

Men Alone, in Bronze and Stone: A Tale of Two Statues

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We pass by them every day in cities and towns, without a second thought. Solitary figures, usually male, standing stern and silent. Familiarity, it seems, has bred not contempt but indifference; statues have become invisible. Yet this is not true always and everywhere. From time to time, sometimes quite unexpectedly, a statue will come to life, will shed its cloak of invisibility and become the focus of public attention and debate. As Annie Coombes, writing about South Africa, explains, the visibility of monuments is contingent on the debates that take place around them at times of political and social change: ‘Thus the dejected political figure consigned for years to an indifferent amnesia paradoxically gets a new lease on life through the actions of later generations... [E]ven the dullest public statuary that has lain dormant and unattended for years can be and is reanimated.’¹

In both New Zealand and Northern Ireland, unresolved historical grievances and contemporary ethnic power struggles have, from time to time, found a focus in statues and other symbolic targets. This article examines conflicts over two statues of Northern Ireland-born Prime Ministers of New Zealand: the statue of William Massey in his birthplace of Limavady, and the statue in Whanganui of John Ballance. It weaves into these stories some threads from the life and writing of the New Zealand author John Mulgan, whose paternal ancestors came from Northern Ireland. Mulgan was also stationed near Limavady, and in other parts of Northern Ireland, during the Second World War. His ancestry and life story, therefore, involve connections between New Zealand and Northern Ireland.

Mulgan helped to make the words ‘Man Alone’ part of New Zealand’s national mythology. Those words have taken on a life of their own, becoming disconnected from the actual content of Mulgan’s novel, so it seems reasonable enough to apply them to statues. Statues have the appearance of being men alone: they are overwhelmingly male, and though they are commonly found in public spaces, they stand apart from (indeed, they often look down on) everyday social life. Yet, at the same time, statues are commonly erected as part of the process of constructing and representing nations and other communities. This paradox – that statues are seen as representing both particular individuals and particular communities – goes some way towards explaining why they can become the focus of conflict.

If left unchallenged, statues and other symbols in public space can, all too often, represent the dominance of one ethnic, religious or political tradition over others. Making public space more inclusive by broadening the range of symbolic statements made there can, on the other hand, play a small but significant role in challenging imbalances in social power. While debates about statues can be socially divisive, they can also be useful opportunities to reflect on, and perhaps to change, the ways in which we represent our communities.

Getting Massey

I can't pretend to any full understanding of the Irish people or their problems. It sometimes crosses my mind that the Presbyterians of the North and the Sinn Feiners of the South are not, after three hundred years, themselves in possession of all the facts or all the answers.

Script for John Mulgan’s broadcast from Northern Ireland, ‘Calling New Zealand’, 11 July 1941²

In the middle of 1940, John Mulgan's battalion of the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Regiment was posted to Northern Ireland, and Mulgan was to stay there for almost two years.³ Although he remained entranced by the Irish landscape, which he likened to New Zealand's, the story of Mulgan's time in Northern Ireland is one of progressive disillusionment with the province's people and politics. In August 1940 he wrote to his wife Gabrielle that 'I continue to be fascinated by the Irish, they are the nicest craziest people' and that 'I am beginning to love the country, its problems and its people appeal to me as something near to myself.'⁴ However in 1941 he wrote to his parents that Ireland 'is the finest of countries but with a terrible climate and the most hopeless, not really lovable people', and to Gabrielle that the Irish were 'too soft', 'not inherently tough or phlegmatic like the English.'⁵ Irish politics, which had at first interested him, came to seem impossibly intractable, as he explained for a New Zealand audience in his July 1941 broadcast, 'Calling New Zealand': 'To engage anyone of either side in political argument is like trying to go back to the seventeenth century. A lot of peopl[e] admire the seventeenth century but I can't help feeling that it must have been a difficult time for men of moderate opinions.'⁶

This bemused view of Northern Irish politics was shared by New Zealand commentators half a century later, when news broke of a dispute over a statue of former New Zealand Prime Minister William Massey, in his birthplace of Limavady.



Statue of William Massey outside Limavady Borough Council offices.
Léim an Mhadaidh/Limavady
Contae Doire/County Derry/County Londonderry
Tuaisceart na hÉireann/the North of Ireland/Northern Ireland⁷

The statue of William Massey which stands outside the offices of the Limavady Borough Council was erected in 1995. The Borough Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland jointly funded the statue, which was the work of Belfast-born sculptor Philip Flanagan. While the statue project was initiated by an Ulster Unionist Party mayor, the mayor who presided over the unveiling ceremony came from the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party.⁸ It seems therefore, that there was a degree of cross-community support for the statue when it was erected.

The Massey statue controversy occurred as Northern Ireland was still struggling to bring about the improvement in community relations envisaged as part of the Good Friday Agreement. That agreement was endorsed by voters in both parts of Ireland in 1998 as a framework for resolving the Northern Ireland conflict. The Good Friday Agreement recognizes the sensitivity of the public use of symbols in Northern Ireland, as well as the need to ensure that ‘symbols and emblems are used in a manner which promotes mutual respect rather than division.’⁹ This wider debate about symbols in public space provided the context for a dispute about the Massey statue that flared briefly but hotly in early 2008.¹⁰

While a majority of the residents of Limavady town are Protestants and pro-British unionists, the wider Limavady Borough Council area has a Catholic and Irish nationalist majority. Since 1993, nationalists have had a majority on the Council and most of the nationalist councillors elected in 2005 came from the republican party Sinn Féin. For several years, Sinn Féin councillors had been campaigning for the removal of politically-contentious symbols on Limavady Borough Council property. In 2005, a Sinn Féin councillor moved a motion calling for the removal of British military memorabilia from the council offices which led to the adoption of a policy that all council buildings and facilities should be neutral environments in terms of how they reflect political or religious opinion.

A committee was then established to consider the implementation of the policy. The committee drew up a list of items that could be considered contentious, and therefore could be inconsistent with the ‘neutral public space’ policy. In addition to a number of items associated with the British Army and royalty, the list included the statue of Massey. Massey was included on the list seemingly because he was a member of the Protestant Orange Order, and could therefore be seen as a sectarian figure who exclusively represented the Protestant and unionist tradition.¹¹

When the list of contentious items was reported to the council in January 2008, a heated debate ensued. Unionist councillors, who had boycotted the process of developing the neutral public space policy, objected strongly to the list, and the wider unionist community reacted angrily to what they saw as an attack on their traditions. There were claims that nationalists were trying to rewrite history and to purge Limavady of Protestant and unionist symbols. Nationalists, on the other hand, argued that they simply sought to ensure that everyone felt comfortable on council property, and that there should be a balanced representation of all traditions in public places. While the dispute was not only about the Massey statue, the statue was a particular focus of debate, especially for unionists, who took offence at the perceived challenge to the reputation of one of Limavady’s most famous sons. The council was unable to reach agreement on the issue, and the Massey statue still stands outside the council offices.

The dispute over the Limavady Massey statue in 2008 was observed with a certain condescending amusement by New Zealand commentators. Political historian Michael Bassett suggested that Limavady should be proud of Massey’s achievements and that ‘if multicultural politics involves destroying the history of a place, well then it has no future.’¹² A *New Zealand Herald* editorial, under the heading ‘Healing rifts won’t start with removing statues’, said that the statue should be kept as a reminder that Massey had put his duty as Prime Minister ahead of sectarian interests.¹³ While there was an undoubted temptation to

view the dispute as another instance of an unfathomable Irish obsession with age-old conflicts, Bassett and the *Herald* editorialist may also have been conscious that disputes about statues were not unknown in New Zealand. Indeed, in the same year that the Massey statue was erected in Limavady, another statue of a Northern Ireland-born New Zealand Prime Minister was torn down in Whanganui.

Losing Ballance

Mabel's grandfather had shot Maoris for his bit of land.

John Mulgan, *Man Alone*¹⁴

‘When the spring comes’, John Mulgan wrote to his parents from Northern Ireland in 1940, ‘we should be gardening and growing our own food, working as the pioneer used to do, with a gun beside him.’¹⁵ While there was an element of macho bravado in this statement, there was also recognition that the colonization of New Zealand and other settler colonies had been accomplished with the gun as well as the spade.

Mulgan was probably unaware that his own ancestry linked him to a particularly controversial incident in the colonial history of Whanganui. Richard Matthews, Mulgan’s maternal great-grandfather, was an early missionary in New Zealand and one of the first Pākehā to travel up the Whanganui River.¹⁶ Matthews was at the centre of allegations that he and other settlers had poisoned so-called ‘rebel’ Māori during fighting around Whanganui in 1847. The truth of this incident is still disputed, but David Young recounts that anger about the alleged poisonings was ‘a major sustaining factor’ in the 1995 occupation of Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens.¹⁷ That occupation was also to focus attention on the record of another settler who had fought Māori in the Whanganui region: John Ballance.



Plinth of John Ballance statue, Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens, Whanganui.
Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens
Whanganui/Wanganui
Aotearoa/New Zealand

Ballance, like John Mulgan's ancestors on his father's side, came from County Antrim in the northeast of Ireland. Settling in Whanganui, Ballance became the editor of the *Wanganui Evening Herald* and, as a member of the Wanganui Cavalry, was involved in the campaign against Tītokowaru's forces in the late 1860s. At this stage of his life Ballance has been described by James Belich as 'vehemently anti-Māori',¹⁸ although his views were to change later in his career when he served as Minister of Native Affairs and then as Premier.

Soon after Ballance's death in 1893, a meeting of Whanganui residents resolved to raise money for a memorial to him. A committee chaired by the mayor decided to erect a statue, which was sculpted in marble by an Italian sculptor and unveiled in 1898. A year later it was moved from its original location to Moutoa Gardens.¹⁹ The statue's plinth bore the simple inscription 'John Ballance, Statesman'. Almost a century later, this statue was to become a casualty of Māori-Pākehā tensions in Whanganui around the time of the occupation of Moutoa Gardens or Pākaitore by Whanganui Māori.²⁰ In December 1994 and again in February 1995, the Ballance statue in Whanganui was beheaded by Māori activists, and, for a time, the statue's head was replaced with a pumpkin. Then in May 1995, during the occupation of Pākaitore, the statue was removed altogether, leaving only Ballance's feet and the plinth. Another statue of Ballance, erected in 1897 in the grounds of Parliament in Wellington, was also beheaded in 1995, and the base was spraypainted with the words 'Pākaitore is Māori land'.

Whanganui Māori activist Ken Mair defended the beheading of the statue in Whanganui, comparing Ballance to Ugandan dictator Idi Amin and to Adolf Hitler.²¹ Ballance, according to Mair, was 'responsible for the thieving of millions of acres of Maori land' and 'was part of a Wanganui Cavalry which pillaged and burned down villages and murdered people.'²² In response, historians and others argued that Ballance was comparatively liberal for his time, and that in his later career he took a relatively enlightened approach to Māori policy.²³

Jock Phillips has dubbed Whanganui 'the war memorial capital of the world',²⁴ and for a town of its size it is unusually rich in monuments to the imperial past. Both Jock Phillips and David Young link Whanganui's monumental landscape to its history as a frontier garrison town.²⁵ Unusually, Whanganui has three memorials to Māori who fought on the side of the Crown, all located in Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens, including the notorious Moutoa monument with its reference to defending 'law and order against fanaticism and barbarism'.²⁶ Jock Phillips argues that the occupation of Pākaitore was a challenge to the loyalist messages of the monuments there, and that 'the beheading of the Ballance statue was less about his own politics than about the politics of memorials on this small piece of land. It was a statement that this was Maori space and Pakeha statues had no place there.'²⁷

In the years that followed the destruction of the Ballance statue, its future was bound up with wider discussions about the future of Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens. A tripartite forum of Wanganui District Council, Whanganui iwi and Crown representatives reached agreement in 2001 for the land to be vested in the Crown and jointly managed by the council, iwi and the Crown.²⁸ Although this agreement stated that the Ballance statue would initially be reinstated at Moutoa Gardens, subsequent consultation indicated that neither Whanganui iwi nor the Ballance family wished to see the statue return there.²⁹ After some years of further discussion within the council, a decision was finally taken to commission a new statue of Ballance.

Located outside the district council offices, the new bronze statue shows a seated Ballance, and was unveiled in 2009 by the then Mayor Michael Laws. Laws used the opportunity to declare that 'If the protesters of 1995 had actually read a little more history, they would realize that Ballance was an outstanding political leader and became a strong protector of Maori land in his time as Native Affairs Minister.'³⁰ But a Māori protester at the unveiling said that Ballance was 'responsible for many injustices to our people.'³¹ Kaumatua

John Maihi acknowledged Ballance's achievements, but said that he was a divisive figure, and that it was right that the statue should be outside the council offices rather than in Pākaitore, which had special significance for Māori. In Maihi's view Ballance was 'brilliant' for Pākehā 'because he totally outmanoeuvred the natives, bullshitted them and stole their land'.³² The new statue has already had to be removed for repair after one of its feet was stolen in 2011.³³



Statue of John Ballance outside Wanganui District Council offices.

Drawing comparisons

The countryside of Ulster is vaguely familiar. The Irish people too, give one that same warm feeling of having come home or of revisiting a place that is well known to one.
John Mulgan, script for 'Calling New Zealand'

For all that the landscape sometimes reminded him of New Zealand, John Mulgan never really felt at home in Northern Ireland. Despite his somewhat strained attempt to persuade a New Zealand radio audience of similarities between New Zealand and Northern Ireland, the sense that comes through in Mulgan's letters is that he was puzzled by Irish people and their politics, rather than finding them familiar. Perhaps, as Peter Whiteford suggests, he felt increasingly ambivalent about the question of where his home lay, and New Zealand, too, had come to seem strange and distant to him.³⁴

'Revisiting a place that is well known to one' is not always a warm experience; it can also be unsettling, particularly if the place itself has changed, or if a person's experiences since being away cause her or him to view the place with new eyes. While it can be uncomfortable, such a fresh perspective can also deepen a person's understanding of a familiar place, and bring into sharper relief those features that make it distinctive. Comparisons of similar events in different places can, likewise, help to highlight what is distinctive about the political and cultural contexts in each place.

There is a long history of New Zealanders drawing comparisons between events in New Zealand and in Ireland.³⁵ Often, the comparison is associated with a warning that, if New Zealand continues down the wrong path, it will end up with what are perceived to be Ireland's problems. During the Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens occupation, for example, a group

calling for dialogue with the occupiers said that ‘Places like Northern Ireland show us what happens when people’s causes are ignored or overridden.’³⁶ Equally, an opponent of the occupation described the vandalism of the Ballance statues in Whanganui and Wellington as ‘low-grade terrorism’ and argued that ‘[s]erious terrorism is a real possibility’ because terrorist campaigns in Northern Ireland and elsewhere had proved successful in achieving their aims.³⁷

James Belich puts such claims into perspective when he writes that ‘In the 1990s, in a technique pioneered by Hone Heke’s amputation of the British flagstaff at Kororareka in 1844-45, Maori radicals attacked Pakeha icons: statues of John Ballance and George Grey, the America’s Cup, and the lone pine on Auckland’s One Tree Hill. Enraged Pakeha failed to register that such tactics would have delighted the authorities in Northern Ireland.’³⁸ Belich, however, goes too far in downplaying similarities between the situations in New Zealand and Northern Ireland. It is, of course, important to point out that Māori activists were not engaged in armed struggle against the state, but it is also important to note that monuments and other symbols have been a focus of political debate and of physical attacks in both New Zealand and Northern Ireland. Symbolic conflict can be an alternative to armed conflict, but can also sit alongside it.

The wider history of conflict over statues and monuments in New Zealand and Ireland is discussed in the final section of this article. For now, I want to consider the similarities and differences between the specific controversies over the Massey and Ballance statues.

One striking similarity between events in Limavady and Whanganui is the unexpectedness of these particular statues becoming the focus of controversy. I have found no evidence that either the Ballance or the Massey statue had been subject to criticism before they came under fire in 1994 and 2008 respectively. Any controversy over monuments in Whanganui had previously been focused on the Moutoa monument’s ‘fanaticism and barbarism’ inscription. Only in late 1994 did Ken Mair start speaking against the Ballance statues in Wellington and Whanganui, in the context of a wider attack on ‘monuments to Maori oppression’.³⁹ As for the Massey statue, there was some disagreement about how widely known Massey was within Limavady, but the town’s unionist mayor said that the question he was most frequently asked about the statue was “‘who’s he’”? He can’t be that contentious.”⁴⁰ Indeed, it appears that the committee tasked with drawing up the list of potentially contentious symbols on Limavady council property had to do an internet search to decide whether Massey was contentious or not.⁴¹ Similarly, the two men convicted of the first beheading of the Ballance statue had come to hate Ballance only after reading James Belich’s book on Tītokowaru, according to one of the men’s lawyers.⁴²

Once Ballance began to be portrayed as anti-Māori, however, it seems that some Whanganui Māori did genuinely object to the presence of his statue at Pākaitore. By contrast, despite the Massey statue being identified as potentially contentious, there is no evidence that Limavady nationalists actually felt strongly about the statue or wanted it removed. The supposed threat to the Massey statue did, however, provoke strong feelings among unionists, just as some Pākehā reacted strongly to the attacks on the Ballance statue. The lack of a groundswell of nationalist opinion against the Massey statue presumably explains why it continues to stand in its original position, whereas the Ballance statue will not be returning to Moutoa Gardens.

If the statue debates in Limavady and Whanganui were not based on longstanding opposition to the statues themselves, what did lie behind these controversies? Both can be seen as products of periods of major social and political change, and of contests over power and identity between ethnic communities (Protestants/unionists and Catholics/nationalists in Northern Ireland, Pākehā and Māori in New Zealand).

New Zealand had, since the 1970s, seen a period of resurgent Māori political activism and of Māori cultural revival. The establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975, and the extension of its jurisdiction to cover historical claims in 1985, put in place a process which attempted to resolve Māori grievances and to deal with the legacies of colonization. By the 1990s, however, many Māori were becoming frustrated that progress towards greater autonomy and equality, and towards the settlement of Treaty claims, seemed to have stalled. In particular, the National Government's 'fiscal envelope' policy of imposing a cap on the total value of Treaty settlements, announced in 1994, led to a new wave of Māori protest action. At the same time, many Pākehā were also frustrated that the Treaty settlement process seemed to be dragging on, and felt threatened by Māori cultural assertiveness.

Northern Ireland, meanwhile, suffered three decades of armed conflict from the late 1960s, during which existing divisions between the nationalist and unionist communities deepened. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 did not end these divisions, but did attempt to set Northern Ireland's politics on a new course. In theory, the political settlement involves an attempt to find cross-community consensus and to build a more inclusive society. In practice, however, there is still political capital to be made from exploiting community differences, and inclusiveness from one community's perspective can seem like exclusiveness from the perspective of the other community. While nationalists, long shut out from power in Northern Ireland, have flexed their new political muscle, many unionists have been alienated by political and cultural changes they see as undermining the Britishness of Northern Ireland.

Although the contexts in the two places are very different, both Northern Ireland and New Zealand have seen tensions over political and cultural struggles for status and influence emerging in debates about symbols. A recent report on Northern Ireland comments that the period since 1998 has been marked by 'the continuation of the war into politics, with politics broadly defined to include cultural contestation over languages, symbols, and celebrations and continuing disturbances at community level.'⁴³ In New Zealand, while communities are not nearly so polarized as in Northern Ireland, the process of renegotiating relationships between Māori and non-Māori has, at times, led to flare-ups of controversy over symbolic issues such as place names, anthems, flags and memorials.⁴⁴ The disputes over the Massey and Ballance statues are instances of a wider process of cultural contestation: 'conflict that is ostensibly about cultural expressions or enactments that becomes intense when it engages core group identity issues.'⁴⁵

In addition, both disputes involved the politics of public space. The Massey statue stands outside the council buildings in Limavady; Ballance formerly stood in a public park, albeit one to which Māori laid claim during the Pākaitore occupation. However, while both statues were located in places that are 'public' in the senses of being publicly owned and accessible to the public, the politics of the public spaces concerned are quite different.

In Limavady, the purpose of proposing potentially contentious symbols for removal was to ensure that council property was seen as open to all, rather than as being identified with a particular political and cultural tradition. In this debate, the assumption of the nationalist councillors who instigated the 'neutral public space' policy was that council property belonged to the whole Limavady community, and therefore should not display symbols associated with only one tradition within that community.

By contrast, while Ken Mair began by calling for the destruction of 'monuments to oppression' in public space generally, the focus of Māori opposition to the Ballance statue came to be on its presence on land claimed by Māori. The new statue of Ballance unveiled in 2009 is in the very location that was seen as problematic in the case of the Massey statue: outside a council building.⁴⁶ Although at least some Whanganui Māori are still uncomfortable with the Ballance statue, they can apparently accept its location near the

council offices, whereas a return of the statue to Pākaitore would now be quite unacceptable. It is interesting that Māori should accept, however reluctantly, the council associating itself with a man once likened to Hitler by Ken Mair and still described as a divisive figure by John Maihi. Does this say something about Māori alienation from the council, or is it simply a case of ‘anywhere but Pākaitore’?

Thus, in Limavady the focus was on removing objects that might detract from the status of council property as public space open to all, while in Whanganui the destruction of the Ballance statue was part of an attempt to claim Pākaitore as a specifically Māori place.⁴⁷ This important difference highlights the fact that, while debates about memorials and other symbols can have features in common, the terms of such debates are ultimately always determined by the specific circumstances in which they take place.

Finding balance

‘This is the end, brother,’ the old man said tonelessly. ‘This is the end. Where is Christ now? There are no men with us, no good men now, no Seddon, no Massey.’

John Mulgan, *Man Alone*⁴⁸



Feet of clay? The remains of the Ballance statue.
Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens, Whanganui.

Man Alone is very much a novel for a post-heroic age. Its protagonist seemingly has no heroes of his own, and makes every effort to avoid standing out, spending a significant part of the novel in hiding or otherwise trying to efface himself. While modern Western societies have not given up on the ideas of heroism and individual greatness, they have become more sceptical of them. As a result, public space has increasingly been filled, not with statues of ‘great men’, but with memorials to ‘ordinary’ people, often remembered en masse, and with abstract public art that may make a symbolic statement but does not commemorate any person or event.⁴⁹ Even so, statues have not disappeared from the landscape, and new statues are still erected. Do statues, in the words of Australian historian Graeme Davison, ‘still speak’ in our more sceptical age?⁵⁰

The final section of this article, which looks beyond the specifics of the debates in Limavady and Whanganui, explores the significance of statues and the reasons why they can become the centres of controversy. It argues for imbalances in symbolic landscapes to be addressed, not by destroying or removing existing monuments, but by increasing the range of symbolic statements made in public space.

Statues of historical figures are erected to draw attention to those individuals. Generally those behind the creation of a statue want to highlight the individual's achievements and laudable personal qualities. Yet even as they invite us to praise great men and to follow their examples, statues can also lead us to question why particular individuals have been commemorated, and whether they deserve to be remembered in this way. Despite standing in three dimensions, statues tend to promote a one-dimensional view of the characters of historical figures. The very fact that they have been put on a pedestal in a public place suggests that they are not to be judged by the same standards as other people. There is little room in debates about statues for complexity or moral ambiguity: for individuals who achieve great things but are deeply flawed, who are humane in one area of their lives but not in others, or who change their views over their lifetimes.

This focus on the character of the individual, however, misses a larger dimension of conflicts over statues and other memorials. I suggest that, when statues become the focus of debate, it is because they represent not only particular individuals, with all their readily-identifiable flaws, but also the identity of groups with whom those individuals are associated. Statues are not, in fact, men alone; they are part of wider networks of memorials and other symbols in public space. The construction of statues is not only about recognizing the achievements of individuals. It is also part of the process of constructing and representing nations and other communities. Statues of the 'great men' of 'our' past are intended to draw our attention to our common membership, with them and with each other, of a particular community. This is part of the phenomenon that Michael Billig has termed 'banal nationalism': the reproduction of the nation through everyday reminders of nationality.⁵¹ Taken together, statues, memorials and other symbols in public space convey messages about collective identity, even if they are not noticed consciously. In particular, in an ethnically divided society they can have much to say about the power balance between ethnic groups, and the place of different groups in the way community is imagined.

Speaking at the 1897 unveiling of the Ballance statue in Wellington, Premier Richard Seddon noted that during his tour of the other colonies 'he had found statues erected there to their leading citizens, warriors, and pioneers.' The fact that New Zealand had 'no statues raised to its leading men', Seddon continued, was 'almost a reproach', and he hoped that more statues would be raised to those who had sacrificed themselves for their country.⁵² As Seddon's words illustrate, the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were periods in which statues and other monuments were constructed in large numbers in European states and their colonial offshoots, as part of the nation-building process.⁵³ The construction of statues to monarchs, politicians and heroes came to be an expected means of reinforcing dominant local, national and imperial identities. However, as Yvonne Whelan writes, 'public statues not only help to legitimate structures of authority and dominance but are also used to challenge and resist such structures and to cultivate alternative narratives of identity.'⁵⁴

In Ireland, the presence of a strongly assertive nationalist movement within a British-dominated state has meant that statues and other symbols have long been contentious. From the mid-nineteenth century, Irish nationalists sought to reverse the symbolic domination of urban landscapes by statues of British monarchs and military figures, through a conscious programme of building statues and memorials to Irish nationalist heroes.⁵⁵ After most of Ireland achieved independence in 1922, the continued creation of nationalist memorials was supplemented by the Irish Republican Army's efforts to deface or remove statues and

monuments seen as legacies of Ireland's imperial past. A significant number of statues and memorials to figures associated with British rule have been destroyed since 1922,⁵⁶ leaving the landscape of the Republic of Ireland dominated by memorials that reflect an Irish nationalist perspective on Ireland's history.

In Northern Ireland, by contrast, public space has continued to be dominated by memorials and other symbols representing the British identity of Northern Ireland's unionist majority, and only relatively recently have nationalists been able to challenge this symbolic domination to any significant extent.⁵⁷ The attempt by nationalists, and republicans in particular, to redress symbolic inequality lies behind the controversy that briefly engulfed the Massey statue. To unionists, however, this process can seem like an attack not only on Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom, but also on their own British culture and identity. Considering the gradual effacement of the British monumental legacy in what is now the Republic of Ireland, unionists' concerns are perhaps understandable.

Matters in Aotearoa New Zealand are somewhat more complicated. The landscape undoubtedly came to be dominated by Pākehā symbols, including statues of British monarchs and Pākehā statesmen. At the same time, these symbols, particularly those that represented New Zealand's ties to the British Crown, were ones to which a significant number of Māori also felt some loyalty. There were statues and memorials in public places commemorating Māori, too, but such monuments have, with few exceptions until recently, commemorated only those Māori who were seen as loyal to the Crown. There was little in the symbolic landscape that represented Māori political or cultural autonomy, so when a new wave of Māori activists began to talk of Māori self-determination and sovereignty, it is unsurprising that some of them saw statues and other Pākehā icons as legitimate targets.⁵⁸ Since the 1980s there have been a number of beheadings and other attacks on statues and memorials commemorating Pākehā seen as responsible for injustices against Māori during colonization.⁵⁹

In both Ireland and New Zealand, then, groups within society have seen the symbolic landscape as politically and culturally biased, and have sometimes sought to redress this situation by destroying monuments or calling for their removal. Destruction or removal are not, however, the only available strategies for dealing with perceived imbalances in the symbolic landscape. Countries around the world have grappled with the challenges posed by monuments left over from old regimes, or seen as representing the dominance of a particular ethnic group.⁶⁰ A range of strategies have been employed in different places, including relocation (re-erecting a monument in a location where it will be less contentious); appropriation (adopting an old monument for a new purpose); and reinterpretation (leaving a monument intact but adding new text or symbolism that presents an alternative perspective on the person or event commemorated).

One of the most popular strategies, however, is to leave existing monuments untouched while adding new statues, memorials or other symbols to the landscape.⁶¹ Such additions are intended to represent identities, perspectives and stories that have previously been absent or under-represented. This approach is not without its critics and can be seen as reinforcing, or at least doing nothing to challenge, existing divisions and communal identities.⁶² It could also be seen as requiring an endless proliferation of new monuments to represent an ever-greater range of social groups; or, alternatively, as running the risk of challenging some forms of under-representation while perpetuating others, particularly if new statues continue the old tradition of honouring 'great men'.⁶³ Then again, there is the argument that such symbolic recognition is mere tokenism, a distraction from calls for genuine redistribution of wealth and power.

It is important to keep these criticisms in mind, but they should not, in my view, stop us from attempting to develop more inclusive symbolic landscapes. As Marc Howard Ross writes: ‘Exclusion of groups from the symbolic landscape is an explicit form of denial and assertion of power. In contrast, a more inclusive symbolic landscape is a powerful expression of societal inclusion that communicates a mutuality and shared stake in society.’⁶⁴ A strategy of symbolic inclusion recognizes that we are not women and men alone. It acknowledges that we have social identities as members of groups; that these groups, in turn, make up the wider society; and that society should, as much as possible, be reflected in all its diversity in public space. This approach need not involve the creation of more bronze statues and towering obelisks: it can take new and creative forms, which may be playful, provocative, performative, interactive, educational or ephemeral.⁶⁵

There are some hopeful signs in both New Zealand and Northern Ireland that competition and contestation over statues and other symbols in public space are giving way to more inclusive approaches. The Wanganui District Public Art Strategy acknowledges that Whanganui’s public space reflects Pākehā settler history better than iwi history, and that the commissioning of public art is an opportunity to redress this imbalance. The strategy notes Whanganui’s tradition of ‘honouring its heroes, civic leaders and patrons’ through commemorative sculpture, and says that by appropriate commissioning of new works ‘we could acknowledge through Atihaunui history, that there is another community perspective on leaders and heroes – and that this story must be illustrated, manifested and told as well.’⁶⁶ In Northern Ireland, too, there seems to be some recognition that the rather sterile language of ‘neutral public space’ employed by the Limavady council may be less inviting than the promotion of shared public space in which everyone can feel welcome and in which a diversity of identities are recognized.⁶⁷

This may sound somewhat utopian, and the challenges of creating truly shared and inclusive space in a society as deeply divided as Northern Ireland’s should certainly give us pause for thought. Symbolic inclusiveness and diversity will mean, for some people, learning to live with statues or other symbols that offend them. The juxtaposition of different views of a community’s past and present could be jarring, but could also be stimulating. Giving our lonely bronze and marble men some more company could help the statues to speak – to each other, and to us, creating a richer, more balanced picture of our communities.

¹ Annie E. Coombes, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Durham, NC, 2003, p.12.

² Mulgan Papers, MS Papers 7906-34, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington. It appears from letters in the same file that this talk may never have been successfully broadcast to New Zealand. Thanks to Richard Mulgan for allowing me access to the Mulgan Papers.

³ See Vincent O’Sullivan, “‘My People Came Out...’: John Mulgan in Northern Ireland, 1940-42”, in Brad Patterson, ed., *The Irish in New Zealand: Historical Contexts & Perspectives*, Wellington, 2002, pp.171-84; Vincent O’Sullivan, *Long Journey to the Border: A Life of John Mulgan*, Albany, 2011, pp.215-38. Edited versions of Mulgan’s letters from Northern Ireland can be found in Peter Whiteford, *A Good Mail: Letters of John Mulgan*, Wellington, 2011, pp.170-228.

⁴ John Mulgan to Gabrielle Mulgan, 4 August 1940 and 13 August 1940, Mulgan Papers, MS Papers 7906-33, ATL.

⁵ John Mulgan to parents (Alan and Marguerite Mulgan), 7 April 1941, Mulgan Papers, MS Papers 7906-11, ATL. John Mulgan to Gabrielle Mulgan, 17 January 1941 and 19 April 1941, Mulgan Papers, MS Papers 7906-34, ATL.

⁶ Script for ‘Calling New Zealand’, 11 July 1941, Mulgan Papers, MS Papers 7906-34, ATL.

⁷ On the politics of place names in New Zealand and Ireland see Lawrence D. Berg and Robin A. Kearns, ‘Naming as Norming: “Race”, Gender and the Identity Politics of Naming Places in Aotearoa/New Zealand’, and Catherine Nash, ‘Irish Place Names: Post-colonial Locations’, in Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho,

eds., *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place Naming*, Ashgate, 2009, pp.19-51, 137-52; Lyn Carter, 'The Big "H": Naming and Claiming Landscapes', in Jacinta Ruru, Janet Stephenson & Mick Abbott, eds., *Making Our Place: Exploring Land-use Tensions in Aotearoa New Zealand*, Dunedin, 2011, pp.57-69; Ewan Morris, 'W(h)anganui and (London)derry: The Role of History in Debates About Place Names', unpublished paper for Treaty of Waitangi Research Unit Winter Seminar Series, Stout Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, 7 July 2010.

⁸ *Northern Constitution* (Limavady), 16 September 1995 (copy in 'William Massey' clippings file, Limavady Public Library).

⁹ 'Agreement Reached in the Multiparty Negotiations', 10 April 1998, Economic, Social and Cultural Issues, para 5.

¹⁰ For more detailed discussion of the Massey statue controversy, see Ewan Morris, 'Getting Massey: The Limavady Statue Stoush and the Politics of Public Space in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 4, 1 (2010), pp.185-98.

¹¹ Massey's memory has been more assertively claimed by the Orange Order in recent years. A Massey Festival was organized by the Limavady District Orange Lodge between 2003 and 2006, and during the 2003 festival an orange sash was placed on the Massey statue during the Orange Order's annual 12th of July parade. Massey is also celebrated on the local Orange Lodge's website: www.limavadyorange.com, accessed 1 April 2012.

¹² *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 25 January 2008, www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-ireland/news/article.cfm?l_id=76&objectid=10488735&pnum=1, accessed 1 April 2012.

¹³ NZH, 26 January 2008, www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-ireland/news/article.cfm?l_id=76&objectid=10488888&pnum=1, accessed 1 April 2012.

¹⁴ John Mulgan, *Man Alone*, Rosedale, 2010 (first published 1939), p.22.

¹⁵ John Mulgan to parents, 23 August 1940, Mulgan Papers, MS Papers 7906-10, ATL.

¹⁶ O'Sullivan, *Long Journey*, pp.11-12; David Young, *Woven by Water: Histories from the Whanganui River*, Wellington, 1998, p.24.

¹⁷ Young, pp.49-50. See, for example, the comments of Rangitihī Tahuparae, quoted in *Wanganui Chronicle* (WC), 24 November 1994 (copy in clippings file 'Moutoa Gardens: Various Articles' [MGVA], Alexander Heritage and Research Library, Whanganui).

¹⁸ James Belich, *I Shall Not Die: Titokowaru's War, 1868-1869*, Wellington, 2010 (first published 1989), p.72.

¹⁹ On the statue's origins, see *Wanganui Herald*, 3 February 1898; article by Athol Kirk in WC, 13 May 1995 (copy in MGVA).

²⁰ For succinct accounts of the Pākaitore occupation, see Mason Durie, *Te Mana, Te Kawanatanga: The Politics of Māori Self-Determination*, Auckland, 1998, pp.125-9; Paul Moon, *New Zealand in the Twentieth Century: The Nation, the People*, Auckland, 2011, pp.577-82. See also Young, 98-101; Cate Brett, 'Wanganui: Beyond the Comfort Zone', *North & South*, June 1995, pp.44-59.

²¹ *Dominion*, 5 January 1995 (copy in MGVA).

²² WC, 22 December 1994; *Sunday Star-Times* (SST), 5 February 1995 (copies in MGVA).

²³ See, for example, letters to the editor from Peter Rodger, *Dominion*, 16 January 1995; Dinah Priestly, *Evening Post* (EP), 5 July 1995; historian Alan Ward, *Dominion*, 7 August 1995; article by Bill Ralston, *Independent*, 24 March 1995; and the quoted comments of historian James Belich, *Dominion*, 29 July 1995 (all accessed via the Newtext database). See also the comments of local historian Athol Kirk in WC, 13 May 1995 (copy in MGVA).

²⁴ Jock Phillips, 'Wanganui: War Memorial Capital of the World', in Kynan Gentry and Gavin McLean, eds., *Heartlands: New Zealand Historians Write About Places Where History Happened*, Auckland, 2006, pp.72-89.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.78; Young, p.102.

²⁶ The other two monuments are the statue of Te Keepa Te Rangihīwinui (Major Kemp) and the Māori First World War memorial.

²⁷ Phillips, p.88.

²⁸ 'Agreement on Moutoa Gardens (Known to Whanganui Iwi as Pakaitore) between Wanganui District Council, Atihaunui-a-Paparangi and the Crown', signed 28 February 2001.

²⁹ Minutes of meeting of Strategy Committee, Wanganui District Council, 16 June 2005, agenda item 5.

³⁰ Column by Michael Laws, SST, 25 October 2009.

³¹ 'John Ballance Returns: Premier's Unveiling', Wanganui District Council press release, 19 October 2009; WC, 20 October 2009, www.wanganuichronicle.co.nz/news/ballance-returns-to-muted-welcome/1011009, accessed 1 April 2012.

³² *Dominion Post*, 20 October 2009.

³³ WC, 16 July 2011, www.wanganuichronicle.co.nz/news/ballance-set-to-return-in-august/1062742, accessed 1 April 2012.

³⁴ Whiteford, pp.xii-xiii

³⁵ See, for example, Richard Boast, 'Making the Waikato British: Land Confiscations in New Zealand and Irish Precedents and Parallels', in Brad Patterson and Kathryn Patterson, eds., *Ireland and the Irish Antipodes: One World or Worlds Apart?*, Spit Junction, NSW, 2010, pp.64-65. For a comparison of commemoration in New Zealand and Northern Ireland, see Helen Robinson, 'Remembering the Past, Thinking of the Present: Historic Commemorations in New Zealand and Northern Ireland, 1940-1990', PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2009.

³⁶ Citizens Concerned for a Peaceful Process, 'Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens', undated flyer (copy in MGVA). See also letter to the editor from Patricia Bass, calling on both sides to learn from the peace process in Northern Ireland and reach a peaceful compromise: WC, 23 March 1995 (copy in MGVA).

³⁷ Opinion piece by David Calder, *Independent*, 21 July 1995 (accessed via the Newztext database). See also editorial in the *Dominion*, 2 September 1998 (accessed via the Newztext database) arguing that tolerance of attacks on statues and other symbolic targets in New Zealand 'is the sort of logic that led to 28 years of violence in Northern Ireland'.

³⁸ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland, 2001, p.479.

³⁹ NZH, 4 November 1994; WC, 24 November 1994 (copies in MGVA).

⁴⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, 18 January 2008, www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/contentious-symbols-row-13376808.html, accessed 1 April 2012.

⁴¹ *Belfast NewsLetter*, 17 January 2008, www.newsletter.co.uk/news/local/plan_to_purge_town_of_protestant_symbolism_1_1863252, accessed 1 April 2012.

⁴² WC, 29 July 1995 (copy in MGVA).

⁴³ Paul Nolan, *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report: Number One*, Belfast, 2012, p.15.

⁴⁴ See, for example, the articles on place names cited in endnote 7; Ewan Morris, 'Banner Headlines: The Māori Flag Debate in Comparative Perspective', *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 9 (2010), pp.115-34.

⁴⁵ Marc Howard Ross, 'Cultural Contestation and the Symbolic Landscape: Politics by Other Means?', in Marc Howard Ross, ed., *Culture and Belonging in Divided Societies: Contestation and Symbolic Landscapes*, Philadelphia, 2009, p.5; see also Marc Howard Ross, *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*, Cambridge, 2007.

⁴⁶ In South Africa, too, it has been suggested that statues and other objects from the apartheid era should be moved from 'highly official, prestigious places (e.g. in front of the city hall) to less prominent locations': Sabine Marschall, *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-apartheid South Africa*, Leiden, 2010, p.146.

⁴⁷ In both cases the suggestion was made that contentious objects be relocated to different public spaces, such as museums, where they could presumably be placed in a historical context and removed from public controversy: see Tariana Turia in WC, 21 November 1994 and Ken Mair in WC, 24 November 1994 (copies in MGVA); Limavady Borough Council, *Equality Impact Statement: Policy on Neutral Public Space*, 2007, pp.22, 31; Limavady Borough Council meeting minutes, 22 January 2008. Needless to say, objects in museums are not necessarily immune from controversy.

⁴⁸ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, p.68.

⁴⁹ On the changing patterns of memorialization in the United States, see Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, Chicago, 2010, ch.1.

⁵⁰ Graeme Davison, 'Monumental History: Do Statues (Still) Speak?', in *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, St Leonards, 2000, ch.3.

⁵¹ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London, 1995.

⁵² EP, 7 April 1897. However, for a different view of the importance of statues, see EP, 8 April 1897.

⁵³ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983, pp.263-307.

⁵⁴ Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity*, Dublin, 2003, p.19.

⁵⁵ Whelan, chs.2-3; Gary Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, c1870-1914: Symbolism and Ritual', in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy, eds., *Ireland: Art into History*, Dublin, 1994, pp.103-17; Nuala C. Johnson, 'Sculpting Heroic Histories: Celebrating the Centenary of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 19, 1 (1994), pp.78-93.

⁵⁶ On the destruction of statues and memorials in Dublin, see Whelan, ch.7.

⁵⁷ However, at least two statues in Northern Ireland were blown up by the IRA during the 1970s: the statue in Derry of Rev. George Walker (viewed by Protestants as a hero of the 1688 Siege of Derry) and the statue of the controversial nineteenth-century Protestant preacher Rev. Hugh Hanna in Belfast. On memorialization in the

context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, see Jane Leonard, *Memorials to the Casualties of Conflict Northern Ireland, 1969-1997*, Belfast, 1997.

⁵⁸ For further discussion of silences in New Zealand public memory and memorialization, see Rachel Buchanan, *The Parihaka Album: Lest We Forget*, Wellington, 2009, ch.9; Rachel Buchanan, 'Why Gandhi Doesn't Belong at Wellington Railway Station', *Journal of Social History*, 44, 4 (2011), pp.1077-93. Joan Metge writes that one of the first actions of the 1970s activist group Ngā Tamatoa was to rededicate a New Zealand Wars memorial plaque in the grounds of Auckland University to 'those Maoris who died during the Pakeha wars': Joan Metge, *The Maoris of New Zealand: Rautahi*, London, 1976, p.177. This is presumably the same vandalized plaque shown in Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials*, Wellington, 1990, p.41.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Maclean and Phillips, pp.40-42; Mark Stocker, "'Director of the Canoe": The Auckland Statue of Sir George Grey', *Melbourne Art Journal*, 11-12 (2009), pp.57-58; Paulette Wallace, 'A Fraction Too Much Friction: Heritage Dissonance and the Whitely Memorial', *Te Ara – The Journal of Museums Aotearoa*, 33 (2009), pp.18-22.

⁶⁰ The literature on this subject is extensive. For some examples relating to countries with settler colonial backgrounds see Marschall; Doss, especially ch.6; Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, Austin, 1997, pp.322-32; James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*, New York, 1999, especially pp.443-54, 460-1; Ian Hay, Andrew Hughes and Mark Tutton, 'Monuments, Memory and Marginalization in Adelaide's Prince Henry Gardens', *Geografiska Annaler*, 86 B, 3 (2004), pp.201-216; Bronwyn Batten and Paul Batten, 'Memorialising the Past: Is there an Aboriginal Way?', *Public History Review*, 15 (2008), pp.92-116.

⁶¹ This is the main approach that has been adopted in post-apartheid South Africa, for example: see Marschall. The United States has also seen the creation of many new memorials in recent years, often motivated by a desire to compensate for under-representation or misrepresentation of particular groups in the past: see Doss.

⁶² See, for example, David Goldfield's concern that simple juxtaposition of memorials and other symbols reflecting different views of history in the American South may leave Black and White Southerners living 'in parallel universes, with parallel misunderstandings, separate but equal and never coming together': David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History*, Baton Rouge, 2002, p.305. This criticism resonates with some critiques of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, which see it as entrenching polarized identities, creating 'a form of well-intentioned apartheid', and leading to a 'shared-out future' ('one-for-you, one-for-me') rather than a shared future: Nolan, p.18.

⁶³ See, for example, J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*, Chichester, 1996, p.219: 'There is a basic flaw to this [inclusivist] approach in that everyone's heritage is ultimately personal and the attempt to be comprehensive could in the extreme become anarchic.' Around the world, statues are overwhelmingly of men, and women most commonly appear as allegorical figures: see Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*, London, 1985. There is a book devoted to sites that commemorate women in New Zealand, but it includes only a few statues: Jill Pierce, *The Suffrage Trail: A Guide to Places, Memorials and the Arts Commemorating New Zealand Women*, Wellington, 1995.

⁶⁴ Ross, 'Cultural Contestation', p.7. See also Stephen Clowney, 'Landscape Fairness: Removing Discrimination from the Built Environment', *Utah Law Review* (forthcoming – draft available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2096409, accessed 15 August 2012).

⁶⁵ See, for example, Sue-Anne Ware, 'Anti-Memorials and the Art of Forgetting: Critical Reflections on a Memorial Design Practice', *Public History Review*, 15 (2008), pp.61-76; Catherine De Lorenzo and Vivien Chow, 'Contained Memories or Catalysts?: Some Aboriginal Memorials in Australia', *Memory Connection*, 1, 1 (2011), pp.452-74; Doss, pp.356-76.

⁶⁶ Wanganui District Council, *Outstanding: Nga Whenu Aronui: Nga Taonga Nui ki Uta ki Tai: Wanganui District Public Art Strategy 2010-2012*, 2010, p.14.

⁶⁷ See, for example, the approach recently taken by Belfast City Council in relation to memorabilia and displays in Belfast City Hall: Morris, 'Getting Massey', p.196; Belfast City Council, *Belfast City Hall: Promoting a Good and Harmonious Environment: Equality Impact Assessment Draft Report for Consultation*, 2012.