

1839 Exchanges: Jewellery by Jason Hall

Damian Skinner

Talking across the fence

1839 Exchanges: Jewellery by Jason Hall extends Hall's investigation of the relationship between contemporary jewellery, identity and the historical responsibilities of Pākehā first coherently voiced in *Jason Hall: Ornaments for the Pākehā* (2004).¹ *Ornaments* looked at the way in which jewellery has been crucial in the articulation of a post-war Pākehā identity. Asking what might be appropriate 'ornaments for the Pākehā', a settler ethnicity deeply implicated in colonialism and the oppression of Māori, the exhibition was an argument about craft history and a larger discussion of the instabilities that affect settler society in Aotearoa.

A sequel in a chronological sense, *1839 Exchanges* is perhaps better described as a prequel, since this exhibition develops the argument by travelling back in time and filling in the back story. One of the difficulties for contemporary Pākehā identity is the unequal exchange between Pākehā and Māori, in which Pākehā control all the resources and institutions of power. This hasn't always been the case, and if we look back to earlier moments of colonisation we find situations in which cross-cultural contact and exchange were not necessarily tied to exploitation. 1839, the year before Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi, was signed between Māori and the British Crown, is a period when relations between Māori and Pākehā were radically different. Māori outnumbered Pākehā, who needed to engage with Māori cultural, social, political and technological structures to survive in a new land. That's one dimension of the title, which also points to the multitude of exchanges between Māori and Pākehā. Māori were early adaptors of European technologies and economics, and they exchanged from a position of strength. Pākehā adapted to Māori culture and politics from a position of necessity.

There's plenty of material culture to back this up, objects around which a different tale of Māori and Pākehā interactions might be forged. In *Making Peoples: A history of the New Zealanders from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century*, James Belich writes that:

In 1815, John Nicholas met a Maori chief, Te Puhi, who possessed a very unusual weapon, a patu, or club, beaten with infinite patience from bar iron. . . . If museums were to choose one object to symbolise the Maori response to contact, Te Puhi's iron patu might be it. From the outset, Maori adapted, even converted, European objects. The early explorers saw perfect earrings ground from bits of glass, large nails made into chisels, small nails made into fish-hooks.²

The iron patu is an example of cross-cultural exchange, and the often-surprising use that one culture will make of another culture's materials and objects. It represents a moment of strength, when, as Belich suggests, Māori directed the flow of consumer goods into the country, influencing the kinds of goods traded by Europeans and thus ensuring that the objects most useful to their purposes became the currency of

¹ For more information see Damian Skinner, *Jason Hall: Ornaments for the Pākehā*. Porirua: Pataka, 2004.

² James Belich, *Making Peoples: A history of the New Zealanders from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century*. Auckland: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1996, pp.148-149.

exchange. New objects and materials were seamlessly adapted into Māori cultural, social and economic structures.

Initially Hall planned to respond to Te Pahi's iron patu with a pounamu axe. This object was to be a typically shaped European axe, of the kind readily traded in Aotearoa in the early 1830s, but carved from stone rather than made of wood and metal. This transformation in material would signal a kind of settler fragility, and a necessary peace with a land and society that was entirely different to the Europe they had left. While the British declared Aotearoa to be part of the British Empire in 1840, this was a nominal control. Settlers were heavily reliant on the surrounding Māori communities and their production of food, as well as maintaining an adroit knowledge of and relationship to local politics. The pounamu axe was also intended to represent a European adaptation of Māori material culture which, while not as prevalent as the other kind of exchange, still took place. It brought into view the question that Hall had set out to answer in *1839 Exchanges*: how might Pākehā have constructed their identities in a new land and social setting by adapting the (Māori) material resources available to them?

There is a cultural phenomenon that perfectly embodies the tensions and opportunities addressed in *1839 Exchanges*. Known as Pākehā Māori, they were European men and women who came to Aotearoa and adopted Māori ways of life. As Trevor Bentley writes:

Pakeha Maori were the foreigners who became part of the tribe and were treated by Maori as Maori. Some were kept as exotic curiosities or trading intermediaries. Others were designated traditional roles as slaves, artisans and fighting men. A handful became white chiefs and priests.⁵

According to Bentley, the Pākehā Māori of the early nineteenth century never fit easily into categories of class or race, and they have suffered in a kind of historical 'no-man's land' ever since. As Bentley puts it:

They are portrayed in the primary and secondary literature as unsavoury, promiscuous characters, overfond of alcohol and violence. Yet close scrutiny of the contemporary evidence reveals a unique class of men (and women) possessed of the knowledge, skills and courage necessary to prosper among a warrior society rent by intertribal gun warfare. Missionaries, temporary visitors and early settlers cast them as renegades, outcasts and outlanders while hiring them as guides, interpreters and bartering agents. Colonial governors and their officials considered them troublemakers, obstacles to progress but employed them as ships' pilots, military scouts and mediators between the tribes and government.⁴

Appealing outlaws, reviled by the missionaries and colonial government, Pākehā Māori are exactly the kind of hybrid cultural identities we seek in order to escape the binaries of contemporary cultural politics. Dismissed because they transgressed the codes of their own social moment, they become worthy ancestors for the Pākehā who wishes to imagine a different past to the bloody legacy of colonialism.

Luckily Hall never made the pounamu axe, choosing instead to create objects with a richer and more complex engagement with the dynamics of settler society. His decision identifies and responds to the central problem found in my construction of

³ Trevor Bentley, *Pakeha Maori: the extraordinary story of the Europeans who lived their lives as Maori in early New Zealand*. Auckland: Penguin, 1999, p.9.

⁴ Bentley, p.10.

1839 Exchanges as an attempt to flee history, to effectively undo the history of colonialism by time travelling to a moment before Pākehā became thieves, unjustly occupying someone else's land. It is, in effect, another version of the Pākehā search for indigeneity. Ani Mikaere has argued that this desire to be native is driven by the guilt that Pākehā carry from colonialism and their role as inheritors of the spoils from the system of oppression.⁵ To overcome the guilt of white privilege, Pākehā seek a state of nativity that involves becoming severed from the colonial past, and somehow born from the country itself. Pākehā, in this construction, are not linked to colonialism, but are instead a product of a more modern Aotearoa. As such we are no longer required to carry the burden of guilt for the history that produced us, and our current identity as settlers.

Settler nativity is, in Mikaere's opinion, a form of amnesia that must not be allowed to go unchallenged. To accept the forgetting that it entails is to accept Pākehā privilege and its consequences as something natural or inevitable. In such conditions Māori run the risk of internalising stereotypes that are an outcome of colonialism as though they were inherent character traits, and Pākehā are not able to – or encouraged to – take responsibility for the injustices perpetuated in their name. Mikaere proposes that the binary of oppressor and oppressed can be broken by recourse to the process of tikanga, a system of ethnical behaviour based on fundamental principles and values. She writes:

Let us begin by talking about the relationship between tangata whenua (loosely translated as hosts) and manuhiri (visitors or guests). When manuhiri go into the area of another people, it is understood that the tikanga of the tangata whenua apply. While there are variations between iwi and hapū in way in which tikanga is practised, there is no question that within the domain of the tangata whenua, it is their interpretation and application of the principles underpinning tikanga that prevails. . . . Nor would manuhiri ever assume tangata whenua status in another people's domain. That is not to say that people from outside an iwi area never took up residence within that iwi's boundaries: there are precedents that show such arrangements took place, whether on a seasonal basis (for example, for food-gathering purposes) or otherwise. But arrangements of this type were always carefully negotiated, and the consent of the tangata whenua was imperative, as was the fulfillment of any conditions they laid down. And always, it was the relationship between the two parties that mattered most. Both sides were expected to actively nurture the relationship, with the concept of utu or reciprocity operating to bind them together more closely as time passed.⁶

The problem, for Mikaere, is that manuhiri (Pākehā) are controlling the tikanga, rather than being guided by the tikanga of tangata whenua as is correct. To live in this situation is to upset the order, and to create the conditions for guilt that eat at Pākehā and prevent us from ever settling our identity.

While Pākehā Māori are a model of what Mikaere suggests and notable for their willingness to live within tikanga Māori, such identities are removed from contemporary grasp by the colonialism that separates the present from the early decades of the nineteenth century. Relief, however, might still be at hand, located in the consequences of colonialism itself. As Jo T. Smith writes, “Vagrant”, “usurper”, “thief” are three of the many possible terms that might be used to replace orthodox notions of settler identity and to highlight the claims to power that inform *all*

⁵ Ani Mikaere, *Are We All New Zealanders Now? A Māori response to the Pākehā quest for indigeneity*. Bruce Jesson Memorial Lecture 2004. Online.

<http://www.brucejesson.com/lecture2004.html> (29 September 2007)

⁶ Mikaere, *Are we all New Zealanders now?*

discussions of cultural belonging'.⁷ For Smith, Mikaere's recourse to tikanga to structure Māori/Pākehā relations is a move that offers alternatives to existing systems of power, a strategy that can emerge from the moment when Pākehā accept their status as vagrants and thieves, and thus provide themselves with the 'means to enter into relations with other economies of belonging and other sets of historical, epistemological and esoteric knowledges, to throw into question the basis of one's cultural identity and social power'. As Smith puts it, 'To affirm one's vagrancy is to affirm another's sovereignty'.

It is a possibility affirmed by Simon During, who argues that the 'settler subject' can begin to acknowledge the previously unsayable in the contemporary moment of postcolonialism. 'Settler disavowal of colonialist relations is becoming impossible, and with it the dream of a culture based on white inscription of a "virgin" land'.⁸ During argues that it is the very instability and emptiness of settler identity that offers hope, reminding us 'that our heritage is compelling because it cannot serve unruffled cultural reproduction or mindless white hegemony'.⁹ During writes:

It is in this situation that the old settler culture, based on bloody transactions, decentrings, loss, horror, stupidity, confusion, hesitancy and repression, reinscribes its bases in us – citizens of the postcolonial state. Or to change the inflection, in the postcolonial moment the wonder of settler culture can be celebrated most of all by showing how it does *not* help us adjust to the space we find ourselves in, as heirs to an illegitimate social order.¹⁰

Because the past can never be erased, settler countries like Aotearoa have the opportunity to become genuinely postcolonial by acknowledging the limits of their own legitimacy. Nativity, the claim to be indigenous, somehow untouched by the legacy of colonialism – to reside, in other words, in 1839 – is a barrier to contemporary possibilities of identity that transcend old categories.

Hall's work has always understood this. We live, so his work makes clear, under the shadow of the fence line. The boundary is the reality of being Pākehā in Aotearoa. We know that there are cultural boundaries that cannot be breached – to do so is to be guilty of appropriation, of causing offence. Hence the power of Hall's work with gates and pickets, reinterpreted for this exhibition. Hall's work is powerful because it recognises that borders can be tricky – false signs of commonality that in fact mark irrevocable difference.

1839 Exchanges is predicated on the awareness that we cannot escape the fence line, the boundary line, and indeed that we don't want to do so. The truth of the fence line is what powers an engagement with being Pākehā. Since 2003 Hall has been working with the picket, a ubiquitous sign of Pākehā or settler culture. There have been three versions of the pickets – *Home* (2003), in which the pickets are carved from bone on a brooch scale; *Stake* (2005), in which Hall made actual-sized pickets in pine; and *Boundary* (2007), first exhibited as part of *1839 Exchanges*.

⁷ Jo T. Smith, 'Postcultural Hospitality: settler-native-migrant encounters', unpublished essay developed from a paper presented at the *Biculturalism/Multiculturalism* conference, School of Culture, Literature and Society, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1-3 September 2005.

⁸ Simon During, 'Postcolonialism and globalisation', *Meanjin* v.51, n.2, 1992, p.351.

⁹ During, p.352.

¹⁰ During, p.353.

Jason Hall

Boundary

2007

pine, whitewash, polyurethane, pigment, charcoal

2400 x 120 x 30 mm (each picket)

Photography: Chris Zissiadis

Oversized, the pickets of *Boundary* loom over the viewer. The three colours of white, red and black make reference to the classic colours of kōwhaiwhai patterns, curvilinear designs painted on the heke, rafters, of whare whakairo, meeting houses. This enforces the visual similarity between Hall's work with pickets and the palisades that surrounded pā, fortified settlements, and were intended to repel attackers. Yet Hall's colours have a particular resonance within local histories of colonialism. Whitewash is an obvious reference, its main ingredient, lime, a quickening agent that speeds up decomposition – hence its use in the mass graves of genocide. Red pigment set in polyurethane is like blood, the pickets coated in repeated layers that congeals and pools over the surface of the pine. And black, created by actually setting the pickets on fire, has resonance on many levels: the fires of destruction that colonialism set in play; clearing the land for cultivation through burn-offs; the ashes of history and the past.

Boundary is, then, Hall's opening salvo as a Pākehā jeweller, a replacement for the pounamu axe, and a work that better articulates the anxieties and shadows of settlers in Aotearoa, making a virtue of the inevitable. Planted firmly in the conceptual earth of *1839 Exchanges*, *Boundary* is a line in the sand.

F.E. Maning: Pākehā Māori

1839 Exchanges tackles the contradictory and complex issues of the settler subject through the life and writings of Frederick Edward Maning, the most famous of the Pākehā Māori and an individual as contradictory and complex as the period in which he lived. His story is the vehicle Hall uses to explore the questions of exchange, power and identity that are at the heart of his artistic project. In this sense, *1839 Exchanges* is 'ornaments for Maning', and jewellery that mediates the distance between Pākehā Māori and our contemporary cultural moment.

Maning was an Irishman who arrived in Aotearoa in 1833 and became a trader. Advising Māori not to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, and generally antagonistic to the colonial authorities, Maning later became a Māori Land Court judge in the 1860s, and a member of the European colonial gentry. As David Colquhoun's essay in this catalogue suggests, Maning is fascinating because in the 1860s, the period when he wrote his famous account of early colonisation titled *Old New Zealand: a tale of the good old times*, he had become increasingly alienated from Māori and their struggles to resist Pākehā settlement. *Old New Zealand* is as much an attempt to distance Maning from his past as it is an account of the early days of Pākehā Māori contact. Maning writes as a Pākehā aspiring to leave his past behind him, increasingly contemptuous of the people and events he discusses in the book.

It is no surprise, then, that contemporary Pākehā find this aspect of Maning's life the most difficult to deal with. It is tempting to skip over it, ignore it, explain it away as a kind of later fall from grace that doesn't deserve as much attention as Maning's

earlier identity. Indeed, John Nicholson goes to far as to suggest that Maning's double life has been the issue around which previous would-be biographers have fallen foul – Maning's unappealing attitudes and opinions conflicting so dramatically with his much more sympathetic public persona. The road of New Zealand history is littered with discarded projects related to Maning, each writer, in Nicholson's words, 'faltering as they encountered the first evidence of Maning's changing face, giving up when Maning's excoriating racism became too loud to ignore'.¹¹

Pākehā find this aspect of Maning's story difficult because it points to the inherent racism and oppression of the colonial experience. Rather than being pregnant with possibility for a kind of bicultural and cross-cultural identity, this later period in Maning's life represents the refusal to engage and the strong possibility that such cultural communication can't and won't be achieved – that colonisation cannot be escaped. In one life, Maning represents (from a contemporary perspective) both the hopeful reality of a world in which Māori retained their sovereignty (and in which Pākehā adapted), and the depressing reality of how quickly colonialism triumphed, leaving injustice and bloodshed in its wake. It is a point that Nicholson makes in his biography of Maning. Commenting on *Old New Zealand's* humorous depiction of the narrator's relationship with his protector Kaitoke – one which is heavily weighted in favour of Māori – Nicholson writes:

Maning's satirical treatment of his contact with Kaitoke – for all its self-depreciation – clearly shows the power imbalance that still pertained between Maori and Pakeha. Frederick Maning's story is all about power. His life provides a potent allegory for the relentless reversal in that power balance that would occur right across New Zealand in the years to come.¹²

It is important, then, that *1839 Exchanges* pays attention to the later Maning, for in this unappealing and difficult character we find sufficient complexity to ensure we never move too far from the fence line. Maning's later attitudes pin us down, keeping the instability of Pākehā identity and the settler subject at the centre of the cultural problematic that Hall's jewellery seeks to engage.

Scenes from the life of F.E. Maning

Hall's work in *1839 Exchanges* takes the amulet as a jewellery touchstone. According to Sheila Paine, 'An amulet is a device, the purpose of which is to protect, but by magical and not physical means – a lump of meteorite worn against gunfire is an amulet, a bullet-proof vest is not'. Amulets are closely related to charms, which are 'believed to bring good luck, health and happiness', but while a charm 'might also be expected to protect from bad luck, sickness and misery . . . protection is not its primary function'. They also share properties with talismans, 'something thought to be imbued with some magical property' which can 'both protect, and radiate power'.¹³

Most cultures have made use of the amulet, in which some part of that which is feared (a tooth or claw, for example) is suspended and worn in order to ward off the object

¹¹ John Nicholson, *White Chief: The story of a Pakeha-Maori – The colourful life and times of Judge F.E. Maning of the Hokianga*. Auckland: Penguin, 2006, p.10.

¹² Nicholson, p.59.

¹³ Sheila Paine, *Amulets: A world of secret powers, charms and magic*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, p.10.

of fear. Animal amulets function in two ways. In many cultures animals are believed to be dangerous, possessed by evil spirits, or the practitioners or victims of magic in disguise, and thus demanding protective measures. If the amulet is closer to a talisman, it will bestow the properties or characteristics of the animal on the person who wears it. As Paine writes:

It is particularly in body parts – a tooth, a claw, a bone, horn, foot or feather – that animals are used as amulets. Such parts are believed to contain the life-force of the animal and its particular qualities – such as power, speed, cunning, fertility – and to transfer them by magic to the wearer of the amulet.¹⁴

While the tooth or claw will vary depending on locality, the power of the amulet and what it is believed to impart to the wearer, is universal. Paine notes that animal teeth are commonly used in amulets as ‘the bared teeth of a wild animal are a powerful signal to stay away’, and while a wide range of animal teeth are favoured for amulets ‘it is particularly animals whose strength spells danger, such as lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs and panthers, hyenas, wild dogs, jackals, wolves and bears, that are held in awe’.¹⁵

Colonial jewellery in Aotearoa has a strong tradition of capping native animal and bird parts, and examples of Māori material culture. These were set in silver and gold claws and caps, and then pinned to clothes as brooches or hung on chains from gentlemen’s waistcoats. While this jewellery was concerned with finding ways to create a local identity for the settlers who wore it, there is also a strong sense of the amulet. These adornments are a mark of the success of the colonial project – one caps that which has been vanquished – and a sign of fear – the tension that sits at the heart of settler societies around the question of native and indigenous, and how settlers might construct a convincing claim of belonging to a land they have stolen. In *1839 Exchanges* the claw and cap are also a sign of the fence line or boundary, and the border that cannot be escaped and which necessarily regulates contact between cultures and identities.

In a sense, then, Hall has created a series of amulets for different scenes in Maning’s life. These are ambiguous objects – it is not always clear, for example, who Hall’s amulets might be protecting, or the specific fears they ward off. Interestingly, too, he hasn’t distinguished between what we might call the public myth of Maning’s identity – at his ebullient, romantic best in *Old New Zealand*, or his literary persona of an unidentified Māori man writing about the events surrounding Hone Heke and the cutting down of the flagstaff at Kororāreka, Russell – and a private Maning, the bitter racist who writes late in life about a past he is firmly trying to leave behind.

Fortune tellers

Let’s begin with the works that predict the future. Maning writes about köpere, or darts, in both *Old New Zealand* and *Heke’s War in the North of New Zealand*, demonstrating the variety of uses they had within Māori culture. In the first, köpere play a role in the pōwhiri, or ceremonial meeting, between the Ngāpuhi that Maning’s narrator is staying with, and an iwi called Te Rarawa who live across the river. A peaceful encounter is possible but not guaranteed, and Maning’s narrator finds

¹⁴ Paine, p.108.

¹⁵ Paine, p.108.

himself in the middle of a tense stand off at Pakanae pä and village. In Maning's words:

Takini; takini! is the cry, and out spring three young men, the best runners of our tribe, to perform the ceremony of the *taki*. They hold in their hands some reeds to represent darts or *kokiri*. . . . At last, after several feints, they boldly advance within twenty yards of the supposed enemy, and send the reed darts flying full in their faces; then they turn and fly as if for life. Instantly, from the stranger ranks, three young men dart forth in eager pursuit; and behind them comes the solid column, rushing on at full speed. Run now, O 'Sounding Sea' (*Tai Haruru*), for the 'Black Cloud' (*Kapua Mangu*), the swiftest of the Rarawa, is at your back; run now, for the honour of your tribe and your own name, run! run!¹⁶

It is, as Maning's narrator writes, 'an exciting scene', a test of skill and daring in which the manuhiri, visitors, seek to capture the runners from the tangata whenua, people of the land, before they can make safety.

Köpere again feature in Maning's account of Hone Heke's famous assault on the flagstaff at Kororäreka. Maning's Māori narrator speaks of the events of the night before the first attack on the 8th July 1844, saying:

When they had formed this plan, and night was come, the priests of the war party threw darts to divine the event. They threw one for Heke, and one for the soldiers, and one for the flagstaff: and the dart for Heke went straight and fair, and fortunate; but the dart for the soldiers turned to one side, and fell with the wrong side up; so did that for the flagstaff. When this was told the people they were very glad, and had no longer any fear.¹⁷

Köpere were used to predict the future, flying between the known and unknown, a sign of impending victory or defeat depending on how they landed – right side up for victory, and wrong side up as an omen of death.

Jason Hall

The pīwaiwaka carries a terrible message

2007

tötara, bone, parchment, steel, ink

100 x 40 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

Jason Hall

The huia travels through time

2007

tötara, bone, parchment, steel, ink

165 x 40 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

Hall has made two köpere for *1839 Exchanges*. With bodies of tö tara and bone and tails of parchment, Hall's köpere are marked and weathered, ink staining the materials black. Tötara and bone are materials with rich meanings within Māori material culture, the one used most notably in whakairo, wood carving, and the other commonly used for adornment. The parchment feathers make reference to writing, to European history, and to Maning's identity as a storyteller. For Māori, the pīwaiwaka

¹⁶ Frederick Edward Maning, *Old New Zealand: A tale of the good old times, together with a History of the War in the North of New Zealand against the Chief Heke in the Year 1845 as told by an Old Chief of the Ngapuhi Tribe, also Maori Traditions*. Edited by T.M. Hocken. Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1930, pp.44-45.

¹⁷ Maning, p.225.

is an omen of death, its appearance inside the house a forewarning that someone is going to pass away. With its fat, angled body and steel nib, *The piwaiwaka carries a terrible message* is a sign of the turmoil and death that accompanies the arrival of Maning and the culture he represents. The other köpere, *The huia travels through time*, is long and thin and evokes the huia. Extinct since 1907, huia feathers were greatly prized as a mark of high rank. Here the huia travels to the future to warn us of its fate. Arriving from the past to the present, these köpere are bad omens.

The horns of history

With *1839 exchanges (carved cow's horn)* Hall makes reference to the historical precedent of the powder horn, used to store and transport small amounts of gunpowder. Usually crafted from a cow's horn and often decorated with images and the names of their owners, powder horns were the poor man's cartridge box, a natural container capped with silver and suspended from straps. Still in use in the early 1800s, they became obsolete during Maning's lifetime with the advent of paper cartridges, and were replaced by the cartridge box, a fact Maning himself noted in *Old New Zealand*, describing Māori warriors in the 1830s as 'quite naked except their arms and cartridge boxes, which are a warrior's clothes'.¹⁸ *1839 exchanges (carved cow's horn)* plays a game of false appearances, designed to trick the audience. Carved from pine, it is not really made of bone at all. In a sense this connects to our experience of Maning – not who or what we thought (and hoped) he was.

Jason Hall

1839 exchanges (carved cow's horn)

2007

pine, silver, whitewash

200 x 65 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

Jason Hall

1839 exchanges (carved pig's tusk)

2007

pounamu, silver

90 x 25 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

Jason Hall

1839 exchanges (carved deer antler)

2007

pine, silver, whitewash

115 x 35 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

Jason Hall

1839 exchanges (forged whale's tooth)

2007

iron

115 x 42 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

Material plays a key role in the meanings of the teeth and horns collected under the title *1839 exchanges*. Two of the works, the carved cow's horn already mentioned and

¹⁸ Maning, p.42.

1839 exchanges (carved deer antler) are carved from pine, an exotic species and an ironic nod to the trade in timber, which was the backbone of Maning's commercial activities in the 1850s. *1839 exchanges (carved pig's tusk)* is carved from pounamu, a stone which was traded heavily by Māori, and which was desirable to Pākehā as adornment. Hall's amulet is both tooth and pounamu pendant, demonstrating the connections between the traditions of setting animal parts and Māori material culture in claws and caps of silver. Finally *1839 exchanges (forged whale's tooth)* is made from iron, a nod to the prominence of metal as the basis of all early trade in Aotearoa.

Flagbearer

In 1844 the flagstaff at Kororāreka was cut down by Te Haratua, second in command to Hōne Heke, a chief of Ngāpuhi. Heke, angered by government oppression of Māori and the recent decision to transfer the capital from Kororāreka to Auckland, waged war on one of the most prominent symbols of the European settlement, cutting down the flagstaff three more times in what came to be known as 'The Flagstaff war'.

Jason Hall

Puncture I

2007

bone, silver, whitewash

115 x 15 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

Jason Hall

Puncture II

2007

bone, silver, whitewash

100 x 15 mm

Photography: Studio La Gonda

According to Maning's fictional Māori narrator, the flagstaff was believed to be responsible for the hardships afflicting Māori, and so Heke had it cut down, doing the deed himself for the final time on the 11 March 1845. In *Heke's War in the North of New Zealand*, Maning writes:

Some said all of the evil was by reason of the flagstaff which the Governor had caused to be erected at Maiki, above Kororareka, as a *rauhui*, and that as long as it remained there things would be no better; others, again, told us the flagstaff was put there to show the ships the way into the harbour; others that it was intended to keep them out; and others said that it was put up as a sign that this island had been taken by the Queen of England, and that the nobility and independence of the Maori was no more. But this one thing at least was true, we had less tobacco and fewer blankets and other European goods than formerly, and we saw that the first Governor had not spoken the truth, for he told us that we should have a great deal more. . . . At last we began to think the flagstaff must have something to do with it, so Heke went and cut it down.¹⁹

Flagpoles on ships and flagpoles on land pierced the sky and ruptured the Māori universe. Like teeth, they represent the bite of colonialism. Heke, we might say, was fighting tooth and nail for the future of his people. Capped with silver, the turned bone flagstaff becomes a tooth, made into adornment, transformed into an amulet in an act that can be read as both aggressive and placatory. Are these amulets for Heke, to be viewed from an animist perspective in which objects are believed to have

¹⁹ Maning, p.222.

agency, the ability to act in the world; or for Maning and the Pākehā, tokens of a quaint view of the world which did not survive the onslaught of colonisation?

Colonial furniture

Central to the work of *1839 Exchanges* are the turned bone pendants that Hall calls *Turning the Table* (2007). Imagine Maning as he sits at his desk, writing *Old New Zealand*. These turned bone pendants are amulets, warding off strange and unspoken fears as he returns to the past and attempts to distance himself from it. But what amulets are these, representing as they do Victorian table legs, and thus the trappings of the very culture (the higher reaches of society in the colony) that Maning strives to become part of?

Jason Hall
Turning the table
 2007
 five pendants
 laminated bone, silver
 80 x 17 mm (largest)
 Photography: Studio La Gonda

Jason Hall
Turning the table
 2007
 six pendants
 stained bone, silver
 45 x 20 mm (largest)
 Photography: Studio La Gonda

These pendants are the baggage that Maning brought with him to Aotearoa in 1833, the furniture of his mind. They make light of the fear that a well-turned table leg could engender in Victorian society, requiring table clothes and coverings. They make reference to hospitality, to food, to the dynamics of early colonial history when Māori fed Pākehā and helped them survive in a strange land. (Some of them are stained with brandy and kumara peelings, items that were traded across cultures.) And finally they make something of the idea of turning the tables, which is what Maning did in *Old New Zealand*, a gamble to leave behind his porous past in favour of an identity that upholds irrevocable difference.

Maning, it would seem, gets the last word on what his past represents. It is certainly a position that he claims in *Old New Zealand*, which begins:

Ah! Those good old times, when I first came to New Zealand; we shall never see their like again. Since then the world seems to have gone wrong somehow. A dull sort of world this now. The very sun does not seem to me to shine as bright as it used. Pigs and potatoes have degenerated, and everything seems “flat, stale, and unprofitable”. But those were the times – the “good old times” – before governors were invented, and law and justice, and all that.²⁰

Like the ‘good old times’ which are rhetorically clamped in narrative claws and held apart from the present in which Maning writes, Hall’s teeth-like forms are chained and diminished, the identifiers of a rich moment of historical possibility that has ultimately become tame decoration for the victorious Pākehā and his waistcoat. But

²⁰ Maning, p.5.

this may not necessarily be the only way of reading this jewellery. Linda Hardy has proposed a ‘settler poetics of colonisation’, in which ‘the politics of racial and cultural domination and resistance are displaced and refigured in terms of an erotic and aesthetic deficiency in European culture’.²¹ She calls this the concept of ‘natural occupancy’. As interpreted by Misha Kavka, natural occupancy

refers to a set of stories – about shipwrecks and Natives, cook-outs and golden weather, even a piano sinking to the bottom of the “deep, deep sea” – all of which willingly “surrender the furnishings of a culture both European and bourgeois [in order] to come into the sensuality of a ‘natural occupancy’ of the new land”. . . . In such fictions, the workings of colonial power are displaced onto a right of “natural occupancy”; the prior history of the land, never adequately articulated, is buried alongside the settlers’ own European bourgeois history, now seen as deficient because it’s unnatural, over-civilised.²²

As Hardy puts it, ‘The pleasure afforded by these fictions is that they allow the heirs of a settler society to imagine our unhistoric origin as the (possibility of the) making of a settlement without a colony’.²³ We have, in other words, returned to the problem of indigeneity. Natural occupancy seeks to remove the problematic of colonialism, and is thus a more beautiful version of the same impulse that leads contemporary politicians and historians to claim that Pākehā are natives, too.

In the myth of Natural Occupancy we can identify the fear that the amulets of *Turning the table* represent. The settler must not only overcome the native in order to take possession of the land, but they must bury the evidence of their own origins in Europe. This ‘furniture of the mind’ is sunk at the bottom of the ocean, as the film *The Piano* famously suggests, or interred in the soil like corpses that no longer have life in the stories that settlers desire to tell each other. But if the gothic has taught us anything, it is that the dead don’t always stay buried. No wonder Maning – and we Pākehā in the present – require a powerful magic to protect us.

Imagine Maning, then, sitting at his desk in a warm study, writing his yarn of the old days in a desperate attempt to reinvent himself as a settler native. Will these amulets be enough to ward off the shadows and spectres that lurk in the darkness beyond the lamp’s glow?

²¹ Linda Hardy, ‘Natural Occupancy’, in Suvendrini Perera (ed.), *Asian & Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, ethnicities, nationalities*. Special book issue of *Meridian*, v.14, n.2. Victoria: School of English, La Trobe University, 1995, p.214.

²² Misha Kavka, ‘Out of the kitchen sink’, in Misha Kavka, Jennifer Lawn and Mary Paul (ed.), *Gothic NZ: The darker side of Kiwi culture*. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006, pp.58-59.

²³ Hardy, p.214.