

NEW ZEALAND STUDIES

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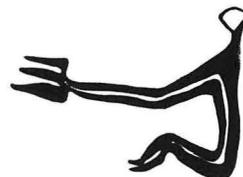
Caxton Press exhibition: *Adventure and Art*

Cover and right:

Various lino block reproductions

of Maori rock drawings by Rex

Fairburn (see pages 9-11).



## To split or not to split

ATTENTIVE READERS WILL NOTICE several split infinitives occur throughout this issue. Such a construction has long been the burr in the warp and weft of English grammatical usage. Automatically the editorial pen used silently to correct them until, following a recent dictum by the Dictionary Department of Oxford University Press that they were henceforth to be permissible, they have now been allowed to stand.

In the third edition of Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, edited by R.W. Burchfield and published in 1996, the entry on the subject reads: 'No other grammatical issue has so divided the nation since the split infinitive was declared to be a solecism in the course of the 19th century'. After a learned discussion of its construction, Burchfield gives illustrative examples which show the various types of split and unsplit infinitives. These include Robert Muldoon's 1986 declaration: 'It was no great achievement to simply split the third party'. Burchfield himself takes the view that 'No absolute taboo should be placed on the use of simple adverbs between the particle "to" and the verbal part of the infinitive'. But clearly he would be happier if the older restrictions, on the whole prevailed: 'Avoid splitting infinitives whenever possible', he writes, 'but do not suffer undue remorse if a split infinitive is unavoidable for the natural and unambiguous completion of a sentence already begun'.

Similar grammatical conventions play their part in music. Every student is behoven to avoid consecutive fifths amongst a plethora of similar prohibitions. 'What do you think they're allowed to do now at the University' [in the reign of Frederick Page], once trumpeted an irate Wellington music teacher, Madame Elsie Betts Vincent, to a friend: 'Double the major third!'

Such rules and usages are deeply embedded in the human psyche and constitution. One age can

resent and reject the style of its successor. Medieval music specialists can find Mozart unendurable. After a week of listening to and playing only renaissance music at a summer course, the ear can at first scarcely tolerate the harmonies of the baroque, perceiving them as 'less pure' and even vulgar.

The analogies implicit in these examples have correspondences in ethnic views and prejudices. They are just as irrational and yet seemingly inborn as if the human being protects its own world view and identity by clinging to what is familiar. Then, in so many devastating ways, it can persecute and destroy that which is not.

THIS HAS BEEN A FRUITFUL YEAR for the Stout Centre with the inauguration of the annual lecture, a conference on sport and a stimulating series of seminars, including an impressive Doug Graham on Maori land claims, delivered without notes, which is why it cannot appear here, but whose essence will no doubt form part of a forthcoming book.

Next year a conference on the 1940 centennial celebrations will be held, most probably, in late November, to be followed by a publication. The proceedings will include the screening of a historic colour film made by the architect of the Exhibition, Edmund Anscombe, and a concert. The breadth of vision shown by those leading figures who gave imaginative direction to the occasion included Joseph Heenan, Eric McCormick, J.C. Beaglehole and many others. It will be an absorbing exercise to re-live their achievements. Suggestions for papers are invited, to be sent to the editor of *New Zealand Studies* at the Stout Research Centre. ✍

*This issue has been held back in order to be able to print Richard Mulgan's lecture. We apologise for the delay.*