

GOVERNING VISIONS OF THE OTHER:
THE POLITICS OF ENVISIONING MĀORI AND MĀORITANGA THROUGH POST-
WORLD WAR II NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL FILM UNIT DOCUMENTARY FILM

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how Māori and Māoritanga were projected in documentary film produced by the New Zealand National Film Unit after World War II. A close look at some of the films as well as the governmentality of (filmic) vision reveals the changing strategies of power that came to shape efforts of modelling Māori and Māoritanga into dominant society. It is argued that NFU films produced an ambivalent field of vision in which Māori were at once shown as successfully integrating into the dominant political economy and provided with a sense of dignity and pride. At the same time, however, they were 'othered' with reference to discourses of exoticism that were important for tourism promotion as well as signified as deviant in areas where improvement of their condition was regarded as exigent. These modes of projection need to be understood with reference to the governmentality of documentary film and state publicity that developed around the time.

Keywords: documentary film, politics, governmentality, Māori, ethnic/'racial' identity

INTRODUCTION

This essay considers the projection of a vision of Māori and Māoritanga (*Māori culture, Māoriness*) through documentary film produced by the New Zealand National Film Unit (NFU) in the period after World War II up until the early 1960s. Its purpose is less to discuss specific films, than to unearth the politics of the real of NFU documentary film in relation to a particular set of historical knowledge/power relations, drawing on Michel Foucault's dispositive analysis and his concept of governmentality.¹ That is, this paper discusses how a vision of what is and what should be real in reference to Māori and Māoritanga was

to be cultivated through *NFU* documentary film and how such a vision related to government and politics. Foucault (2000, 341; 1991, 102–3) broadly conceived governmentality to designate the ‘conduct of conduct’; that is, a specific way of thinking about and aiming at governing the conduct of selves and others within the political economy of liberal democracies. *NFU* documentary film is discussed as a specific mode of ‘realising’ a seemingly truthful and authentic vision of ‘the real’ New Zealand, and in particular Māori and Māoritanga. The films at once provided sensory data through images and sounds, but crucially also set out to shape the imaginative and ‘visionary’ faculties of audiences who would ideally govern their selves and others into the future by drawing upon their vision of what is and should be real. In *NFU* documentary film this ‘real’ did not primarily refer to a physically given external world; rather it was the result of a teleological transcendence of the material surfaces that the camera could record by inserting the recording and arrangement of images within an apparatus that calculated their functions, effects and affect beyond what they ‘literally’ and specifically showed. Images were strategically arranged, hence creating certain narratives and filmic visions about the nation and its population. In other words, *NFU* documentary emerged from a specific set of strategies and techniques of power that arranged, controlled and directed possible knowledge about its subjects in order to advance and improve the conduct of the population and overseas audiences (as potential tourists and economic agents) through the strategic cultivation of a productive and ‘positive’ vision.

By the late 1930s in New Zealand, film had come to be regarded as one of the most powerful means of civic education, propaganda and public relations, particularly since its imagery could be universally understood and it could subtly further certain governmental objectives and economic conduct. After Labour was voted into government in 1935, the New Zealand state administration began to show a deepened interest in the use of public media, particularly radio and film, for its potential for civic education. During this time, documentary film, as defined by John Grierson, the proclaimed ‘father’ of the British Documentary Movement, was gaining force in New Zealand as a political pedagogy.² Grierson, who came to New Zealand in 1940 to advise on efficient and effective film production for governmental purposes, demanded documentary film be a ‘creative treatment of actuality’, resulting from a teleological transcendence of the material surfaces that the camera could record. That is, documentary had to move above and beyond the literality of images in order to serve a telos of social progress. Important here is thus not Grierson’s designation of a specific type of film, but his outlining of a particular approach to civic education, propaganda and public relations that implied a specific governmentality for film production by which a desirable future could be advanced.

The NFU was established in August 1941, and its main task was to produce films that furthered the war effort, particularly by building up morale, faith, affect and perceptions of mutual responsibility amongst the population. After the end of war, the NFU remained as the film division of state publicity, extended into peacetime conditions in order to educate the population for responsible and economic citizenship in a modern and progressive nation state. Thus, the state began to employ film as a 'positive' and productive means to improve the population and (self-) government. Thus the control and direction of the filmic image of New Zealand and its population became of crucial importance, not only for warfare, but also for 'peacefare'; the production and maintenance of a harmonious and docile population which would take a variety of appropriate and layered roles and functions within a liberal society.

In this sense, this essay seeks to describe a 'heterogeneous ensemble' of knowledge/power relations with reference to cinematic visions of Māori and Māoritanga as projected through NFU documentary films. I argue that the films were frequently marked by an instrumentalisation of images, implying a strategically selective adjustment of Māoritanga for filmic portrayal to suit a variety of norms, desires and perceived necessities. NFU films produced an ambivalent and normative field of vision in which Māori and Māoritanga were rendered knowable as generally normalising and successfully 'integrating' into the national political economy and were strategically provided with a sense of dignity and pride. At the same time, however, cinematic visions frequently 'othered' Māori as exotic and ancient, which was valuable for tourism promotion, as well as by cinematically establishing and seeking to diminish their 'deviance' in several areas of daily conduct.

Martin Blythe (1994, 82) has claimed that the outlook of NFU films in relation to Māori during World War II tended to 'emphasise the unity and sense of pride felt by the entirety of Maori culture ... These films are among the finest expressions of the Integration Myth and even a kind of bicultural nationalism.' Māori were generally not 'othered' as exotic or deviant in NFU films, and no documentaries were made that specifically engaged with Māori as a collective identity. After World War II, however, the focus of film production changed and the projection of Māori as a problematic Other, deviant in relation to planned economic progress and social cohesion, became common in what Blythe (1994, 88–105) termed the 'social problem documentary'.³ Further, Māoritanga had since the 19th century been subject to commodification for tourism purposes that relied on the projection of profitably 'exotic' images of Māoritanga, and these images are found particularly in films made for overseas promotion of New Zealand.⁴ NFU films rendered Māori and Māoritanga

visible in relation to governmental knowledge and policies demanding that Māori be, in official terminology, further ‘adapted and adjusted’ into the political economy, in the interests of a harmonious and efficiently functioning nation, while at the same time capitalising on specific ‘othering’ images of Māori for tourism promotion. These images were ‘exotic’ in the sense that they were strategically produced to appeal to and satisfy curiosity and interest in the unfamiliar and ‘strange’ customs of a seemingly ancient culture. NFU films cast Māori difference, in other words, in terms of both deviancy and exoticism, largely depending on the overall objectives and target audiences of specific films.

After the war, the state administration articulated a policy that aimed at ‘manufacturing public opinion’ regarding the projected socio-economic progress of the nation and related matters (‘Report on Publicity’ 1947). In this sense, it can be argued that neither the NFU nor state publicity in general was mainly focused on a disinterested or faithful representation of local actualities or in the production of film that would further ‘open’ public discourse and deliberation. As I have argued in detail elsewhere (Weckbecker 2015):

Griersonian documentary did not conceive an ideal autonomous subject that envisions the real; the subject was instead to be subjected to a vision it should embody, a vision in which the subject envisions itself as autonomous and free, thereby producing a ‘free will’ to act upon the self and others in the process of realising a ‘better’ future.

Documentary film could assist good government largely by implicitly and subtly propagating, evaluating, and interpreting certain ways of envisioning and becoming. This would be largely achieved, as Grierson (1966, 176) demanded, not through addressing and engaging reason, but through addressing the ‘subconscious’ of audiences. Subconscious knowledge, images, motivations, affect were to induce a ‘free will’ and a vision to act upon one’s self and others, and by extension the future, which, according to NFU films, would be populated by citizens who envisioned themselves and acted as though they were closely integrated and equal, who lived up to standards of a humanitarian and progressive modernity, and co-operated freely within an egalitarian society towards a ‘good modern standard of living’ for all.

Until the 1960s, when television broadcasting began in New Zealand under state control, the NFU had a clear hegemony in the audio-visual signification of New Zealand and its collective subjectivities. NFU films were regularly shown

in a variety of places, including cinemas, in which they were usually shown before the feature film, town and community halls, libraries, wharehenui (*meeting house*), marae (*courtyard before the meeting house*), and schools throughout New Zealand. In addition, overseas distribution was considerably expanded, including screenings of NFU films in cinemas, television (in the US), international ferries, film societies and at special occasions, such as industrial exhibitions. Films by the NFU provided a way for Pākehā and Māori to get to 'know' and envision one another as well as the nation at large, with reference to a set of perceived necessities, norms and desires addressed and encoded in a variety of ways within the films.

THE CHANGING TAXONOMY OF MĀORI AND MĀORITANGA

Since the filmic projection of Māori and Māoritanga was closely related to policies and strategies of population management and social engineering, it is necessary to briefly discuss the changing status of Māoritanga and the place and functions that the state administration desired for Māori in modern New Zealand. Richard Hill (2004, 2009) has argued that at least until the 1970s the focus of state policy regarding Māori remained one of 'assimilation', despite semantic changes to 'integration' in the 1940s.⁵ However, such a general perspective does not take into account the micro-strategies and techniques that were brought into play during this time, relating to the increasing attempts to salvage, preserve and revive specific and limited aspects of Māoritanga alongside efforts to 'adapt and adjust' Māori into mainstream society. Certain aspects of Māori culture were thereby defined as legitimate and even desirable for the projection of a national identity.

What slowly began to change from roughly the 1910s, and with increasing force within the state administration after Labour formed the government from 1935, was that Māori and their culture ceased to be regarded as *inherently* and naturally inferior compared to 'Western civilisation'. This discursive realignment, however, continued to be permeated by theories of race, evolution and progress as imported from Britain (see also Hill 2004, 18–20).

Population statistics, a decisive governmental technique by which the population could be rendered visible, measurable, calculable and governable, dissected 'British Subjects' in terms of 'races', and thus rendered these quantitatively comparable. They indicated that the Māori population was growing at a faster rate than the non-Māori population and Māori were not assimilating to the extent that was widely regarded desirable and necessary. Statistics indicated that Māori had a higher rate of health problems, a higher rate of delinquency

and crime, higher unemployment rates, had less formal education and skills, and belonged to the lower socio-economic class of society. Hence, as a policy paper in the late 1930s expressed it, 'the quickening of the Māori spirit, significant of vitality and growth' ('Policy of Native Education in New Zealand' late 1930s), demanded new strategies and policies. Further, anthropological theories of cultural relativism slowly gained force in educational policy, which suggested that racial and evolutionary theories that claimed an *inherent* and *natural* inferiority of Māori and Māoritanga were inappropriate or simply false (Barrington 2008, 174). In this sense, cultural relativism became an important aspect in the emergence of a more efficient dispositive of power that aimed at the adaptation and adjustment of Māori and Māoritanga; in contrast to cultural relativism, biologically grounded theories of racial inferiority had proven to be relatively powerless.

Thus there was a shift away from doctrines that marked Māori as biologically inferior to Pākehā – a biological racism, inspired by the science of eugenics which had promoted, for instance, intermarriage to facilitate biological assimilation of a presumed 'dying race' into that of Pākehā. Furthermore, this shift implied that Māoritanga increasingly ceased to be regarded as culturally inferior *per se* and as a whole – which had implied full cultural assimilation as expressed in the belief that Māoritanga as a whole would perish since it was evolutionarily obsolete. Instead, it increasingly became common practice to envision Māori and their culture as profoundly changeable and adaptable.

Colonisation had resulted in the concepts of 'Māori' and 'Māoritanga'⁶ which subsumed the heterogeneity of indigenous people and their ways of living under singular and generalising concepts. Subsequently, and increasingly from the 1930s, Māoritanga became subject to dividing practices that evaluated certain traits as positive or negative. 'Positive' aspects had to some extent be preserved and revived through the assistance of state agencies. These were almost exclusively related to the field that had been classified as 'arts and crafts' (culture in a non-exclusive, but commodifiable, dissected and narrow sense), and to some extent to Te Reo Māori. This carefully controlled revival would provide Māori with a sense of dignity and pride about themselves and also cultivate a motivation and discipline to advance their own adjustment. By extension this revival could also minimise the disintegration of Māori communities and the perceived negative effects it had on delinquency and crime. The identified negative aspects were to be diminished as this advanced the 'adaption and adjustment' of Māori into modern New Zealand and the behavioural standards a modern economy demanded in terms of the appropriate conduct of life.

Walter Nash (1942) succinctly expressed this changing governmentality in relation to the functions of state government:

The idea of a superior people is false. It must go. One simple illustration to back up my point. We have a group of people called Maoris in New Zealand. They are as good a type of people the world ever produced ... What I wanted to point out is that the Maoris were cannibals one hundred years ago, but they are as good as any of us, and better than some of us to-day. There are *no inherently superior* people in the world. There are some superior people, but *not inherently superior*. There are none we cannot lift up to our standard, and if we want to experience life in the full sense of the term, we have got to lift them up to our standard and then we can go forward into our better world together ... We have to build a better world. We are using the souls and bodies of our young people to make a new world possible.

Hence, state policy regarding Māori from the early 1930s began to change from general and total 'assimilation' to selective 'adaption and adjustment', also referred to as 'integration' (see, for instance, 'Policy of Native Education in New Zealand' late 1930s). It was still assumed that Māori had to be made fit for 'modern standards of living' in a New Zealand that was 'necessarily' primarily established around a set of values and practices imported from Britain, particularly in terms of a capitalist economy based upon imperatives of growth, efficiency, the division of labour and capital accumulation. However, Douglas George Ball (late 1930s), Senior Inspector of Native Schools, amongst others, also saw an increasing need for further 'recognition of certain aspects of Māori culture'. As Ball pointed out,

this is not done merely for the sake of the Maori culture itself, though this would in itself be considered sufficient justification, but rather as a gesture to the Maori that certain aspects of his culture are worthwhile, and that our system of education is sympathetic to his ancient culture.

In other words, the recognition of 'certain aspects' of 'his ancient culture' had a strategic function by which the state administration attempted to gain further acceptance and recognition from Māori who, in exchange, gained dignity for the 'worthwhile' aspects of their culture and their progressing integration/assimilation. This shift in policy implied a changed focus from, one might say, 'letting die' to 'making live',⁷ after it was realised that Māori were not a 'dying

race'. The invention of an essential, static and homogeneous 'ancient' culture thus aided the biopolitics of the state by at once defining Māori with reference to this imagined authentic culture, while also selectively demanding of Māori to move beyond it, to become at once more ancient *and* modern. In other words, Māori were to live an idealised presence that is constantly torn between an authentic past and a better, more desirable, future.

The shift in policy also related to the changing understanding of the role of the state towards a continuing and more comprehensive education of its population in terms of the appropriate conduct of life. In other words, now Māori were to be guided and supervised through the application of scientific taxonomies and techniques as well as a set of universal humanitarian and economic standards and norms that defined specific characteristics and behaviours which were valuable and to some extent promoted through state agencies.

Other deficient characteristics and behaviours, such as a lack of internal discipline and work ethic, unemployment, lack of skills and education, poor health and safety, had to be eliminated as they were seen to be undesirable in terms of calculated socio-economic progress and appropriate citizenship. Māori had to prove themselves to be suitably equipped for the 'necessities' of modernity and responsible self-government, and hence to be able to take up positions of authority within New Zealand society (see, for instance, Beaglehole and Beaglehole, 1946, 329–47). Through proper education, and by providing Māori with a sense of dignity and pride, it was deemed possible to foster and direct the development of active citizens in order for 'the Maori race' to realise its inherent potential to 'progress'. To this end, it was crucial that Māori internalised a certain mode of responsibility, discipline and self-regulation, while being allowed, and even encouraged, to remain distinct in certain limited areas. It was no longer the aim to assimilate a race, but to integrate Māori and their culture by producing useful, healthy, well-adjusted and productive citizens, able to function according to normalised and standardised ways of being and becoming. Hence, after the war, the state policy of integration, while defining *some* space for Māori to remain distinct in *some* matters, at the same time functioned as a general strategy to improve the conduct of Māori and increase their efficient and normal functioning within the political economy.

NORMALISING MĀORITANGA

A technique of signification commonly employed in NFU films was to verbally signify Māori as a homogeneous collective identity, while abstracting from local differences as well as modes of identification and experiences of different

iwi (*extended kinship group, tribe*) and hapū (*subtribe*). Thus the films inserted Māori at once within a nationalist framework as well as a totalising mode of thought in which plurality and diversity was rearticulated within the figure of thought of 'the Maori' (in singular), that is, the typical Māori. Thus individuals shown on the screen frequently functioned as synecdoche for 'the Maori race' or 'the Maori'. NFU films functioned as a governmental technique and as such the production and reiteration of coherent and totalising concepts assisted in the normalisation and governability of heterogeneity, while at the same time dissecting and evaluating this totality in terms of the binary of appropriate/inappropriate, desirable/undesirable.

This is particularly detectable in post-war NFU documentaries about the perceived 'Māori problem'. Such films aimed at showing to the population, and in particular Māori, specific aspects of Māoritanga that were considered problematic and needed improvement, while at the same time emphasising the worth of Māori as equal citizens in general terms. These films, according to Martin Blythe (1994, 83),

reasserted the differential of old and new, antiquity and modernity, the primitive and the progressive, where the Maori play catch-up with the Pakeha. No longer was it a question of historical inevitability ... but of an obvious digital choice between health and sickness, education and ignorance, good farming and bad farming.

Such films demonstrated what state agencies were doing to improve the living conditions of Māori as well as to encourage Māori to adopt specific 'better' behaviours in relation to matters such as housing, hygiene, health, education, professional skills, agriculture and employment. These problems were no longer regarded to be naturally inherent in Māori culture, but rather a matter of knowledge, successful self-government, and economic management. Therefore, NFU films began to provide specific information about such issues and hence implicitly manufactured an appropriate vision for the future; at the same time, they suggested that, although problems still existed in their adoption of a sufficiently successful self-regulated lifestyle, Māori were in general terms willingly and successfully integrating and adapting to the demands of modern standards of living.

Post-war NFU documentary films that dealt with perceived Māori problems in relation to housing, health and hygiene included *Backblock Medical Service* (1948), *Aroha. A Story of the Maori People* (1949) and *Tuberculosis and the Maori People of the Wairoa District* (1952). Further, Māori education was dealt

with in films like *Maori School* (1947) and *The Maori Today* (1960). Problems of economic behaviour and the imperatives of modern agriculture were dealt with in films like *Maori Rehabilitation. New Farms Beside the Wairoa* (1949) or *Modern Maori Farmers* (1951). While such films dealt with perceived Māori problems, as pointed out before, they strategically and generally endeavoured to provide Māori and Māoritanga with a sense of dignity and pride in what had been achieved as well as a motivation for what still was to be achieved. At the same time, however, these films substituted the possibility of heterogeneous or critical voices, the validity of local and traditional knowledge, and the struggle for Māori Tino Rangatiratanga (*self-determination; sovereignty*) with reductive portrayals of Māori and Māoritanga deemed suitable to advance state control and guidance of their own improvement and that of the national economy.

Tuberculosis and the Maori People of the Wairoa District (1952), a documentary made for the Department of Health with the assistance of Turi Carroll, set out to promote modern medicine and advance proper conduct for Māori to combat tuberculosis. The commentary, mostly spoken by Carroll and illustrated by suitable images, detailed various appropriate habits assisting with disease control. The different living conditions of Māori were evaluated in the film, according to the binary of appropriate/inappropriate ways of living and Pākehā ways of living were deemed most appropriate. When an old shack at Te Reinga is pictured, representing inappropriate living conditions, Carroll's commentary claims, 'The fact is that this whole settlement needs rebuilding if the people are ever to be healthy'. These images are juxtaposed and contrasted with several 'progressive' settlements and typical living conditions in houses that are characterised as modern, convenient, well-spaced and healthier. Māori shown in this sequence seem to be living in nuclear families and in their appearance are entirely 'Westernised'. Towards the end of the film Carroll is seen sitting behind a desk claiming that the improvement of Māori health relies on 'individual conduct' and that 'in the fight against TB everyone has his duties'. Furthermore, those infected are told to follow their doctors' advice and detailed instructions are given for an adequate diet, proper hygiene, clean workplaces, exercise and personal care.

While *Tuberculosis and the Maori People of the Wairoa District* (1952) to a large extent incorporated the didacticism of instructional films, a film like *Aroha* (1951) did not set out to instruct about proper conduct and values through the commentary. *Aroha* is an entirely scripted and staged film that was promoted as a documentary drama. Rather than employing an omniscient narrator as common in NFU productions, it promoted a certain vision through the struc-

turing of a self-contained narrative. It revolves around the central character, Aroha, who embodies 'Western' ideals of beauty. She is the daughter of a Māori chief and has learned about the 'benefits' of Pākehā ways of living beyond the claimed 'narrowness' of traditional Māori life and teachings of Māoritanga. Hence, she sets out to make some Māori friends and her whānau (extended family) more receptive to Pākehā values and ways of living. In one scene Aroha claims, 'We are living in a Pākehā world. Some say we should keep apart, but we can't grow up as two separate races in the same country'. In the following scenes she tries to convince one of her Māori friends to learn a proper trade and to study with the assistance of the Maori Affairs Department, before finding out that her father is severely ill. First he refuses to leave his people, but after the tohunga, the Māori healer, is unable to help him, and as he is about to die, he agrees to go to the hospital. He recovers there and the film ends happily, employing a commonly used strategy suggesting that it was entirely up to Māori to shape their future. Thus *Aroha*, another film promoting modern medicine over traditional Māori healing practices, ended with the following title: 'As the Maori people remember their past in singing and dancing, their future lies waiting. It will take the form they desire, for it is theirs to shape as they will ... theirs to form for their descendants and their race'.⁸ Of course, as we have seen, this suggested that free will was bounded and limited by a bi-political strategy that defined how and who Māori could legitimately become. Thus the assertion above served to advance a sense of self-determination that functioned in terms of appropriate self-government, while at the same time Māori were deprived of the control of their own decolonisation.

EXOTICISMS – MĀORITANGA AND TOURISM COMMODIFICATION

Documentary films made by the NFU primarily for overseas consumption tended to focus more on the exoticism of difference by which Māoritanga had been portrayed overseas since the advent of tourism promotion in the 19th century. These films were made to promote specific aspects of Māoritanga, and provided a way for the state to point out its 'enlightened racial policy', and hence they focussed less on the aspects of Māoritanga that were considered problematic. Travelogues in particular were designed to attract tourists from overseas (or from different localities around New Zealand), and hence focussed on the aspects of New Zealand that could be marketed as exotic and different from other countries. Landscapes and typical tourist destinations that have largely remained unchanged until today occupied an important position in such films. One of these destinations is the area around Rotorua, which combined the exoticness of the landscape – boiling mud pools, geysers, interesting rock formations – with the exoticism of a commercialised and con-

tained version of Māoritanga. The prototypical location for a tourist promotion of Māoritanga remains Whakarewarewa near Rotorua and in particular the model pa (*fortified Māori village*). The settlement of Whakarewarewa had been established by people of Tuhourangi of Te Arawa, and after colonisation had been classified as a Native Reserve. The model pa nearby had been built around 1904 and was specifically erected with the expectations of tourists in mind. It was part of a Thermal Reserve, administered by and under the jurisdiction of the Department of Tourism and Health Resorts that from 1930 also incorporated overseas publicity. The pa was designed and built 'by the Department not to accommodate the Maoris of Whaka[rewarewa], but purely as a show-place to give visitors some impression of what a true Maori Pa really looked like in the olden days' (District Manager of Rotorua 1938), as well as to display some 'valuable' aspects of Māoritanga. The authenticity of the pa was thus measured in terms of commodity values and applied through universal, top-down standards and procedures, rather than from within locally lived experiences. Some Māori had protested from the beginning against certain features of the pa as being inauthentic representations of pre-colonial Māori life.⁹

The 'valuable' aspects of Māori culture on display at the model pa closely related to arts and crafts, the area which came to be promoted through state agencies in order to salvage and revive specific aspects of Māori traditions. In NĒU films made primarily for tourism promotion, Whakarewarewa was by far the most frequently filmed location in which certain pre-colonial traditions of Māoritanga were on display, in a space primarily erected and arranged for the gazes of touring non-Māori.¹⁰ The model pa at Whakarewarewa was the most convenient and most thoroughly domesticated space, which allowed aspects of Māoritanga to be rendered visible in easily controllable and desired ways. Māori who occupied the model pa during daytime (officially no one was allowed to live there permanently or to stay overnight) earned a living displaying specific aspects of their culture and performing for tourists. Additionally, the government department in control of the model pa prescribed to a considerable degree how Māori guides had to present themselves and conduct tourists through the model pa. This included the employment and licensing of guides, the regulation of entrance fees, the prescription of dresses to be worn by guides, as well as appropriate language skills, manners and behaviours.

For instance, in 1955, Rangitiaria Dinnan, better known as Guide Rangi, who had become the most famous Māori guide in Whakarewarewa, and who is frequently shown in films by the NĒU, complained about the requirement that Māori guides wear certain dresses. These, according to Dinnan, were deemed authentic and picturesque by the Department, but were clearly not authentic

pre-colonial Māori costume and only came into vogue after colonisation. Further, she claimed, 'it must be appreciated that the Maori people are now civilised and have a European mode of life and wearing apparel' (Dennan, quoted in Penno 1955). In 1958, Dennan was blacklisted by the Department and not allowed to guide American or South African tourists through the model pa, because of her repeated 'mixing of political, racial and religious comment with Tourist guiding' (Hill 1964). Dennan's frequent raising of the 'colour question' had been regarded as a particular problem, and it was deemed inappropriate for her to raise such issues in a local context. Similarly, in films by the NFU, Dennan was confined to the role of Guide Rangi, a keen and charismatic Māori guide who presented and introduced aspects of Māoritanga to film audiences. These, however, were limited to poi, haka and tititorea (stick) performances as well as flax weaving, food preparation, washing and carving, usually performed by Māori in (supposedly) pre-colonial costume. The existence of the model pa at Whakarewarewa made it easy to create desired images of 'ancient' Māoritanga for the promotion of tourism, since the Māori employed there staged performances for tourists daily, within a space specifically erected, administered and controlled by the state for such purposes. In a sense, analogous to the techniques of control employed at the model pa in Whakarewarewa that prevented Māori from inhabiting their 'own' space, in NFU films Māori were also subjected to a series of control measures that prevented them from inhabiting a space that they could control and own, as further discussed below.

A QUESTION OF CONTROL: ADJUSTING MĀORITANGA

With the increasing strategic importance placed on producing lasting effects through film for educational and promotional purposes, projections of Māori came to be increasingly controlled. This happened not only in explicitly socio-political terms, but also in aesthetic ones, referring to the set of principles that governed how beauty was signified and defined through film. Instructive in this regard was the production of the documentary *Maori Songs and Dances* (production title), which was to be directed by Oxley Hughan.¹¹ Archives New Zealand holds various reports Hughan (multiple dates [m.d.]) wrote to Geoffrey Scott, manager at the NFU, summarising the results of his investigatory trips searching for a concert party that suited the requirements for the film.¹² On his first trip in early 1955 he inspected Tuini Ngāwai of Ngāti Porou, a well-known Māori songwriter and performer of the time, as well as a potentially suitable performance group. After his trip, Hughan (m.d.) wrote to Scott :

I explained the general outline of the film and emphasised that as this was for overseas release a glamorous presentation was necessary ... After all N.Z.

people knew what Maori people looked like and if they were a bit fat it didn't matter, but overseas people expected slim figures. I was on a very sticky wicket, for I was in a roomful of very fat wahines. Stickier still, I had come 400 miles to interview this expert [Tuini Ngāwai] and found that from the appearances point of view she was an embarrassment.

His second trip in April 1955 led Hughan (m.d.) to Ohinemutu to see whether the Taiporutu concert party would prove to be of a better aesthetic standard. He concluded in his report:

In trying to find girls who measure up to modern standards of beauty, and at the same time are good performers of Maori actions songs and pois we are in some way trying to do the impossible. The girls who have adopted pakeha standards of smartness have in the main given up their Maori ways, many of them have become thoroughly Anglicised and cannot even speak Maori. They have no understanding of the significance of Maori culture, and would tend to be poor interpreters of old time action songs ... In front of a camera they will probably go through the movements of a song gracefully, but it will have nothing of the lusty vigour which characterises the true Maori performance.

Here Hughan, the observer of the performance and himself of European descent, positioned himself as the one who defined the parameters of 'the true Maori performance'.¹³ More significantly, he designated the performers as incapable of understanding 'the significance of Maori culture'. They had been too 'Anglicised' and modernised to live up to his definition of their 'true' pre-colonial culture. In relation to their performance this meant they lacked 'the lusty vigour' that was seen as the main characteristic advancing the impression of authenticity. This produced a double-bind where Māori at once had to live up to the standards of beauty as defined in relation to anticipated expectations of (Western) overseas audiences, while still showing a 'natural' and 'traditional' behaviour that allowed them to perform seemingly authentically, as defined by the filmmaker with reference to hegemonic discourses and preconceptions about Māori culture. In other words, authenticity here referred not to locally lived modes of expression and experience, but was articulated as a top-down governmental technique to become a mode of projection, a prescriptive normative concept that was then rearticulated into locally lived experiences through techniques of education, including film.

In January 1956, Hughan (m.d.) wrote a further memo to Scott regarding the

film and the problem of finding a suitable performance group . He discussed shooting footage in Ruatoria of a concert group of Ngāti Porou, arguing that ‘the Ngati Porou are probably the most Maori-conscious Maoris in the country and their performances will be nearest to the real Maori McCoy’. However , as Hughan (m.d.) claimed:

The greatest difficulty will be probably to get what we want, not what the tribal elders want. The Ngati Porou are notoriously stiff-necked in this direction ... We will be strangers in a strange land. We will not be able to fall back on the Maori Affairs [Department] to act as intermediaries if we can't talk the tribe into doing as we want them ... We will probably encounter difficulties in the matter of dress, especially with football shorts and ragged pui-puis. Also some of the girls have the words ‘Ngati Porou’ worked into their bodies.

The primacy of getting what was wanted for filmic portrayals instead of encountered locally is also clearly visible in *The Maori Today* which was released in 1960. It was made primarily for overseas distribution, but was also extensively screened domestically. Walter Nash (1959), in his position as Minister of Māori Affairs, provided the following guidelines for the production of the film. It had to

[d]emonstrate the progress that has been made by the Maoris and the position they enjoy in New Zealand society. The film will also serve the purpose of encouraging and inspiring the Maori people by showing through examples what they can achieve ... It will show the Maoris ... in a variety of situations in modern life, in terms of equality and harmony with other New Zealanders. Residual problems of adjustment must be kept within perspective. They must be handled with care since they could be used to undermine the essentially good story of achievement ... The film will include material which shows that although economic and social integration is taking place, the pride of race is not being obliterated and there is much to show concerning the revival of cultural matters, including performances for tourists ... The lasting impression must be that of the unity of the two races.

The film became a superficial sociological survey of Māoritanga, modelling and appropriating images to establish the message of the film, which was, again, that while Māori were generally successfully adjusting, they still faced and generated certain problems. The exotic aspect of Māori performances persists, but the film is primarily concerned with the stereotype of ‘the modern Maori’.

The Maori Today (1960) begins by reiterating the equality myth, pointing out that 'a man's worth can't be measured by the colour of his skin, but by 'his' 'qualification' and 'ability'. The film shows a series of role model Māori in modern jobs before briefly depicting tourist performances and then moving into a paternalist exposition of assumed Māori problems. The film's overall objectives are again summarised at its conclusion, with the commentary clearly reflecting Nash's instructions as well as what was then current government policy:

To carry respect in the community they [Māori] must also be in demand when skill is necessary, otherwise all Maoris will be accepted as only fit for unskilled labour. But to retain the age-old traditions is essential in the shift to modern living. To take pride in their past gives a sense of security in these changing times with their subtle problems. In less than a hundred years they're trying to do what it's taken Europeans 2,000 years to do. The young people and the older people too, can be proud of what has been achieved in their adjustment to the 20th century, and their fellow New Zealanders can share that pride with them.

The message is that Māori must become more skilled to be useful to the economy and to be 'respected' (and not be a drain on state welfare and a part of unemployment statistics). Although it is suggested that 'age-old traditions' can be retained for the sake of pride, the film employs a linear evolutionary model in which Māoritanga is designated as 'backward', placed about 2,000 years behind the implied progress of Europeans.

Beyond such explicit appeals, further aesthetic problems had to be overcome in establishing a desirable vision of Māoritanga, such as the control of colour and contrast. One problem became apparent after colour film became the standard film type during the 1950s, particularly for overseas promotional films. Colour film used with little natural light, such as when shooting inside buildings, tended to produce a stronger than usual contrast between darker and lighter skin colours. This caused concern to filmmakers involved in the production of *The Maori Today* (1960). The higher contrast between dark and light skin tones with colour film, particularly when used in interiors, tended to contradict Nash's directive to advance the impression of a 'unity of the two races'. Therefore not only what was shown and said, but also the aesthetics and psychic effects of colour had to be carefully adjusted to sustain the objective of the film. In August 1959, Scott wrote a letter to Odell regarding the making of *The Maori Today* (1960):

My worry with colour is that there are so many interiors in this film which are necessary, that it would be easy to have the Maoris very dark and the pakeha looking very fair. This could of course give the impression that the Maoris are a very dark skinned race, akin to the negroes, but this would be a very grave mistake as it would speak strongly against the very objective of the film ... tests are proceeding at the moment to determine how we can photograph the Maori and pakeha without too great a differential in skin texture.

In other words, Māori ideally had to look comparatively pale-skinned in order to avoid associations with darker-skinned 'races' like 'negroes'. Such concerns attest to a continuing and generalised racism that was attached to skin colour in operation at the time to which Scott strategically reacted by trying to avoid potentially negative connotations. As darker skin tones were seen likely to evoke associations with more 'primitive', less civilised 'races', showing Māori with a lighter skin colour assisted the objective of showing their successful 'integration'. This could be visually expressed through a 'whitening' of Māori, minimising the contrast of skin colour between Māori and Pākehā, while avoiding the darker side of the colour spectrum.

CONCLUSIONS

If we want to conclude the discussion above, we need to ask what did remain invisible to the vision of the other? How was the dispositive that created and governed the vision of the other ordered? Which imperatives governed its operation? It rested upon three imperatives as discussed below.

First, the imperative for the strategic sculptability, instrumentalisation and exploitability of vision: The visions created through NFU documentary film in Post-War New Zealand did not stem from the aim to solely encounter or provide substantial insights into Māori life beyond the artificiality of the model pa at Whakarewarewa. Images that depicted some Māori living conditions were commonly created, functionalised, selected and/or evaluated for governmental purposes. Images were used to demonstrate how well Māori were generally progressing towards modernisation or to point out where problems still existed. In this sense, the vision created of Māori through NFU documentaries during the 1940s and 50s is a result of superficial, homogenising and normalising modes of filmic realisation. They did not endeavour to engage with different Māori perspectives or let Māori speak about their experiences beyond what generally suited the government policy of integration. In this sense, the films, beyond the specificity of particular images, *showed* very lit-

tle of the living conditions of Māori at the time, but rather *exhibited*, *exposed* and *evaluated* from a governmental perspective how their life should be and the filmic visions were created accordingly. In other words, a main concern became images that could be 'shot' and arranged in order to produce film that could effectively govern by holding the attention of audiences and providing a vision through a set of optimised aesthetic, affective and intellectual stimuli. At the same time an important strategy was to render this instrumentalisation of film invisible, thus seemingly providing truthful and authentic representation of actualities that resulted from their *documentation* with film cameras.

Second, the imperative for reductive abstraction, simplification and illustration: Such considerations of technique and strategy, aimed at controlling and directing the vision of Māori and Māoritanga, are explicit expressions of what by the 1950s had developed into a formulaic approach to projecting Māori, strategically designed for 'educational' and publicity purposes. However, the same holds true for how New Zealand and its entire population was given to be envisioned through film. NFU documentary films were made by drawing upon particular governmental knowledge that relied on positivist science and measurable data in the form of statistics, population censuses, reports, as well as departmental channels that provided state agencies with knowledge about its population. Such knowledge often formed the basis on which documentary film treatments and scripts were written. In a film like *The New Zealanders* (1959) the ostensible subject of the film, a plurality of people framed within the concept of the nation state, were given the status of 'illustrative material' for a 'statistical survey of New Zealand' ('Production of the New Zealanders' 1955). The vision provided by such a film was based on generalised and abstract knowledge that was removed from the multiplicity of historical experience and localised knowledge and placed within a nationalist and reductive framework of vision.

Third, the imperative for advancing docility, self-discipline and governability: The Griersonian approach to documentary filmmaking and its relations to state and corporate publicity and public relations, to a large degree demanded docile subjects that would be strategically selected, arranged and shaped into a desirable vision. In New Zealand, the requirements and policies of state publicity, the focus on effective and educational films with 'mass appeal', and the satisfaction of anticipated expectations of target audiences largely precluded more disinterested and/or 'open' encounters with local actualities and subjects. Filmmakers who 'creatively treated' actuality according to existing policies, desires, expectations and preconceptions – intentionally or unintentionally – added to the strategic production, appropriation and arrangement of a certain vision.

Such practices also precluded critical enquiries into the political economy that shaped the self-actualisation of individual and collective subjectivities. As Lynton Diggle, a former filmmaker at the NFU said in reference to the production of tourist films, one was looking through ‘rose-tinted glasses’. ‘You knew what you had to shoot and how it had to look like without even thinking of it’ (Diggle, personal communication, October 2010).

Until the NFU was sold in 1990, the policy remained that New Zealand had to be given to be envisioned in an unambiguously ‘favourable’ light.¹⁴ In this sense, affirmative readings of NFU documentary films as unproblematic, authentic and/or self-evident records of a vanished past, miss their crucially strategic and frequently appropriative nature. They also miss the techniques of control and direction that were employed in order to project what was desired and deemed necessary with reference to a variety of layered purposes. In this sense, filmic visions of Māori and Māoritanga, but also of Pākehā, related to a set of governmental strategies. To the extent that these visions were taken up and incorporated, they may have served their purpose for improving (self-)government into a ‘better’ future. In the future Māori would form a well-adjusted, integrated and normalised part of national culture and the political economy, in which a certain degree of difference had come to be regarded as permissible and even desirable. This also allowed capitalising on Māori otherness for the promotion of tourism, which had come to rely on certain displays of pre-colonial Māoritanga that could evoke a sense of exoticness for potential tourists.

While the dispositive and its inherent discourses, practices and institutional architecture discussed above have changed and shifted, much of the ways in which Māori were rendered visible can still be seen today, aiding and justifying governmental control and the exploitation of their image for the accumulation of capital.¹⁵

NOTES

- 1 Foucault (1980, 194) loosely defined the term dispositive as ‘a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid I understand by the term “apparatus” a sort of – shall we say – formation which has its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function. This may have been, for example, the assimilation of a floating population.’

- 2 In the late 1920s John Grierson was the first to rationalise documentary film as a specific type of non-fiction film that was to function as a political pedagogy within liberal democracy. His approach to film production subsequently had an important role to play within the British Empire/Commonwealth, such as in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.
- 3 Film focusing on social problems were, for instance, *Backblock Medical Service* (1948), *Aroha. A Story of the Maori People* (1949) and *Tuberculosis and the Maori People of the Wairoa District* (1952).
- 4 Films in this category include *Thermal Wonderland, Rotorua New Zealand* (1950), *Meet New Zealand* (1949) and *The New Zealanders* (1959).
- 5 While terminology was ill-defined at the time, assimilation implied a total loss of Māoritanga over time, while integration rather implied that certain features of Māoritanga would become a part of mainstream New Zealand.
- 6 The term Māori unifies and identifies heterogeneous tribes and individuals into one concept. It was initially used by Māori to refer to themselves in a pan-tribal sense, distinguishing themselves from Europeans at the beginning of colonization. Multiple ways of living and tribal cultures came to be unified and generalised in the concept Māoritanga. Both terms aided in the designation, governability and institutionalization of Māori as New Zealand's Other.
- 7 This phrase is indebted to Foucault's discussion of racism and biopolitics (2003, 241–79).
- 8 For a further discussion of some of the films with Māori content made by the NFU after World War II, see Blythe (1994, 73–150)
- 9 This included 'indecent carved figures that have been erected around the so-called Maori pa' ('Petition for Minister for Tourist and Health Resorts' 1905). According to Teipu Tarakawa of Te Puke, 'The work done was in no way resembling that of a real Maori pa' ('The Model Pa at Whakarewarewa' 1904).
- 10 Films that include an 'obligatory' Māori sequence shot at Whakarewarewa are, for instance, *Meet New Zealand* (1949), *The Maori Today* (1960) and *Thermal Wonderland, Rotorua New Zealand* (1950).
- 11 It is likely that the film was finally made with the help of the Mauriora Maori Entertainers and was released as *New Zealand Maori Rhythms* (1962). It was shot

entirely in the studio with the characters looking strikingly pale skinned and groomed.

- 12 Emphases in the following quotes are in the originals. Other archival traces of techniques used in the production of films include the use of liquor to make subjects amenable (see Oakley 1952).
- 13 Throughout the 1940s and 50s, there were no people who identified as Māori or Tāngata Whenua employed in directive or creative positions at the NFU.
- 14 From 1978, the policy that governed the NFU required it to be the government's film production agency and 'to produce films of an educational, informational, cultural or general publicity character conveying a favourable image of New Zealand' ('Policy: NFU Programme' n.d.)
- 15 A selection of NFU films can be accessed and viewed online through:
 - Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision:
<http://www.ngataonga.org.nz/catalogues/moving-image-catalogue/advanced-search/>
 - NZ On Screen:
<http://www.nzonscreen.com/collection/national-film-unit-collection>
 - Archives New Zealand:
http://www.ecasttv.co.nz/channel_detail.php?program_id=&channel_id=60 and
 - <http://www.youtube.com/user/archivesnz?feature=watch>

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