

JADE AND BELONGING:
MAKING A SOCIAL LANDSCAPE OF BELONGING ON THE WEST COAST

Fiona Grubb

ABSTRACT

The collection of jade on the rural Northern West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand is a serious and popular pastime for a group of local people who call themselves Coast Roaders. Largely transient and often socially marginalised, this group of people, predominantly men, use the collection of jade to construct a social landscape, 'the bush', through which they negotiate a sense of belonging to the area. This paper explores the development of this social landscape and further, how it is gendered in particular ways.

INTRODUCTION

It's about an hour after sunrise, and I am walking along a wet beach, the sand shining brightly as it streaks off into the horizon. I look at my companion walking about twenty paces in front of me. He has walked with the same hypnotic speed and inclination since we set out just over an hour ago. His head is bowed, and he is following an almost imperceptible line in the stones. The line divides the slightly larger heavier stones from the smaller ones closer to the water, the stones graded anew everyday by the tide. Today, like most days, he is looking for jade pebbles along a stretch of beach on the Northern West Coast of the South Island. (Field notes)

For Pākehā, belonging in New Zealand often means to belong to the landscape (Longhurst & Wilson, 1999: 216; Phillips, 1996: 3, Park *et al* 2002). This dominant discourse of belonging is oriented around a particular type of landscape, (cultivated) and a particular (dominating) relationship to this landscape.¹ Further, this dominant discourse of belonging has arguably been positioned against other discourses of belonging to the land, most obviously the idea of landscape as an untouched or pristine whole that could be connected with

but not ‘humanised’ (Ross, 2002) This version of landscape has often been associated with indigeneity, and both these images have ‘grown up’ in the context of Māori/Pākehā claims to land where they have become politicised and solidified into two contrary and often competing discourses of belonging to landscape. A position where Māori are construed as retaining an essential, primeval connection with the landscape is advanced, sometimes for political traction (Clifford, 2001), while Pākehā also mobilise their politicised perspective of ideal landscapes. Therefore, Pākehā identity, intimately tied to the (dominated) landscape, has become a somewhat homogenous idea, oriented around notions of farming, dominating the landscape, and masculinity (see Dominy, 2001; Bell, 1996; Phillips 1996; Hatch, 1991; Park *et al* 2002; Morris 2002: 29) with little room for alternate images of Pākehā landscapes of belonging. However, as this article will show, not all Pākehā landscapes are the same.

COAST ROADERS AND WEST COASTERS

This ethnographic research examines the construction of a Pākehā social landscape through the collection and appreciation of jade. I lived in the Coast Road area of the Northern West Coast of New Zealand, on and off, for a little over one year, participating in the daily life of a group of people who call themselves Coast Roaders.² The very fact that my moving in and out of the area was considered so normal by the locals attests to the first characteristic of Coast Roaders: their transience.

Coast Roaders, predominantly men, often leave the local area for periods of months to work on fishing boats at sea and other manual jobs. Most come from other areas in New Zealand to live on the Coast Road, its appeal lying in the casual lifestyle. Approximately seventy per cent of them live in very rudimentary conditions – often in old outbuildings, modified cars with awnings, buses and sometimes ‘renovated’ packing cases set back into the scrub. Most do not have permanent electricity although some have small petrol generators and battery banks. These men live on the Coast Road for a variety of reasons, but most have one thing in common: poor position and mobility in the labour market. The remote and relatively under-developed nature of the Coast Road enables them to live a lifestyle oriented more toward self sufficiency than the market economy, and most work only sporadically to meet specific expenses, which range from dental surgery to court fines. They all have one thing in common however, their participation in the collection and appreciation of ‘jade.’³

There are also other people living in the Coast Road area such as permanent householders, families and some dairy farmers. Many of these people refer to themselves as locals, but as 'West Coasters', rather than 'Coast Roaders'. They can often trace their histories in the area and associate with broader West Coast notions of what it means to be a local, as outlined shortly. There is an enduring social division on the Coast Road, then, between Coast Roaders, normally men, living a transient lifestyle oriented around subsistence agriculture, fishing and part time work, and the West Coasters who are more permanent, better franchised and who participate in the market economy. Not surprisingly, it is this second group who show up in the census details for the area. These two general categories, Coast Roaders and West Coasters are used throughout this paper to explore the Coast Roaders' construction of a meaningful social landscape.

Both Coast Roaders and West Coasters maintain a connection with the landscape with each referring to 'the bush' which provides a meaningful discourse through which to negotiate a sense of belonging to the area. Yet, there are subtle differences in the way each group constructs 'the bush', most notably, the collection of jade which is crucial to the Coast Roaders' version of the bush, but largely absent in the West Coasters' version. These differences have implications for who can belong as a Coast Roder, and who cannot.

MĀORI/PĀKEHĀ PERCEPTIONS OF JADE AND THE POLITICS OF INDIGENEITY

Jade, or pounamu, was (and still is) an important resource for Māori.⁴ Pre and some post contact Māori from Southern North Island tribes, (Ngāti Kahungunu, and Te Atiawa) and South Island tribes, (such as Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Rarua, and Ngāti Tama) all made trips to the Coast for jade collection. Ngāti Apa ki Te Waipounamu were the only tribe in residence on the West Coast for any period of time, and were mostly based around the Arahura region (Kennett Law, 2004). Ngāti Apa ki Te Waipounamu collected jade for trade and their own use. In 1996, the New Zealand government awarded the South island tribe, Ngāi Tahu, rights to all the jade in the South Island, including several mining licences in operation at the time. Given the varied tribal histories regarding jade, the 1996 settlement was criticised for excluding non Ngāi Tahu iwi and hapū.⁵

It is untenable to suggest a completely Māori or Pākehā realm of jade, as the two are interwoven. Yet it is possible to talk about jade as commonly associated with traditional notions of Māori culture in the popular imagination.

Jade remains an important resource for Māori, who traditionally valued it for its tremendous hardness, making it a valuable material for tool making and jewellery. It is also an important part of Māori origin stories.⁶ Gradually, jade became important to Pākehā as representing something unique to New Zealand and popular Māori spiritualism, and it is normally carved into jewellery following ‘traditional’ Māori stylistic mores.

Partly because of the commodification of jade, and partly due to the discourses of colonization, it is easy to present a popular picture of jade as an aspect of Māori culture gradually being appropriated by western mainstream culture. Yet, my research presents a very different picture of jade. It illustrates practices of jade that have very little reference to the idea of jade as a ‘Māori thing’. The people on the Coast Road are predominantly Pākehā and they collect and appreciate jade in a unique manner. This is not to suggest that Coast Roaders do not recognise or appreciate that jade is traditionally associated with Māori. Although it is untenable in post colonial New Zealand to suggest there are two essential, discrete cultures: Māori and Pākehā, Coast Roaders do acknowledge that they sometimes ‘borrow’ from more traditional Māori idioms regarding jade.

For instance, Coast Roaders use Māori words to describe different types of jade. Inanga, for example, is the word used to describe a particularly pale stone, named for its resemblance to whitebait, a small fish caught in shoals near river mouths. Whitebaiting is an iconic West Coast activity, a cherished part of West Coast life. The name therefore, links jade into the region in a meaningful way. Other words are used simply because the Māori vernacular contains words which relate directly to jade, whereas in English the words are generic – for instance ‘kakapo’ as opposed to a ‘dark green stone’. Yet, there is one fundamental and obvious difference between jade in the popular imagination, with its ‘traditional’ Māori affiliations, and jade on the Coast Road: Coast Roaders very seldom carve their jade.

Coast Roaders often comment on the general tendency in New Zealand to associate jade with Māoritanga, and some talk about South Island jade in the context of a broader politicised indigenous rights movement in New Zealand. Most of the Coast Roaders I spoke to were keen to make me aware that they considered Ngāi Tahu did not have jurisdiction over jade, rather, that Ngāi Tahu were guilty of overriding the ‘true’ Māori residents on the West Coast – the Waitaha people. The general consensus is that Coast Roaders share concerns with locals over the exploitation and alienation of jade.

Coast Roaders say they generally agree with the local Māori group, the people at the Arahura Pa,⁷ that jade is something special to the people that live in the area and Ngāi Tahu does not have a true appreciation of the meanings and values associated with jade. Ngāi Tahu did recognise and try to pre-empt this sentiment to a degree, by handing the management of most West Coast jade largely over to the Māwhera Incorporation, a Greymouth-based group of local Māori, who in turn allow the people of the local Arahura Pa to manage access to the river. The Arahura River lies just north of Hokitika, and therefore out of the local area of the people in this study. Yet, most of the Coast Roaders I spoke to commended the way the people at the Arahura Pa closed off the river, claiming that jade needed to be protected by people who had some feeling about its special nature.

Further, most of the people represented in this research felt that commercial mining of jade should be prohibited, and several people expressed agreement with the Ngāi Tahu rule which allows people to keep what they can carry per day. A few people I talked to said that Ngāi Tahu were the biggest thieves of jade – allowing it to be mined under license for the commercial market without any real understanding of, or concern for, the ‘special’ qualities of the stone.

There is also a political dimension to this research. This research presents jade as culturally and emotionally significant to a group of Pākehā people, and as such could conflict with the mainstream (and hard won) Māori dominion over jade, administered in the South Island by Ngāi Tahu. This tension resonates with anthropologist Michele Dominy’s (2001) ethnography about how South Island high country farmers develop, cultivate and maintain a sense of belonging to the South Island landscape. Dominy’s work emerged into the highly charged political context of indigenous rights in New Zealand. Her earlier work (1995) examined the ways in which settler populations could develop a sense of belonging to place that they felt as equally authentic as the indigenous one. In her high country research, Dominy drew a picture of Pākehā people for whom the landscape they farmed was intimately involved in the social, sacred, and personal processes of their lives. Dominy however was criticised for championing the rights of the oppressors over colonised and marginalised Māori⁸ and the debate over Dominy’s research highlights contested notions of indigeneity in New Zealand. Further, her work had real political implications as it informed a submission regarding the settlement of a land claim bought forward by Ngāi Tahu. The tension over Dominy’s work is not just relevant to this research because jade is considered special by Pākehā people, but also because this research shows how jade helps this group

of Pākehā people construct an enduring and significant sense of belonging to a local landscape. In the discourses of fourth world politics of indigeneity the idea that indigenous people have an *exclusive* cultural, spiritual, and/or emotional attachment to landscape has been challenged. Australian anthropologist David Trigger (2002) shows how important aboriginal claims to land, such as the landmark 1992 Mabo decision, are not based on an exclusive sense of belonging or attachment to landscape, but rather on a legal doctrine of indigenous rights. In New Zealand this is frequently referred to under article two of the Treaty of Waitangi, dealing with the concept of rangitiratanga, which is commonly used as the basis for a discussion about dual sovereignty or bi-nationalism.

I think it is important to be clear about this distinction, because often 'native' claims are thought in New Zealand and Australia to be based on some sort of indigenous attachment to place that other settlers cannot ever access or achieve (Trigger, 2002, Clifford, 2001: 470). My research shows how Pākehā develop a sense of belonging or attachment to landscape and does not aim to negate, challenge or invalidate Māori claims to landscape which are primarily oriented to their status as autochthonous people. That being said, it must be noted that politicised Māori claims to indigeneity are often associated with a special cultural attachment to land and landscape in the public imagination as outlined above. Broadly, I do not see this research as an attempt to compare or conflate Pākehā ideas about jade with Māori ones, nor is it an evaluation as to whose claim is more authentic. On a more positive note, I think that this work opens up a space for possible synergies between Māori and Pākehā agendas surrounding jade.

PERSPECTIVES ON LANDSCAPE AND BELONGING

It has been shown that landscape is an important site for the creation of identity and belonging in rural New Zealand. Michele Dominy (2001) gives a compelling account of the meaning of the South Island high country to high country farmers, showing how meaning becomes inscribed on the landscape through social narratives about belonging to place. Morris' (2002) thesis on high country farmers follows similar themes of stable and enduring local histories in the high country. Park *et al* (2002) discuss images of 'ideal' landscapes in Northland, where forested landscapes are considered morally different to farmed ones in the face of changes in land use from farming to forestry. These three approaches are oriented around narrative histories in an area. Dominy's (2001) work shows how farmers use the landscape as a lodestone for telling locals, in particular families, about their histories in the area. A historical tra-

dition of farming emerges again in Park *et al's* (2002: 527) examination of land use in Northland, with locals privileging their farming history in the area. Dominy (2001) and Morris (2002) also discuss how histories and narratives gender rural New Zealand landscapes in particular ways.

Social landscapes constructed through narrative histories are more accessible for ethnographers; they are easier to 'get at' as one taps into established and ongoing local tropes of talking about the landscape. So what about the Coast Roaders who have short and fragmented histories in an area? How crucial is history to making a social landscape? Can gendered social landscapes be made in the here and now?

Gray's (2003) work amongst Scottish lowland farmers suggests that they can. Gray (2003:227–8) argues that the very nature of ethnography privileges social landscapes based on long narrative histories precisely because they are much more readily obtained. In some ways the ethnographer is mimicking what the locals are doing – reifying an objectified image of landscape extruded (and edited) from social histories in a place. This process overlooks the idea of landscapes created through social practices rather than narratives (Gray, 2003). Gray's (2003) notion of practiced landscapes is useful for making sense of the practices of jade collection in constructing a sense of belonging to place in response to the transient lifestyles of Coast Road residents.

SOCIAL LANDSCAPES

Landscape in anthropology has long been thought of as a social construct. Franz Boas (1911) investigated the ways in which language constructs culturally specific notions of place and space in the early twentieth century, laying the groundwork for an approach to the study of place and space focussed on meaning. Approaches which focus on meaning are underpinned by underlying assumptions about the nature of space and temporality. Hirsch's (1995) work illustrates the hegemony of the Cartesian worldview in the construction of social landscapes, examining the anthropological trend to position landscape as a general, passive background against which specific, active things are positioned:

Hirsch defines landscape as developing from and involving a tension between idealised or imagined settings which he calls 'background' against which the 'foreground' of everyday, real, ordinary life is cast. In Hirsch's scheme, landscape's foreground actuality is to background potentiality, as place is to space, inside is to outside, and

image is to representation (Low *et al.*, 2003: 4).

Low *et al.* (2003) argue that the Cartesian view of space is a key component in the development of western ideas about landscape, highlighting the cultural and historical particularity of this construct, 'In western European culture these notions can be traced to Renaissance rationality that separated people from nature, abstracted both, and created a separate ideal, a background of objective reality' (Low *et al.*, 2003: 16).

Gray critiques the idea of a separation of subject and object in the construction of landscape, arguing that this type of perspective begets a particular image of landscape – 'landscapes as texts' (Gray, 2003:227). Gray argues that the tendency to separate subject from object encourages anthropologists to conceive of landscapes as narratively constructed maps that people use to tell about themselves and their communities i.e. 'Landscape perspectives tend to treat localities as "an ordered system of objects, a text"' (Duncan, 1990:17) whose positioning of places and their meanings has already been inscribed on the landscape by people's actions' (Gray, 2003: 227).

Landscape in anthropology is frequently seen as a mnemonic through which people tell stories about how they should belong to an area and relate to one another (Gray, 2003) as in the case of Dominy (2001) and Morris' (2002) work in rural New Zealand. Gray (2003) would be critical of these approaches to landscape, arguing that in these versions landscape provides the background for experiences, but not the experiences themselves. These landscapes, it seems, are seen and talked about, rather than done. Gray (2003) deconstructs the idea of narratively constructed landscapes, arguing that these 'landscapes as texts' (2003: 227), with their focus on landscape as a map or objective background against which people draw ideas about themselves and their identities, tend to overlook the *practicing* of landscape.

Strathern's (1980) work resonates well with this idea of landscapes as objectified images against which subjects act, arguing that a subject/object relationship structures the conceptualisation of nature and culture anthropology and western metaphysics more generally (Strathern 1980:176–181). Strathern argues that this active/passive, colonising/coloniser relationship is embodied in dynamic western constructions of nature and culture:

At one point culture is a creative, active force which produces form and structure out of a passive given nature. At another, culture is the end product of a process, tamed and refined, and dependent

for energy upon resources outside itself....Culture is *nomos* as well as *techne*, that is, subsumes society as well as culture in the marked sense. Nature is equally human nature and the non – social environment...To these images of the ‘real’ world we attach a string of evaluations – so that one is active, the other passive; one is subject, the other object; one creation, the other resource; one energizes, the other limits (Strathern, 1980: 179).

Further, Strathern argues that westerners use the nature/culture dialectic to talk about gender. We think about one being produced out of the other (Strathern, 1980, Delaney *et al*, 1995). So, as we ‘...use a hierarchal contrast between nature and culture itself to talk about relations internal to society...’, we think about gender through the idiom of ‘transformation and process’ (Strathern, 1980:182) that underpins the nature/culture dialectic. In other words, nature and culture emerge out of an idea based on the separation of resource and modifier, subject and object,⁹ and these categorisations are used as a sort of metaphor for thinking about gender (Strathern, 1980:181).

Keeping these ideas in mind, the idea of practiced landscapes is useful for thinking about the construction of ‘the bush’ on the Coast Road. Coast Roaders are transient, with little or no access to long narrative histories in the area, yet they manage to produce a socially meaningful landscape, ‘the bush’ that provides them with a sense of belonging to the area. The key component to making ‘the bush’ is the collection of jade. The collection of jade not only constructs a social landscape, ‘the bush’, it also creates a gendered landscape.

JADE HUNTING

There are two main types of collecting jade or ‘jade hunting’, both almost exclusively pursued by men. Most commonly, Coast Roaders search for jade on the beach during long walks, often spending four or five hours ‘hunting for jade’. Most look for jade on their own. The conditions for jade walks vary, with some considered better than others, for instance, the low tide following a king tide and heavy rain is considered one of the best conditions. The second type of jade hunting takes place along river and creek beds.

Proficient jade hunters maintain that jade stones are immediately obvious:

(Jade) sticks out like dog’s balls, you can’t miss it. I mean it just looks so obvious, if it’s a big bit you don’t even have to pick it up – if you do, it’s not jade.... You only really pick up the small pieces, you

know, just to get a better look. Jade is like love, if you even have to pick it up for a second look, it's not the real thing (Graeme).

Coast Roaders often talk about how jade finds them, although finding jade requires skill, jade also reveals itself to them:

Jade finds you...I know people who have spent days walking the beach and not found anything, and then I go out there and find the best piece on the beach in five minutes...it finds you' (Pete).

Thus some people 'see jade' and others do not. Jade is not so much found as presented or revealed to you. The 'jade is obvious, jade finds you' aspect of jade collection is a key component to making a sense of belonging for Coast Roaders.

Upon asking one day if all of this talk and interest surrounding jade would go on if jade were found in any other area of New Zealand, everyone present agreed that it would because it is the jade that is special, not the people i.e. 'People have always seen jade as the doorway between spiritual worlds, you know, between the human world and something else more special and secret. I dunno, maybe I'm just stoned, but I reckon I'm right too' (Chris). However, while Coast Roaders acknowledge the mysterious aspects of jade such as jade revealing itself to a person, they also couch their opinions in caveats about not being superstitious. These superstitious ideas about jade emphasise that there is something animate and ultimately unknowable about jade, it is endowed with a sort of intrinsic power. At which point, it is also important to note that conceptions of jade, the bush and belonging are largely restricted to men. There are very few women living the Coast Road lifestyle and those that do, tend not to participate in the activities surrounding jade. Thus the social meaning of jade is highly gendered.

THE BUSH AS A SOCIAL SPACE

Jade is always talked about as being found or 'hunted' in the bush. 'The bush' is not simply a forested area, it is a socially constructed space with specific meanings and boundaries. Broadly, Coast Roaders talk about most (but not all) of the land in the area as 'the bush'. However, this land does not necessarily have trees or forest on it, and includes riverbeds, large areas cleared by slips, and the beach. This un-forested land is incorporated into 'the bush', an area generally defined by being *mostly* covered in native bush. Cleared farmland (of which there is comparatively little on the Coast Road) is talked about as not being

part of the bush, even if it is surrounded by native bush. The only cleared land considered part of the bush are the small areas around peoples' (non farmer) dwellings. There is no distinction between types of bush, for instance temperate podocarp forest which makes up most of the forest in the area, and beech forest, which grows on the higher areas of the West Coast and in some of the deeper valleys in the lee of the sun. Although 'the bush' includes significant sections of regenerating forest following extensive sluice (gold) mining in the last half of the 1900s, or cleared areas surrounding people's houses, these areas can only be included in 'the bush' because the majority of the land is covered in native bush that has never been cleared. Pine plantations and large cultivated crops of trees are also not considered part of the bush by West Coasters or Coast Roaders, rather, they are categorized as cleared land. An important characteristic of the bush is its encompassing nature, with Coast Roaders often referring to it as being 'all around us' as in the following quotation:

People here don't really think about the bush like the greenies or anyone else. It's just something that's part of all of us – it's so huge you kind of can't help but think of yourself in relation to it. It's all around us (Lance).

In talk with Coast Roaders, 'the bush' emerges again and again and occupies the imagination of Coast Roaders, it is immediate to the way they think about themselves as people, and as people who belong to the area. 'I've been living in the bush now for about three years...' is perhaps the most common way for Coast Roaders to describe where they live. They live in the bush first, and on the Coast Road second. It does not matter if their house is in the middle of an acre of cleared land (which it sometimes is), living in the bush is not a literal description, it refers to a broader imaginary space.

The clearest illustration of the social construction of the bush is the manner in which it excludes farmland. Local farmers will occasionally hire local men to help with seasonal chores. This work is not considered by Coast Roaders to take place in the bush, even though they consider work in other cleared areas, like around their houses, as working in the bush. A key component of the bush is that almost all work performed by men on the Coast Road is considered to be work in the bush, (except when it is work on a farm) irrespective of whether they are actually working amongst the trees. However, because the *majority* of work takes place in the bush, all the rest of the work can be considered working in the bush, such as setting nets at the beach, building sheds at the back of the section, fixing fences, and importantly, collecting jade. The bush is a socially constructed landscape, imagined through practice, or work.

Working in the bush is considered the only ‘right’ way to be in the bush. Work produces the social space of the bush, homogenising such disparate spaces as cleared land and the beach, into a unitary concept.

I asked Coast Roaders: What does working in the bush mean?

It means working in the bush, spending time doing hard labour. Its hard work in the bush, you know, if you get lost, you’re screwed – no-one’s ever going to find you... you have to be able to take care of yourself (Andy).

Going bush can mean all sorts of things – looking for jade on the beach, setting up plots (for marijuana), deer hunting, whitebaiting, fishing (surf casting, or boat fishing – local people do not generally fish in the creeks and rivers), anything really, except if you’re working for one of the local farmers (Graeme).

I asked Graeme if this was because work in the bush is essentially working for yourself, not for another person, whereas farm work was working for the farmer:

It’s a bit of both, I mean the reason that working one of the local cockies [*farmers*] isn’t really proper work, I mean it’s still work, but you can’t really do things with the farmers ‘cause they look at things a bit differently...they never go bush and farm work isn’t in the bush.

Key to the authenticity of ‘going bush’ is actually working, rather than spending leisure time in the bush. The decline of extractive industries such as mining and forestry, and other occupations such as possum trapping and deer culling has spelt a decline in the reasons to spend ‘purposeful’ time in the bush in the area. Jade ‘hunting’ provides a good excuse to spend significant periods of time in the bush.

The necessity to work in the bush (rather than spend leisure time) illustrates the way in which thinking about the landscape is negotiated. Comments about tramping or using Department of Conservation tracks in the area further illustrate this idea:

Yeah, they [*the tracks*] get used sometimes, like if you want to get to a particular piece of bush in a hurry or something, but nah, *you don’t go tramping*. (Lance)

In fact, no-one goes tramping, yet trips into the bush take place under the flimsiest of pretences: 'Just goin' up to check the traps', or sometimes water supplies that appear to be working perfectly, or dope plots that have only just been tended to a couple of days earlier by someone else. 'You're not in there for the fun of it, you're there to work.' There is always a *reason* to be in the bush, because there must be a reason in order for time spent in the bush to be considered work.

Another feature of 'the bush' is women's exclusion from activities in and knowledge about the bush. A local woman, Andrea, noted:

I know several guys who've gone bush for a while, but I don't really know that much about what they get up to out there, hunting I guess, and a bit of fishing...I don't really know of anyone who has gone for any period of time.

At this point, her partner, Graeme, said:

Yes you do, you know (*local man*) and that other guy who used to live down the bottom of the creek by Chris's.

Andrea replied that she did know who he was talking about, but didn't know anything about them going bush. 'How would I know what they get up to, I'm not their bloody mother'.

After talking to more women about their knowledge of going bush, it became clear that men talk about going bush, sometimes in front of women, but not specifically *with* women, further, women often 'tune out' the talk about it. The bush is a place for men, constructed through work in the bush that only men undertake. Indeed, Coast Roaders dismiss even the possibility of a woman working in the bush. In the time I spent in the area I spent quite a lot of time working areas that Coast Roaders considered the bush, yet my work was not recognised as work in the bush – rather, just lending a hand. The bush is a social space that I could not properly participate in.

CONCEPTUALISING THE BUSH AND BELONGING

Sitting in the main room of a house on the Coast Road with the rain pelting down outside, a video-taped television program prompted one of the best evocations of a local view of landscape. Slouched on a couch surrounded by two neighbours, my hosts and a couple of local kids, we were watching a

video-taped episode (most people cannot receive television reception on the Coast Road) of a television show in which Scottish comedian Billy Connolly undertakes a tour of Britain. Connolly was standing beside the River Tyne, in the city of Newcastle, in northern England, when he bombastically informed us: 'There's something wonderful about bridges, something very human, not like a mountain that you'd have nothing to do with.' Having just had a long conversation about the meaning of the bush for local people that afternoon, one of the people watching the program drew everyone's attention to his statement: 'That's the difference between them and us – a bridge *is human, that's the bloody point.*' I asked him to elaborate, (while I busily hunted for a pen and my notebook). 'It's like the whole point is that you can't live in a place where everything is man-made, it's like everything is smaller than you, and sort of the *same* as you.' Others in the room murmured in agreement.

This theme of domesticated versus undomesticated landscapes comes up again and again in Coast Roaders' talk about the bush. For Coast Roaders, people can only be familiar to themselves in the presence of a non human, untamed other and this unknowable, undomesticated other, the bush, is constructed through work. These two ideas, that the bush is an untamed other and that it must be worked in to be interacted or consumed with properly are amalgamated by Coast Roaders to create a sense of belonging in response to their transience. Specifically, the bush as an untamed other enables Coast Roaders to appropriate two key features of broader, more traditional discourses of belonging on the West Coast in order to make their own sense of localness - working in the bush, and being born on the Coast.

As Gray (2003) shows us, landscape in anthropological discourse has commonly been conceptualised as a 'text' (2003:227), a mnemonic for local people to tell stories about themselves as belonging to an area. Landscapes constructed as texts grow out of local histories and stories and as such tend to privilege narrative over practice. Without going into too much detail, West Coasters have a different image of the bush to Coast Roaders. For West Coasters the bush is constructed through narrative, and physical characteristics, such as hills and rivers become lodestones with which people tell stories about themselves as locals. For instance, the locals always refer to one creek as a river, even though it is much smaller than the two main rivers in the area. The 'river' flash flooded on two separate occasions, about forty years ago, and more recently, about ten years ago. It can do as much damage as a river, and so it is called a river, yet this is also socially significant. Each time a river floods local people 'pull together' - they demonstrate an important part of being a West Coaster - helping out your mates. The 'river' hooks people into a shared set of values

and understandings about what it means to be a local. This is one example of many of the ways people invest social meanings in their environment that are narratively constructed over time. In Gray's (2003) terms, they are narratively constructing landscapes as texts.

For West Coasters then, the bush is replete with demarcations that remind local people about how to relate to themselves and one another and for making people feel at home. These images derive from long histories of working in or with the bush (Sampson, 2003).¹⁰ For West Coasters, the bush is an agglomeration of specific locations made meaningful by long histories of work in the area.

Coast Roaders do not construct their version of the bush in this way, they make no distinctions between 'up the back' and 'down the front', or the river or beach. For them, the bush is a *unitary* construction; constructed through activity, specifically, work in the bush. In line with Gray (2003) Coast Roaders, as newcomers or transients, do not have access to local narratives and histories about place in the bush, so they borrow the parts they *do* have access to. They recognise that work in the bush is an important part of the dominant discourse of being a West Coaster (Sampson, 2003). Coast Roaders use work to 'replace' the West Coasters' narratively constructed version of landscape where the bush is a text that tells locals about their history in the area, with a practiced landscape, practiced through work in the bush.

The difference between the bush as a text and the bush as a practiced landscape is seen in the differences in the ways that the two groups talk about the bush, as outlined above. For West Coasters, the bush is comprised of places with historical significance, whereas for Coast Roaders the bush is a unitary all encompassing concept, including the beach and riverbeds, practiced through work.

There is a second reason that Coast Roaders construct the bush as a unitary whole: it is an explicit recognition of an implicit assumption that West Coasters talk about, that the bush is all around, or omnipresent. This has implications for the sort of work that can be done in the bush. For Coast Roaders, work in the bush must make a mark, otherwise one is not interacting with the bush, rather you are 'watching it on television'. On the other hand, they must heed the idea that the bush is all around, omnipresent, which grows out of West Coast histories of working in the bush. Coast Roaders must walk a line between making a mark on the bush, and recognising its uncontrollable, omnipresent nature. The collection of jade provides a perfect medium nego-

tiating this paradox. One can work in the bush, by collecting jade, without making too big a mark on the bush. So Coast Roaders construct the bush as a unitary whole for two interrelated reasons, firstly, as a response to their exclusion from the landscape as a text due to their lack of history in the area, and secondly, as an explicit recognition of the implicit West Coast assumption that the bush is all around them, an idea that grows out of local histories of working in the bush.

Yet there is another facet to Coast Roaders unitary construction of the bush, one that taps into another important aspect of belonging in the traditional West Coast notion of belonging: being born on the Coast. Coast Roaders use the idea of the bush as something omnipresent and adjust it to realise a sense of belonging as essential and authentic being born on the Coast. Sampson (2003) discusses the importance of being born on the Coast for West Coast-ers:

I say I'm a fourth generation (West Coaster) but really I'm a third. My great grandmother was born in Ireland, lived in Westland for 73 years and had 13 children without a doctor, but she's not really a Coaster, still she possessed all the survival characteristics that would make her local but...she cannot really be called a local (Sampson, 2003:77).

Perhaps the most important way of being a West Coaster is to be 'born here' (ibid, 2003:177), and having grown up on the West Coast I would certainly concur that the idea of being born on the Coast is widely considered to be the most important qualification for being a Coaster.

Coast Roaders are made particularly aware of this idea of being born on the Coast as key to West Coast 'localness' - as transients and newcomers they provide opportunities for West Coast-ers to discuss their claims to the localness. I asked every person I interviewed during the course of my fieldwork what they thought it meant to be a local, and all referred to the idea that 'you have to be born here', even though most did not like or agree with this categorisation. Coast Roaders use 'the bush' to tap into this idea of being born on the Coast to further their sense of being local in response to their transience. Let me explain.

We have seen Coast Roaders constructing the bush as a unitary whole as an explicit recognition of the West Coast implicit assumption that the bush is omnipresent, which is why Coast Roaders cannot make too big a mark on the

bush. Yet, by never making too big a mark on the bush Coast Roaders maintain an image of the bush as essentially undomesticated or uncontrollable. Coast Roaders talk about never ‘clearing’ the bush, or altering it too much; ‘you can’t just be clearing everything in sight’ (Neil). Imagining the bush as non-man made and uncontrollable provides Coast Roaders with a vehicle to make a notion of belonging that is analogous to the notion of being born on the West Coast. West Coasters have no choice about being born on the Coast, it is out of their hands, something they have no control over. I would argue that by working in the bush in the ‘right way’ - positioning the bush as something that is out of their control - Coast Roaders reproduce this process of citizenship gained by West Coasters through being born on the Coast. Eventually, after working in the bush in the ‘right way’ the bush will come to ‘accept’ them as locals. This acceptance is analogous to being born on the Coast; it is a sense of belonging that is ordained by something they have no control over. In other words, the bush as something people have no control over becomes a metaphorical version of being born on the Coast. And how does a person know when he is working in the bush in the right way? Pieces of jade will begin to reveal themselves to him. By revealing itself to a worthy man, jade ordains a sense of belonging to the area on the finder.

The collection of jade is integral to the process of ‘bush making’. Again, the crucial aspect to performing futile work in the bush is modifying the bush, but *not modifying it too much*. This is not easy. One must learn to walk the line between working in the bush, which necessarily involves making a mark on the bush, without altering it too much in order to maintain the idea that the bush cannot be controlled. Jade collection provides the perfect medium for this. A person can still be ‘working in the bush’ without appropriating or controlling the bush, and therefore rendering it man-made. The relationship between jade collecting and the bush is represented in the aesthetic appreciation of the stones. Coast Roaders thus use a pastiche of historical ideas and social processes about what it means to be local on the West Coast to develop a sense of belonging to place in response to their transience. In a place with a lot of newcomers, the practice of jade collection provides access to an authentic and enduring sense of belonging.

GENDER AND THE BUSH

Furthermore, this notion of belonging is gendered in particular ways which appropriate key aspects of a broader West Coast discourse of belonging. This articulation also sheds light on another aspect of being a Coast Roder – the marginalisation of women in the processes and practices of belonging. As out-

lined previously, women are largely excluded from the practices of work in the bush. Women are not considered 'bush going', and as such, cannot find jade. The bush is thus a gendered landscape.

When talking to people about jade, everyone recommended men for me to talk to, no-one recommended women and this is indicative of women's general exclusion from the activities surrounding jade. In asking Coast Roaders why women don't tend to pursue jade in the same ways as men, always playing an auxiliary, if any, role, I was told this was because they were more likely to be busy looking after children, rather than spending all day 'pissing about with jade'. It is well accepted by both (the few) women and men in the area that women cannot 'see jade', with regular jade hunters referring to this 'jade blindness' as a characteristic of their gender.

The most obvious explanation for women's exclusion from the social processes of belonging on the Coast Road is that they typically remain in the area for an even shorter period of time than men, especially if they have children, and often stay in the area only once owing mainly to the difficulty of the living arrangements. Furthermore, women are marginalised within the West Coast narratives of the bush. When Coast Roaders 'borrow' the concept of 'the bush' from West Coasters, they borrow its gendered nature. West Coast myths about working in the bush are masculine,¹¹ and as Coast Roaders 'borrow' this discourse, they also borrow its gender bias. This goes some way to making sense of women's exclusion from the social practices of belonging – or 'bushmaking'. However, this idea is somewhat problematic, after all, Coast Roaders have shown themselves as adept as appropriating West Coast notions of localness to suit their circumstances, and it stands to reason that they could alter the gendered nature of these histories as well. Yet, there is another way of thinking about the marginalisation of women on the discourse of belonging on the Coast Road. Strathern's (1980) analysis of the relationship between nature, culture and gender in western metaphysics informs an analysis of the gendered construction of the bush among Coast Roaders.

For instance, we have already seen Coast Road men talking about the importance of conceptualising the bush as something they have no control over, an essentially unknowable other. This idea of the bush as an uncontrollable other resonates well with Strathern's (1980) ideas about nature, culture and gender, and provides an insight into the gendering of 'the bush'. I want to use the West Coast idea of landscape as resource, and the Coast Road idea of working in the bush, making a mark in the bush, (but not too big) as a starting point for a deeper analysis of gender on the Coast Road. As in the version of belonging

discussed above, Coast Roaders make a distinction between themselves and the bush in their conceptualisation of the landscape. Coast Roaders look at the bush as something that is non-man made. In both of these conceptualisations, the bush is seen as separate to people - Coast Roaders hold the bush as fundamentally different to them – non human.

I previously outlined a key idea in the anthropology of landscape – that landscape is divided into ‘background and foreground’ (Hirsch, 1995), and that there is a Western tendency to position landscape as a general, passive background against which specific, active things are positioned. The image of nature as separate from people that underpins this idea of landscape as a background, and is underpinned by a key metaphysical assumption that holds implications for gender on the Coast Road. The separation between nature and culture in western thinking is underpinned by a conceptual subject – object relationship, where one concept is held as the passive object and the other as the active subject (Strathern, 1980: 181). Nature and culture occupy a relationship where one occupies, colonises or displaces the other. This relationship has implications for the way the landscape of ‘the bush’ is gendered on the Coast Road. Using the idea that nature and culture exist in a colonising or controlling relationship, we can see why ‘the bush’ can be thought of as nature, and part of a men’s domain.

By developing this framework further to think about gender on the Coast Road, it becomes possible to see women held as being homologous with nature, men with culture in the Coast Road version of ‘the bush’. Let me explain.

The few women I spoke to mentioned that the Coast Road was a good place to carry out their ‘natural roles’ as mothers. And frequently, when asked about what women do on the Coast Road, men said that women have babies, ‘that’s just what they do’. It is difficult to provide a good illustration regarding women’s belonging on the Coast Road, because there are so few women. Yet, there is one strong indication that gender is conceptualised according to the schema outlined above. ‘Going bush’ or working in the bush is considered the main purpose of life for men. Generally speaking, it is the most important facet of their lives – ‘it’s just what they do’. Women’s equivalent is having children, which is talked about as their natural role. In a follow-up interview, I asked both men and women, ‘If men go bush, what do women do?’ and the answer, from both men and women, was that they had babies.

Indeed, a couple of local women agreed this was a powerful draw-card for the area:

It's like this is the place you can actually be a mother, and that's all it's about, y'know. You don't have to worry about all the other stuff like having a career or you know, explaining to people why you haven't got a job. It's my natural role as a woman to be a mother, to nurture my kids. This is a good place to do it (Sarah).

This resonates with the argument about gender above, where we can see men as active modifiers of nature, as expressed through their interaction with the bush, and women as the passive holders of nature, as expressed through their perceived 'natural' mothering roles. Men 'go bush', it is *something that they do*, women are mothers – *it is something they are*. This is analogous to Strathern's position that in a western discourse men can be positioned as active subjects, as opposed to women, who are conceptualised as 'passive bearers of nature' (1980:183).

Jade is central to the process of becoming a Coast Roder: because looking for it is understood as work in the bush. Work in the bush positions men as modifiers of the bush – the bush 'gives up' the stone, and the proper way to conceptualise the bush is to interact with it – not to 'watch it on T.V'. The most important aspect of being on the Coast Road for men is to work in the bush – 'this is what you do'. According to this version of gender on the Coast Road, women are excluded from the collection of jade because they cannot be in the bush in the 'right way' – in other words, women cannot be distinguished between themselves (culture) and the bush (nature) because they are homologous with nature. The two women who were considered to be proper Coast Roderes both not only worked in the bush, collecting jade in the same way as the men (and importantly, never finding any), but also were both single and childless. In other words, they live like the men, and were talked about as men.

There are thus two articulations of gender on the Coast Road. The first argues that women are peripheral in the broader West Coast discourse of working in the bush. As Coast Road men appropriate and practice aspects of the mainstream West Coast tradition of working in the bush to make a sense of belonging as authentic as being born on the Coast, they also 'borrow' women's exclusion from the broader West Coast discourse of work in the bush. The second articulation relies more heavily on anthropological theory, arguing that women's marginalisation in the construction of 'the bush' is produced out of a western metaphysical paradigm where nature and culture are subjectified and objectified, and then used to think about gender relations. In this way, only men can produce 'the bush' as women are held as homologous with it.

CONCLUSION

Jade represents the centrality of 'the bush' in engendering a sense of belonging or localness for Coast Roaders. 'The bush' is not simply a forested area, rather, it is a socially practiced landscape which enables Coast Roaders to create a sense of belonging to the local area in spite of their transience. In the absence of long histories on the West Coast, practice is privileged over narrative in the construction of a social landscape – 'the bush'. Coast Roaders practice the bush in order to tap into and appropriate two prominent and important aspects of a broader, more mainstream West Coast discourse of belonging – working in the bush and being born on the West Coast, to develop a sense of belonging to the area. And as we have seen, belonging on the Coast Road, through the development of a social landscape, 'the bush' is a highly gendered process. The anthropology of landscape provides insight into the gendering of 'the bush'. Gray's (2003) critique of narratively constructed, and therefore objectified landscapes complements Strathern's (1980) ideas about objectified landscapes in the western imagination, where subject/object, coloniser/colonised and nature/culture are mapped onto male and female categorisations. We can see that 'the bush' is constructed in this way, the bush is conflated with nature, something that men 'colonise' (Strathern, 1980:179). We see this colonisation of nature as a metaphor for the colonisation of women, which offers an explanation as to why men can realise a sense of belonging through the construction of the bush, in a more authentic, enduring way than women. This is reflected in the collection of jade – where men can 'see' jade and women cannot.

Finally, this ethnography demonstrates a group of Pākehā people practicing their identities as locals in a quite different manner to the common perspectives on Pākehā identity oriented around farming and domination of the landscape. Coast Roaders practice a socially meaningful landscape – 'the bush' – through the collection and appreciation of jade. It is through the bush that relatively transient people negotiate a sense of belonging to the area. Interestingly, though, the landscape remains, as in the more mainstream versions of Pākehā identity, 'men's business': the bush is a gendered landscape that excludes women from developing a sense of belonging as enduring or authentic as men's. On the Coast Road, we see a group of Pākehā men practising and reifying a social landscape of belonging and identity, represented through the myriad practices associated with the collection of the greyish, misshapen stones found almost everyday in creek beds and on beaches up and down the Coast Road.

NOTES

- 1 The importance of the imagined connection with a 'country landscape' for Pākehā has prevailed despite the fact that by 1911 half of New Zealand's population were urban dwellers, increasing to three quarters by 1961 (Statistics New Zealand available at www.stats.govt.nz retrieved 14 April 2005). The importance of country landscapes to Pākehā New Zealanders can be seen in odd little cultural quirks such as the stigma attached to the act of buying a cord of firewood rather than collecting it oneself, thus commodifying the important practice of clearing land.
- 2 The Coast Road area is a coastal reach bounded by hills to the east and the sea to the west. It is generally considered to stretch between just north of Greymouth and Westport, about a two-hour drive on the (only) winding road. My research dealt most closely with the activities of a group of Coast Roaders, neighbours, numbering about thirty people in total. However, the population of Coast Roaders is difficult to estimate given their lifestyle, but roughly 200 people live in these conditions in the area at any one time.
- 3 Nephrite Jade is generally referred to in New Zealand as Greenstone or pounamu (its Māori name). It is referred to as 'jade' on the West Coast.
- 4 Traditional Māori found that jade held an edge extremely well, and made an excellent tool, from digging and cutting wood to carving out *nga waka* (*canoes*) and making weapons, such as a *patu*, a heavy hand axe. Further, many Māori wore pendants fashioned from the stone, often in the shape of fishhooks, (that were probably used) but also other shapes. Māori fashioned their stones slowly, carrying around one piece with them, working on it whenever they sat down for any period of time (Brailsford, 1996: 34) Found predominantly on the West Coast, pounamu was difficult to obtain. The West Coast is surrounded by mountains to the north, east and south, and sea to the west. Parties of men, sometimes accompanied by women, would leave from settlements on the East Coast or the top of the South Island, and travel over the mountains to the West Coast, whereupon they would search for jade, sometimes for months, before returning home. The tribulations of river crossings, rain, flooding, injuries, illness, and hunger meant the successful were held in high esteem.
- 5 There is some dispute amongst South Island Māori regarding Ngāi Tahu's eligibility to claim jurisdiction over all the jade in the South Island. Broadly, the \$170 million Ngāi Tahu settlement of 1996 made reparations to South Island Māori for the purchase of eight separate land areas by the Crown between 1844

and 1864 (Ngāi Tahu Settlement Briefing Kit, 1996). In 2000 Ngāti Apa ki Te Waipounamu went to the Court of Appeal to challenge the authority of Ngāi Tahu to claim ownership of all pounamu on the basis that their tribe was resident and actively collecting jade. Their claim was struck because, among other things, Ngāti Apa ki Te Waipounamu had ‘no more than a right of residence granted by Ngāi Tahu’ (Kennett Law, 2004) The main topic of a preceding hearing regarding the definition of the Ngāi Tahu takiwa (area) discussed ‘...whether groups other than Ngāti Apa (Ngāti Rarua, Ngāti Tama, Te Atiawa) had gained rights in the purchase areas by virtue of tribal invasions in the 1830s’ (Kennett Law, 2004)

- 6 The Māori name for the South Island is Te Waipounamu, meaning the place of jade. Māori myths, ideas and understandings surrounding jade are complex and vary regionally, and are influenced by socio-historical context. However, the generally accepted tradition of jade holds that pounamu is thought of as a fish that turns into stone when removed from the water, and is the personification of Poutini, a mythical character who travelled to New Zealand from Hawaiiiki (the mythical ‘homeland’) with Ngahue. Ngahue accompanied Kupe on the first voyage to New Zealand.
- 7 The idea that Ngāi Tahu over-rode the sovereignty of other South Island tribal groups is supported by complex post settlement negotiations between the groups (Kennett Law, 2004).
- 8 See the contributions from the NZASA (1990) to the article ‘Cultural Politics in New Zealand’, in *Anthropology Today* (6) 3 1990.
- 9 Delaney *et al* (1995) argue that nature and culture are not representations of an unconscious mental mechanism, in line with structuralist thinking, rather they are socially constructed, the product of a Christian worldview of domination over nature. In short, they trace the way the origin story of God as creator of a (passive) nature, then men as creators and modifiers.
- 10 For a greater elaboration of the construction of a West Coast version of the bush see Grubb, (2005:104–105).
- 11 Many New Zealand myths about working on the land are oriented toward men (Phillips (1996) Bell (1996), and on the West Coast arguably more so. The pioneering stories that provide the basis for many myths about landscape and Pākehā masculinity are oriented around farming, especially farming as a family enterprise, including the ‘farmer’s wife’ who played an important role in the

establishment of the family farm. However, unlike the rest of New Zealand farming is a comparatively recent development on the West Coast, with the majority of the West Coast's population engaged as labourers in extractive industries such as gold and coal mining during this 'pioneering' period. Indeed the number of women compared to men on West Coast during the 'pioneering' period was very low (May, 1967). Arguably, the West Coast images of landscape and the bush are even more masculine than in the rest of New Zealand.

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