

organization waged a campaign against 'dirty dairying' in the late 1990s. Hunter ends by telling the extraordinary story of the domestication of deer carried by the capture of wild animals from helicopters, an activity that further reduced the amount of game available for hunting. The end result is that hunting has become less popular in the early twenty first century while hunters are an increasingly marginalized group. Yet as Hunter concludes: 'Hunting is everywhere in New Zealand's past. That past is very recent and we remain connected through our families and whanau, our kitchens and communities, and through the history of the land itself'.

The text is augmented throughout by over a hundred evocative and well chosen illustrations, many of them in colour. The majority are photographs but Hunter also uses posters, original documents and maps effectively. Random House must be congratulated for such an attractive production. Inserts and boxes also break up the main text, a practice which seems to disrupt the flow to readers of my generation but which will appeal to younger readers from the 'visual generation'. Indeed one hopes that given the eye-catching production and lively text, school pupils as well as university students and interested lay readers will gain much useful knowledge as well as pleasure from reading the book.

My only quibble is that Hunter could have attempted a slightly longer conclusion which spelt out the significance of her findings more fully, especially in terms of what she has added to an admittedly thin historiography. Perhaps, too, she could have made more of the work of Mike Davis on the escalating slaughter of wild animals that occurred around the globe in the second half of the nineteenth century. But she can do this in academic journals knowing that she has produced a book which will stimulate further debate and discussion because she has recovered so much of a world that many urban New Zealanders, both Maori and Pakeha, have lost.

No Fretful Sleeper: A Life of Bill Pearson

by Paul Millar. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2010; xi, 380pp., [40]pp. of plates. ISBN 9781869404192

Reviewed by Lee Wallace

Bill Pearson and I go way back. Not that I ever knew the man, except in 1981 as the author of 'Fretful Sleepers: A Sketch of New Zealand Behaviour and its Implications for the Artist' (1952) and *Coal Flat* (1963), both compulsory texts on a dreary second-year New Zealand literature course taught by Frank McKay at Victoria. Ten years later when I embarked on my doctorate, I read *Rifted Sanctuaries: Some Views of the Pacific Islands in Literature* (1984) and 'Beginnings and Endings' (1990), both mandatory reading for

anyone interested in Pacific sexual encounter. But my relation to Pearson goes back further than a longstanding reading acquaintance insofar as we also share a biographical trajectory that is noteworthy less in its homosexual dimension than in the odd parallel of beginning in Greymouth and ending, not without ambivalence, in Associate Professorships in the University of Auckland's Department of English. Valid and interesting to me even in its significant non-alignments (b. 1922, male, Presbyterian, personally and professionally closeted, a sometime successful writer and reluctant academic / b. 1962, female, Catholic, personally and professionally out, a reluctant writer and sometime successful academic), this projection is hardly based on firm historical ground. Narcissistic, self-aggrandizing, shamelessly one-sided, this associative projection is to me a productive methodology since I continue to find in Pearson's many writings different perspectives on aspects of my own queer life, from the familial to the erotic, the professional to the domestic. With the appearance of Paul Millar's biography of Pearson I was therefore interested to see what a more traditional approach might yield in relation to what I see as my key themes: homosexuality and visibility, writing and not writing, and the reconciliation of self to place, whether that be the largely imagined West Coast of childhood or the all-too-real university landscape of maturity.

Millar's biography starts by acknowledging as the central fact of Pearson's long life his decision to keep secret his homosexuality. The constant fear of exposure, reveals Millar, checked Pearson's creativity to the extent that he ceased to write fiction after the mixed reception given *Coal Flat* in 1963. The rabid intolerance of puritan New Zealand society toward the dissident individual is, of course, the theme of Pearson's 1952 landmark essay so it is perhaps not surprising to see it put to good explanatory use by his biographer. More cautious and less ideologically charged than the mid-century Pearson, who wrote the essay as a graduate student taking advantage of London's queer culture after years of sexual hesitation at home, Millar is so even-handed in advancing psychological and sociological observations on the plight of the closeted man that his various speculations tend to cancel each other out. We are left with an accessible book that scrupulously avoids what Pearson, responding negatively to Simon During's discussion of the homosexual subtext in Sargeson's 'The Hole that Jack Dug', calls the 'tricks and parlance of poststructural criticism' (p.328). Despite his disciplinary affiliation, Millar avoids a literary-critical approach to his subject, preferring the generalist middle-brow tones of the poet-professors who shaped New Zealand cultural discourse until the social and political upheavals of the 1980s which, as they manifested in and transformed university culture, are well outlined in the final chapters of this book. Unlike John Newton who, in a recent essay on D'Arcy Cresswell, uses the intensities of close

reading to generate an entirely new account of homosexuality's relation to New Zealand literary style, Millar has no taste for the critically or sexually counter-intuitive. I do not mean to suggest that Millar shies away from the sexually explicit (he doesn't), but he is by and large at ease with the idea that sexual secrecy or nondisclosure is ultimately incompatible with the kind of naturalism Pearson was trying to achieve in *Coal Flat* since this confirms his own methodological reliance on personal utterance, mostly attained by interview, as the means of resolving an otherwise unsustainable split in the writing subject.

While I've no idea how successful Pearson was in passing for straight (certainly most readers see through his fictional stand-in, *Coal Flat*'s Paul Roger), Millar's book provides manifest evidence that, like generations of gay men, he was completely adept at managing a variety of sexual matters across a variety of social contexts such that no-one took offence. Most of Pearson's sexual infatuations or more longstanding attachments derived from the schoolrooms, boarding houses, military barracks, social clubs and faculty rooms that made up the regular setting of his life. These were intensely personal relationships that often drew on intellectual compatibility or a shared interest in writing or study. Although they scarcely ever resulted in sexual connection, these relationships reveal in Pearson an erotic predisposition, consistent across many decades, to typically straight young men with dark smooth skin. Sex, as one would expect, was transacted elsewhere in the reliably anonymous locations, such as the bathhouses of Cairo or the bars and beats of London and Auckland, which comprise the queer world. There is nothing unusual in this. What is unusual is how Millar presents this workable erotic division (a romantic attachment to heterosexual men, a practical engagement with other queers) as if it needed correction to the point of aligning sexual object with sexual action in the attainment of a long-term relationship with another gay man. Most troubling, this is presented not as a straight man's perspective on a gay man's life but as Pearson's own slightly melancholic account of how different things might have been if he had been that much bolder as a homosexual living through the decades of gay liberation. To this end, Millar draws deeply on a number of interviews Pearson gave late in his life in which he enunciated an account of the closet and homosociality drawn in part from the critical work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. This account is footnoted and elaborated by Millar to the extent that it is clear he has no better grasp than Pearson of Sedgwick's point about the inescapability of the closet as an epistemological mechanism by which the knowledge of homosexuality continually circulates as ignorance, no matter how often or forcefully one comes out. In a textbook example of this logic at work, the empathetic non-judgmental biographer continues to frame the gay man's life as something about which he knows more than the gay man

himself: 'But there were also such factors as no longer writing creatively, a sex life that had been for years a barren scratching of the physical urge, and the reality that although he had many good friends, he had never had an intimate relationship' (pp.294-5).

Though implicit in all his fiction and critical writing and increasingly explicit in his autobiographical essays and interviews, Pearson's homosexuality was only tacitly acknowledged within most of his social and professional networks throughout his life. Millar's approach is to try and capture tacit knowledge within the discursive conventions of traditional biography, which begins with family genealogy and ends with funeral eulogies. But Pearson's sexuality defies this narrational arc, indentured as it is to reproductive time. Irrevocably split between in and out, then and now, the temporality of queer life is, as Pearson well knew, tied to recursive structures and simultaneously beset by precociousness and belatedness, distraction and delay, as the title of his memoir 'Beginnings and Endings' makes clear. The movement between tacit and patent sexual understandings, as Sedgwick could advise, is less a problem to be resolved than an inexhaustible textual mechanism that generates erotic effects that are far less containable than the trope of the closet suggests. For evidence of this one need read no further than Pearson's scarcely fictionalized account of his pubescent obsession with flies, not just the flickable button and cloth of other boys' pants but the merest indication of them in the comics and illustrated magazines he later puts in the hands of *Coal Flat's* disturbed schoolboy Peter Herlihy. It is not what the flies conceal but the display of concealment that sexually wires a young boy to nothing more than 'a vague line which might have been the long line of a shadow caused by the fly . . . a simple ink-stroke . . . that line down the centre of [a boy or a man's] trousers. Sometimes if he was lucky he found two. The thick edge and the thin curving thread near its side' (p.61). Taken from 'School, Heart and Home', an unpublished manuscript written when Pearson was seventeen, this is not the work of a young man who would easily forgo a lifetime in charged proximity to the sexual closet.

The Invention of New Zealand: Art and National Identity, 1930-1970

by Francis Pound. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2009;
xxi, 425 pp., [80]pp. of plates. ISBN 9781869404147

Reviewed by John Newton

When it comes to New Zealand cultural nationalism, poets, as we know, have a lot to answer for. The prodigious force of Curnow's criticism, and the self-assuredness of the Caxton Press, were two factors in the emergence of a discourse in which poetry came to stand as a synecdoche, not just for