator, January, 1858.

painful and baffles all description.” A later public meeting called to address the ensuing problems passed a resolution “to open a separate subscription list for the purpose of relieving serious cases of private distress among the sufferers by the recent inundation.”¹²⁹

Later floods on the river reveal a worsening situation as more and more of the valley’s bush was cleared for farms and water run-off accelerated, proving particularly problematic to the bridges built over the river. Floods later in 1858 and then 1859, 1868 and 1871 all caused significant damage, especially to bridges. The 1871 event destroyed groynes and protective works, and caused the permanent abandonment of the Aglionby Arms hotel on the banks of the river in Lower Hutt.

In 1878 two floods filled the entire valley. More damage occurred in flood events in 1880 (with one child drowned), 1887, 1893, 1895 and 1896. A series of inundations in 1898 proved to be the last straw for local residents and resulted in action by central government.¹³⁰ The details of this governmental action will be outlined later in this chapter, but it had taken years of massive damage to farms, land, fences, roads plus considerable loss of stock to get to that point.

The Hutt River dominated settler lives for some sixty years from the time of their first arrival on the Petone foreshore. David McGill has observed that the river “ruled and

¹²⁹ Easter, *Hutt River*, 34.

¹³⁰ Butterworth, *Petone*, 31.

ravaged Hutt lives last century.”¹³¹ It is the uncertainty the river presented which not only ensured the founding township was moved to Thorndon but also restricted ongoing settlement in the Hutt Valley itself. Many properties lay vacant and undeveloped by absentee landlords.¹³² In 1891 Lower Hutt was still a small borough of some 1300 people struggling to build infrastructure and to maintain the most basic of services on £667 rating revenue for that year.¹³³ Flooding and drainage constituted a major difficulty in people’s lives, compounded by the low rating base. Petone had fared better with its population growing to 20,000 by 1886. Cheap land, a ready source of fresh water and rail linkages had resulted in heavy industry moving into the area.¹³⁴ However, the two boroughs were locked in ongoing competition with each other, and there was little inclination to cooperate in developing a comprehensive response to the river.¹³⁵

The inhabitants of the valley had arrived with a strong utilitarian view of rivers developed over decades in Europe where rivers had been developed and managed to serve the needs of humanity whether for transport, industry or agriculture. The Hutt was viewed and treated exactly in this way. By the late 1880s the Gear Meat Works, Railway Workshops, Woollen Mills, a jam factory, brewery, violin string factory and rope and basket industries in Petone were all taking advantage of the abundant fresh

¹³¹ McGill, *Lower Hutt*, 117.

¹³² Easter, *Hutt River*, 19.

¹³³ McGill, *Lower Hutt*, 121.

¹³⁴ Easter, *Hutt River*, 35.

¹³⁵ Easter, *Hutt River*, 39-40.

water resources from the Hutt system.¹³⁶ Plans were under way to build a harbour at the Hutt Mouth but dredging proved to be an ongoing problem.

Utilitarian and hydraulic approaches were evident in various efforts to control the river. In 1853 a stop bank was first mooted but the idea was abandoned in favour of whatever groynes or control works individual landowners could afford. The end result was landowners pushing the full force of the river current onto some other unsuspecting person's property. A river board was established on 12 January 1879 after two major floods the previous year. John Easter notes that the board was largely ineffectual "due to the 1880s depression and trying to raise rating revenue from absentee landlords.... A mix of poverty, lack of political power and settler individualism led to an apathy for public affairs." In 1883 the board was put into abeyance.¹³⁷ Some river control work was achieved with the closure of old river channels and protection of assets like schools but the effect was limited and undermined by a lack of overall strategy between Petone and Lower Hutt Borough Councils. The lack of cooperation between the two communities was highlighted by a flood in February 1896 resulting in Alicetown residents trying to break down a Petone stopbank because of its dire impact in pushing flood waters onto their own properties.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Butterworth, *Petone*, 107, 109.

¹³⁷ Easter, *Hutt River*, 39.

¹³⁸ Easter, *Hutt River*, 40.

The river loomed large in the consciousness of inhabitants of the Hutt Valley as a malevolent and menacing threat.¹³⁹ As inheritors of a utilitarian water tradition this was particularly galling. The Industrial Revolution spearheaded by Great Britain had been largely possible through the ability of capitalist entrepreneurs to control and manage water resources to enhance production and provide cheap transport especially of coal, cotton goods, bricks, stone and manufactured goods.¹⁴⁰ Rivers were the basis upon which the extensive inland navigation system of Great Britain was built. Effective management of waterways had become a primary foundation of the Industrial Revolution, with an enormous impact on business organization, the building of towns, employment and the construction of industries. According to Eric de Mare, canal construction started in earnest in about 1760 and “within about 80 years roughly 3000 miles of canal were dug, authorized by some 300 acts of parliament. This was the great Canal Era which made the Industrial Revolution possible.”¹⁴¹ The country was laced with a sophisticated canal network, and industry relied on readily available and controlled sources of water for cleaning and other uses.

Pakeha interaction with the Hutt River indicates nature values focused around this technological advancement and management of waterways for economic purposes. In this context, the Hutt was often viewed as a negative force, a threat to livelihood and a

¹³⁹ Easter, *Hutt River*, 35.

¹⁴⁰ C. Hadfield, *The Canal Age* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1968), 140-142.

¹⁴¹ E. de Mare, *The Canals of England* (Guernsey: Alan Sutton, 1987), 13.

frustration to progress; its unruly presence providing a constant critique of settlers' faith in their ability to master natural forces for human ends and advancement.

Bringing the River under Control

The intermittent and largely unsuccessful attempts to control and tame the Hutt River that characterized the years prior to the 1890s replicated a pattern apparent in other parts of New Zealand to that point.¹⁴² The first attempts were carried out by individuals with meagre resources. This had been followed by an era of river boards which enabled better planning and progress to be made but Acheson notes this “left much to be desired in regard to areas of control and weaknesses in technical and financial resources... divided control and differing policies did not usually encourage comprehensive planning in river valleys.”¹⁴³

In the Hutt Valley the flooding issue reached a critical juncture at the end of the nineteenth century. On 14 February 1899, a river board was formed at the conclusion of a decade of phenomenal flooding, culminating with two disastrous floods in 1898. These two floods, the first in June and then a worse one in November, wrought devastation in the valley and brought an outcry of exasperation and frustration from Lower Hutt residents. Robert Stevens of Bloomfield Road in Lower Hutt wrote to the editor of *The Evening Post* on 8 February 1899: “We are a long suffering lot in the Hutt

¹⁴² R. Acheson, *River Control and Drainage in New Zealand* (Wellington: Ministry of Works, 1968), 171.

¹⁴³ Acheson, *River Control*, 171.

Valley, but when the place is being rapidly transformed into an inhospitable waste and we have to wade waist deep twice a week on the highway in getting to the morning train, and perhaps curse loud and deep; the cause of all this is nothing but the ineptitude, the venality, and the base methods of those in high places.”¹⁴⁴

Steven’s reference to those “in high places” was aimed at the Premier, Richard Seddon. Locals felt that Seddon was somewhat disinclined to assist the afflicted residents of Lower Hutt because a principal land owner on the river was one of his political archrivals, E.J. Riddiford. Eventually, however, Seddon caved in to the pressure and publicity and on 16 March 1899 elections to the new river board took place in the Borough Council Chambers in Lower Hutt. Dilmott Sladden was elected chairman and Gilbert Laing-Meason was employed as the Board’s engineer. Laing-Meason remained as engineer until his death in 1924 and his career represents a turning point in controlling the river. His obituary in the *Evening Post* opined that the district “owes its salvation from flood entirely to his engineering ability,”¹⁴⁵ and a monument to him was eventually unveiled beside the Ewen Bridge. The Hutt River had begun to lose its menace.

Much of Laing-Meason’s work was undertaken on a trial and error basis, but it gradually began to bring the lower river under control. Treadwell’s history of the Hutt River notes that floods still did considerable damage, but the construction of shingle

¹⁴⁴ McGill, *Lower Hutt*, 117.

¹⁴⁵ McGill, *Lower Hutt*, 124.

stop banks and the strategic planting of poplars and willows began to stabilize and restrict flows.¹⁴⁶ Petone Borough determined to remain outside of the new river board and to construct its own flood protection, but by 1910 Lower Hutt, Normandale and Taita areas were protected, along with parts of Belmont. So too was Epuni by 1915.¹⁴⁷ Overflow channels at Boulcott and Taita were closed and, through the development of a river gravel extraction industry and removal of riverbed debris, the river alignment was trained and the river deepened to increase its ability to scour and redeposit bed material by 300 to 500 percent.¹⁴⁸

The impact on Lower Hutt was dramatic. With the valley now more secure from flooding, land values rocketed and the population grew rapidly.¹⁴⁹ After Laing-Mason's death, the work of the River Board's engineering operations passed to Hubert Sladden, the son of the first chairman, who was able to build with confidence upon the work of his predecessor.¹⁵⁰ Sladden had a number of factors working in his favour. He benefited significantly from the lessons learnt on flood control during Laing-Mason's tenure and was able to develop excellent relationships with the board. The engineering of the river was undertaken from a stable financial base, aided by income from the businesses extracting shingle from the river. Sladden adopted a long-term strategy to ease the river

¹⁴⁶ Treadwell, *Hutt River*, 37.

¹⁴⁷ Easter, *Hutt River*, 53.

¹⁴⁸ Easter, *Hutt River*, 54.

¹⁴⁹ Easter, *Hutt River*, 85.

¹⁵⁰ Easter, *Hutt River*, 55.

into a defined central channel alignment. His methodologies worked well and new subdivisions emerged.¹⁵¹

Sladden's approach was a straightforward continuation of utilitarian and hydraulic thinking and methodology. The Hutt was to be adapted and used for human purposes of development and progress and its capacity to cause destruction and damage was to be mitigated and reduced. Central to this philosophy was the practice of shingle extraction. A number of shingle companies were granted licenses to work on the river for roading and other purposes. The effect was to significantly deepen the river channel which in turn increased the river's ability to carry higher flood volumes without over spilling the banks.¹⁵²

The immediate impact of all this on the river itself, however, was devastating. For months on end the lower reaches would be made unusable for swimming, angling and other activities by the pollution of the waterway from silt and sedimentation created by the gravel extraction activity. In effect, the lower river had been turned into a large drain, effective in channelling flood waters into Wellington Harbour, but also highly detrimental to healthy freshwater aquatic life which was smothered by the fine silt generated by the gravel plants.

¹⁵¹ Easter, *Hutt River*, 85.

¹⁵² Easter, *Hutt River*, 85, 87.

Sladden utilised other control methodologies at his disposal including timber boom groynes, weirs and low embankments, concrete block walls, diversions, willow plantations and the removal of large pieces of debris from the channel itself.¹⁵³ The net effect was to stop flows in old flood channels, re-direct flows and to stabilize alignments. From the mid-1920s it is clear from flood reports that these measures combined with the use of stop banks were very effective in controlling floods.¹⁵⁴ Between 1924 and 1951 when Sladden ceased as the Board's engineer there were a total of 43 significant floods on the river; the only years in which no flooding occurred were in 1927, 1933, 1934, 1945, and 1950. Four floods occurred in 1947 and three each in 1924, 1926, 1931, and 1941. In total there were only eight years in this period when there was only one flood.¹⁵⁵ Flooding damage had been significantly minimized and perceptions of the river as a sinister and malevolent threat receded.

Some problems continued in the gorge area between Silverstream and Taita, where there was localized flooding and slips, but it was a flood in 1939 which proved most problematic. On the 11 December "the greatest flood within living memory swept the Hutt valley, covering hundreds of acres, isolating houses, flooding and making roads impassable, destroying and damaging bridges and drowning large numbers of stock... At the peak of the flood the Hutt River rose 14 feet above normal at the Lower Hutt Bridge to discharge 70,000 cusecs." Cowie's history of flooding in New Zealand notes

¹⁵³ Easter, *Hutt River*, 87-89.

¹⁵⁴ Easter, *Hutt River*, 85.

¹⁵⁵ C. Cowie, *Floods in New Zealand 1920-1953* (Wellington: The Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council, 1957), 133-139.

that the 1915 flood of only 46,000 cusecs had caused more damage. Shingle extraction had lowered the river bed by eight feet and this combined with dredging of the estuary and work on the channel alignment had made a significant difference.¹⁵⁶

An overriding utilitarian motivation dominated Pakeha nature values during this period on the Hutt River. Eileen Duggan's poem written in 1959 was commissioned as an introduction to Treadwell's history of the Hutt River and mirrors the economic and utilitarian values which had dominated both Treadwell's book and the river values of Pakeha in the valley. Her verse initially portrays the Hutt in its pre-European period as an untamed natural phenomenon forming a boundary line between two Maori tribal areas:

Do you recall how as the Heretaunga,
Demarking Ngaitara from Rangitane
Simple as peace or joy you flowed all Maori?

The river is impacted in its course only by the effects of a natural event in the form of the 1855 earthquake and its impact on the large aquifer that extends from above Melling out into Wellington Harbour. The river is therefore portrayed as its own master and the determiner of its own destiny. It is a "restive stream" which writes its own story "by flowing":

Have you forgot, how, sudden in an anger
Earth jerked its head, let fall a heavy eyelid,
And half your stream, still innocently smiling,
Struck blind, lurched through the shale and vanished?
It fell, men say, near what we now call Melling.

¹⁵⁶ Cowie, *Floods in New Zealand*, 136-137.

It is in the second half of the poem Duggan introduces a change in the character of the river. It describes the effects and impact of the economic and utilitarian values of the previous sixty years. Now the Hutt is subservient to human management and control:

Quintilian was wrong. I do remember
At every bend, I cry to my lost waters,
Hoping entombed, they may, like miners
Or, in eternal cooe, prove they live.
Take heart. Nothing of ours commits surrender.
The power that crib-bites banks and scours your selvedge
Remains in them, sheered up, "neath land and ocean,"
August in wrath, they storm beyond Somes Island:
But where our shafts pit earth and find the exiles,
Purged of all pride, they slake the whole Hutt Valley.
A rage for freedom found its peace in service.¹⁵⁷

Duggan's portrayal heralds the specific impact of European activity. It depicts the imprisonment and management of the river as a natural resource for human purposes and particularly its utilisation for supplying fresh water.¹⁵⁸ Where the river is still able to assert its power only takes place once the aquifer releases the water into the sea waters in the middle of Wellington Harbour. Her poem typifies and even trumpets the triumph of economic and utilitarian priorities which had been exerted since the turn of the century in ensuring the Hutt River was brought under control and no longer represented a threat to human habitation.

The utilitarian motivation was also clearly enunciated by W.L. Newnham, the chairman of The Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council. In the introduction to Cowie's

¹⁵⁷ Eileen Duggan, "The Lost River," in Treadwell, *Hutt River*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ On Jackson Street in Petone residents have queued for many years to fill containers with the water which is tapped from the aquifer and is renowned for its qualities of purity.

book he states that the priority is to “confine” rivers to their “pre-determined course” and that “it can therefore be readily seen that any remedial measures... will be to the [country’s] financial advantage, and will as well assist in the preservation of fertile lands and forests which are the country’s wealth.”¹⁵⁹ This was confirmed in 1941 with the introduction of a critical piece of national legislation.

The Introduction of “Stewardship”

In 1941 the wartime Labour Government under Peter Fraser passed the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act. The support of opposition MPs for the legislation was indicative of the widespread concern which had been growing for some years over the effects of erosion within the country as a result of extensive farming and over utilization of land. The legislation provided for the establishment of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council responsible to the Minister of Works for the establishment of catchment districts to plan and carry out works under the Council’s general supervision.¹⁶⁰ The principal functions of catchment boards included the control and regulation of watercourses, prevention or lessening of flood damage and the prevention or lessening of soil erosion.¹⁶¹

The Act was both indicative and symptomatic of the prevailing values and attitudes towards rivers and their catchments at the time. For any particular scheme to be

¹⁵⁹ Cowie, *Floods in New Zealand*, 7.

¹⁶⁰ Acheson, *River Control*, 19.

¹⁶¹ Acheson, *River Control*, 23.

considered for development under the Act, the prime consideration was the economic viability and benefit to be gained. R.R. Acheson, who was previously the chief Soil Conservation, River Control and Irrigation Engineer for the Ministry of Works and chief engineer for the Council, stated that benefits had to be assessed in relation to reduction of flood losses, increases in agricultural, industrial and horticultural production, improvements to property values and urban areas and indirect benefits, such as freedom from fear of flooding, security of access and protection of public utilities.¹⁶²

There appeared to be little scope or allowance for the claims of benefits other than these economic ones. As Acheson indirectly noted: “The effects [of drainage of wetlands] on native and introduced water birds is already apparent in many areas and it is claimed that the ecological balance has been upset to the extent that there is a danger of some native species becoming extinct... while the Council has been sympathetic... the duties of the Council... make it impracticable to meet the wishes of wild life or acclimatization societies.”¹⁶³ Elsewhere, with reference to public access to stop banks in urban areas, Acheson decrees it as “desirable” but “not essential”.¹⁶⁴ In light of this prevailing priority given to utilitarian and economic concerns, it is no surprise that Easter commented that the margins of the Hutt River represented something of a

¹⁶² Acheson, *River Control*, 140.

¹⁶³ Acheson, *River Control*, 170.

¹⁶⁴ Acheson, *River Control*, 132.

wasteland which was used as a dumping ground and gathering place for people involved in more nefarious and undesirable activities.¹⁶⁵

For many years soil erosion had been a serious concern to government. The chair of the Council, E.R. McKillop, summed up the outlook: “Some 92% of our overseas earnings now comes from the land... It is certainly not too much to say that the whole prosperity of the country depends on the proper use and protection of our soils”.¹⁶⁶ Cowie echoed the same thinking in 1957: “Closer settlement and higher development in recent years have tended to increase the monetary value of these losses [from flooding]... It can therefore be readily seen that any remedial measures... will be to the [country’s] advantage, and will as well assist in the preservation of fertile lands and forests which are the country’s wealth.”¹⁶⁷

The Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act was an important watershed because of the introduction of notions of stewardship and conservation. The responsibility for protecting and looking after the soil because of erosion became a paramount concern coupled with the ongoing need for flood protection. The drivers may have been primarily economic, but the Act was nonetheless significant in that principles of conservation were now accepted and formalized in official policy. On the Hutt River it provided added impetus in the construction of new flood defences northwards to Taita

¹⁶⁵ Easter, *Hutt River*, 140.

¹⁶⁶ Acheson, *River Control*, ix.

¹⁶⁷ Cowie, *Floods in New Zealand*, 7.

Gorge to protect new housing areas developed by government in the northern areas of Lower Hutt and in the strengthening of existing stop banks.¹⁶⁸

Conservation and stewardship may have been limited concepts compared with later understandings, given the overriding emphasis on utilitarian concerns in public policy and the modern state apparatus in general. Nevertheless, formalisation of these ideals in the Act signalled the growth of a different set of questions concerning human interaction with the land and its waterways. These questions derived from a different spiritual perspective, and were evident in a range of individuals and institutions.

Though not based in the Hutt, Herbert Guthrie-Smith's observations in his classic book *Tutira* are of particular significance in this regard. For a lifetime Guthrie-Smith had closely documented the ongoing impact of European settlement on the landscape and bodies of water that made up Tutira sheep station in the northern Hawkes Bay. In exhaustive detail, he depicted the geology and soils of the station, the effects of erosion, slips and earthquakes and the life of the resident iwi, Ngati Tatara. With the arrival of Europeans came the inevitable burning off of fern to make way for sheep grazing and Guthrie-Smith not only describes the vagaries of trial and error farming but also the introduction of plant species and changes in both flora and fauna.

¹⁶⁸ Wellington Regional Council *Living With the River*, 11, 17.

Tutira was published in three editions. The first sought little more than to be descriptive of the changes to the landscape and waterways, but by the time of the third edition in 1940, there exists a distinct change in outlook and awareness in Guthrie-Smith's preface and the later chapters which were added to the book. Prior to this Guthrie-Smith had dispassionately observed the effects of erosion. He noted that the ultimate impact was that Lake Tutira would be lost as a result of the "deposition of mud and silt by an extremely rapid process."¹⁶⁹

Guthrie-Smith also observed that there had been "no cessation in the process of denudation and erosion."¹⁷⁰ He then wondered: "Could I, after all, have misunderstood the counsel of my Scottish forbears... [to] 'Destroy your fern! Clear off your woods'. Now with a ripper knowledge of the law, now when resuscitation and rehabilitation are alike impossible, I begin to imagine of myself if I have misconstrued... and read into their measured tones: 'Oh be content to leave alone. Admire, conserve, let well alone.' Have I then for sixty years desecrated God's earth and dubbed it improvement?" Guthrie-Smith left it to the reader to decide whether he should be regarded as the metaphorical bridegroom coming forth from his chamber as the victor over the land or a sackcloth berobed penitent who needed to stand in ashes as a result of the development and changes he had introduced to Tutira Station. He spoke of "my contribution towards more quickly melting New Zealand through erosion into the

¹⁶⁹ H. Guthrie Smith, *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station* (Wellington: AH & AW Reed, 1969), 17, 20, 36.

¹⁷⁰ Guthrie-Smith, *Tutira*, xi.

Pacific – a question of ethics this, of simple right or wrong, one increasingly clamatory in years.”¹⁷¹

Guthrie-Smith is significant in pointing to the emergence of another stewardship/conservation appreciation. His experience on Tutira led him to wonder whether “the lamentable laissez faire in regard to misuse of the land and water is passing away. For the first time in the history of the globe we are about to cease to maltreat this kindly old world of ours. The future of mankind is to make of his life home an earthly paradise, cleansing its waterways, staunching its wounds and waste, conserving its fertility, renewing its forests”.¹⁷² He was articulating an outlook centred around a stewardship spirituality that both included but also went further than the economic priority being given by government. It gave him cause to ponder that “it may well be that we are on the brink of an astounding new era of spiritual and aesthetic growth, a period when the heart shall count as the head.”¹⁷³

There is also evidence from this time of a growing concern to respond to problems of environmental degradation, applying themes of stewardship, care and nurture of the land, but from an explicitly Christian perspective. In 1943 Brian Low, a Methodist and agricultural economist, wrote a booklet on *Land and People* for the National Council of Churches in New Zealand’s Campaign for Christian Order. In this he too noted

¹⁷¹ Guthrie-Smith, *Tutira*, xiii.

¹⁷² Guthrie-Smith, *Tutira*, 422.

¹⁷³ Guthrie-Smith, *Tutira*, 422.

problems with the loss of topsoil from the hill country regions of New Zealand and similar problems from ploughing on easier sloping land. He also criticized the abusive “mining” of level land which was depleting the fertility of the soil.¹⁷⁴ Low pointed out that “human beings need a satisfying spiritual relationship to the land. We must work on it for more than economic reasons” and “the needs of the land itself in its own right must be jealously watched. The preservation of its fertility must come before output and profits.”¹⁷⁵ In describing a “divorce from the soil” and the “Disorder” which resulted, Low argued that the world is God’s creation and that the Christian view was one in which the world’s resources are for human use rather than monetary enrichment. The benefits were meant for all people and future generations because the function of the material world was of both a physical and a spiritual nature.¹⁷⁶

On the Hutt River there were some specific examples of the development of spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of stewardship and conservation which Guthrie Smith and Low refer to. In 1924 efforts were made to raise public funding for the purchase of Bartons Bush as the sole remaining stand of native bush on the valley floor.¹⁷⁷ The owners had contemplated clearing the land and the bush area was included. The potential loss of the unique stand prompted an immediate public response of concern but it would be many years before there would be sufficient support for the change in

¹⁷⁴ B. Low *Land and People: In Christian Order* (Wellington: AH & AW Reed, 1943), 16-17.

¹⁷⁵ Low, *Land and People*, 23.

¹⁷⁶ Low, *Land and People*, 3.

¹⁷⁷ More details on Bartons Bush are outlined in Chapter 3.

public ownership to be approved and financed. In fact negotiations continued until 1950 when the land and bush passed into public ownership and were secure from threat.

On the other side of the river further south towards Silverstream, the western hills area which had originally been divided into 100 acre lots by The New Zealand Company had been milled of its native timber between 1890 and 1920. Now in an uneconomic state and unable to sustain stock, two blocks of land were donated in 1907 and 1917 to form the Silverstream Scenic Reserve. In 1923 the George family donated another adjoining block to the Wellington City Council in memory of their son who had been killed in World War One as a gift to future generations. Here there was evidence in the Hutt setting of the realisation of the inappropriate use of steep hillsides for economic return and attempts to mitigate that land use for other non utilitarian purposes. Today the Keith George Memorial park consists of 113 hectares of attractive regenerating native bush and bears testament both to the foresight and concern of the original owners but also to the growing awareness for the need for preservation and restoration of the natural environment.¹⁷⁸

Both examples highlight two critical areas of growing concern. The first focussed on the scenery preservation movement and the need to conserve areas of native bush which were rapidly disappearing for the benefit of future generations. In New Zealand this received initial impetus from the Liberal Government of the 1890's. The second

¹⁷⁸ This information is available from the Upper Hutt City Council information site at the entrance to the Keith George Memorial Park.

concerned the increasing anxiety over the inappropriate overuse of the land which had resulted in the Soil Conservation and River Controls Act.

Summary

The values dominating Pakeha understanding and relationship with the river during this period were utilitarian with a strong and dominant economic qualification about them. The need to manage and control the river was a paramount concern as well as ensuring the resources were made available for this to take place.

Three forms of expression characterize this era of control and management. The first was one of frustration due to limited resources in which the river was experienced primarily as a malevolent threat. The second featured the rapid control of the river and the achievement of economic objectives but with accompanying negative impacts on the river environment and ecosystem. The third introduced stewardship and conservation elements as a result of the recognition of the damage being done to the environment. Often, this final expression still had economic priorities at its centre but there was also evidence around the river of attempts to preserve and restore the natural ecological order in light of uneconomic land use.

The overriding emphasis given to the river's management and control is evidence of the waxing and waning of nature spiritualities. Utilitarian values proved to be tenacious as well as flexible and adaptive. They were a continuation of the progress and advancement values evidenced as one of the spiritual responses amongst the first

settlers. Other major spiritual expressions in the form of Christian values rapidly lost ground so that utilitarian values were left in a dominant state, although Lows study does indicate a Christian voice being exercised on environmental issues.

In light of current outlooks and attitudes towards the river, the expressions of river spirituality of this utilitarian period seem somewhat negative. The priority placed on economic gains justified significant invasive practices in controlling the river, which had severe detrimental effects on the Hutt's ecology and environment. On the other hand, control of the river had immediate significance for the people of the Hutt Valley in that it heralded security from personal and property flood risk. It enabled the valley's residents to get on with their lives in terms of values and outlooks important to them.

There are however other voices of a quite different kind still to be considered.

Chapter Three - Aesthetic Values

In the period prior to the middle of the twentieth century a range of spiritual outlooks were evident in Pakeha interactions with the Hutt River. To date, this thesis has emphasized the significance of certain Christian and utilitarian values, especially as they contributed to river control and management practices. The control technologies employed were often invasive. These led to increasing ecological damage as the twentieth century unfolded. While utilitarian emphases may have been characteristic of this period, they were never uniform. Indeed, as Chapter Two suggested, twentieth century notions of stewardship and conservation were partly the offspring of utilitarian values.

This chapter further challenges any temptation to interpret river spirituality in uniform terms. It examines what may be termed “aesthetic” responses to the Hutt River. Aesthetic responses refer to values that focus on appreciation of the beauty, attractiveness and spiritually-sustaining power of the natural environment. The chapter argues that these aesthetic values sat alongside Christian and utilitarian values in the Hutt, evolving in their own distinctive way and with their own unique expressions. They also point to a strong geographical differentiation: aesthetic responses featured more evidently in the upper areas of the river, whereas utilitarian values were more strongly expressed in the lower reaches. Aesthetic spiritualities were therefore indicative of the variegated character of Pakeha nature spirituality in the Hutt. They also are significant in both explaining and contributing to the rise of new environmental values in the latter part of the twentieth century. The existence of aesthetic values since

the beginnings of Pakeha settlement and their capacity to change and influence warrant careful consideration alongside other values.

Initially, aesthetic responses emphasized the untouched character of the river and its valley, but they continued in the context of later highly modified environments. In the nineteenth century, romanticized responses were common and this tradition had considerable longevity. As Claudia Bell has noted, the romantic tradition has continued in two distinct forms: “In New Zealand there are two versions of romanticised landscape. Landscape is either beautiful but potentially dangerous... or it is beautiful and beautifully cultivated a tribute to both nature itself and to the efforts of human labour.”¹⁷⁹ This has changed even further in more recent years so that a more distinctive Kiwi aesthetic response has emerged, signalling a move away from imported aesthetic values.

The Hutt as an Untouched Wilderness

William Golder’s poetry was discussed in Chapter One as an example of diversity in Christian outlook, but it was also indicative more generally of early aesthetic appreciation of the river which was heavily influenced by a range of romantic responses. Golder’s marriage of the transcendent with romanticism was only one response to the untouched grandeur and majestic wilderness of the Hutt. There were a number of distinctive romantic features in these early aesthetic responses.

¹⁷⁹ C. Bell, *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday Myths of Pakeha Identity* (Auckland: Penguin, 1996), 29.

Firstly, natural beauty and appreciation was often related in European types and norms. The German Ernst Dieffenbach, the New Zealand Company's naturalist, explored the Hutt River and upper reaches in late winter in 1840 and commented on the "remarkable" size of kahikatea and the rimu which he considered to be one of the most beautiful trees imaginable and compared to the English weeping willow. Similarly, he admired the totara which he equated to the English oak.¹⁸⁰ Dr Evans, a founding member of the New Zealand Company noted earlier in this thesis, used well known scenes and landscapes from Great Britain to depict his romanticized view of the Hutt in July 1840: "Imagine the basin of the River Lea overgrown with colossal timber... To describe to you the beauty of the forest would be to write what you would consider an exercise of imagination... the facsimile of the most beautiful lake in Cumberland, with mountains beyond to the distance of forty miles, all distinctly visible in their sharpest outline, and all covered with this rich velvet mantle of foliage."¹⁸¹ Earlier in 1839, George Duppa travelled up the river and observed it "seemed to him as broad as the Thames at Richmond, an enchanting serpentine river overshadowed by trees of every colour."¹⁸²

James Brown Jnr however described the forest enveloping Upper Hutt in 1846 at the time in which his father had moved into the upper reaches of the river as its founding settler: "The forest was dense. Thousands of totara trees, 7 feet across, 100 feet without

¹⁸⁰ Ernst Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand* (London: J. Murray, 1843), 75.

¹⁸¹ McGill, *Lower Hutt: The First Garden City*, 11.

¹⁸² McGill, *Lower Hutt: The First Garden City*, 10.

a branch. Rimu and white pine as big as the totara. Rata too, with tops covering half an acre of space.”¹⁸³ There are no references to European tropes with Brown, reiterating the lack of romantic appreciation amongst the poorer settlers.

Secondly, romantic concepts were partly used for propaganda purposes. Heaphy had painted an “aerial” view of Wellington Harbour with the Hutt Valley as the focus of the painting in what McGill describes as a “Shangri-La version of endless wide and flat green acres in the Hutt Valley, an image which was used as the Company’s principal piece of propaganda to attract emigrants.”¹⁸⁴

Thirdly, romantic concepts were even evident in military evaluations of the untouched wilderness of the valley. Godfrey Munday, a British Army officer, viewed the Hutt Valley through the different lenses of the military tactician. He observed of the Hutt Valley in 1846 that “it is certainly worth fighting for. Richly alluvial... the vale itself seems perfectly flat, the soil very rich, the timber magnificent.”¹⁸⁵ A military evaluation in light of growing Maori tensions clearly appreciated the ‘natural wonder’ which was the Hutt Valley.

Fourthly, the irony of these romantically influenced appreciations of an untouched wilderness is that those expressing them also accepted that it would be soon all be gone.

¹⁸³ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 43.

¹⁸⁴ McGill, *Lower Hutt: The First Garden City*, 6-7.

¹⁸⁵ Park, *Nga Uruora*, 77.

William Swainson, one of the few who did not accept the total destruction of the valley ecosystem, produced sketches which included the primeval splendour of the Hutt River near Petone with a Maori canoe making its way upstream. In another etching of the tall bush of the valley, Swainson depicted the first Hutt Road as it was being created. It has already been noted that Swainson wrote on 28 July 1847 that “the new Hutt Road, independent of its utility, has opened to the artist an entire new field of the most magnificent forest scenery I ever beheld.” Again on 6 September he commented that the road had opened up so many opportunities for sketching “that I am loathe to go anywhere else in search of the picturesque this year.”¹⁸⁶ In that same year, another artist, Samuel Brees produced a landscape lithograph of Upper Hutt as the first settlers encountered it; a magnificent and seemingly impenetrable landscape of dense bush, large trees and encompassed by the surrounding Tararua and Rimutaka Ranges. Most settlers and visitors, however, had little other expectation than that the Hutt Valley would be cleared for settlement and development.

Appreciation of the Hutt as Modified Landscape

Aesthetic appreciation of the Hutt with its strongly romanticized elements continued beyond the initial period when the untouched bush which dominated the environment was replaced by pasture lands and other modified rural environments more obviously shaped along European lines. Philip Temple, in *Lake, Mountain, Tree*, observed the development in aesthetic appreciation within New Zealand to include highly modified

¹⁸⁶ Swainson, *William Swainson: Naturalist and Artist*, 132, 133.

environments as time unfolded. He wrote: “In moving from simply viewing and experiencing the landscape through the perspectives of European aesthetics and intellectual ideals, the increasing number of immigrants prosecuted a transformation of the landscape that would attempt to remake New Zealand in their own, largely English image.”¹⁸⁷ Tony Ballantyne and Judith Bennett refer to the “Pakeha desire to improve the land and to transform it to meet both European economic needs and aesthetic sensibilities.”¹⁸⁸

In the upper valley this took a range of forms. A topographical painting of the upper valley now held by St Patrick’s College entitled “Silverstream” was completed by Charles Aubrey in 1890. Painted from a high vantage point above Silverstream and looking northwards, it depicts a wide open valley fenced into paddocks with grazing stock much of which made up the Barton estate and farm. The Wellington to Wairarapa railway line runs down the valley and a picturesque steam train and carriages is making its way south. In the far distance is the outline of Barton’s Bush and the main road which bisects the valley and bridges the Whirinaki Stream which in turn meanders its way to the Hutt River in the distance. It is a strongly rural scene along the lines of classic English countryside.

¹⁸⁷ Temple, *Lake, Mountain, Tree*, 77.

¹⁸⁸ T. Ballantyne and J. Bennett *Landscape/Community: Perspectives from New Zealand History* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2005), 12.

Barton's Bush was a distinctive example of the attempts made to transform New Zealand landscape into a British form. Richard Barton had originally been the superintendent of the estates of the Duke of Sutherland of Trentham in Staffordshire. Kelleher notes that the Duke had made Barton a shareholder in the New Zealand Company so that he could lead a group of emigrants from the estate to resettle in New Zealand as a means of relieving economic pressure and overcrowding on the Duke's estate.¹⁸⁹ He purchased 100 acres of land in Upper Hutt which he then developed along the same lines as an English country estate with a large manor house, considerable areas under crops and pasturage and the large preserved wooded area. Originally the manor house comprised six rooms built to withstand Maori attack but over the years it was added on to so that when it was destroyed by fire and had to be demolished in 1939 it comprised some 22 rooms and no less than six staircases.

Today, this area of tall native trees in Trentham Park forms the only remaining lowland remnant of native bush which once blanketed the valley. Ironically, it was not saved by Barton from the axe or fire as a monument to the grandeur of New Zealand flora but rather as a replicated reminder of the forested areas common to large English estates and popular amongst genteel country society. Kelleher wrote that Trentham was "the Hutt Valley's corner of England. It was an identity transplant; the case of a settler who

¹⁸⁹ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 21.

took his English place name and memories of a great park with him, and saw them re-established in a colonial setting.”¹⁹⁰

Others were also attracted to the modified rural outlook and ‘English countryside’ of the upper river. Nelle Scanlan’s novel from 1934, *Winds of Heaven*, drew heavily upon the actual events of the period and the Hutt River context around Silverstream and Heretaunga in depicting the lives, relationships and events impacting a wealthy family from Upper Hutt and the Wairarapa in the early 1930s. It includes a description of a “tall, sunburnt man who came out and looked at the sky [with] his eyes wandering up the Valley, caressing the curve of the hills, the sharp sunlight splashed vividly on the long green grass and the dappled shadows beneath the group of trees.”¹⁹¹ Scanlan describes an encounter of one of the young characters named Measle with the artist, whom Jane Vial believes to have been Nugent Welch:¹⁹² “He had seen the artist before, but today he had an urgent impulse to speak to him, to ask him how he knew those little blobs, splashes of colour he smeared on the paper would become trees, and float as clouds and make patches of grass in the sunlight.”¹⁹³

Scanlan describes the Hutt River as a location for children to play and explore. At one point she writes of it being “low after the long dry spell... chattering over the stones making a merry summer sound,” while “down below she [one of the child characters in

¹⁹⁰ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 191.

¹⁹¹ N. Scanlan, *Winds of Heaven* (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1934), 110.

¹⁹² J. Vial, *Bohemians of the Brush: Pumpkin Cottage Impressionists* (Upper Hutt: Expressions Art and Entertainment Centre, 2010), 32.

¹⁹³ Scanlan, *Winds of Heaven*, 111.

the story] had caught a glimpse of a young trout, its smooth brownish body suspended in the quiet water. Occasionally it moved, its tail swaying in a slow graceful movement of propulsion.”¹⁹⁴ The river margins also formed the backdrop for adults to find respite and renewal from the pressures of business life on the Heretaunga golf course. “To Genevieve there was nothing lovelier than that view across the Heretaunga links... on the left the Hutt River winding its tortuous way at the foot of the steep green hills. Between lay the green carpet of turf, crossed by streams, and starred with clumps of trees... the peace and beauty of the valley on a summer afternoon stirred even the most prosaic businessman to rapture.”¹⁹⁵ The Heretaunga Golf Links landscape had also inspired Mary Tripe to paint it in 1912 in her watercolour “Still Evening”. There, as in *Winds of Heaven*, the sense of a replicated English society in an English rural idyll are strong.

Art: The Impressionist School and Beyond

This modified and replicated landscape became a centre for artistic enterprise, both among residents and visitors to the region. The artist James Nairn provides a good example of this pattern. He led the impressionist movement in New Zealand, and spent much of his time in the upper valley painting the Hutt River and its environs.

¹⁹⁴ Scanlan, *Winds of Heaven*, 107.

¹⁹⁵ Scanlan, *Winds of Heaven*, 115.

Nairn was born in Aberfoyle, Scotland in 1859.¹⁹⁶ From early on, he showed considerable flair as a painter. Inspired with a passion for the new style in French Impressionist painting of the 1870s and 1880s, with its particular experimentation with colour and light, he became associated with what was known as the McGregor impressionist school in Glasgow.¹⁹⁷ He had studied at both the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts and at the Academie Julian in Paris and developed a reputation as one of “The Glasgow Boys” of impressionist artists in Scotland. In 1890 he immigrated to New Zealand because of ill health and settled in Wellington.¹⁹⁸ Jane Vial records that he intended only staying a short while, but instead remained and “became New Zealand’s most renowned impressionistic painter.”¹⁹⁹ Other impressionist painters had arrived at around the same time, including Italian Girolame Nerli, in Dunedin, Dutchman Petrus Van der Velden, in Christchurch, and Swede James Fristrom, a little later in Auckland in 1903.²⁰⁰ Nairn was the acknowledged leader of this “school”.

The impressionists challenged conventions on a number of fronts. Nairn was Bohemian in outlook, and the use of nude models for “live” sketching sessions did not endear him to a conservative colonial society.²⁰¹ Docking observes that the impressionist artists came as professionals “into a pragmatic society where the public aspects of art were

¹⁹⁶ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 187.

¹⁹⁷ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 188.

¹⁹⁸ Kelleher, *Upper Hutt*, 187.

¹⁹⁹ J. Vial, “Nairn, James Lachlan 1859-1904,” in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. III, 1870-1900, ed. Claudia Orange (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1993), 344.

²⁰⁰ G. Docking, *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting* (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1971), 70.

²⁰¹ Docking, *Two Hundred Years*, 78.

controlled by entrenched amateur organizations.”²⁰² Renowned New Zealand artist Charles Goldie reacted against the impressionists, referring to “the Battle of the Schools”; Pound describes a “division of artists into avant-garde and philistine, modernist versus reactionary.”²⁰³ The battle lines were drafted around both vision and technique and some of the local press led the charge in their critical reviews. The *Evening Post*, upon the launch of Nairn’s 1893 exhibition, stated: “Several of the exhibits in the Wellington section are bilious as to colour, inchoate as to form – creations of a disordered imagination, and a palette foul with the accumulations of many tubes and many years.”²⁰⁴ It was neither the first nor last broadside emanating from the *Evening Post* aimed at Nairn and his peers.

In 1891 Nairn was appointed as a teacher at the Wellington School of Design. He fell out with the New Zealand Academy of Fine Art rejoining it again later and instead established the alternative Wellington Art Club in 1892. The club started with a membership of twelve which grew to about 40 during the 1890s.²⁰⁵ In 1894 he rented an old cottage in Silverstream beside the Whirinaki Stream which was a short walk from the Hutt River, and in time painted a large and distinctive pumpkin on an outside wall so that it would be immediately recognizable to visiting artists. The site’s accessibility to Wellington made it an attractive destination, since Pumpkin Cottage lay

²⁰² Docking, *Two Hundred Years*, 70.

²⁰³ Frances Pound, *Frames in the Land: Early Landscape Painting in New Zealand* (Auckland: Collins, 1983), 84.

²⁰⁴ Vial, *Bohemians of the Brush*, 24.

²⁰⁵ Wellington Art Club, *70 Colourful Years: A History of the Wellington Art Club* (Wellington: The Wellington Art Club, 1962), 5.

within easy reach of Silverstream railway station. Nairn revelled in the location. He had visited the area frequently upon first arriving in Wellington, camping by the Whirinaki Stream where he took early morning bathes and caught eels for breakfast. Swimming parties in summer in the river became popular for the artists who gathered around Nairn and became part of the art club.²⁰⁶ Because of Nairn, his peers and his students, the Hutt Valley and River became one of the most painted locations in New Zealand. Nairn spent almost all of his spare time at the cottage but his career was tragically cut short when he died of peritonitis from a perforated bowel ulcer in 1904, leaving his wife and children virtually penniless. His insistence on painting outdoors was probably the cause of the onset of his early death.

Nairn's love of the Hutt River around the Silverstream area is readily apparent in his works. The Wellington Art Club's history noted "The Hutt Valley and especially Silverstream provided endless material for landscape painting" and "Nairn painted some of his best pictures in the vicinity of Silverstream."²⁰⁷ No other place received as much attention from him as did this area. A tally of his known paintings from Victoria Hearnshaw's catalogue of Nairn's works reveals 17 pieces which can be identified as directly focused on the Hutt River and painted between 1894 and 1902; another 16 are undated.²⁰⁸ Other paintings of the river exist but the locations painted are not specifically identified.

²⁰⁶ Vial, "Nairn, James Lachlan," 188.

²⁰⁷ Wellington Art Club, *70 Colourful Years*, 9.

²⁰⁸ Victoria Hearnshaw, *James McLauchlan Nairn: A Catalogue of Works*, Bulletin of New Zealand Art History, Special Series, no. 3 (Dunedin: Hocken Library, 1997).

Nairn and the Pumpkin Cottage artists portrayed aesthetic appreciations of the Hutt River and upper valley which could otherwise be completely overshadowed by the encompassing demands of economic and utilitarian priorities. He characteristically used a *plein air* approach of painting undertaken in the outdoors before the light changed. Nairn believed that all the great artists began either from the study of nature from life or from the outside and always tried “to paint the thing as one sees it... in front of nature.”²⁰⁹ He wrote: “If we want art we must begin at the point where all the great artists have begun: the study of nature, from life or outside.”²¹⁰ His continual urging to his pupils was to “always go direct to nature for your work, and you cannot go wrong”.²¹¹ Nairn’s blend of technique and vision represented a new aesthetic appreciation of the river and its environs different from the Romantics and was more concerned with the ordinary and the mundane.

The Silverstream School lasted for more than half a century into the 1950s through the influence of well known impressionist artists including Nugent Welch, Charles Barraud, Frederick Sedgwick, Mabel Hill, Mary Tripe and George Butler. In light of this, Jane Vial has recently argued that “Pumpkin Cottage... symbolises the nurturing ground of a nationally significant impressionist movement. For about 50 years [it] was a retreat for bohemian artists to paint, discuss and develop a unique New Zealand style of impressionism.”²¹² She stresses the significance of Pumpkin Cottage to New

²⁰⁹ Docking, *Two Hundred Years*, 78.

²¹⁰ G. Brown and H. Keith, *New Zealand Painting: An Introduction* (Auckland: Collins, 1969), 58.

²¹¹ Brown and Keith, *New Zealand Painting*, 83.

²¹² Vial, *Bohemians of the Brush*, 5.

Zealand's first generation of modern artists and describes how "it thrived as an artists retreat [and] was at its height between the two World Wars [with] artists at the forefront of the battle for impressionism [who] infiltrated the Establishment, gained some control by establishing art clubs and alternative exhibition structures, and won the hearts and minds in the propaganda war". Through its recognition nationally, impressionism "finally became accepted as part of the mainstream."²¹³

The Wellington Art Club's own history supports Vial's position with respect to the ongoing influence of the impressionists and the continuing contribution of Pumpkin Cottage and art in the upper valley. *70 Colourful Years* traces the various achievements of the Wellington Art Club which was so integrally connected with Pumpkin Cottage with lists of membership, the various achievements of the club, changes in name and the incessant search for studio facilities in Wellington.

Nairn's and the impressionist's ability to portray the Hutt was on the basis of an imported European art discipline and specifically the impressionist's love affair with the effects of light. This, together with their emphasis on the immediacy of experience, had local implications in terms of interpretation of the natural world – partly through the inherent focus on mundane experience rather than Romantic grandeur. Yet, it was significant that the upper river remained the site for appreciation of the natural world.

²¹³ Vial, *Bohemians of the Brush*, 30.

This location reflected an imported cultural aesthetic, though it contrasted sharply with the imported utilitarian concerns which predominated on the lower river.

Recreation and Aesthetic Values

Romanticised concepts of aesthetic appreciation were evident in some recreational pursuits which took place on the river and Kelleher notes that Upper Hutt developed something of a reputation for its picnicking industry. Joseph Kenneally argues that picnicking flourished along the river even before the advent of motor cars.²¹⁴ Given its proximity to Wellington, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Hutt became a favoured destination for visitors from the city. Along the Hutt during summer weekends small family groups dotted the river bank as they picnicked, swam and played. Larger church and social groups travelled by train to enjoy the river for annual picnics and social occasions. Kirstie Ross has noted in *Going Bush* that “those who ventured into the countryside had their sights set on a variety of things – health and beauty, leisure, profit and pleasure – and their keenness on the outdoors was accelerated by such modern conditions as urbanization, industrialization and technical change.”²¹⁵

Romantic ideas were also at work in the development of angling activities on the upper river with the release of brown trout as a favoured past time and distinctly British in character. Izaak Walton (1593-1683), widely regarded as the father of fresh water

²¹⁴ J. Kenneally, *Upper Hutt: Reflections from the Past* (Wellington: Colonial Associates Publication, 1980), 46.

²¹⁵ K. Ross, *Going Bush: New Zealanders and Nature in the Twentieth Century* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), 52.

angling in the English speaking world, had written during the tumult of social and civil upheaval: “No life, my honest scholar, no life so happy and so pleasant as the life of a well governed angler... then we sit on grassy banks, hearing the birds sing, and possessing ourselves in as much quietness as these silent, silver streams, which we now see glide so quietly by us... if I might be judge, God never did make a more calm, innocent recreation than angling.”²¹⁶ It was this idealized image of angling for trout which the acclimatisation societies sought to develop as an activity accessible not only for the affluent but for all the settlers who were making New Zealand home.

Keith Draper noted angling as an imported English activity: “Fly fishermen the world over have an ancient heritage, and while most of us have never floated a fly down a chalk stream, fished a team of wets on a tumbled north country beck... those far away places are the cradles of our art. I have always been proud to be a fourth generation New Zealander, but I am very aware of the debt we owe to our British heritage, rich in angling lore and literature.”²¹⁷

The popularity of trout angling on the upper river had already been captured by artists. Nairn had painted the Lower Hutt general practitioner Dr Purdy fishing the upper river, and Charles Barraud produced a similar painting entitled *Fishing: Hutt River* during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In his quaintly titled book *Bon Bons from*

²¹⁶ I. Walton, *The Complete Angler: A Conference Betwixt an Angler, A Falconer and a Hunter Each Commending His Recreation* (London: Kessinger Publishing, 1653-1655).

²¹⁷ K. Draper, *Trout Flies in New Zealand* (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1971), 14.

Birchville Laurie Meachen describes the various recreational activities taking place on the river around Upper Hutt from the beginning of the twentieth century. A number of people maintained baches and weekend cottages in the area which were used as weekend retreats from Wellington and Lower Hutt. “Weekend cottages and baches found consistent favour in settings extending from the Brown Owl to and including further reaches of the upper valley. Birchville could justly claim for itself a reputation of excellence beyond dispute as an angler’s haven for river fishing, and a number of fishing refuges contributed a substantial historical impact.”²¹⁸ He noted that John Henry Boyes, a one-time Public Service Commissioner, indulged in trout angling which was clearly a favorite activity in the area. In the early 1900s a trout rearing pond had been built at Birchville fed by a local stream where fingerlings transported from a Masterton hatchery were allowed to grow until they were released into the Hutt River when they reached 12 months. Meachen also noted that the Wellington Acclimatization Society used the 25 by 8 by 3 foot pond to rear up to 10,000 fingerlings at a time. The commitment in time and money for the establishment of this most British of past-times was considerable.

A Move to a New Aesthetic Appreciation

By the latter half of the twentieth century significant changes were beginning to emerge in aesthetic vision and appreciation. Romantic, nostalgic and artistic values which had been couched in the cultural values of nineteenth century English civilisation began to

²¹⁸ L. Meachen, *Bon Bons from Birchville* (Wellington: L.J. Meachen, 1996), 39.

subside and be replaced with new aesthetic appreciation on the Hutt. A landmark poem focused on the Hutt written in 1960 is quoted by leading historian and commentator on Pakeha spirituality, Michael King, in his book *Being Pakeha Now*. The significance of the poem lies in a clear move from imported spiritual values and emphasis on the English countryside to a more nationalist expression.

King had been sent to St Patrick's College in Silverstream as a boarding student in 1960. At that time, St Patrick's was a 140 acre farm bisected by the Hutt River. He quotes a poem written by Father Kevin Maher, who had encouraged King in literature and English towards the end of the utilitarian period. The poem introduces this new development which begins to express distinctive Kiwi values which have emerged more from within the local context than from the influence of ideas imported from elsewhere.

Here is the pulse of youth, the urge
Of waking life; green clovered fields,
And bees gold-dusty in the yellow gorse
By the slow river
Drowsily moving down along the hills.

Here on a summer's day below the school
The white-clad figures move upon the green
With clap of bat on ball; or by the waters edge
Lithe bodies poise a moment and are gone
With shout and laughter, or by twos and threes
Companies idle down the river road
And smoke of camp fires drifts up in the wind.

Here have been other boys in other days
Young as these are, as urgently alive
Who knew these fields, the river and the hills,
And swam and played and knew no thought beside....
And by them all this ground was sanctified.

Because, unquestioningly, they went away
And laboured, fought and died, for little things...
To save for these the freedom of the hills,
The white-clad figures, and the river's song
And slow smoke rising through a summer's afternoon.²¹⁹

King explains the white smoke as the fires the boys at the College were allowed to light to toast bread and cook sausages. He describes the river, gorse, manuka, punga and swimming holes as “an environment that complemented a love of literature. We often took our work down there, to read and swot amid the sights and quiet sounds of natural surroundings.”²²⁰ Maher's verses reflect King's relationship and connection with the river and its environs as the boys swam in its pools, lit camp fires and walked in groups along its banks. He makes an enduring connection for the former old boys at the school who had to leave for war. The influence of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth are downplayed. Maher was well aware of the “Soldiers Pool” near St Patrick's to which soldiers had been marched from Trentham Military Camp since the Boer war for swims as depicted by the Pumpkin Cottage artist George Garnham in *Soldiers Pool at Sunlight, Hutt Valley* painted at around the turn of the century. Their sacrifice is so that other boys could enjoy the same “freedom of the hills... the rivers song” and “slow smoke rising through a summer's afternoon.” Men have gone to war to defend their place in the land of New Zealand. By them, the ground they walked, played and lived upon was “sanctified”.

²¹⁹ King, *Being Pakeha Now*, 43.

²²⁰ King, *Being Pakeha Now*, 44.

Summary

The responses analyzed in this chapter contrast strikingly with utilitarian values. Focusing on aesthetic appreciation of the Hutt and its environs challenges any interpretation that treats utilitarian values as absolute. Aesthetic responses highlight the ability of multiple expressions of Pakeha river spirituality to exist and thrive, even where certain traditions may be dominant. They focus attention on the variegation of spiritual understandings and responses to the river environment.

The whole river had undergone significant modification, but in different ways, and with significant variations between the upper and lower river. Different localities upon the river arguably nourished quite different spiritual outlooks. On the lower river, the prevailing outlook had treated the river as a physical utility to be managed and controlled. Utilitarian values were typically held unreflectively as part of broader cultural assumptions.

The upper valley was a highly adapted and modified environment, too, but attractive to the eye and one in which a wide variety of groups established other important and nourishing connections. The nature values of the aesthetics were more self-conscious and aware of the river as a spiritual resource. There was a clear ability to affirm the river as a natural feature with intrinsic value. Whilst flooding was an issue around Upper Hutt, it was not as significant a problem as it was for Lower Hutt where most of the flood control work was focused. Because the upper river did not undergo the indignity and polluting effects of shingle extraction or the same level of flood control

interventions, relationships with the river were able to develop in different ways, and an environment conducive to aesthetic values enabled them to take root.

Over time, the river had taken on a much friendlier hue as a place for play, recreation, fishing, picnicking, sport and painting. In this sense, the modes of engagement with the river, and views of it which were previously associated most strongly with the upper river slowly filtered down the river system. In the most recent period, aesthetic appreciation and environmental values converged, so that aesthetic values were no longer overshadowed by the monolith of utilitarian nature spirituality. It is to these environmental and ecological outlooks, which gathered momentum from the 1960's, that the final chapter of this thesis on Pakeha river spirituality on the Hutt now turns.

Chapter Four – New Environmental Values

The second half of the twentieth century was marked by rapid changes in human engagement with the Hutt and in expressions of river spirituality. Effective management and control of the middle and lower reaches of the river enabled new activities to flourish and existing ones like aesthetism to gain a wider influence. As the threat of the river receded, so access increased. In this sense the control of the river made possible by utilitarian priorities spawned another set of interactions. River management and control, however, does not explain all the changes in late twentieth century outlook. Legislation aimed at striking a balance between river control and emerging environmental values more broadly within the community also had a significant impact.

This chapter assesses the role of river control management and legislative change on approaches to the Hutt. It suggests that the dominance of utilitarian spirituality waned, even if it was not entirely supplanted. The nature values of the late twentieth century changed, and river spirituality gained another new currency. Nevertheless, Pakeha spirituality in the Hutt remained diverse, and in many respects wedded to utilitarian values. The triumph of utilitarian thinking changed the inhabitants' relationship with the river, and this ultimately allowed other expressions to flourish within the confines of the Hutt's cities.

River Control

Chapter Two outlined the history of the control and management of the Hutt River, particularly from around 1900 to the middle of the twentieth century. This ongoing project was particularly effective in reducing flood risk and enhancing the human development of the valley. In August 1990 the Wellington Regional Council carried out a survey of 3,000 households which resulted in the return of 1055 completed questionnaires representing 4.33% of houses in flood prone zones in the Hutt Valley.²²¹ The survey concluded that the structural flood defences on the river “has led to the false assumption that urban areas are flood free.” Only 17% of respondents recognised a flooding risk to their properties with the remaining 83% believing there was “no chance” of their homes being flooded.²²² The survey confirmed that effective control and management of the Hutt River had provided the room and capacity for people to enter into new relationships with it.

The river, however, was never as potentially benign as people believed. In its 1996 report *Living with the River*, the Wellington Regional Council revealed that “in any one year there is a 1 to 100 chance that breaking of the flood defences will lead to significant flooding in urban areas... the line of flood defences consists of sections in good condition linked to sections in poorer condition.” The report went on to show that a 1 in 1,000 chance of flooding would drown 14,500 homes, 36 schools, 9 medical facilities, 175 community and recreational facilities, 1,330 commercial and utility

²²¹ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 48.

²²² Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 51.

facilities with 71,000 people directly impacted and affected.²²³ Clearly, the Hutt River continued to pose a threat as it had during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The difference was that it was no longer considered malign by most inhabitants.

In 1998 residents were reminded of the potential risk still posed by the river. Within the space of a week, two floods of 1305 and 1540 cumecs swept down the river valley. Two years later, in 2000, a similar sequence of events occurred, with the largest flood measured at 1245 cumecs.²²⁴ *The Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan* released in 2001 revealed the ongoing challenge and nature of flood mitigation and control in the Hutt Valley. The plan claimed that a large flood could cause “wide ranging social and psychological impacts” with resultant injury, death, social distress and trauma and damage to infrastructure.²²⁵ In monetary terms an event of this nature could cause one billion dollars worth of damage with the “associated disruption on the regional economy as well as the national economy.” In the face of the ongoing challenge of flood threat the *Floodplain Management Strategy* set a blueprint for the next 40 years in which the ultimate goal was to provide protection from a flood of up to 2300 cumecs. This would be resourced through proposed expenditures of \$78 million over that period of time.²²⁶

²²³ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, vi.

²²⁴ Wellington Regional Council, *The Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan*, 5.

²²⁵ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan*, 6.

²²⁶ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan*, xi. It is noteworthy that the Upper Hutt Leader in an article “Flooding, a very real threat” on February 2, 2011, put the latest damage estimates for a breach of the river defences at \$1.7 billion .

River management and control therefore remained an ongoing and unrelenting task. There are two ironies in this. Firstly, the effectiveness of the river defences have not had the misfortune of being tested or shown just how illusionary they could be in a particularly bad flood. Secondly, other positive values and relationships with the river had been made possible because the river had been made manageable by human intervention and utilitarian approaches which were invasive by nature and frequently damaging to the environment and ecosystems.

Environmental Values

In addition to flood management, a range of social changes took place during the second half of the twentieth century which influenced the degree of people's interaction with and connection to the river. A growing concern for the environment emerged and found expression in a variety of ways.

The first indications of these changes on the Hutt River appeared during the 1950s as an environmental debate raged over the best means of disposing of the valley's sewage waste which was becoming more problematic as a result of population growth around the river.²²⁷ For a growing number of people it was no longer acceptable to pour waste into the river and to use it as an open sewer. Attitudes towards the older utilitarian and hydraulic view of rivers and waterways were slowly changing. This development was not only local. Barry Gustafson had noted the rise in concern over environmental issues

²²⁷ McGill, *Lower Hutt*, 161.

within New Zealand generally during the 1950s, particularly in protection and preservation efforts such as the National Parks Act of 1952 and the addition of six new national parks between 1953 and 1964. He also notes “growing unease”, during the 1960s, “especially concerning the depletion of indigenous forests and the pollution of lakes and rivers.”²²⁸ The Hutt featured prominently in terms of the latter concern. The waste debate in the Hutt Valley focussed on a treatment plant located at Seaview versus a cheaper option to pipe sewage to a Pencarrow outfall into Cook Strait through an 18 kilometre network. Eventually, budget priorities won the day and in July 1962 the new and less expensive option was officially commissioned.²²⁹

There were other evidences of environmental change and concern. The polluting effects of shingle extraction on the river were crippling in terms of silting and water contamination which made the river unusable for long periods of time. A degree of public agitation over the issue had taken place. A letter written by the Wellington Acclimatisation Society (Southern Branch) in 1973 on behalf of “ordinary citizens of the Hutt valley and Wellington who are concerned at the destruction of the river as a recreational and aesthetic resource” called for all commercial exploitation of the river to cease, and specifically drew attention to the detrimental impacts of shingle extraction. The letter contended that the “river belongs to everybody, and no one, nor any organisation has the right to use it to the detriment of other river users.”²³⁰

²²⁸ Barry Gustafson, “The National Governments and Social Change 1949-1972,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, ed. Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990), 287.

²²⁹ McGill, *Lower Hutt*, 171.

²³⁰ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 67.

Concern had also been mounting over the condition of the Waiwhetu Stream which flows into the estuarine area of the Hutt and had been subjected to systematic pollution by surrounding industry in its lower reaches. In 1979, the Gracefield Trade Water Sewer had been commissioned and put a stop to the systemic killing of life in the Waiwhetu, but this was too late to prevent the announcement by biologists that it was now a dead stream.²³¹

Critical to many of these changes was the establishment in 1972 of the Wellington Regional Water Board which replaced the old Hutt River Board. From this point management policy of the river began to intentionally include environmental and sustainability concerns.²³² Economic factors were no longer the sole consideration in the management of the waterway and new values were being introduced. Stuart Macaskill noted in *Living with the River* that “some current river management practices are of concern to residents.” The report stated that “pollution, poor access to some parts of the river, litter control and some management practices reduce enjoyment of the surroundings.” Further on he stated that “a strategy is required to achieve an acceptable balance between effective floodplain security, enhancement of recreational areas, and the longer-term objectives of re-establishing the natural riparian environment.”²³³

²³¹ McGill, *Lower Hutt*, 186.

²³² Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 7.

²³³ Wellington Regional Council, *Living With the River*, i, 51, 54.

These values and influences came from a wider awareness of the impact of pollution on the environment. In 1982, M. P. Mosley observed on a national level that “in stream” uses of rivers, scenic values and wildlife habitat had been gaining increasing attention after receiving little support in the earlier utilitarian environment.²³⁴ Mosley introduced a wide range of in stream uses for humans with respect to waterways and classified them under “contact”, “non-contact” and “associated water-enhanced” categories. His work was important in helping identify a significant and widespread change in attitudes to rivers in New Zealand that were gaining new status in addition to the older hydraulic and utilitarian values. These new values were much more difficult to define because they referred to quality of life and were not so readily measurable in economic terms. Mosley observed that “as increasing pressure for development is put on New Zealand’s rivers, there is increasing concern that non-development uses particularly recreation, provision of fish and wildlife habitat and enhancement of scenic beauty be catered for.”²³⁵

The concern on a national level in turn reflected an international trend. Postel and Richter exemplify this, and noted recent interpretations of “forests, watersheds, soils and rivers as ‘natural capital’, which just like manufacturing or financial capital, provide a stream of benefits to society.” Natural capital was being increasingly taken into account in decision making and included categories of fish to eat, moderating

²³⁴ M.P. Mosley, “Flow Requirements for Recreation and Wildlife: A Review,” *Journal of Hydrology* 22, no. 2 (1983): 153.

²³⁵ Mosley, “Flow Requirements,” 152-153.

floods and droughts, maintaining food webs and providing habitat for animals and humans. Natural capital was also assigned to the provision of beauty, life fulfilling values, recreational opportunities, sources of inspiration and deep cultural and spiritual values.²³⁶

Many of these values were reflected in the 1990 Household Survey referred to earlier. The survey concluded “the river channel and riverbanks are greatly valued by residents as a tranquil haven in contrast to their urban surroundings.”²³⁷ It noted that the responding residents regarded access to the river and its banks, the tranquillity of the river environment and its fauna and wildlife as important aesthetic values. The Greater Wellington Regional Council’s *Hutt River Environmental Strategy* paints a further picture of the Hutt as a corridor “that provides a tranquil environment where people can go to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life and enjoy the natural character of the river environment”. Significantly, the Council also specifically construed the Hutt corridor as contributing “positively to the community’s spiritual, mental and physical well being.”²³⁸ Over one million people visit the river annually as evidence of the importance of these new nature values. Aesthetic appreciation of the river was assuming a much greater recognition.

²³⁶ Postel and Richter, *Rivers for Life*, 6-8.

²³⁷ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 51.

²³⁸ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy* (Wellington Regional Council, 2001), 13-14.

A number of important changes in the philosophical and ethical governance of the river were introduced to allow these values to emerge, flourish and find tangible expression. Firstly, flood control was now balanced by other values. In 1996 the *Living with the River* report noted that “improvements to flood defences must be through a participating process which leads to the enhancement of environmental and recreational values.”²³⁹ This was reiterated later, where the report states that “Future management of the river environment will need to meet the environmental and recreational demands of an increasing urban population while maintaining adequate flood security”. The report adds that it will be “unacceptable to achieve [flood defence] at the expense of the river environment as has occurred in the past.”²⁴⁰ The earlier function of the Hutt River Board to ensure that the river was maintained as an efficient floodway was now mitigated by new expectations which sought a balance between floodplain security and other environmental values. The report noted particularly the popularity of the river for anglers with 20,000 angler visits per year and the interest amongst residents in “improving the ecological, botanical and landscape qualities of the river environment.”²⁴¹

The environmental and recreational demands of groups of river recreational users like anglers are significant because fishers have traditionally maintained high levels of interest and commitment towards environmental issues through their representative

²³⁹ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, vii.

²⁴⁰ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 7.

²⁴¹ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 139-142.

bodies such as acclimatisation societies in the past and more recently Fish and Game councils and angling clubs. The enjoyment of the river by recreational users is directly commensurate with the degree of health and ecological quality of the waterway. This emphasis was reiterated again in the 2001 *Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan* and described as an “holistic” and a “co-ordinated approach”.²⁴²

A second change in the governance of the river was the recognition of the widespread interest of other groups in the river’s welfare. *The Environmental Strategy* outlines a wide range of interested groups and represented a substantial change in the acknowledgement of ‘stakeholders’. These included 7 environmental groups, 60 recreational groups including tramping, orienteering and angling organisations, 25 other community groups including Rotary and Probus clubs, residents/ratepayers associations and ward or community board committees.²⁴³

The Environmental Strategy discussed the need to coordinate the development of the river to meet the needs of these groups. Walking and running groups would require a high quality landscape, quietness in most areas and the exclusion of motorised vehicles. Swimmers on the other hand needed easy access to a range of swimming holes, high aesthetic quality and clean water. Anglers needed a well managed habitat for fish, access to high quality water and landscape and as little water abstraction and bed disturbance as possible. Passive river users and picnickers required good walking and

²⁴² Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan*, xi.

²⁴³ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 139-142.

vehicle access to the river berms and the water itself, high landscape quality and the provision of rubbish bins, toilets, picnic facilities and barbeque sites.²⁴⁴

A third change in the philosophical and ethical governance of the river was the decision to designate the river as a “linear park” as a long term vision.²⁴⁵ The linear park concept took advantage of several key elements. These included ready access over many kilometres of urban space; the possibility of developing an ecological corridor between what are currently isolated native reserves and the development of a cycleway and walkway from Petone to Te Marua taking in a wide range of landscapes and environments. The linear park model aimed to provide a place accessible to the urban populations of the floodplain, “where people can go and walk their dogs, picnic by the side of the river, swim in pools, and simply enjoy getting closer to nature.”²⁴⁶

Legislative Changes

The changes in environmental emphasis reflected various legislative developments over the latter half of the twentieth century, which in turn mirrored changing public outlooks and attitudes. In the context of a democratically driven society legislation which does not meet with general acceptance will not usually survive. The advent of several significant pieces of legislation over the latter part of the century bears testimony to a widespread appreciation and concern over environmental issues at a public level.

²⁴⁴ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 149-153.

²⁴⁵ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 26-30.

²⁴⁶ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 13.

The Water Pollution Regulation of 1963 introduced standards of water quality by prohibiting discharges and introducing a bathing standard primarily by means of the implementation of a water right process. It allowed access by councils for the purpose of investigating and ascertaining “the extent of pollution in any one locality” and “the extent to which any pollution found to exist should, in the circumstances be controlled or mitigated.”²⁴⁷ The impact on the Hutt was dramatic. For decades the river had been effectively tamed by the use of shingle extraction plants on the lower river which had lowered the river bed and negated the effects of flooding. By 1976 all the shingle plants had either ceased operation or complied with the new requirements and the lower river became a useable resource for bathers, fishers, kayakers and others.²⁴⁸

This was followed by the Water and Soil Conservation Act of 1967, and its 1981 amendment which introduced protection for wild and scenic river values. More latterly, The Resource Management Act was a critical influence and a major point of reference. Passed into law in 1991, the Act’s stated purpose was “to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources” and to manage “the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well being.”²⁴⁹ A number of qualifications to these goals included sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future

²⁴⁷ New Zealand Government, *Water Pollution Regulation*, No. 30, Section 3 (1). 1963.

²⁴⁸ Easter, *Hutt River*, 143.

²⁴⁹ New Zealand Government, *Resource Management Act, 1991*, Part 2, Section 5 (1).

generations and safeguarding the life supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems. Additionally, the Act was charged with avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.²⁵⁰

The Act also included the maintenance and development of amenity values, the protection of ecosystems, quality of the environment and the protection of the habitat of trout and salmon. It was a major contributing influence impacting the governance of the Hutt River and people's relationship with it because local body councils were obliged to implement its provisions and were held accountable to them. The legislation has been controversial and attracted its share of critics. It is liable to change according to political whim but its overall positive impact in improving the life and quality of rivers like the Hutt has been significant.

Another influential element was the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy which was introduced in February 2000 as the nation's response to the international Convention of Biological Diversity and the 1992 Rio Earth Conference. At the time, Prime Minister Helen Clark described the Biodiversity Strategy as establishing "national goals to turn the tide on the decline of our biodiversity, and to maintain and restore a full range of our remaining natural habitats and ecosystems and viable populations of all native species."²⁵¹ Amongst the ten "themes" inherent in the Strategy goals, was freshwater biodiversity with a number of desired outcomes by 2020. These included maintenance

²⁵⁰ New Zealand Government, *Resource Management Act, 1991*, Part 2, Section 5 (2).

²⁵¹ New Zealand Government, *The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy* (February 2000). Foreword.

of remaining natural freshwater ecosystems and habitats, the restoration of degraded or scarce habitats and protection of natural freshwater areas. The management of human activities in catchments, threatened native species, plants and pests, introduced species and the protection of indigenous ecosystems, habitats and species were all mandates of the Biodiversity Strategy.²⁵²

Environmental values were absorbed into the legislative priorities of government legislation and as a consequence into the policy frameworks of local body government in the management and development of the Hutt River. To a significant degree they were reflective of a strong nationalist programme which was pursued by the long serving Labour Government until it lost power in 2008 and which took environmental and ecological matters seriously in a wide range of policy contexts including conservation, climate change, forestry and development. Under Labour, a strong emphasis around conservation enabled the presentation of New Zealand on the international stage as a clean and green destination and producer of pure export products for human consumption. Whilst the worldwide advertising campaign extolled these virtues it did cause some angst in New Zealand circles as to how accurate this picture actually was and concern over the health of rivers lay at the forefront to much of that angst. Nonetheless, the commitment to environmental and conservation issues was a genuine one and was further strengthened by the influence of the Green Party. The language, concepts and understanding of a new emerging ecological thinking had in

²⁵² New Zealand Government, *New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy*, 45.

turn become a major framework of interaction with the Hutt River and resulted in some important changes.

Emerging Ecological Values

The changing environmental values of the second half of the twentieth century evident on the Hutt River were also significantly influenced by emerging ecological understandings. Ecology can simply be defined as “the study of the structure and function of nature” in which all life is regarded as being intricately connected.²⁵³ Certain key concepts and values have come to be associated with ecological thinking. Ecology is biocentric where the focus is on the entire biosphere and not just human affairs. It is holistic in the sense that it emphasises that all of life is interconnected. It advocates sustainability as a critical priority. Ecological values maintain a reverence for the earth and all its creatures, recognises the rights of future generations in the use of resources, and advocates the protection of the environment as a precondition of a healthy society.²⁵⁴

The importance of ecological ideas was highlighted by the Wellington Regional Council in its *Hutt River Environmental Strategy* where it observed that “the floodplain ecology has been irrevocably altered to the extent that restoration to a “natural” environment is now impossible. Despite this, there are opportunities to restore some of

²⁵³ T. Cooper, *Green Christianity* (UK: Spire, 1990), 9-10.

²⁵⁴ Cooper, *Green Christianity*, 106.

the natural components. This also means that the preservation and enhancement of the few remnants of the natural ecosystem is of paramount importance.”²⁵⁵

The recognition of these opportunities and the importance of ecosystems reflected the *Regional Councils Ecosystems Charter*, which in turn related strongly to the requirements of the Resource Management Act and The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy:

The management of natural resources should take account of, and provide for, the ecological processes of the systems of which they are a part. This recognizes that we live within ecosystems, and that these living webs provide us with the services and products needed for us to survive.... It also argues that sustainable management of the environment will only happen if we keep the underlying ecological relationships incorporating life in the biosphere working. Only in this way can indigenous systems survive.²⁵⁶

The *Regional Council Environmental Strategy* noted ways in which new ecological values had begun to take hold amongst residents of the Hutt Valley: “Although the middle and lower reaches have been largely modified, the river is still recognised by the community as giving a sense of naturalness to the surrounding urban areas... The Hutt Valley community places a high value on the ‘natural’ character of the river and its

²⁵⁵ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 24.

²⁵⁶ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 112.

margins.”²⁵⁷ *Living with the River* observed that residents preferred to see the river in a more natural state and restored towards its original environmental qualities. The residents also wanted to minimise disturbance to the river bed and pay for bank-edge protection works in preference to more invasive gravel extraction and cross-blading flood control methods.²⁵⁸ As a place for reflection, solitude, quietness and renewal the river landscape was providing a natural spiritual resource. The concept of a linear park was further evidence of the influence of recent ecological thinking and approaches to the river.²⁵⁹ The linear park allowed for an overall approach to the development of the whole catchment which would entail deliberately planting native species distinct to the area, regenerating native plant areas and linking existing native plant areas.²⁶⁰ This encouraged the regeneration and establishment of the river valley as a valuable ecological reserve.

These ecological outlooks reflect responses to a natural resource in ways previously reserved for the more rural environment existing around Upper Hutt and Silverstream during the first decades of the twentieth century. With the pressures of urban and city living upon the residents of the Hutt Valley, the river provided the opportunities for a new interaction with nature as a result of environmental outlooks which were being fed by a number of new influences.

²⁵⁷ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 43.

²⁵⁸ Wellington Regional Council, *Living with the River*, 88.

²⁵⁹ Wellington Regional Council, *Floodplain Management Plan*, 130.

²⁶⁰ Wellington Regional Council, *Hutt River Environmental Strategy*, 26-30.

The accessibility of the river had become a key dynamic. The Hutt experience indicates that such interaction was made available and possible through ease of access to the river and its careful development. This in turn bears evidence to the potential for the redemption of even highly humanly modified physical environments and to the value and importance of highly modified ecosystems to human well being in a way not dissimilar to Mark Wallace's relationship with Crum Creek which is outlined in Chapter One. The values which granted understandings of rivers had changed into something much more personalised than responses of control and utility. A new relationship had taken hold.

Other Values

Whilst it is difficult to ignore the influence of emerging environmental values upon modern Pakeha New Zealanders, further factors have also been involved. Notwithstanding their role in reshaping contemporary Pakeha nature spiritualities, it is by no means clear that these values are entirely ascendant. Thus, utilitarian values are still evident in the ways people choose to relate to the river. Indeed, these may operate alongside other sentiments. A typical example of this phenomenon is recreational usage of the river by groups such as canoeists. In 2008 research from the New Zealand Recreational River Survey noted that non-motorised boaters on New Zealand rivers rated physical prowess, achievement and stimulation as their highest ranked values in

their interaction with those rivers.²⁶¹ On the Hutt River, which ranks eighteenth nationally for its frequency of visits, the non-power boating group grades the Hutt River highest for the values of challenge and opportunities for companionship amongst recreational peers.²⁶² For this group of river users there are strong elements of human end purposes as a priority with humans in a dominant user position rather than as a partner on an equal basis to and interconnected with other life forms and ecosystems.

Another complication with the new appreciation of the river lies in the area of the origins of ecological values as a significant contributor to the latest expression of Pakeha nature spirituality. Geoff Park confirms that these may derive from sources other than just government legislation, local government planning policy and imported ideas. He dedicates a whole chapter to the Hutt in *Nga Uruora*, entitled “The Perfect Vale,” in which he describes an impenetrable, virtually untouched forest unparalleled in its beauty, splendour and richness before the arrival of the Pakeha. He later recounts standing in person near the Petone foreshore and observing the current landscape “filled with the roar of traffic on a highway interchange. In its midst, a tiny surveyed-off rectangle of grass and graves is all that remains of Pit-one Pa. Cars and trucks pick their way through the surrounding grid of factories and warehouses... now mirror and glass have taken over.” The question he then poses is a key one: “Once we have tamed land

²⁶¹ I. Galloway, “The New Zealand Recreational River Survey,” PhD Thesis in Physical Education, University of Otago, 2008, 25-26.

²⁶² Galloway, “New Zealand Recreational Survey,” 69.

like we believe we have this floodplain, are we immune from the life forces that shaped the land and the plants and animals that inhabit it?”²⁶³

Park answers the question in *Nga Uruora*: “Many Pakeha now dissociate themselves from the European ethos of conquest and its rationalised landscapes... Many have an intuitive affinity for the idea of mauri.” Park refers to “an indwelling yet little talked about primordial power in these islands” and introduces terms like “genius loci”, “spirit of place” and “inscape”.²⁶⁴ These terms refer to the life forces of the land which lie hidden underneath its forms, yet are central to its identity. Park was influenced by Maori perspectives. He interpreted the land as a living entity, comprised of unique and balanced ecosystems, spiritually vibrant, and dependent on mauri or life force, the principle and energy in all things.

Whilst Park’s viewpoint is somewhat pagan, its significance lies in a different explanation for the origins of ecological outlooks as an important influence on river spirituality. Park’s claims are important in locating ecological values and nature spirituality emerging from within the context of the natural and physical. He does not pretend that there are many western biologists who are particularly sympathetic to the concept of customary knowledge, but adds that as science “becomes aware that the fate

²⁶³ Park, *Nga Uruora*, 80, 82.

²⁶⁴ Park, *Nga Uruora*, 320-321.

of ecosystems and the fate of humanity are inextricably linked, the realisation grows that this is not necessarily new knowledge.”²⁶⁵

Pakeha river spirituality in the Hutt context therefore reflects ecological values within a wider environmental project, but for some individuals these may not have their source in imported ideas but rather in an old understanding of the land itself. This does not refer specifically to the adoption of the Maori schema of gods and deities but rather the process which has enabled Pakeha to view themselves as indigenous New Zealanders with a special affinity in the land in a way just as valid as Maori. In this vein Michael King once claimed that “the God I discern now is infused... in the regenerative power of the natural world” in a landscape that has in “just over one hundred years... reassembled its elements and reasserted its healing powers.”²⁶⁶

It may seem logical to designate the primordial argument as another category or construct which humans have brought to bear on the river. Its significance lies however in the understanding that this appreciation is not something which is ‘brought’ to the waterway. It arises from within the very essence of the river itself. This is not a debate to be resolved within the confines of this thesis. It is important however to note the phenomenon and the special nature of its distinctive claims which differentiate it from other expressions of river spirituality as well as its growing popularity.

²⁶⁵ Park, *Theatre Country*, 27, 30.

²⁶⁶ King, *Being Pakeha Now*, 240-241.

Summary

Changing environmental values became operative in Pakeha relationship with the Hutt River as the latest form of nature spirituality, adding to the complexity of an already diverse and complex scene. Their emergence followed from several developments, which highlights something of the process by which spiritualities adapt and change.

Firstly, the effective control of the Hutt meant that residents and others now had the ability to experience a sense of ease and comfort with the river as a consequence of successful management policies. These policies, which focussed on technological intervention, resulted in a feeling of safety and enabled greater access to the river, which in turn facilitated the emergence of new models. Originally dominant utilitarian spiritual values lost some of their traction, energy and the ability to empower people's thinking. This provided the space and opportunity for new values and an older one like aestheticism to take wider hold. Newer outlooks emerged that challenged, interacted with and accommodated older utilitarian models. That these should coexist alongside each other confirms that spiritual values do not end in tidy parcels of time. It should also be noted that management and control priorities can exist and operate under quite different banners.

In addition, the emergence of environmental concerns, grounded in wider international ideas and imperatives took hold in New Zealand during this period. Governments introduced various pieces of environmental legislation with the requirement that local bodies adopt them as policies in strategic plans. This development highlights the role of government and local government, both in stimulating and responding to new nature

spiritualities including evolving ecological ideas. By contrast, Geoff Park has also introduced the possibility that ecological values can emerge from within the land itself as a form of primordial power. Park's proposition highlights the influence of Maori understandings, but indicates yet another source of new nature spirituality in the life force of the land.

Whichever of these sources has been most influential, contemporary river spirituality is typically characterised by greater appreciation of the Hutt River as a natural environmental feature with intrinsic value in its own right and the need to balance previously dominant outlooks.

Conclusion

The history and social context of the Hutt River confirms that just as there exists a growing appreciation of the land and an earth centred nature spirituality amongst Pakeha, it is also possible to speak of a river spirituality. This thesis has shown that religious, economic, political and aesthetic elements have all played an important part in influencing and determining the forms of river spirituality which have emerged on the Hutt. In an overall context in which there has existed little tradition, language or literature on the subject, the river spirituality of the Hutt has been revealed from a diverse range of sources to be rich, varied, progressive and highly adaptive. It also indicates two key factors in river spirituality important to the Hutt context and significant to river spirituality at large within New Zealand.

The first important determining element in river spirituality religious influences, were at their zenith during the first few decades of Pakeha settlement in the form of Christian values. Settlers in the Hutt Valley responded to the natural features of the river using a range of Christian understandings which included ideas of progress in technology and Anglo Saxon civilising values. Financial circumstances and socio-economic background were significant factors in determining which particular values were likely to be adopted or brought into play. Arguably, poorer settlers were more prone to resort to technological imperatives, in the quest for sheer subsistence.

The second form of nature spirituality, based on utilitarian values, proved to be durable for at least a century. It focussed largely around a perspective of the river and its valley

as an economic resource to be utilised purely for human benefit, with a heavy emphasis on the taming and then the ongoing management of the waterway. One of the important characteristics of this utilitarian outlook was its general and unquestioned acceptance in the population at large. The utilitarian period saw increasingly effective flood control methods being used on the river with a corresponding negative impact on its ecology. Stewardship and conservation concerns began to emerge in government legislation and policy but only in some isolated instances did this equate to a wider understanding outside of economic priorities.

Political considerations featured from the beginning of European settlement and shaped and reflected Pakeha relationships with the river during the utilitarian era. Various pieces of legislation like the Resource Management Act and the Biodiversity Strategy, were particularly influential during the later period because of the requirements they placed on local bodies with respect to ascending environmental values. The utilitarian and economic values which demanded control and management of the river found themselves in a relationship with values which expected respect and nurture of the river as a living ecosystem.

Running through all periods of Pakeha interaction with the river has been a consistent thread of aesthetic values. These started as an appreciation of the grandeur of the untouched world amongst the first settlers and visitors to the Hutt, but increasingly focussed on admiration of the adapted landscape of a European pastoral landscape especially around Upper Hutt. Later, this aesthetic appreciation changed yet again and

became more widespread as ecological and environmental considerations gained currency.

Religion, economics, politics and aesthetics therefore all played major roles in shaping the forms and contours of Pakeha river spirituality. These have operated in varying intensities throughout the period of Pakeha settlement on the Hutt leading to different accommodations and considerable complexity in how river spirituality has been expressed. It is this complexity and diversity which is fundamental to any understanding and appreciation of river spirituality.

Two key factors have emerged from river spirituality on the Hutt and its ensuing complexities. They are important not only to the Hutt River context but also contain their insights and applications to river spirituality at large in the New Zealand context.

The first dynamic concerns the broad application of lineal frameworks of interpretation and prescriptive categories to river spirituality. This thesis has identified several major forms of river spirituality operating characteristically within broad yet distinct periods since 1840. In some respects this model reiterates widely accepted explanations of patterns in the development of nature spirituality in general. In particular, the notion of a progression whereby various forms of nature spirituality gain ascendancy and are then supplanted, has been readily identified. This thesis has outlined a lineal progression from Christian/technological spirituality, to a utilitarian/economic form, followed finally by an environmental/ecological expression.

Categorisation of spiritual models and concepts of linear development are helpful insofar as they highlight a range of distinctive values and cohere with narratives of historical change. They provide a starting point in approaching spirituality in relation to other rivers in the country. Nevertheless, examination of Pakeha interaction with the Hutt River indicates limitations in the models as well. Characterisation of spiritual values in terms of epochal shifts obscures the diversity of outlooks that functioned in certain periods and categories. Christian responses during initial settlement varied whilst utilitarian values have adapted over time and accommodated new influences. Even during the early years of frustration with the river efforts had been made to control it and during the years of utilitarian dominance the seeds of other priorities including conservation and stewardship were taking root. More latterly environmental priorities have intermingled with utilitarian ones resulting in a complex scene of reconfigured understandings. The same can be argued for aesthetic values which functioned in various forms throughout all the major periods. Reflecting on the Hutt River experience helps to focus on factors which might otherwise be overlooked in the wider context of other New Zealand rivers. The lineal understanding of nature spirituality is helpful but not as definitive or straightforward as the frameworks of Darragh, Flannery, Smith and others might suggest.

In the Hutt's history no element held total sway among Pakeha during any one period. A diverse interplay of values was clearly at work within each epoch from the very beginning of European settlement, forming various accommodations, a pattern which has continued through to the present day. Whilst some spiritual expressions came and went, others were long lasting and influential during more than one epoch.

The Hutt River experience also confirms that spiritual expressions on a river can be geographically isolated so that the concept of a 'river' is in itself a construct and a range of expressions can be found along the course of the river. This was particularly evident in the different Pakeha responses to the upper river as against the lower river so that artists and anglers idea of river was quite different from the utilitarian understandings of inhabitants in the lower river valley.

Additionally, the Hutt story has shown that spiritual values which dominate for long periods of time and are considered environmentally negative also contain the capacity to lay the foundations from which new and positive spiritual influences may ultimately take root and grow. This complex phenomenon occurred when utilitarian values empowered a new relationship with the natural environment of the lower river and established the context in which new environmental/ecological values and older aesthetic ones could take hold and flourish. Categorisation of spirituality based on lineal models tends to emphasise sharp change and hence obscures the continuities and the complex interrelations between periods as well as the interplays within any one period.

A second factor in the Hutt context has been the deliberate and intentional struggle for balance between utilitarian values and environmental/ecological values, thereby signalling the ongoing accommodation of differing nature values and demands on and around the river. This has been a more recent phenomenon. The advent of particular environmental values and focussed attempts to reconcile these with the existing utilitarian values has highlighted the balancing of conflicting nature spiritualities and

approaches to the natural world. It is a continuation of the ongoing complexity of spiritual expression on the river.

The struggle for balance highlights the vulnerability of waterways like the Hutt to political decision making and party political priorities. One example serves to highlight the point. Debate is currently focussed on the damming of the Whakatiki River, the last major tributary of the Hutt before it reaches the sea. The Whakatiki is a spectacular landscape in its upper and lower reaches. Conservation voices in Wellington argue that the region's cities must learn to conserve water resources to prevent the invasive construction of dams. The solution, it is argued, lies in the introduction of water meters so that consumers are encouraged to conserve through a user pays philosophy.²⁶⁷ The election of a 'green leaning' mayor in Wellington in 2010 will help focus the debate.

In the meanwhile, a third large storage lake at Te Marua is to be built. Additionally, a proposal emerged during 2010 for water abstraction from the Hutt River at Kaitoke weir to be increased through a reduction in the accepted minimal flow levels of the Hutt River from 600 litres to 400 litres per second for three years so that the current water storage lakes at Te Marua can be earthquake strengthened. This in turn has given rise to debates focussed around the consequent impacts on ecosystems, toxic algal growth and fish habitat.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ The debate around this issue is outlined in *Water for Wellington: Draft Conservation and Efficiency Plan* (Wellington: Wellington City Council, 2010).

²⁶⁸ "Hutt City and GWRC in Riverside Face Off", *Upper Hutt Leader*, 10 November 2010, 14.

The Hutt is indicative of a wider phenomenon referred to in the *Proposed National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management*, which emphasises the “balancing of cultural, ecological, economic and social goals for management of New Zealand’s freshwater resources.”²⁶⁹ The report identifies a range of objectives which need to be balanced to achieve best use of the nation’s freshwater resources. These objectives include the well-being of people and communities, improvement of water quality, protection of life supporting capacity and ecosystems, addressing degradation issues, managing water demand, ensuring efficient use and monitoring and ensuring the values and interests of the tangata whenua are maintained.²⁷⁰

This research has revealed a dynamic and changing river spirituality marked by the existence of diverse values and a ready interplay of ideas both within and between broadly defined periods. It highlights the limitations of other models which have been used in the discussion of Pakeha nature spirituality, and the struggle for balance between opposing outlooks and priorities on the waterway. These factors are in turn reflective of a wider debate involving rivers on a national level.

The river’s historical context has been an instructive lense into spiritual dynamics pertaining to one specific New Zealand river. It has illuminated an hitherto unexplored

²⁶⁹ Ministry for the Environment, *Proposed National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management* (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 2009), 1.

²⁷⁰ Ministry for the Environment, *Proposed National Policy Statement*, 2-3.

realm of Pakeha spirituality and the findings have granted an insight into Pakeha interaction and responses not only into one river context but also into other rivers and the wider milieu of Pakeha nature spirituality.

In 1986, Eddie Durie wrote in the foreword to *Faces of the River*: “Rivers are an invitation to confront ourselves. The river teaches us where we have been, where we are now and where we might be going.”²⁷¹ Durie’s observation sums up neatly the findings and challenge of this thesis.

²⁷¹ E. Durie, “Foreword”, in Young and Foster, *Faces of the River: New Zealand’s Living Water* (Auckland: TVNZ Publishing, 1986), 6.

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