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## Notes

- 1 A term used by Michael Billig and cited by Stephanie Taylor and Margaret Wetherell in 'Doing National Construction Work: Discourses of National Identity', *SITE* 30 (1995), 69-84.
- 2 The translation is Michael King's in *Being Pakeha*, pp. 210-212.
- 3 It is interesting that Frame should immediately liken the marginalisation of her country to the marginalisation of her illness. Indeed, Margaret Atwood has described the postcolonial/ settler sense of being neither here nor there as a condition of madness: 'A person who is "here" but would rather be somewhere else is an exile or a prisoner; a person who is "here" but *thinks* he is somewhere else is insane' (Atwood 1996, 18).
- 4 Dorothy Jones uses the apt phrase 'double vision' in 'The Antipodes of Empire', p.82.
- 5 I have extracted this notion from Frame's comment earlier in the same volume: 'A state of restlessness can be infectious and any departure from an artist's planned routine can be a trigger to anarchy as the ideas, looking in, find nowhere to come home to' (1985, 81).
- 6 Schaffer, p.513.

GREG O'BRIEN

## SAT UP AND WATCHED GO BY

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The river watched the road  
go by,

stood still as a menagerie  
flooded the ridge—

one person's sow, another's  
paradise duck. Now only

invisible traffic takes  
the river road.

Terraced, palaced  
like the music

of Palestrina—a finely placed  
sense of the tragic,

and the landscape as if  
tragedy made sense

of it—the brooding mistress's  
green corner,

asphalt embedded in clay  
above the falling

road, the signs  
the living

and dead go by—seventeen  
signatures

in a visitors' book, 'the quick  
brown road

jumps over the lazy river', then further down  
'what are all these Maori idols

doing in your church?' And whose  
is that mangy ghost dog?

Its own dog. Whose corrugated iron  
dirt floor, and where

does the swing bridge swing?  
Graves afloat

just beneath their hillside, like  
the smoke that lives

inside valley chimneys. When roadworks  
appear between the hilltop

and the river, the settlement  
is unsettled, the graves

riding the movement of soil  
down the slope—

and anything gone wrong in the valley

is blamed on these disturbed

ancestral bones. When the road is  
repaired, the roadworks

moved along, the valley regains  
its equilibrium.

This way the river grows  
and goes

onward. A gift of seven hats.  
A silent, barking dog.

~

A resting place. You could count  
the pongas

from the river to the roadside  
statue,

the wooden bench which is  
always warm.

'Dogs,' the old guy says,  
'and spirits

keep it.' This last year waiting  
a week for the rain

to lift before painting the statue –  
his twice yearly

pilgrimage to visit  
with his brush

the blue rode, white gown, a golden rose  
between her toes.

Another coat to warm the valley.  
Another shade.

The rain resuming before his brushwork  
dried, this year

he went inside, he went down  
the valley,

his colours striated, an undulating  
membrane of paint

lifting off. In flakes.  
Scattered among

the yellow leaves. Where he wandered  
off. He who could talk

the river up a tree, and talk  
the river down,

silent.

~

A river subsides, a road  
slips into it,

depositing jetboats, tree trunks,  
the rafter of the church

a boy swam out for, then paddled  
back to shore.

'Back to nature,' like the Barraud painting  
the sisters found

behind an impression of the  
Sacred Heart.

Or beyond nature—the island  
on the river

on which a battle  
took place,

now only a clod, dissolving  
or dissolved.

February, the river claimed another,  
but left the man's spirit

wandering from house to  
unsettled house,

finally appeased or vanquished by  
the sprinkling

of holy (or was it river) water. And,  
against his return,

the playing of music—  
Led Zeppelin

two weeks resounding off  
the dirt floors—so loud

it came right through  
the convent walls

and in their bathtubs  
the sisters watched

the waters  
move.

~

Paddocks rearranged, fenceposts.  
Two years after

the nuns' flock vanished, a cheque arrives,  
rural delivery—

a stockman had recognised the earmark  
on the stolen sheep,

forwarded payment to the sisters.  
Some things

you can't blame on a river—  
crossing a swingbridge

by horse, five or six cattle  
following at a time,

if one of them panicked they would all  
lose their balance,

you'd join them in the river  
forty metres below.

Which is where these lines might  
settle

or keep going, like the actor  
who can deliver

his lines—in this case, Hamlet—  
cartwheeling across the stage.

The way the river goes—these skeletons  
sitting up

by the time they reach the road.  
Time chipping away

at itself—layers of paint dislodged,  
revealing the coat of six

months before. Blue and then green.  
These laws, pongas,

the river goes by—has gone by  
or gone without.

The ten or twelve calm eyes  
following you

across the swaying bridge. This,  
your impeccable Hamlet.

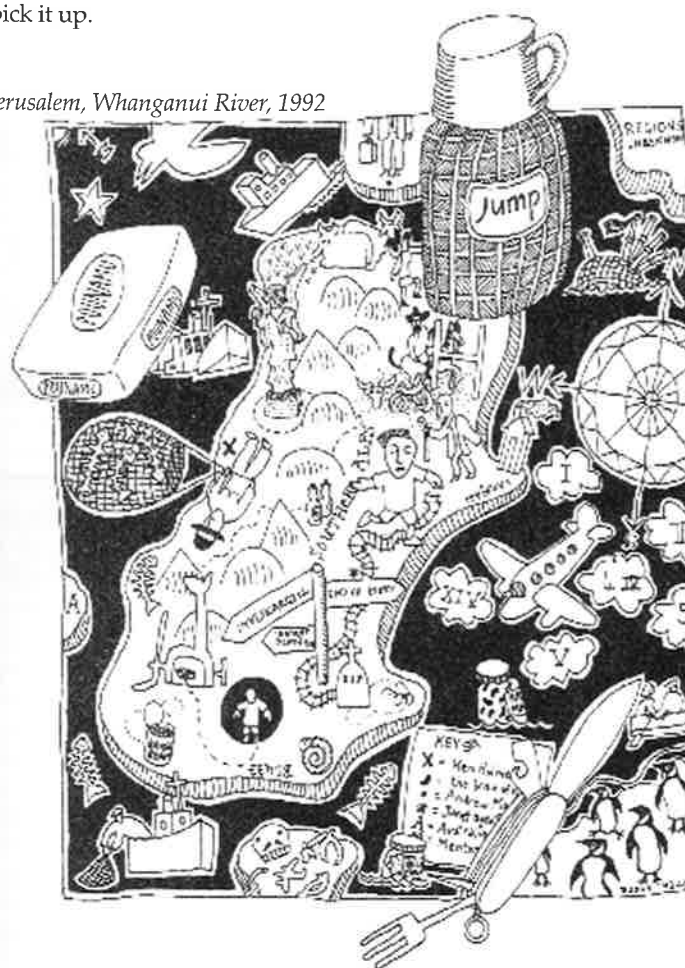
And though the hillside might  
fall away

and keep falling, forever  
losing

its tumbling,  
tragic

coat. The river will  
pick it up.

Jerusalem, Whanganui River, 1992



Jerusalem – or Hiruharama, as it is called in Maori – is a small settlement inland 70 kilometres from the North Island town of Wanganui.

The population of the settlement is entirely Maori with the partial exception of the Home of Compassion nuns who, while of European or Pacific Island descent, are all adopted members of the Whanganui River tribe. In the early 1990s I stayed at Jerusalem a number of times with Sister Rita, my aunt. 'Sat up and watched go by' is an account of events in the village during one of these visits. The poem finally made the journey back up the River Road last year when it was published in my collection *WINTER I WAS*.

One of the Sisters now living up the river had been mailed a copy of the book. It arrived on a special day. At the end of the financial year, the Hiruharama Marae Fund still had some money left in it so the village elders decided to hire a bus and take the entire population of the settlement down to Palmerston North (150km away) for lunch at 'Valentine's'. The bus, travelling down the winding road which runs adjacent to the river, met the mail-van driving the other way and the settlement's mail was offloaded into the crowded bus. Upon opening the package containing *WINTER I WAS*, Sister Susan Cosgrove read the poem aloud to the high-spirited, receptive passengers heading lunchwards. And so the poem was reunited, happily it has to be said, with its subjects.

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## ERIC PAWSON

### 'TIPPED WITH ALPINE GLOW'? MOUNTAINS IN THE NEW ZEALAND IMAGINATION

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Arguably New Zealand since European settlement has always been an urban land. It was settled from planted towns, its important trades have always been coordinated through towns, since the early twentieth century a majority of its people have lived in towns. In 'Living Here', Cilla McQueen imagines that 'this place is just one big city' with its 'suburbs strung out in a long line' from north to south, between ocean horizon and mountain ranges (in Eggleton 1999, 14).

In visual terms, however, it is the coastline and the mountains – not the towns – that are the dominant features of the landscape. Less than a quarter of the surface area lies below 200 metres and a considerable portion is above 600 metres. The Southern Alps start at the south western, heavily fiorded tip of the South Island and sweep up its length. All told, there are about 223 named peaks rising above 2300 metres; the highest at 3754 metres being Aoraki-Mount Cook, surrounded by permanent icefields and glaciers. The alpine zone loses prominence in the North Island, but still finds expression as a series of rugged hills, as well as volcanic peaks of the central plateau (Figure 1).