

hills, the other landscape components, the handling of sheep. This is by no means to imply that Peden is an apologist for the pastoralists, past and present, their decisions and actions. Far from it. But he exhibits a deep understanding of, and sympathy for, the South Island tussock lands and those who first settled them.

*The Settler's Plot: How Stories Take Place in New Zealand*

by Alex Calder. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2011

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Reviewed by Philip Steer

Alex Calder is the type of Pakeha I think I'd like to be. Witty, articulate, cultured yet self-conscious about what it means that he is not tangata whenua, he is also – to top it all – an excellent close-reader. The presence of such a persona ensures that *The Settler's Plot* is highly readable, and has as good a chance as any work of literary criticism I've read at garnering a non-academic audience. That persona is also central to the methodology of this first full-length manifesto of 'Settlement Studies', a 'form of postcolonial inquiry' whose 'basic premise is that the foundational problems, injustices and consequences of European settlement of this country will not disappear' (p.x). If it weren't written in such a conversational style, one might almost think it was a declaration of war on Patrick Evans. Despite the absence of Evans' name, passing remarks suggest that Calder has *The Long Forgetting* (2007) in mind: 'I have opted to examine a few illustrative case studies in the hope that one or two detailed examples are worth a hundred cursory glances' (p.viii). Calder's affability effectively goes toe-to-toe with Evans' renowned wit, and their battle is over the direction of postcolonial analysis in New Zealand literary studies.

As the title neatly indicates, *The Settler's Plot* foregrounds the depiction of place in New Zealand literature, yet it is also about literary form, for Calder's argument is that the narration of Pakeha identity in particular settings inevitably produces ideological and formal complications. There's a slight tension here between generalizing about place – 'I have tried to be the anthropologist of the tacit cultural knowledge Pakeha have invested in the most common settings in New Zealand literature' – and privileging particular representations of it in 'classic New Zealand texts' that deserve to belong in the 'canon' of the nation's literature (pp.viii, ix). F.E. Maning's status as the patron saint (or trickster god) of Settlement Studies is thus reinforced here both because he seems 'prophetic' of a general ongoing ambiguity surrounding the settler's status in New Zealand (p.71) and because

he has written a formally complex ‘classic’ that portrays cultural encounter and exchange as something (contra Evans) to be celebrated and affirmed:

Against all notions of ingrained racial or determined cultural qualities, against the invention of incommensurable differences between Maori and Pakeha, is the give and take of the ever-changing beach, where warring incompatibilities dissolve in the middle ground. (p.87)

The personal tone of *Settler’s Plot* is thus closely calibrated to an approach that rejects overarching and moralistic critiques of colonization in favour of more localized and complicated scenarios. It also supports an exclusive focus on self-fashioning and cultural boundaries because ‘it is with this kind of settlement process, rather than the legal, political and military processes of state forming, that literature is most intimately associated’ (p.110).

*The Settler’s Plot* is divided into four parts: ‘Belonging’, focused on Pakeha representations of nature; ‘Landing’, where the beach provides a model for the cross-cultural frontier; ‘Settling’, concerning a variety of ‘sub-national’ spaces; and ‘Looming’, which explores the ways ‘overseas’ has shaped settler narratives. It begins by introducing the concept of ‘Pakeha turangawaewae’, a ‘syndrome’ whereby settlers feel a deep sense of connection while lacking ‘a more essential mode of belonging to this place’ that Maori can claim: ‘it is the sort of belonging you have when you don’t have turangawaewae’ (pp.4, 5). Calder traces this settler engagement with nature in writings by Lady Barker, Blanche Baughan and James K. Baxter, as well as – curiously – a CNN documentary featuring Helen Clark. Yet in describing the latter’s coverage of a marae welcome, the concept of Pakeha turangawaewae appears to have undergone a subtle but significant shift:

We see the challenge through his American eyes, and those eyes are not ours. We know how the challenge works, why it is done and what happens next. . . . It is as if tangata whenua and Pakeha manuhiri had exchanged winks beforehand and allowed the overseas participant a small misapprehension about a ritual we value.

Knowing these things . . . is what I think gives Pakeha turangawaewae here. (p.29)

What was initially a ‘syndrome’ is now treated much more positively, located in the domain of culture rather than in nature, as Calder reframes Pakeha turangawaewae in the relational terms of ‘manuhiri’ rather than the existential terms of nature with which he began.

The second section, ‘Landing’, explores a similarly diverse range of texts: a painting by Augustus Earle and accounts of supposed Maori cannibalism; Maning’s writings; and William Satchell’s historical novel of the New Zealand Wars, *The Greenstone Door* (1914). Each of these is the

subject of powerful and insightful analysis, with Satchell's novel treated to a Franco Moretti-style reading that points out the ideology behind its spatial representation of the war torn North Island landscape in order to reveal that the contradictions of settlement are manifested in stylistic contradictions and shortcomings. What isn't immediately clear is the principle of selection that justifies choosing this painting or historical novel in particular, or even a painting at all. The next section, 'Settling', centres on the claim that 'it may be useful to think of our literature as if it were the expression of something more like a *terroir* than a nation' (p.111). By 'terroir', Calder means distinctive sub-national spaces, and here he explores the suburb and the farm in particular. These chapters amply demonstrate the usefulness of regionalized, place-bound literary analysis, although the comparison of suburban fiction by Mansfield, Sargeson and Gee left me wondering why the novel and the short story were being conflated at the same as the nation was being disaggregated.

The final section also breaks productively with a simplistic nationalist analysis, this time by considering a variety of ways in which settler writing has been shaped by a sense of being dislocated from the world's 'cultural and financial centres' (p.190). Calder likens this to the freak atmospheric condition of 'looming', an optical illusion whereby distant objects suddenly seem near:

[M]etaphors of looming offer a better account of the place of these texts than those proposed either by our traditional 'here' narratives – the discovery, growth and maturation of a distinct cultural identity – or by post-nationalist postmodern alternatives that are themselves cultural imports, often arriving from there to here on an updating mission . . . as if the distortions of looming were not themselves real, and had not . . . always already unfixed our relation to space and time. (p.192)

Looming, in other words, is another model of formal complexity, but one produced out of global rather than local conditions. It also proves a remarkably capacious concept, licensing a psychoanalytic reading of Robin Hyde's *Passport to Hell*, revealing the role of the American western genre in John Mulgan's *Man Alone*, and framing a highly nuanced reading of the 'hemispheric shifts' of Allen Curnow's later poetry (p.254). What stands out most, however, is Calder's use of it to mount a rescue of Janet Frame's fiction from overly individualized and psychologized approaches through 'a more grounded reading of the place of imagination and the imagination of place' (p.259). While 'looming' possibly lacks sufficient catchiness to enter the critical lexicon, there is clear value in an approach that repositions Frame's work from the formal fringes of New Zealand fiction to the centre of the aesthetic interrogation of settlement: 'so too might we learn about place

when the verbs and nouns of belonging and location no longer automatically function' (p.267).

This is a smart, provocative, and richly insightful book. By its end, however, I was left with a slight anxiety that its individual parts might be worth more to New Zealand literary studies than their whole, because I keep coming back to the question of how Settlement Studies as a grand theory understands the relationship between settler identity, culture and history. To be fair, each reading is deeply contextualized in service of 'connect[ing] the way stories take shape in these settings to the actual history of Pakeha settlement' (p.vii), yet this occurs within an overall commitment to treating culture in isolation from the domains of law, politics and economics. By ring-fencing culture in this way, the book's central temporal claim about settler society – that 'the foundational problems, injustices and consequences of European settlement of this country will not disappear' (p.x) – struggles to account for the different ways those 'foundational problems, injustices and consequences' have manifested themselves over time. Put another way, organizing the book in spatial terms blurs any clear argument about how and why settler literature might have changed over time, and what this might say about changes to settler identity. The other aspect that stands out is the rhetorical role played here by the use of a collective 'we'. Calder has chosen to restrict his focus to 'an account of Pakeha literary and cultural history' (p.x), but there is an occasional slippage here between a Pakeha and a national 'we'. On the beach, so to speak, it is a Pakeha 'we', but when faced with looming 'we' are New Zealanders; the difference is significant because the latter implicitly constructs a homogeneous national identity in Pakeha terms. In a book that so powerfully questions what New Zealand literary criticism is and how it is done, one further question it raises is whether Settlement Studies requires Maori to occupy rhetorically the space and time of 'Old New Zealand' in order to guarantee the modernity of the settler nation.

*The Treaty of Waitangi Companion: Māori and Pākehā  
from Tasman to Today*

edited by Vincent O'Malley, Bruce Stirling and Wally Penetito  
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Reviewed by Melissa Matutina Williams

If there's truth in the rumour that 'Treaty fatigue' has beset the nation, then the publisher and authors of *The Treaty of Waitangi Companion: Māori and Pākehā from Tasman to Today* should be commended for this