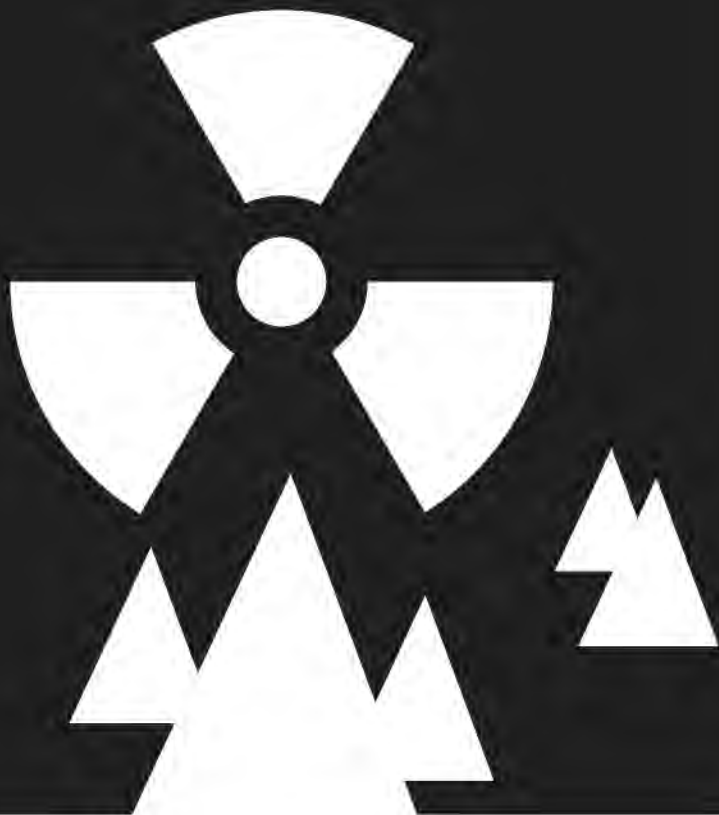


MORUROA

FOR HER OWN SAKE



***Challenging French nuclear testing
in the Pacific 1995-96***

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To
*my granddaughters,
Hannah and Ellah,*



from Abba



DEPARTURE

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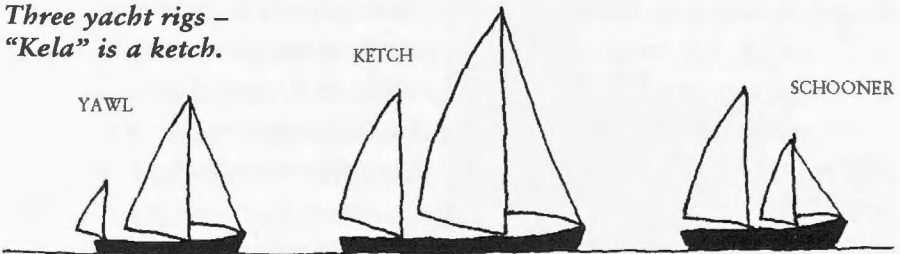
BANNERS, FLAGS AND SAILS painted by school children brighten railings and rigging. Maritime safety inspections and Customs clearances are over. Ever-hungry journalists snatch last-minute interviews on wharves as we fuel and water ship. Builders high above splash “Good wishes. Safe journey!” in red paint on walls of Wellington’s new museum. Cameras zoom and flash. The Lady Mayoress addresses cheering crowds. Car’s horns blare farewells.

President Chirac of France has announced more nuclear testing in the Pacific. Leaping at the chance, like jolly tars of old into their rigging, we’re off to Moruroa Atoll.

Clearing harbour, four vessels breast the swells together, nodding seaward in stout agreement and common purpose, reinforcing our resolve. Miles downwind “New Zealand Maid’s” freshly varnished masts are flashing in afternoon sun. Her topsail and mizzen are furled from the freshening breeze, before snowy mountains looming in haze beyond.

We’re on “Kela”, a fifty-three-foot steel ketch. Her name is Aboriginal for “dolphin”. Replying immediately to faxes from Wellington seeking crew, Quentin and I are from Melbourne. Quentin, is a student volunteer with “Stop the Bomb”, organising a Peace Flotilla. Nick Gales, our skipper, is a marine mammalian vet with Antarctic experience, now

*Three yacht rigs –
“Kela” is a ketch.*





with the New Zealand Department of Conservation. Cathy is a psychologist of dolphins. They met in Fremantle eight years ago. My first conversation with them is by telephone from Melbourne.

“How long is ‘Kela’s’ keel?”

“About three-quarters of her waterline length,” answers Nick.

“Does she have good bilge pumps?”

“We’re fitting one,” Nick replies.

They are sailing with their children, Jemma, aged two, and Jeremy, now seven, who declared on national television, “I’m on the side of the French. I like bombs!”

“Laugh as we may at a child’s delight in fireworks,” I comment, “not so with Chirac’s and his generals’ juvenile sabre rattling. These brazen braggarts are boasting they’ll forcibly, deeply penetrate Mother Earth, discharging their explosive load inside her. What such men get called ‘would make a sailor blush’. Would they do it to their natal mothers? How do they bear the monstrous violation of doing it to the mother of us all? What parenting reared them to defile the mother of all mothers, who deserves to be sacred?”

Our amusement at Jeremy’s violence covers embarrassment at a child voicing destruction. It reminds us of our own explosiveness. In my teens, I went mining. We drilled the rock, placed our charges, lit the fuse and sheltered under an old truck while the sky rained stones and dust for long minutes of excitement, greater than from specks of gold we found.

Today we recognise all environmental arguments whether military, economic, aesthetic, or of human cost or benefit are second to the value of nature for her own sake. She is worthy of respect, love, humility, sensitivity, and care. Bio-diversity as a resource is second to biology for itself and diversity for itself. The plural includes the singular. It is richer. It clusters with female values. Regardless of her usefulness, Earth merits worth-ship, the root and meaning of worship. Our voyage pays homage to her. We are to be humbled before her, in awe.



We fly to Wellington on 17 August 1995. Inviting us aboard, Cathy introduces us to our crew mates: Marty, a blond hunk rugby stalwart has sailed a tall ship across the Atlantic. He left his teaching job in Christchurch for this journey. Another young teacher, Diamuid, formerly a money market dealer, has left his pupils and livelihood. "Call me Dermot," he says, "It's Irish." He has been busy on "Kela" for weeks, above and below her waterline. Diamuid has defended New Zealand beaches, Sarawak rainforests, and volunteered as a "jumper" with Greenpeace. New Zealand police stood on his hands and repeatedly threw him into the sea as he clambered aboard an illegal Japanese whaler. Four Gales and four crew are risking this adventure together on the vast Pacific. A third of Earth's surface and up to 33,000 feet deep, this ocean isn't always peaceful despite the name.

"How much money do you have?" asks Jeremy.

I pass him the banknotes from my wallet and help him count them on the saloon table.

"Do you believe in God?" he asks.

"I don't believe in anything," I reply. His eyes widen. "Some things I know. Believing is a poor substitute."

For five days at the marina, there's chaos and frenzy. Four yachts prepare for their three thousand mile passage, east along the Roaring Forties, halfway to

"Kela" in Wellington harbour.





Patagonia, then up the Southeast Trade Winds to Polynesia (*see map on page 104*). Greenpeace has sent secret instructions in sealed envelopes, "To be opened at sea". Piles of gear and provisions clutter landings, decks, and cabins. Shipwrights, chandlers, riggers, electricians, mechanics, volunteers, friends and children vie with the mobile phone for attention. Excitement and urgency fill the hours.

Except for a few dully asking "Where's Moruroa?", everyone fires with enthusiasm and encouragement. Often they give physical support including generous discounts on Polynesian Airlines fares across the Tasman, Paddy Pallin expedition clothing, Damart thermal underwear, produce from New World and the greengrocer, while Eveready, The Body Shop and Forest Mill donate cartons of goods stamped "We support your protest". At the laundrette, Judy insists my serviced wash "is on the house". Wellington's FM Radio station raises \$10,000 and the people of Wellington subscribe a further \$24,000 for their flotilla, whose crews score printed T-shirts and free jugs of beer in pubs where anti-nuclear songs resound.

Friends bring fruitcakes over and I picture Marie Antoinette smiling. Our daring is exaggerated by drama and romance, by fear or courage in those who would but cannot come, making us heroes before we've even tossed our warps ashore.

Paler evening fades. We plunge on through darkness. Phosphorescence burns on wave crests, overhead, like cool fire on black ranges. Slabs of luminosity flash from afar and sweep by as if we sail the Milky Way, as if the stars themselves have come to join the mission of our onward-rushing ship, whose sleek form grooves the night; rushing on to save the world from evil-doers, agents of imperial, old world order. In this reeling darkness, who can tell what is sky and what's the deep?



NUCLEAR POWER

.....

CHANGING NIGHT WATCHES, Marty says, "It's rare to be part of something larger than life – it's as if we're going out to war".

"But it's the opposite," I demur. "We're going out for peace."

"I'm glad of this opportunity," Marty continues, "though I'm sad its necessary – it's great when ordinary people get to have a say."

"Governments will have to reckon with more ordinary people having leisure and means to influence policies," I agree.

"Ordinary people," says Marty, "who've paid their taxes over forty years, deserve a shake in the action."

"Having done their domestic duty," I persist, "many ordinary people still have strength and freedom to contest critical issues. Having joined a counter-cultural movement in Britain as *an elder*, I'd rather not call it 'grey power'. If name it needs, a better name will follow. The Hiroshima rally in Melbourne a fortnight ago was mostly of under-thirties. It felt like early Vietnam protests. Anti-nuclear protest is part of something even bigger. The Earth is at stake. The Western World is spawning a new under-class of well-educated, qualified people without jobs but wanting to be more than freaks or couch potatoes."

"Or just conform in staid old Christchurch," says Marty ruefully. "In New Zealand, though, local councils arrange weekly forums for planning environmental actions. It's giving the unemployed purpose, meaning in life and renewed self-respect."

"This crisis is an opportunity for growth and cultural redirection," I add, tweaking the auto-pilot. "Outraged by the Vietnam war, crying, 'Enough is enough!', ordinary people rose to challenge governments regardless of formal means like elections. They remember their power."



“Vietnam was a more immediate and ghastly horror than nuclear testing. Moruroa, however, is part of Nevada, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Bikini, Maralinga, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Russian dumping in the Arctic, Windscale and the rest. This idyllic tropical island is a vivid focus for the even more general long-term horror of nuclear death.

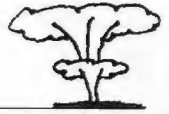
“The atomic bomb is a powerful and a condensed symbol. Its consequences huge, the atom is small. Even if it is no longer the smallest conceptual point, it is of that order. It is a fundamental particle. Its smallness is engaging. So is its form. It is circular like a white palm-waving atoll surrounding a turquoise lagoon.



“The shape of the atom is like a solar system. Electrons around their nucleus are like planets round a star. It’s like our moon around the Earth. It’s like our galaxy. You can see its rim as the Milky Way. Our solar system is near its centre.

“Stretching our minds in all directions to the limits of the imagined universe, we are at its centre. Rather than assume self-importance, we understand this now as the form of mind, a limitation beyond which we can not see. From ‘Kela’s’ cockpit the horizon sweeps around us in a circle. Although at the centre of our vision, seeing ourselves at the centre of the ocean is an illusion, the measure of our limitation.

“Endeared on land and sea, the lovely breast, each half a globe, endures the burden of our homing gaze. Her alluring pole draws on the intrepid sled. Adorning Rodin’s ‘Eternal Idol’, charming navigators with compass card, ship’s wheel, clockface and barometer dial, the universal design is in flowers, to bees their nectared beacon and to all a compelling vision.



“New to humanity is the vision of Earth from space. It is the transforming image of the century. She floats more lovely than a smoky opal against black space. Seeing her solitary, spellbinding beauty, we can fall in love. It changes our perspective. It turns our opinion round, as Copernicus’ and Galileo’s demonstrations that Earth revolves around the sun reversed former belief. Powerful like Beethoven’s music, firing passions for the Industrial Revolution, this modern perspective fires passion for our planet, cooling our ardour for planetary destruction.





“Circle and centre, void and presence, are fundamentals of cosmology. Zero and one are the basis of computing. Computing generates a new sphere surrounding Earth in consciousness uncontrolled by authority. From the periphery, it can challenge domination from the centre. Uncensored, free, wild, unorthodox, it is transforming. It offers hope.

“The shape of atoms repeat in living cells. Membrane and cytoplasm surround the cell-nucleus. It is our experience from the first cell of life throughout evolution. It is our fundamental psychology from conception, carried in tissue memory, independent of the nervous system. It is the memory of the foetus. We relive those feelings sheltering in our cabin, tossed on striding seas.

“Those sensitive enough are feeling the limitations of Earth. The feeling reminds us of just before birth. Failing supply drove us then to struggle for a new order. It is doing so now. As Earth’s resources dwindle, economies are driven increasingly by short supply. We are entering a time of contractions, a time of inevitable transformation, a crisis or dangerous opportunity. There is a psychological drive from the grass-roots for rebirth.”

Marty makes tea and brings it to the cockpit, asking “With these psychological energies how have we gone so wrong?”

“The nation state, historically a recent phenomenon, is not to be taken for granted. Like the Church, it has an appalling record, acting for itself before its people, let alone the planet. In suppression of Earth-consciousness, the Church burnt a hundred thousand women. Values and structures of society are changing, but governments are out of touch with people and the planet. In France at present sixty-five per cent of people oppose their government’s nuclear testing. After Hiroshima, they cry “What further testing is needed? Enough is already far too much!”.

“Church and state are centralist. They are nuclear like the male. It is no coincidence their culture produces nuclear weapons. They follow



reductionist, convergent thinking, the dominant mode of consciousness. They go with patriarchy, reason, theology, science, technology and industry. They give economic and military might to the West.

“It began with agriculture, taking surplus from Earth as grain. In nomadic life fertility of humans and herds naturally gave females power. Hording grain in cities replaced nomadic ways and life in dark, enwombing forests. With later puberty, men grow longer and therefore bigger than women. Their hormones promote skeletal muscle, at a premium defending settlements and their granaries. Male power became dominant.

“This process has been enormously creative in its own direction. Dominance, however, is innately unbalanced. It contains seeds of its inevitable downfall. Dominance over nature is destroying our planet. Ordinary people see what’s happening. Experts muddy the pool with arguments. It’s not about authority anyway.”

After thoughtful silence, Marty says “I’m going below for some ZZZs”, leaving me musing to myself:

“Philosophy is part of the problem. It’s another aspect of the dominant mode. Einstein said, ‘We need a new way of thinking’. What we need is an alternative to thinking.



Marty at the helm of “Kela”



“Even if we can’t stop the French bombing Moruroa Atoll, I want to be there for the alternative. I want to be counted for the planet. At least I’m learning the other mode. I’m learning non-violent protest. It’s non-dominant. If all else fails, at least we will bear witness, as Quakers advocate. We will bear witness to the world of her violation. We draw attention to it and raise awareness of it. It feels great going as free agents against formal power, going of our own volition, self-referential, self-determining and self-reliant.

“With characteristic *follie-de-grandeur*, France offers this opportunity of opposing nuclearity at several levels: France’s current nuclear testing, nuclear testing in general, her appalling abuse of colonialism, colonialism in general, the central dominant state and patriarchy in general. “Pride before a fall.” Hubris before nemesis. Patriarchy is “bombing itself out of the water”, out of acceptability and none too soon out of history.

“Beyond my pleasure in sailing the Southern Ocean and South Pacific; beyond excitement over going to the fulcrum of such events, I am privileged to be handling the sheets of cultural change as history tacks. With the millennium in sight we approach the windward mark calling,



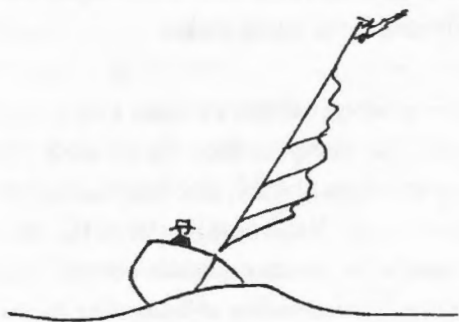
*Dinner in
“Kela’s”
saloon the
night before
departure for
Moruroa
Atoll.*



“Stand by to go about”. More and more on board this vessel “Earth” can see it is time to change; can see we have no choice other than wreck our craft.

“Shortly we’ll hear the call ‘Lee-Oh!’ All who know the ropes will cry, “Let go of petty patriotism!”. Expecting a disturbing phase of transition, they will cope coolly with flapping sails, rattling blocks and shaking timbers, with swinging booms and screaming winches. For the uninitiated, this time of transition is disconcerting, disorienting. The vessel’s motion changes from its regular, predictable lilt to sudden jerky pitching. Crew rush about, intent on tasks unfathomable to landlubbers. The vessel leans the other way. Glasses spill their drinks, plates their contents. Objects in lockers settle anew. The vessel gathers way once more, finding a new and comfortable rhythm.

Children in sailing dinghies cope with transition and uncertainty. They can tolerate unresolved disorder. They sustain it for minutes, their craft head to wind, sails flapping, caught in stays or reefing at sea. They are practised in deconstructing the old and bringing in the new. You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs. At present we are addicted to the old as if to heroin. Giving it up, Brett Whitely said, “is like trying to turn a giant tanker going full speed”. Australia is a young nation. Unavoidably it is going about. Inevitably it is in transition. It could become a model of cultural transition for the English-speaking world.





STORM

.....

GREY DAWN; GREY FALLS of rain are hanging all around. Sheltering under the spray-dodger, our breaths condense to fog. We're touching twelve knots under storm jib and triple-reefed mainsail. We're racing white horses down grey mountainsides of Southern Ocean swells. Our thirty tons are driven like a matchbox in lathering foam. The ship thrills and shakes; a spirited creature, leaping and bouncing in excitement. How lucky we are to be on this ride!

Out of sight of other yachts, we're in good company of cute faced seals, of majestic albatross, of molymawks, shearwaters, petrels and Wilson's storm petrel, the "Jesus Christ bird", so-called for seeming to walk on water. Flying so close, it touches the surface with its feet. All are at home in roughest weather.



Hove-to for three hours during a blow, we're safe but awed as fields of seascape disappear behind horizontally driven spray. Then like a bird we're off again, all aboard now being sick.

"Bother France!"

Kneeling on the dunny floor, where vagrant onions roll in the slops, I'm shouting "Europe" into the porcelain bowl after my evening noodles. Reflecting on my involuntary cry, another part of me understands it is indeed European culture that's making herself, the world and our ship's company sick just now. So many little countries crammed together with borders tangled like noodles is bound to be a pot of trouble.



Dominant northern dreaming, its mass trance, its public spirituality is toxic, nay lethal. Slowly turning from our cultural cringe, we of the Antipodes, literally under your feet, have healthy responses to offer an ailing world.

Compared to Europe's cultural history of two thousand years or so, some of us Down Under are touched by Earth's most ancient culture. Aboriginal lore is steeped in intimacy with stars, rocks, winds, waters, foliage and creatures of Earth's most ancient land. *Terra Australis* is the most non-dominant land, worn down to desert flatness.

This land has psychic power. It changes European heritage. Aborigines are suddenly fashionable, capturing the imagination as supreme environmentalists. Their sixty thousand years of culture dwarf all others, subverting their authority. Culture is arbitrary. Although ignorant of details of their Dreaming, we want to be in harmony with nature, with the universe. I dream Australia might modify European culture in favour of the environment. I dream we might translate messages from the Earth and stars into English for the world to heed.

Only a thousand years in New Zealand, Maori spent millennia in the Pacific, influenced by it. I honour New Zealand for leading the way opposing nuclear testing. I honour David Lange, with whatever political motives, for saying, "No!" to United States nuclear warships. How is it so few Australian yachts are with us now? Perhaps, like most of the population, most yacht owners' heads are still in that other space.

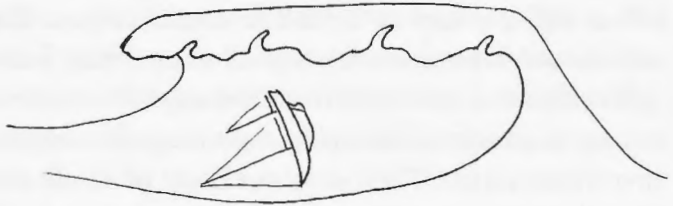
Back in my focsle bunk, the motion is so lively I bruise in bed. I listen to chilling brine rushing by my ear. I hear wind with hungry breath, tearing at rigging. I see tongues of tempest curling tumultuous about us, whistling and screeching on wires now feeling its teeth. So may winds of change blow round the globe. May people rise in waves like these to douse the cultural madness of our day!

For twenty-four hours, on steep sides of breaking seas, three yachts hang from drogues astern. We use a new "series" drogue. It is 150



metres of thick nylon rope with conical pockets of sail-cloth every metre along its length. It slows the vessel so she doesn't descend too fast down waves. She can bottom-out before climbing the next. Without a drogue she might bury her bows into the trough and go under, "pitch-pole" forwards or broach and founder abeam. Nylon rope is elastic. We laugh about "bungy-jumping into Davy Jones' locker".

*Yacht
pitch-polling*



We're still doing five knots under bare poles. Our outboard motor is lashed to the stern rail. Its propeller turns in winds of sixty knots. It's spinning now. Did we join the gales! Waves crash on "Kela's" hull with shuddering impact, shaking everything aboard. Crockery rattles in the galley. My body reverberates to the marrow. It's sickening. How much more shocking are the blows prepared for Earth in her bones below Moruroa?

Falling across the focsle, Marty and I smash a bunk board. I hurt my shoulder. The pain prevents sleep. Weakness of my left arm is a hindrance.

Two yachts lose their drogues. One loses its propeller. We tear and repair our mainsail. "Sudden Laughter" returns to New Zealand for repairs. On "New Zealand Maid", John Tucker dismantles her diesel engine, clearing sea water from its cylinders. He gets it started again by dawn to charge batteries for lights, radio and to warm his crew shivering in their sodden cabin. The manes of white horses get a green rinse.

After two days tapping the barometer glass, the low passes. Vivid stars shine out. Cath and the children emerge from their cabin. Swells



of the Southern Ocean are grand for sailing. It's good to be on our way once more, albeit under storm jib only. We start cooking and enjoying food: pasta, curries, dhal, rice, salads, beans, pumpkin soup, tortilla, stroganoff, scalloped potatoes, fresh warm bread and pikelets.



Nick and "Kela" surfing Southern Ocean breakers.



AT SEA

.....

MAKING A FEW DEGREES of northing we edge across the fortieth parallel, skirting stronger weather. There follow many nights of glorious sailing. On my pre-dawn watch, the Southern Cross dives head first through our mizzen rigging. Orion stands ahead; his belt on the main spreader, his dagger angles towards bright Sirius. Sheets are creaking. Steering chains are slapping in their metallic housing. Bilge pumps gulp. Strange cat-like mewling from the auto-pilot answers the “rish-rush” of bubbles streaming along the hull. Turning in the under-passing sea, the propeller mumbles through the vessel. It drives a generator charging batteries. Above the chart table, two-way radios maintain busy chatter amid a cacophony of whistling sounds, like bottles filling and the insistent patter of Morse code.

We hear we are not alone. Seven days and a thousand miles out of Wellington our little fleet is closely scattered over only fifty miles. What a thrill it is contacting “Rainbow Warrior” on the evening radio schedule and keeping regular communications with her! What an honour to be on her roll call! How eagerly we listen for news of other yachts.

We hear of “Tryptich”, a huge trimaran from Auckland, owned by Barry Keon, a dominating man. “Let’s show these bastards we’re serious about this issue,” were his words when initiating New Zealand’s Peace Flotilla of three dozen yachts, crewed by ordinary people.

Taking the warmer, northern route via the Cook Islands, “Triptych” meets strong head winds, suffering delamination of her fibreglass hulls. She loses part of her cross-members. Motoring into northeasterly gales, she strikes something under water, losing two blades off her propeller. She has galley problems, can’t cook food and her crew quarrel.



In Australia an all-woman crew is mustering for the protest voyage Four lawyers crew "Aquila D'Oro". They compose new words to Bob Dylan's "Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door", which drift discordantly across the ocean to our radio:

*We've got a letter for Jacques Chirac,
You'd better take your weapons back,
We don't need your nuclear power...*

"Kaunitoni", a Fijian cargo tramp hurriedly chartered out of Suva by an environmental group called Ocean, has seventy-one aboard including seventeen journalists. "Kaunitoni" has engine trouble, a cracked cylinder head. They suspect French sabotage. HMNZS "Tui" gets the New Zealand Air Force to airdrop spare parts at sea. One crucial part is missing. "Kaunitoni" wallows adrift for a week. Taking her in tow, "Te Kukupa", a Cook Island patrol boat, overheats her engine. She drifts onto "Kaunitoni", colliding with her. Twenty passengers are drunk. Politicians demand immediate rescue. One seizes the radio at night and is sending a "Mayday" signal when another, insisting the situation is not life-threatening, pulls the plug on the radio. Passengers are told to put on life-jackets, stored under their berths. They find others meant for children. They sit looking ridiculous and afraid.

Two Fijian yachts, "I Tau" and "Metangi Princess", are chartered by German journalists out of Suva. Each finds water in its diesel fuel. Recalling the bombing of "Rainbow Warrior" in Auckland Harbour in 1984, some suspect French sabotage. France gives \$1.2 million foreign aid to Fiji. Colonel Rabuka sacks three Cabinet ministers for crossing the floor in favour of nuclear protest, formerly silenced by the "hush money".

A traditional Maori ninety-foot outrigger canoe "Te-Aa-O-Tonga" is towed from the Cook Islands. Other names on the airwaves include



"New Zealand Maid" setting out from Wellington



“Anna”, “Bifrost”, “Caramba”, “Gemini Galaxsea”, “Photina”, “Pickety Witch”, “Siddharta”, “Tara”, “Tucker Thompson”, “Vega”, our close friends “Joie” and “Chimera”, with whom we sailed, and “New Zealand Maid”, with whom we are in constant contact.

We have many glorious days reaching eastwards, romping at eight to ten knots, over seas of Gaia blue, cheered on by circling birds, under sunny skies towards which white caps leap and doff. Quentin plays cool guitar. Environmental action is a great way of life. I’m singing:


*Speed bonnie boat,
Like a bird on the wing,
Onward, the sailors cry*

“Sail-Ho!” rings out as “New Zealand Maid” appears, hull-down ahead, and again as “Chimera” appears briefly to starboard. Two of our companions from Wellington are with us again but “Joie” is further south and east.

From now we stay in sight of the lovely “Maid”. She is a classical gaff-rigged, forty-six foot ketch of traditional design with low freeboard and low wooden coach-houses, a sleek black hull and khaki canvass dodgers lashed to railings aft around the cockpit. Lovingly built by John, Barbara and their family, the “Maid” is on her first ocean cruise.

“Kela”, by contrast, is modern, steel with high freeboard. She has a new solid spray-dodger arching over her high cockpit. Intended for sub-Antarctic research, “Kela” is powerful, dry and comfortable. She behaves well in a sea but she could have more hand-grabs in her wide cabins for safety below decks at sea.

Life is a thrill a minute. From spellbinding dawns, up empty paths of light, brighter than burnished gold, we charge towards morning sun, bouncing out of the sea. Sun-up sees sail changes: shaking out reefs, reefing and reefing again. We alter the spread of our genoa with roller



furling gear. Below decks we enjoy radio calls, more adventurous meals, great music on the saloon stereo, books, games and children's ploys that make the French look gauche.

On deck, I lust on heart-touching skies of a thousand lovely greys, wondrously soft, in gentlest, fluffy forms or menacing and dark, often with pink, apricot, orange, red, gold, cream and most tender blue. Rain squalls lean around our path.

"To call them, 'monumental', or 'towering columns'," I'm thinking, "would reduce them to human scale and values. Beside these our greatest monuments are trite and trash. How dare we describe the universe and its wonders in human terms, but how to avoid doing so? Such are the limitations of our view, of mind, of language. Regarding Earth as female, as Mother, however, is not casting her in human form. She is Mother of all species. She is Mother in essence. Earth is mother of life itself. She gives flesh from her flesh. She bears us, cradles us, feeds us, nurtures us, plays with us and heals us.

"Infamous for arrogance, the French merely epitomise the arrogance of our species. Regarding herself as still the fountainhead of civilisation, the leader, before which all others culturally must cringe, France may well be. Sadly, however, her culture is misdirected. Based on whimsy, romance, drama and make-believe, for thousands of years nurtured on sickly piety, Western culture, whether led by France or not, is festering, is lethal to Earth. It survives, propped up on more of the same. It clings more firmly to effete foundations. Not all the treasures of a hundred museums and galleries of Paris and Versailles are worth a straw beside the wonders among which we now sail.

"All museums of the world are but warehouses of gilded icons to a culture that will pass for the sake of Earth, whether we survive or not. Culture is relative. Ours opposes nature. All treasures of civilisation are but fantasies or counterfeits of nature. They are forgeries, as banknotes are of gold. Possessed by the wealthy and by the state, they maintain a



mystique to which millions pay homage. Tourists endorse the culture of their power-elite by making their pilgrimage. They pay their due, enter Babel and fall under its spell. The learned pronounce solemn benediction from deeper realms of mystery over artifice. Out here in the wild it's obvious but who dares dissent? Unchallenged, however, our arbitrary culture maintains its insidious power further alienating us from nature, from truth. In Plato's cave those chained to benches remain enthralled by mere shadows on the wall, their backs to the light that casts them.

"Language, however venerable, beautiful, loved and carefully guarded by the learned, by commissars of dominant culture, will change," I muse, "and free us from its thrall. Escaping with our lives, language will honour nature first and for her own sake. Monuments will be 'cloud-like', if monuments we have at all. Let's change our language to suit our days. Changing language from sexist bias, feminism shows the way. Let's change it more radically from human-centred bias. Let's reinvent speech to fit new perceptions. For Earth's sake, let's talk Earth-speak. Let's bid the words we know adieu or forever hold our peace. Let's wish them dead as Latin and ancient Greek lest we be silenced for them.

"Guarded by the powerful, words are dominant, 'mightier than the sword'. Let's not fall on them. The power elite 'looks on tempests and is never shaken'. Conservative, it would have all species dead before it changes. The French parliament recently outlawed changing French parlance. 'Museum mentality!'," I'm thinking in our 'wand'ring bark'.

"Now 'at the edge of doom' let's be iconoclastic. Shakespeare is both wrong and arrogant. Love is no 'ever-fixèd mark'. It's a spirit. By definition, it 'alters when it alteration finds' and 'bends with the remover to remove'. Priests in black defend wicked disinformation: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was made flesh'."

What do you think?

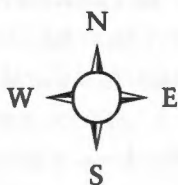
To the "Maid", having lost her drogue, we offer our spare. It was

lent us by a generous stranger on the wharf the morning of our departure. The "Maid" sails alongside. Her heaving-line comes aboard, followed by her hauling-line, to which we quickly tie a bag containing the drogue. We toss it overboard, but it is too heavy and the "Maid" is going too fast for her crew to drag the mass aboard. Fortunately we tied a float to the bag. As the "Maid" casts it adrift, however, the line tangles in her shallow bilge-screw. After grim minutes, we recover the drogue and they untangle their propeller. With relief, spirits soar. Environmental action is a great adventure. It sure beats joining the military!

"More than the technical skills of sailing; more than the challenge of the elements, the distance we travel is a measure of our earnestness," I'm thinking.

"This long journey of non-violent protest echoes the great salt march of Mahatma Gandhi, himself influenced by the American Henry Thoreau. As Gandhi brought world attention to the colonial foolishness of Britain, so may we focus it on that of France. As he brought down the British Empire by defiantly raising one crystal of salt, so may we subvert dominant patriarchy and its warfare by raising the atom, the convergent point at which reductionism is most lethal.

On the evening radio schedule we listen eagerly for "Rainbow Warrior's" rollcall and for developments at Moruroa, still two thousand miles northeast. The "Warrior's" companion vessel, MV "Greenpeace", has arrived. Her helicopter is closely shadowed by French helicopters.





INTIMACY




IN QUIETNESS, IN HALF-DARKNESS one morning; in half-sleep, waking, before sleep is sated, I drift and dream content. The ship seems slower, the seas more even. A gentler westerly hums in shrouds above my bunk. It is strong but not a gale. In the richly complex rocking of this sea-kindly craft, now ten days out, sensual feelings flow through my flesh. They are mellow, smooth, sweet as honey but dark. Disorientation, fatigue and practice turn the key on doors conventionally closed.

The saloon bunk is warm and soft. From the locker beneath wafts the pungency of coffee. Its fragrance, just perceptible, is at first unrecognised. It's vaguely aromatic like some old spice or rare herb too precious for these degenerate days. Now drifting on quiet air, it is soft, evoking exotic visions before slumbering eyes. Beneath shady trees, a table is spread at which are strangers, so kindly I can trust them. They are dark and foreign but friendly, *sympatique*. I feel more at home than when at home.

They are agreeable, slow, hardly moving, but the movement of my bunk continues rhythmic as a lazy hammock. I'm swinging and lifting, rocking and falling, pitching and swaying. Liting in delicious parabolas, cushioned in its own flesh, the body feels fluid like the sea from which it came and which rocks it now. It senses itself falling but not too far.

Cradled in arms of self-awareness, bones float in tropic swells of their own sweet juices; dipping and plunging, slow and swift, thrusting and nudging. The skeleton is enwombed in its own kind, yet strange, substance. Sinking then riding seas of consciousness, it is swimming in limpid awareness. It feels sexual but not disturbingly so, erotic but so



soft and slow as seeks no consummation. A lover would intrude. "Here I come home to my expectant country. They know my name here and speak it with delight." Union with self asks no resolution. The orgasmic charge being undirected, unconfined is widespread and sustained.

Extraneous seas perturb the syncopation, propelling mind to another realm. Breath is now so light and free that inner and outer merge. Body drifts behind. So sated, self recedes and fades from view. Half-smiling, surrendered beyond all seas into sky-blue emptiness, happiness becomes a mischievous summer cloud.

Beyond voluptuary, desire is a pain outmoded. In such full openness, abandonment is itself abandoned. Sailing another golden dawn, completeness neither wishes the radiant day delayed nor wants this bliss forgotten.

Children are stirring in the after cabin. The work-a-day begins. One wish I do recall: that presidents and generals sail such seas sublime. Without defences, with nothing to defend, ecstasies within need no reminders from beyond. Ultimately, it's the subjective that matters. Reconciled with flesh, reunited to biology at large, we inherit the Earth and the universe around. For these it's worth swapping palaces and banquets. Like yesterdays toys, bombs would lie discarded. How other than relating to ourselves can we relate to others or the world beyond? If not connecting with ourselves, it's not we who are connecting. "Charity begins at home." How better than reclaiming our own biology can we reclaim sensitivity to biology at large? What better way back to Earth is there than through our earthiness? Breaking Victorian taboos against self-looking, proscribed as narcissism, we can reverse cultural alienation.

So far from civilisation as to be unthinkable, we regain sensitive relationship with Earth by physically relating with her. Like champagne socialists, most think this planet can be saved from suburbia, if she can be saved at all. Garbage-bin greenies! Saving the environment involves



changes to life greater than sorting our rubbish and using recycled toilet paper. We'll leave our comfort zones and live in the wild.

In "Voss", Patrick White claims relationship with Australia's red centre through sacrifice, by spilling blood. That is too intellectual, abstract, symbolic and dramatic, too tainted with Christian imagery. What reconciliation did Scott achieve with blood on snow? Good relationship with the environment comes not by dying in it, but by living in it. The hippies adventured one step towards reconciliation but transported suburbia to the bush. Governments preserve token wilderness by locking up reserves. With dominance, in the style of patriarchy, they divide, alienate, separate people from their patch. Humanity, however, needs re-educating by the wild. This comes from contact with the wild, by living in the wild, by going wild again. Ferals go closest.

After pondering, I sold my suburban house. Consumerism was not for me. Just "getting out of it" is doing well. I have a distaste for living among straight lines and rectangles. I call it "rectilinear phobia". I live in a van. I still run a motor vehicle but at least I've taken one step from civilisation. I tread more lightly on Earth. I'm closer to nature. It's a step, a more radical alternative. I camp where I hear frogs at night and birds in the morning. Australian landscape transforms consciousness. The oldest land on Earth, visible for ninety per cent of the planet's life, being arid is naked. The other bares her bones. Condensed from interstellar dust and vapours, the Outback re-connects me with the stars, with the universe. This sea voyage encounters another desert, another revelation, another transformation.

With passing showers, rainbows grace our way. We gasp with wonder. Their colours are more magical than I've seen in deserts ashore. Some are double. Once, in a sprinkling shower, the heavenly arc fills the cockpit, bathing our feet. I've never been this close before. I need no promised crock of gold; we're in it. Crocks of gold are dross beside this blessing realised. I always thought the promise unattainable, a tease.

Espousing the Universe, dreams come true. She rushes towards me with welcome, with extravagant bounty. Her dowry overflows

Romp along for weeks, broad-reaching on twenty-five knot winds, we're making splendid progress. Turning north more sharply now, we skip the sterner blows. At evening a dolphin plays about our prow, confirming our new direction.

"It indicates good fortune," says Diamuid.

"Only one dolphin in so much ocean? I've sailed in pods of scores. I've heard of hundreds playing round ships for days," I reply.

"Population counts are unreliable and notoriously open to manipulation by statisticians," Nick explains.

"Who needs statistics on a count of one?" I wonder.

"Rainbow Warrior" and MV "Greenpeace" fail to make the evening rollcall. From radio chatter between other craft around Moruroa we're delighted and proud to hear of Greenpeace audaciously getting nine Zodiac rubber dinghies into the lagoon. Two divers swam ashore and chained themselves to the drilling rig under which the first atomic explosion of this series was due this morning. The explosion is delayed till next morning. We are delighted and relieved. Another day is another day, as for life on Earth. Slowly through the crackling radio, however, in bits and pieces of secondhand news, we gather that "Rainbow Warrior" and MV "Greenpeace" have both been boarded. The French have knocked out their communications, cutting their satellite telephone cables. We are dismayed.

Even worse, they are disabled. Their steering fire-axed, both ships are rafted together and are being towed to Hao Island, two hundred miles north of Moruroa. Most of their crews are being deported. Those still on board are badly treated by their captors.

Previously, on 9 July, four Zodiacs entered Moruroa Lagoon. Their crews were beaten and required hospitalisation in Papeete. This time "Rainbow Warrior" was rammed, boarded and tear-gassed. One canis-



ter of tear gas cleared the ship's bridge. French commandos, however, threw canister after canister of tear gas into closed quarters below decks from which crew could not escape. Crews were interrogated for sixteen hours on Moruroa. Commandos robbed and pillaged the ships. They tossed overboard millions of dollars worth of equipment. Later we hear that John Castle, master on "Rainbow Warrior", climbed the mast, greased it, cut the rat-lines and hid in the crow's-nest. From here he continued broadcasting a running commentary of his ship's siege till the lines were cut. Two days later, John was still aloft and a further three days later was still refusing to leave his ship.



In our focsle, Diamuid recounts how James Ingram and David McTaggart in their yacht "Vega" were boarded by French commandos in international waters during 1973. The men were beaten and kicked. I reach for the book by Morgan and Whitaker, called *Rainbow Warrior* (1986, ISBN 0-09-947720-3), lent to me on leaving Melbourne. I read that McTaggart was kicked in the eye and blinded. Fearful of a world scandal, his French assailants insisted

Charismatic McTaggart: courageous protestor all round the world.

on surgery but McTaggart, with Gandhian courage and unflinching purpose, risked the sight in his damaged eye, refusing surgery until connected by phone to his brother in Canada. Picture this inspiring leader jumping off operating tables and out of bed, pursued down hospital corridors by nurses with hypodermic syringes of anaesthetic.

As evidence for subsequent court hearings, McTaggart's girlfriend,

Anne-Marie Horne, aged nineteen, smuggled in her vagina film of the bashing. These are stirring legends of the environmental movement.

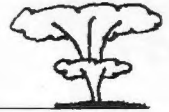
“Two Greenpeace divers were trying to block the drain from Britain’s Sellafield nuclear power station,” Diamuid continues. “It discharges low-level radioactive waste into the Irish Sea. Spotting them, authorities deliberately sent high-level nuclear waste down the drain. Both men died of cancer.”

“That’s hard to believe,” I demur, “green conspiracy theories make good eco-myths.” I wonder how the authorities had high-level waste so ready to hand.

“Such is the sway British Nuclear Fuels holds over its government,” says Diamuid, “that radioactive waste continues accumulating on Irish beaches despite repeated high-level complaints.”

“In environmental circles Britain is called ‘the dirty old man of Europe’,” I recall. “The dirt is not only on the physical plane. It is the established custom for developed industrial nations to export toxic waste and dirty industries. Testing nuclear weapons in the Pacific, France is doing that now. Fatuously, she claims Moruroa is, ‘metropolitan France’. She is driven by economic rationalism. Her nuclear industry, military and civil, is her largest employer. In France nuclear power stations produce ninety per cent of the electricity. Much of it is exported to neighbouring Belgium, Holland and Germany. Seventy per cent of French exports are military. In Australia to our shame it is twelve per cent.”

I ask: “How much of Chirac’s present grandstanding is to convince his electorate he’s a tough leader like Napoleon or de Gaulle? I hear their nuclear testing is also to convince the United Nations France is still a major and, in particular, a nuclear power. That’s an entry ticket to the Security Council. How much is it a marketing gimmick for nuclear technology? George Bush’s Gulf War looked like a lavish trade-fest for the latest in guided missiles and bombs. Defeated and humiliated in six recent wars, Le Coq feels insecure. Having reduced the military budget,



President Chirac is obliged to compensate his generals with further nuclear testing. With contemporary environmental awareness, such politics are unworthy.”

“The trouble is,” I continue, “the dominant goes on dominating the non-dominant. It is in their very natures. Dominance rules and is destructive.”

“But the non-dominant go on arising,” answers Diamuid with optimism and courage.

“The water wears away the rock.”

“Do you think humanity will disappear from the Earth?” Diamuid asks as our conversation deepens.

“No, but most must go if any are to continue,” I reply.

Diamuid agrees. Most under-thirties do. This is background to their lives, storm clouds before which they sail.

In my bunk, lurching northeast through darkness, I ponder the daring of Greenpeace activists; civilians dropped from helicopters behind military lines. Their soft bodies challenge awesome nuclear fire. They occupy sites of bombs able to destroy millions. Their stories will be legends. Like Old Testament heroes Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they walk in “the burning fiery furnace and are not consumed”. What heightened awareness they earn and carry with them! What a coup to stall a world nuclear power by direct non-violent action! But what can be done now both Greenpeace ships are impounded?



MADNESS

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DISTURBED SLEEP WHEN SAILING is great for dreaming. Waking to movements, sounds and as watches change I dream again. I meet by chance in the city a peer from college days. Though never close, he greets me as a long-lost friend. He's in pinstripes, healthy, tanned, confident and friendly. He asks me to lunch. We meet a couple of smart women, city-dressed in suits, one navy, the other black and white.

Entering the carpeted restaurant I notice the disparity between us. I am in bare feet, cotton trousers, worn and rolled, a frayed and faded skivvy, and baroque beard also faded. In this fantasy restaurant, I feel uneasy. They might think I'm odd. Leaving my bourgeois, suburban, professional practice three years previously aged fifty-four, I might seem to be rapidly going to seed. Doubtless they expect next time we meet, I'll be huddled in some doorway among plastic bags of all my worldly goods.

Seeing my life change after my children left home, one old friend cautioned me, "You'll soon run down your capital, travelling as you propose".

"Capital is not my god," I retorted, going my way thinking, "How deeply capitalism bites into a person, stultifying the spirit! How disgraceful to die rich!" Determined to live richly, adventurously and dangerously, I strengthen my resolve to die poor. I won't "run to seed". Liberation from my appointment book, from suburban consumerism and all that goes with it seems more a late flowering to me.

"Personal growth and change in the inner world," I told clients, "involve corresponding changes in life and circumstances. Patriarchy rests on the regulated life. Getting up on time, having breakfast on time,



arriving at school on time or at the office or factory, changing periods to the bell, having lunch on time, going home on time to the news at seven and to bed by eleven is the measured beat of the mass trance of patriarchy. It keeps the world in thrall.”



Author at the helm.

Freed from the stultifying spell of conformity, freed from external regulation, my heart began to beat and glow. I felt joy in my belly. Self began to manifest in my life. I began to know happiness as warmth inside, an aura round my skin. Such feelings are persuasive. They are the basis of self-reference in self-determination. They are the stuff of self-esteem and give confidence for self-reliance. In their nature they

lead away from conformity towards individuality, away from orthodoxy towards uniqueness. Finding self, finding uniqueness, transcends sheep-like conformity. To the flock one becomes idiosyncratic, eccentric, odd. A wise old Rabbi once said, "You haven't arrived till you've no one left to talk to". How must I seem now to my old college set? How do I seem, I wonder, to my protesting comrades aboard "Kela"? They see me possessed by the muse, scrawling notes in my pocket book, by torchlight in my bunk, at the saloon table and on my knee in the cockpit with ink running on my soggy page. I read them as much as possible amid other activities at sea. They're enthusiastic.

"What have you published before?" asks Nick.

"I've always resisted it," I reply. "Mass media are alienating. They enable widespread dissemination of ideas but favour the abstract. They keep people in their heads. They filter out personal human nuances. Technology keeps people apart. It is part of the dominant mode. Publishing drags the writer into the capitalist machine. The pressures of industry and commerce influence what is written and read. I've kept my writing to letters. Writing to people I know is personal and specific. There is a social context and a background of shared allusions."

"This time you're writing a book," asserts Nick.

"I'm too shy to write a book. Once in print it's there for ever. There's nothing new worth saying. It's all been written before. There are too many books already. What really matters is what we do. Deeds not words. Behaviour makes the difference. It's *praxis* that counts. Reflection and books compound our problem. Spare the trees, mate!

"In Tibet recently, the magnificence of the country drove me to write, even wearing gloves and bumping across high cold deserts in Chinese trucks. It was a great adventure but I didn't publish. Writing for its own sake, I made a circular. Perhaps that was a warm up. I'm feeling my way. I'm changing and developing. Maybe I'll publish against better principles because it's the way the tide is running. These are desperate



days. The global crisis overshadows everything. Time is short. Try anything. It's better than nothing. I dunno. Wait and see."

Nick doesn't reply.

How do my companions seem to me? Who is maddest of us all?

Is it two-year-old Jemma, blonde, seductive, intelligent, remarkably mobile on newfound sea-legs, or rather sea-hands-and-knees. She crawls across lurching cabin or cockpit to provoke her bomb-loving brother. He in turn provokes her to screaming. During radio schedules all aboard clench their teeth, locked in the children's combined manipulative power,

Is it Jeremy? Forceful like his father, intelligent as both parents, remarkably independent in argument, he has an astonishing vocabulary and a matching repertoire of *attention deficit correcting devices*. He is impatient when flat batteries interrupt computer games on the saloon table or when other desires are unmet by parents preoccupied by navigation. Since "consciousness is born in rebellion", Jeremy must be an enlightened avatar.

Is it his mother, Cath, still looking grim ten days out, her cosy home ravaged by wild movement of the yacht, invaded by four strange eco-activists? Lesser women would complain about the blackcurrant juice on her pale Nepalese carpet in the saloon.

Once at sea we meet a hitherto unnoticed ninth member of our ship's company. For all his virtues, the skipper is having a shameless affair of passion, infatuation, love and hate. Unfairly favoured with long tricks at the helm, wayward and obstinate, difficult and temperamental, it's George, the oft-tweaked auto-pilot. Sometimes George conflicts with Nick's more authoritative love. This is another electronic gadget, the satellite-tracking Global Positioning System, or GPS. When George sulks or fails to cope with difficult seas, the skipper in the galley has an eye on the GPS above the chart table opposite. He shouts course corrections through the hatch to bemused Diamuid, who's never steered a boat before. Often cooking great meals and with every other aspect of

life on board and beyond in mind, courageous, bright and well-read, Nick is a master indeed.

Or is it Diamuid, our Irish pacifist, on hands and knees under the saloon table rummaging for ingredients with which to make delicious vegan meals he's then too queasy to share with the carnivorous rest of the crew?

Is it congenial Marty, winking and smiling, kind and soft, generous and caring but visibly reddening, his eyes rolling over squabbles between the children? Marty and Diamuid, albeit in fun, closely parallel the children in their sparing badinage. Marty likes to put things bluntly then apologise for being blunt.

"It should be automatic," Marty insists, "not to pollute the air we breathe. Just shows how fucked we humans are. Should be automatic to care for one that bears us. We could be forgiven before. Because of her bounty, we could rape and pillage the Earth, not even noticing. But we have no excuse now. We've got the education. We've got the communication. We've got the information. Sorry about the bad language."



Melbourne activist Quentin.



Is it Quentin, ever-ready for action above and below decks, first up the mast to look for sail, first to repair the leaking head? Quentin is often washing and often crouching to leeward, his cigarette flaring in the wind. Polluting his own body, not a single cigarette butt goes overboard, defiling the sea.

To those still sipping gin back at the yacht club, we're "all bloody mad". Anyone is mad automatically who deviates from so called normality or challenges the dominant paradigm. It defines madness on its own mad assumptions and in its own crazy terms. Anyone is mad who challenges the madness of normality. Anyone is mad who challenges the wisdom or permanence of the status quo.

For that challenge "Kela" herself for days, nights, weeks and months, ceaselessly, madly, drives on at six to eight knots, surging up to ten, foam spewing along her cheeks, wind sighing and moaning aloft, her screw mumbling in her stern-post, her auto-pilot now snoring, now screaming. All sounds rise in crescendo together and fall away on every long, strong South Pacific swell.

Crossing the dateline, we advance our watches two hours and retard our calendar a day. Garry on "Chimera" celebrates his birthday twice, but what are days and hours, "these rags of time", except for radio schedules and changing watch?

We are all tired by storms, by ceaseless motion, by night watches, by broken sleep, by falls and bruises, by excitement and wonder over glories of blue, blue seas and ever-changing, ever-awesome skies.

*For one who has been long in city pent,
Tis very good to look,
Upon the fair and open face of heaven,
And to breath a sigh,
Full in the dome of the blue firmament.*

Beneath us slides the ghastly deep, in whose shafting darkness is no dread but the power to evoke it in perishable hearts. Saved from its embrace by skill and the thin steel of “Kela’s” hull, we cheerily skip across the perilous main. I’m thinking of jolly tars, now gone from these great wilds, of their fears and superstitions, of their courage, strength and skill. I see them racing each other aloft, up rat-lines on pitching masts and swaying yards a hundred feet over boiling seas, rain, hail or snow. I picture them returning home with but one sea-chest of all they own.

Appalling hardships of their lives were compensated by dwelling in magnificent grandeur of nature’s heavenly realms, as we revere them now. Feeling the pulse of her surging life, we dance to her rhythms. In her cold, we blow on our nails. We peer through her darkness. Shouting above her roar, we exalt in her glory. Buffeted by her enormous breath, shaken by her violence, awed by her light, we are humbled by her power. We are blessed by her sunny warmth, refreshed by her unconditioned air and nourished by her bounty.

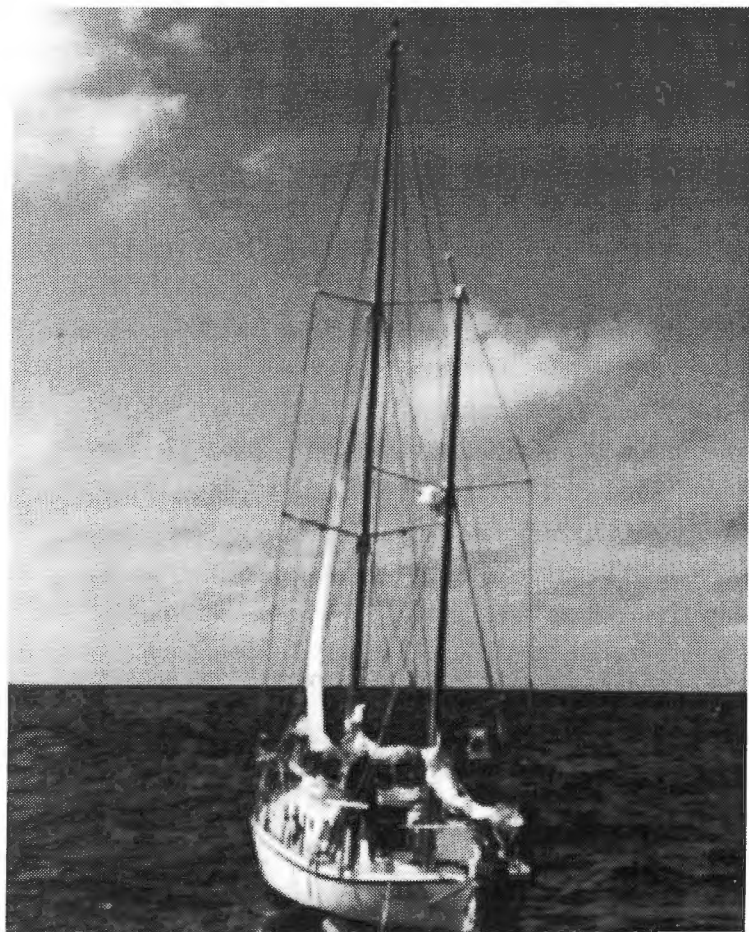
Overtaken by heavy rain, “The lift grows dark. The wind blows strong and gurdy grows the sea.” Vision fades. Loving all weathers, I’m in the cockpit, sheltering under the dodger. The Gales are sleeping aft. The rest of the crew are in the focsle playing cards. For the short distance I can see, the ocean stands in dark ranges with white ridgetops. Valleys are pale from driven scud and rain. My heart thrills to nature’s unbridling violence.

As suddenly as it began, the squall passes. Pale blue sky appears. “Kela” loses way, rolling and flapping in the lull. Cards still in their hands, the players rush up the companion to see what’s amiss. The fresh northwesterly resumes and we’re back to nine knots under reefed main and headsail. Being out here in this storm-tossed cockpit sure beats watching telly at home.

On the evening radio we hear a third Greenpeace vessel, “Manutea”,



has arrived, together with the veteran anti-nuclear campaign yacht "Vega", on which McTaggart conducted his first action off Canada in 1971. This is "Vega's" seventh campaign at Moruroa. We are eager to see her. In suspense we wait to hear if the French will detonate the delayed test, but two Zodiac rubber dinghies enter Moruroa Lagoon so tests are again postponed.



McTaggart's "Vega" at Moruroa.

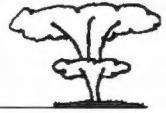
ALIENATION

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I'M PICTURING HUMANITY retreating from the wild, from nature; retreating into comfort zones, insidious traps of body, mind and spirit. Most return to the wild only for refreshment at weekends or annual leave. In our culture nature is a resource, the environment is second. Nature is used for enjoyment or exploitation. Nature is not worthy in her own right nor for her own sake. We are alienated from nature in the wild and from nature in our own bodies. We are alienated from each other. We are alienated more deeply, seriously and generally than Marx supposed. Making birth struggle political as class struggle, Marx harnessed primal energies. More critical struggles are emerging between people and dominant patriarchy; between Earth and state involving natural forces. From their struggle for life at birth, people identify with struggle for life through rebirth.

The state fears its people. It needs them alienated from their passion, from power. The state needs to devalue and suppress the inner world. It acts to stem the fountainhead of imagination and of individuality. The state needs people uniform, compliant, conforming, predictable, easily led, easily manipulated and easily exploited. The state needs factory fodder, office fodder and cannon fodder. The state needs to keep us away from nature and away from even the example of nature in her wild unruly ways. The state wants us in cities, in boxes. It herds gipsies into council houses and new age travellers off commons and out of woods.

With revolution so big in her history, French government fears its people. "Beautiful Paris!", admired by tourists, romanced in popular song, is only a hundred and fifty years old. Most of it was razed last century for grand avenues, boulevards and triumphal arches designed



to get troops and police quickly to any part of town. In Paris, the French beautify fascism, as Stan Kubrick in “Clockwork Orange” beautified violence. In Paris much of the decoration is explicitly fascist. There are few monuments to women or anything other than conquest. Sickened by gold, probably from Australia, on English palaces, I am shocked by its excess in Paris. Real estate can be convincing but the grand Chateau of the Sun King are so over the top as to be counter-persuasive, particularly in days of terminal consumption.

In London stolid British shopkeepers frustrated the grand centralist town plans of John Nash. Britain’s history, however, is as dark as that of France. The Enclosure Acts separated people from their land. Class and monarchy are centralist and away from nature. The recent Criminal Justice Act is too complex for ordinary people to understand. Among other things it seems to be directed against new age travellers, who dissent from suburbia preferring to wander the country in vans, camping in groups. Of the law, I write as an amateur in non-dominant mode.

Tragically White Australia apes Europe. What we have to offer the world is our relative freedom from European culture. Australian police harass hippies and ferals ostensibly for drugs. Drugs, however, are integral to their alternative life. They are returning to nature as a whole, including their own nature complete with imagination and sensation. As in shamanism, drugs can facilitate social change, healing, and reconciliation with self, with nature and the sacred. They call it Neo-shamanism. The *I Ching*, ancient book of Chinese wisdom, says, “When conditions become bad enough, people turn to dangerous drugs”. More feared than drugs themselves are the counter-cultural values going with them. Fearing imagination and a return to nature, the state outlaws recreational drugs. From the point of view of nature, a state declaring any plant illegal is ludicrous!

The French are Cartesian. Descartes’ divisiveness lives on. “I think therefore I am” is nonsense. Separation of body and mind maintains

alienation of people from themselves, from each other and from biology. No nation expresses its fear of nature more than tidy-minded France. No other culture so dramatises its opposition to the wild. No tradition sets out to tame, control or dominate the environment as does the French. French classical gardening illustrates the point: nature is neatly clipped to tidy geometrical patterns as cruelly as Chinese bound women's feet. The French manicure even their regional reserves. Their famous wilderness, la Camargue, is fenced, drained and cut by roads. There are more spent cartridges on the ground than birds in the air. The famous wild horses have brands. Displays at the reception centre dramatise man's struggle against "our enemy the sea, which so menaces humanity".

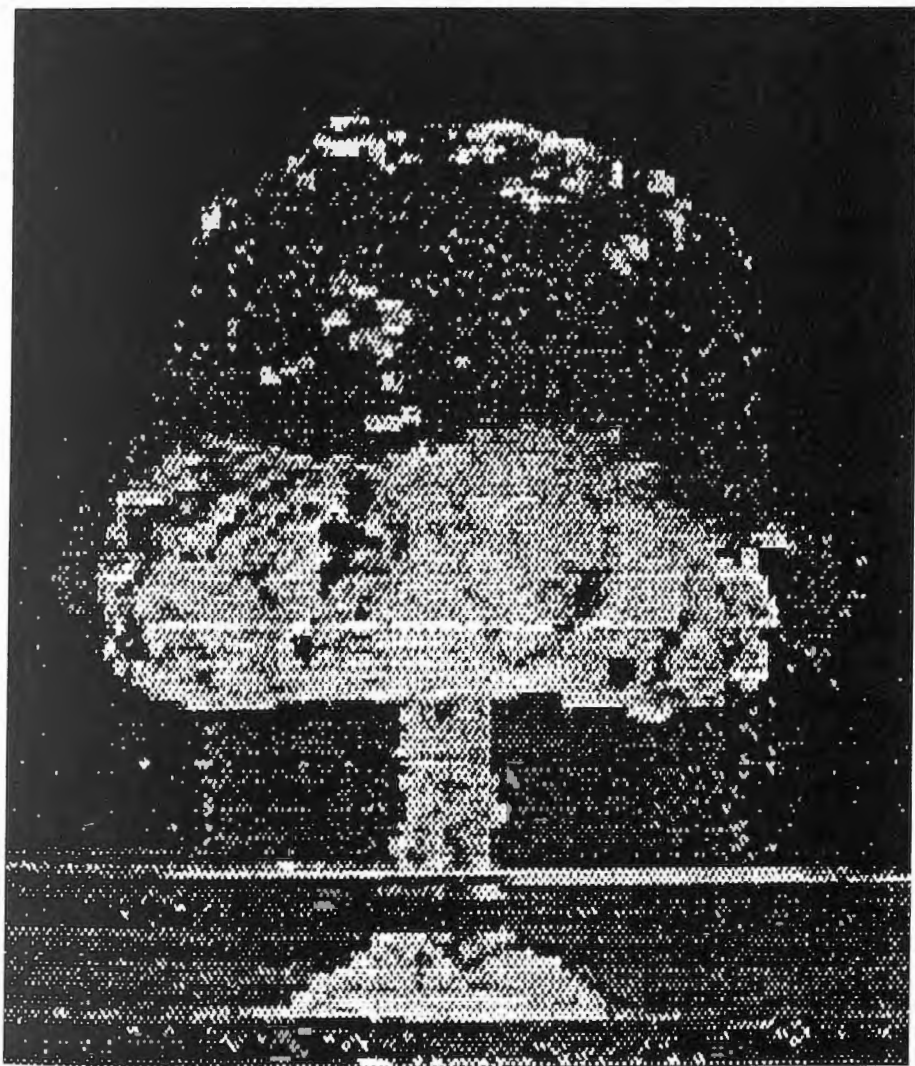
So-called civilisation of Europe is a blight to which France is most prone and in which her president is most captive. It is a model of alienation. Civilisation by definition opposes nature. Despite its discontents, civilisation prides itself as superior to the primitive. It feels so superior it can indulge in occasional flirtations with the "Noble Savage" and Brut Art. France is not much worse than the rest of Europe. Regarding herself as superior, France deserve more censure.

Journalists in London asked Mahatma Gandhi, "What do you think of English civilisation?" "Wouldn't it be lovely!" replied Gandhi. Poor Europe is captive to its history, burdened by its architecture, enchanted by its artefacts, spellbound by its old myths and fairytales. Clinging to fables, backward-looking Europe falls behind. Brandishing her muscle, France falls further behind necessary values, emerging in a world she hopes to lead.

On the evening radio we hear the French have exploded their first bomb. Our spirits slump. Poor Earth! We have failed. We aren't even there. We still have a thousand miles to go. The explosion causes an earthquake of Force Six on the Richter Scale. Since stopping atmospheric testing, they lower bombs through basalt a thousand metres down metre-wide shafts then sealed with conical concrete plugs. Activists in



prison on Moruroa during tests say the floor of their cell jumps violently. The lagoon seethes like boiling water. Fish float to the surface, their swim-bladders ruptured. Le Coq has had his pleasure.



SAIL ON!

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EVERY NIGHT WE LISTEN to Keri Keri Radio, clearly audible from New Zealand across two thousand miles of stormy ocean. It's a shoe-string volunteer subscription service. Ever calm and helpful, station owners Maureen and John give strength, courage and detailed local weather information to many a storm-tossed sailor. They relay messages, advise on engine trouble and organise search and rescue, sometimes for days and nights on end.

Warning us of the gales we survived just out of Wellington, Maureen dryly reassured us, "They'll be character building". They were! Now she's saying, "You can enjoy respite from the vigorous weather of the last fortnight. Winds will drop overnight".

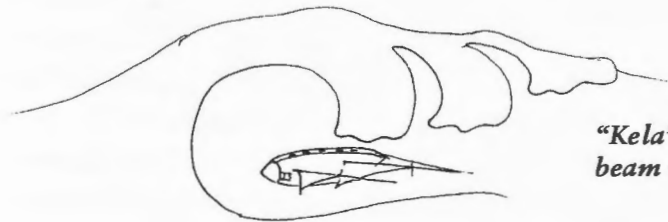
Catching only scraps of sleep between storms and watches, all aboard are chronically tired. Our rule is to shorten sail at dusk. Being so tired and with Maureen's favourable forecast, we fail to shorten sail this night. Instead of easing, the wind increases to a full northwest gale throughout the night. It's as if bands of angels volunteering from around the universe are puffing their cheeks to blow us onwards with all power towards the French. With weather, even Keri Keri Radio can be wrong. Square reaching with too much sail, we are racing along crests of mounting seas.

Crash! With shattering impact, green water breaks over our quarter-deck. Its explosive power is ten times that of any that smacked us before. We fall off the crest of a wave onto our beam-ends. In the abyss below the wave dumps and thumps us. Plates cascade from normally safe storage in the galley. The saloon is full of flying objects: crockery, cutlery, books, fruit, children's toys, baby's bottles, cushions and torches.



I'm dozing on the saloon bunk, strapped in behind a canvas lee-sheet. Landing on my feet, I race up the companion, behind the skipper into the cockpit, now awash. The wave struck over Nick's sleeping head. He's sure the mast is overboard.

Dazed and still half asleep, Nick is crying, "It's the bloody stick. The stick is gone. Oh, the stick. There goes my stick!"



"Kela" on her beam ends

The wave tore netting from railing and ripped paint off the deck, but did no other damage. "Kela" rights herself and sails on. Three cheers for Archimedes!

Soon it is my watch. I'm alone on deck with the ship surging across black waves under black clouds. The wind is screaming. Lightning is flashing all around. White foam seethes to leeward in the gloom. Between clouds and squalls, a bright moon lights an awesome valley, like beaten silver beneath me to windward from which a wall of utter darkness rises high above the railing to the moon, herself placid as ever.

With dawn we're roaring up a path of light towards the climbing sun. "New Zealand Maid" is short of water. In the rush of fitting out, her new fibreglass tanks failed to cure. She sails close enough to throw us some fresh trevally. Drawing ahead, she drops four plastic jerrycans overboard. With our boathook we catch the line between them, haul them aboard and fill them with fresh water while overtaking the "Maid". Then we toss them over again with four loud splashes like depth charges for the "Maid" to retrieve. All enjoy the fun of these manoeuvres so far at sea. Cameras are busy.

Between the Roaring Forties and the Southeast Trade Winds are transitional winds called The Variables. Being blessed by the elements, we spend only one day in these light airs. Motoring is hard to take after weeks of gallant sailing.

Garry on "Chimera" radios he's having rudder trouble. He wants to sail to the Gambier Islands for repairs but Nick says he'll use scuba gear and replace the missing rudder bolts. Three yachts close in but it becomes too rough for diving under "Chimera's" hull. We all press on for Moruroa, keeping close together. At night, lights of other yachts swaying among the stars are cheering in the darkness.

Sailing is a great metaphor of life. It teaches the joy of meeting, the pain of parting, the wisdom of sailing out to sea in a storm and of shortening sail to slacken speed. It reminds us to "Pour oil on troubled waters" and that "A stitch in time saves nine". Sailors live between elements. They know the perishability of all compound things. They enjoy sailing close to the wind, clearing a windward mark and the luxury of returning home with sun and wind astern. Sailors ensure adequate sea-room, are quick with fenders and pump their bilges. Like good bushmen, good sailors allow a margin for error, keep reserves for emergencies and conserve fuel and water. They stand away from danger and shorten sail at dusk. Seafarers are resourceful and self-reliant.

After sunny hours by the mast, stitching our mainsail again, we hear on the evening radio that Greenpeace has again launched two Zodiacs into Moruroa Lagoon. Tests are again delayed. The French cancel their television link-up from Moruroa intended to publicise the event. They are planning to explode the biggest-ever underground bomb beneath Fangataufa Atoll, conceding Moruroa is already too weak for such a blast.

Marty makes a radio-telephone call to his girlfriend in New Zealand. Jane says two hundred workers are striking on Moruroa in protest against nuclear testing. We are elated. There are riots in Tahiti. Papeete



airport burns to the ground. Aircraft are damaged but New Zealand aircraft are spared. French legionaries use riot grenades and tear gas in the streets. Several aboard “Kela” deplore violence, insisting on non-violent protest. Regie on “Chimera” says on the radio, “In Wellington I was feeling pretty brave. I’m not feeling as brave now”.

Money continues flowing to the Peace Flotilla in Wellington. Marty gets \$200 from the Mayoress of Christchurch and \$500 from her council. We’ve each chipped in \$700 for two month’s food. At sea we miss news of the protest in which we are so involved. Greenpeace is letting only news of Greenpeace through to world media even when other matters are worth reporting. For all the good it does, Greenpeace has feet of clay. It is a huge multinational corporation with a budget of \$280 million and a traditional corporate structure.

SEA CHANGE

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IN THE THRUSTING FOCSLE, close behind the prow, the great mast pierces the deck, finding the sturdy keel. Erect and dancing amid Gothic curves of the hull, its nineteen metres pitch and delve while from her waterbed the supine vessel pushes back. Together they're creating primeval dances, raising pagan energies of the wild. They follow rhythms of waves, old rhythms of Earth from before there was life. For three thousand miles, for nineteen days, we sway and step to primal beats. Asleep and awake, rocked by pre-biotic power, old energies arise within us. How different we'll be on arrival at Moruroa! How altered by the experience of our journey!

Que mare transunt currant...

"For those who cross the seas, the skies are changed." How far we have travelled! How our inner skies are changing! How far we have come from the civilised mind. Poor Jacques Chirac cosseted in your Elysee Palace, poor captive of your culture and position! From a new perspective, we're sailing close now to meet your minions. We come from the great parliament of nature. Loving the elements and long among them are our credentials. These qualifications are more valid than certificates, more relevant than bureaucratic roles. Imprinted with the wild, from storm and tempest, out of profound darkness, from icy cold, tossed on the mercurial deep, we are messengers indeed.

Guided by stars that wink and beckon, escorted by planets pirouetting round our courtly passage, encouraged by our queenly moon, smiling from above, we approach past arcs of rainbow, beneath the Milky Way, along vistas of cloud and rain, and showered with shooting stars.



Ordinary people, proved by storms, sped on by favourable winds, surfing hazardous seas, steeped in brine, inspired with oceans' fresh clean breath, caked in salt, dried in beneficent sunshine and drenched in heavenly visions, we come from other values.

From the Council of All Beings we come to witness. In the company of whales and dolphins, sea-lions, seals and flying-fish, we sail toward your navy. Followed by royal albatross, cheered on by wheeling molly-mawks, by terns and petrels, we approach. Endorsed by teeming hordes of pilchards brushing past our driven hull, by countless schools and shoals of fish beneath our urgent keel, we come. Illumined by billions of microbes glowing on cuttlefish and in foam and spray at night, representing legion creatures unnamed on land and of the deep unseen, we claim our mandate.

Intimacy with these and with ourselves reinforces our direction. Sensitive to life, our own, and to biology in general, spanning evolution, we drive on. Reconnected to ourselves, our species and all others, alive and yet to come, on land, in sea or air we feel responsible. All are descendants of the stars. All are jeopardised by radioactive fallout and leakage from this blasted atoll, you claim is yours. We sail for life, harmony and peace, for cooperation and synthesis. We come to witness your deadly fission, asking you to stop. Parlez vous monsieur? As we ask on radio at sea, "Do you copy? Do you copy?"

The evening rollcall and news bulletin come in a lovely new voice from "Manutea". Alix is from Zimbabwe. She works with the marine division of Greenpeace in Amsterdam. She apologises for the absence of regular broadcasts over the last few days due to trouble with equipment. Hearing a Greenpeace yacht, "La Ribauld", has sailed into the twelve-mile exclusion zone, we cheer. She carried parliamentarians from Australia, Austria, Japan, Luxembourg and Sweden as well as journalists from Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United States. They took letters demanding the end of testing and condemning the colonial

attitude of France. They accuse France of violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty, of acting against human rights, and against her own constitution. The letters demand the release of scientific data relevant to the region. They condemn harassment over twenty-three years of "Vega", rammed, boarded and captured in international waters, with David McTaggart temporarily blinded and his crew beaten. They condemn the bombing of "Rainbow Warrior" in Auckland Harbour, and the use of excessive force on protesters against the present series of tests. They condemn harassment in international waters of the Peace Flotilla by helicopters, Lear jets, warships and commandos and the recent capture of "Rainbow Warrior II". The French announce a reduction from eight tests to six.

Now in the steady trade winds, sleeping is easier although it is warm at night. On waking for my watch I enjoy the lights of "Chimera" and "New Zealand Maid" not far off in muted greys of dawn.

"The three yachts are almost as close as when they lay in Schaefer's Marina in Wellington, now three thousand miles astern," Nick remarks.

"To see three ships come sailing in like this," I reply, "you'd have to suspect there's something going on ahead."

Altering course due north, we are creaming up the meridian. No longer following golden causeways towards the morning sun, we surge towards a man-made sun, brighter for an instant than the one from which all life comes. We sail towards an artificial sun of death.

After breakfast all gather in the saloon to compose a letter typed by Nick on his computer and addressed to the Naval Commander of Moruroa. Below decks it is hot and sticky. We can't open the saloon skylight because of spray as we continue powering towards Moruroa.

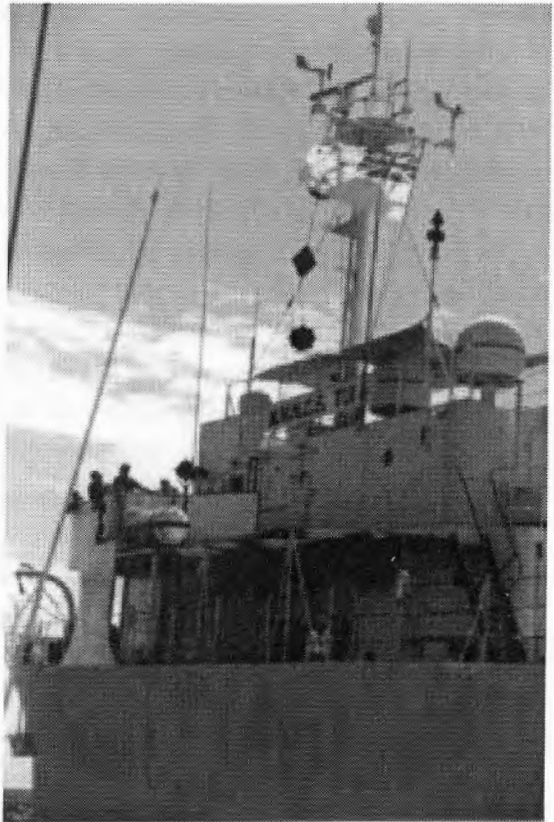


MORUROA

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WITH A CHILLING WHISTLE, a low-flying military jet flashes past our spreaders. All rush on deck with cameras except Jeremy, banished to the chain locker for squabbling with his sister. The jet speeds close to our companions then sweeps past us all again on its way back to base.

Diamuid cooks scalloped potatoes. On an untimely wave, I fumble a large bowl of coleslaw. Returned from the saloon cabin-sole, it tastes good despite bits of carpet fluff. After lunch, I take the wheel. All others fall asleep below, very tired till called by the skipper to frenzied cleaning up and dressing ship in preparation for HMNZS "Tui", now calling us by radio. She is steaming south to meet us. After an hour's eager look-out, "Tui" appears, a smudge on the horizon. Amid a wash of smoky hue, "Tui" approaches in a murky rain squall. What



HMNZS "Tui" arrives.

a thrill it is to see a ship after so long – and one we know is friendly!

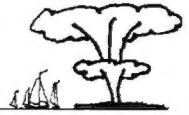
Slowly she grows till her iron sides are daunting above us. We wave for journalists lining the bridge with cameras. “Tui” lowers a Zodiac, black on a dark sea. It darts between the yachts of our flotilla. Crew wear bright orange jackets. “Tui” navigator Andrew comes aboard with advice, news, a chart of Moruroa, “Strictly not for navigation”, and offers of fuel, water, postal and medical services. Andrew is friendly, informal, competent and obviously enjoying life at sea. He is unflattering of Greenpeace for bungling the loss of their ships. I like Kiwis.

Andrew leaves a sheaf of photocopied newspaper cuttings. It is a nauseating reminder of that other world. They report only the political play between parliamentarians over Moruroa, not the issue itself that so occupies us. A couple of particularly offensive articles support nuclear testing. They are by journalists with vested interests. They argue the ocean is large enough to absorb small amounts of radioactivity; that it is deep and free from currents that might spread danger.

“Our protest is a moral one and concerns long-term dangers,” Nick points out.

On to Moruroa we sail, to an emotional welcome from the flotilla already there. Behind my camera, I am choking on emotion as we surge between lovely yachts whose crews are waving and cheering, calling good wishes, congratulations, jokes and questions about our passage. Words can’t bridge the gaps between us still, however, nor release the burden of our experience of the last three weeks at sea. Most moving are square-rigged “R Tucker Thompson” and heroic “Vega” for whom jerky tears lurch across my viewfinder. Fog horns sound. Sky rockets spiral into evening grey.

Hove to in darkness like a swan asleep, her head under a wing, “Kela” is just outside the twelve-mile exclusion zone off Moruroa. We dine on Quentin’s pasta marinara. After a hot shower, the second in three weeks, I fall exhausted into bed. I have been up since 4:00 am and spent a long



trick at the wheel. The skipper is doing the dishes after bringing us so splendidly 3117 nautical miles in only nineteen days. Our average of 6.4 knots vindicates the southerly course he chose. The elements have business for us here.



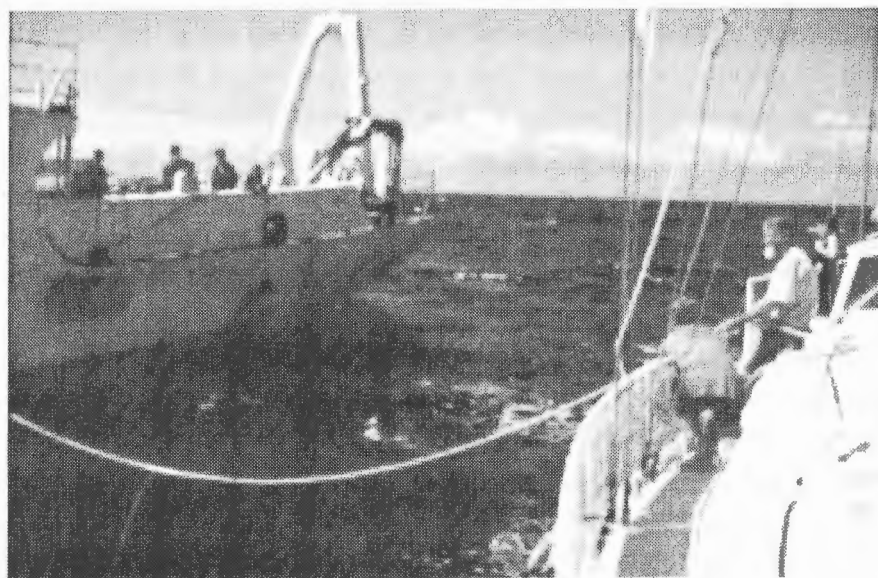
I'm up for my watch at 0200. We're underway by 0500, buzzed

by a French jet at 0700, by a helicopter at 0730 and meet "Tui" at 0900 to receive fresh water and diesel fuel. Four yachts of our flotilla queue to come alongside "Tui", who heaves a line to each in turn, followed by a hose as vessels steam slowly side by side. Meanwhile, "Tui's" Zodiac comes alongside "Kela" to take Cath and her children to the naval doctor. Jemma screams as I pass her across the lurching gulch between vessels into the arms of a naval rating. With a surge of power, the Zodiac accelerates away over its painter dropped into the water. Immediately its engine stalls. The classic error of tangling a line around the propeller happens for the second time this voyage. The coxswain jumps overboard, freeing the propeller. Then they go bouncing and splashing across to "Tui", where the children are handed aboard. Nick films his family departing. Jeremy has a fabulous day on "Tui", indulged with fish and chips and computer games in the chartroom. Female crew go clucky over adorable Jemma.

Adrian dives overboard from the "Maid", swimming to be welcomed by old friends on the "R Tucker Thompson". She is a lovely traditional square-rigged topsail schooner. A French frigate steams around us in decreasing circles. She looks sinister, like a predator about to snatch her prey. Provocatively we change to a collision course and watch with pleasure as the frigate shies away but our skipper sharply forbids obscene gestures. We are here to create newsworthy incidents for world



"New Zealand Maid" sails past HMNZS "Tui".



"Kela" refuelling from "Tui" off Moruroa.



media but are committed to non-violence. The situation, however, is innately one of mutual aggravation, easily inflamed as tempers are frayed.

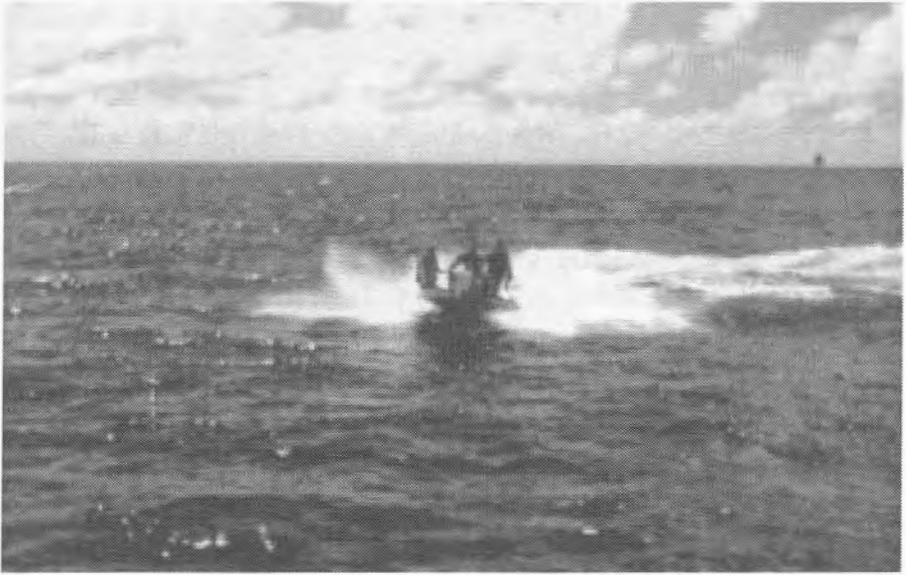
The night is hot and sticky with an egg-yolk moon. After heaving to, we open a bottle of “Moruroa Landing” with dinner. There will be no other landing for us. After coming so far there is no anchorage, no harbour, no shelter, no rest. We see no more of Moruroa than the glow of lights over the horizon. We are still tossed on high seas with our work hardly begun.

Falling asleep I’m seeing moorings and marinas packed with costly yachts. Of all yachts in the world, only ten are currently at Moruroa. Only thirty so far have come. Of all Australia’s rich yachts, only one is here. Are the wealthy so alienated from their primal roots? Is the world doomed by greed and blindness? What more enjoyable use for a yacht can there be than an adventure like this, with real action in a life and death struggle between good and evil? A sailing adventure like this outshines ordinary cruising and far excels mere racing. Even this few is changing the world. Brave little “Vega” blew the whistle twenty-three years ago, alone in this remote part of the world; the little yacht and her charismatic owner, McTaggart, inspired us to join them for this protest, embarrassing France.

“If it would stop the testing, I’d have faithful ‘Vega’ rammed and sunk,” declares McTaggart.

At 0500 Gary’s voice on the radio from “Chimera” alerts us. His rudder is now seriously awry. We motor alongside. Nick and Marty dive. Just as they complete the rudder work, “Tui” calls yachts to rendezvous for more photographs. She is departing for Rarotonga in the Cook Islands for provisions. We motor directly into an easterly for an hour, with Nick and Marty still on “Chimera”.

I’m making bread: six cups of flour, salt, sugar and a can of beer. The tins are just in the oven and I’m scraping sticky dough off my fingers when a call from the cockpit reports a French frigate 150 metres astern.



French commandos in a Zodiac roaring towards "Kela".

"This is a French warship," it announces in English, by radio, "we want to board the yacht 'Kela'. We have letters for you."

"Australian peace yacht 'Kela' to French warship," answers Quentin. "Negative. Our skipper is not on board. We will not allow you to board. Come back with your letter another time."

Jemma's screams drown the radio as the boarding party roars alongside in their powerful, red Zodiac dinghy. Commandos in khaki combat fatigues with firearms and truncheons are talking on their two-way radio. After a moment's hesitation they zoom away to "Chimera", close by, who accepts their letter. The Zodiac roars back to us, banging against our side with spray and revving engines. They thrust their letter over our rail. Looking like an Israeli commando, suntanned with dark curly locks, Quentin insists, "We will not receive your letter while our skipper is away. When he returns we will allow you to board. We will receive your letter. We have a letter for your commander".



A French helicopter circles noisily above, filming every move. Cathy is forward, busy with her Hi-8 video camera. In an attempt to make French crews feel personally responsible, we have agreed to take as many close-up photographs of their faces as possible. I'm at the quarter rail with my camera. Just at the climactic moment, my camera jams at exposure #5. I load another film. It jams. On the cabin-top Jeremy is dancing and shouting, "Stop dropping bombs! Stop dropping bombs! Stop dropping bombs! Stop dropping bombs!"

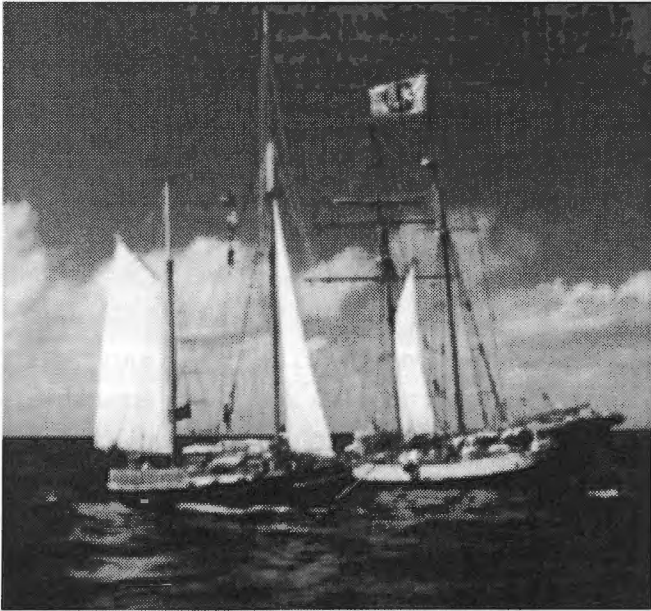
The smell of fresh bread wafts from the galley. Suddenly, the French Zodiac roars away to its patrol boat. The helicopter stooges off. The patrol boat blows clouds of black smoke into the sky and steams way to "New Zealand Maid", four miles astern. By radio we hear the French announcing their warship and their purpose. John Tucker replies, "Negative! You may not board 'New Zealand Maid'. We will accept your letter if you accept a letter from us." The French agree.

When "Chimera" catches up, Nick and Marty leave their scuba gear and swim to "Kela". A French frigate approaches. A helicopter buzzes us aggressively, much too close, fanning spray from the sea, then flies to the frigate. It is 10:00 am. Hungry, we tuck into hot bread, butter and jam with ginger beer. When leaving Wellington, we stowed provisions in such a hurry we have trouble finding things. After three weeks we find the charcoal for the barbecue. Nick puts a roast in the barbie mounted on the quarter rail. Setting all sail for the cameras, we head towards "Tui". It is a picture with seven ships, one square-rigged and several ketches. Varnish flashes. All are brightly dressed in anti-nuclear flags and banners. The sky is sublime with fluffy white clouds. The Pacific is astonishingly blue and transparent under dark hulls close by. What makes the sea so incredibly blue?

As soon as filming is over, Simon, the doctor from "Tui", comes aboard for lunch. The day is hot. We are sweating under our sun lotion. Nick and Simon swap yarns of Antarctic and sub-Antarctic personalities and

adventure, of counting and tagging sea-lions, of fire at Davis Base. "Tui" is monitoring radioactivity of water round Moruroa Atoll.

"There is no increase yet but the issue is not an immediate one," says Simon, "It is a long-term issue and a moral one. The long-term issue is



"New Zealand Maid" (left) and "R Tucker Thompson".

notoriously indeterminate," says the doctor. "How can the French guarantee 'No leakage for five hundred years'? And what's five hundred years when plutonium has a half-life of 260,000 years?" he asks. "General Vericel, Military Director of Moruroa, himself has said, 'There is no danger now. What will happen in the future, we are still working on'."

"Ultimately, our concern is about non-measurable things," I comment, "can rape be measured with Geiger counters?"



“It’s okay for responsible nations to have nuclear weapons,” Simon continues, “but not for small irresponsible countries like Iraq and Iran or Pakistan.”

“And what characterises a nation as responsible?” Quentin retorts.

Simon goes astern. The beef is delicious and tender with our fourth consecutive coleslaw; six cabbages to go.

An inflatable rubber dinghy comes buzzing and splashing alongside to take me to the afternoon meeting on “R Tucker Thompson”. My heart thrills stepping aboard a traditional square-rigged tall ship. She is built of steel with teak decks. Brass and varnish are bright in the sun. Sturdy Oregon spars support heavy wooden dead-eyes and blocks in the rigging. There are tarred rat-lines and coiled ropes hanging in rows from belaying pins. A deep seat of teak slats forms a half-circle against the taff-rail surrounding an octagonal binnacle on the quarterdeck.

All are welcoming, soft, kind, interested in our journey and in me personally: “Which yacht are you on? When did you leave Wellington? What country are you from? Is everyone well? How are the children? How did you get into this peace flotilla? Are you having a good time?”

The master, Russel, offers tea and nibbles from coconut shell bowls. All are barefooted and tanned in broad-brimmed straw hats. Men wear beards and shorts. McTaggart’s famous piercing blue eyes are flashing everywhere. He tells me the story of buying “Vega”:

“On the advice of a friend, I saw her in Melbourne, and settled on the boat, closing the deal with a substantial deposit before travelling to Sydney for other business. The vendor rang me there, saying he had sold ‘Vega’ to another buyer. He would return the deposit. I consulted a solicitor, caught a train to Melbourne, and a taxi to the mooring. I borrowed a dinghy and a hacksaw, cut off the padlock and sailed away. The magistrate settled the ensuing court case in ten minutes. The boat clearly was mine, nine-tenths by possession and the rest by the receipt for my deposit.”

Using black rubber from an inner tube of a car tyre, a group amidships is lashing an outrigger to a dugout canoe. Soon they launch it to cheers. Two Tahitians jump overboard, spring onto their canoe and paddle around to further cheering. "Shall we begin the meeting?" asks John from "Photina". Thirty activists gather in a circle round the wheel, under a khaki awning. The meeting is earnest, intent, quiet and in best anarchist style. There is no formal hierarchy, leader nor rank. McTaggart quietly introduces the Tahitians, Moana Puroti and Eduard Huridge.

Moana Puroti, a construction worker on Moruroa from 1980–84 and 1988–89, has prepared a statement to the French: "We are entering *our* territorial waters to protest against your nuclear testing program. The French government pollutes our waters and our land. We ask that you leave. This land belongs to us."

Eduard Huridge drilled shafts for nuclear testing from 1979 to 1988. He states, "The Polynesian people are united in opposition against French



Eduard Huridge, Moana Puroti and David McTaggart discuss tactics.



nuclear testing. On behalf of my grandfather, born on Moruroa and of all Polynesian people, I am here to stop nuclear testing on our land.”

The Peace Flotilla will state, “This outrigger canoe is part of the Moruroa Peace Flotilla, comprising thirty-one vessels to date with crew from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Polynesia, Sweden, and the United States of America. The Peace Flotilla plans to maintain a peaceful protest and vigil in international waters off Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls to urge an end to French nuclear testing.”

“How do people feel about Moana and Edourd paddling their canoe twelve miles into Moruroa Lagoon?” McTaggart asks deferentially. “We on the yachts can shepherd them as far as the exclusion zone, so the French can’t get to them. Then ‘Vega’ will turn back surrounded by other yachts so the French can’t get her. Over the last twenty-four years, the French have taken ‘Vega’ six times. They would love to impound her again.”

McTaggart explains the courage of the Tahitians. Their captors are likely to beat them and victimise their families in Papeete. The Tahitians reply in French, translated into English. Repeatedly they thank “Greenpeace” and the Peace Flotilla for coming to Moruroa in support of their cause to stop the bombing of their atoll and reclaim their ancestral lands. We all sing an anti-nuclear song in French to the tune of “Frere Jacques”, clapping and cheering the Tahitians for their bravery.

“Are there any other suggestions?” asks John.

“Could the Greenpeace supply ship ‘Machias’ returning soon from Rarotonga bring a supply of large beach balls?” asks Denis of “Joie”. “We could glue on sheets of aluminium cooking foil and release them upwind at night to keep the French busy tracking them on radar,” he explains.

“We could use condoms,” suggests the retired farmer and gold miner, Garry, from “Chimera”.

Emerging amid laughter from the main hatch with a roll of cooking foil, Russel waves eight packets of twelve condoms, his ship's supply, left over from last summer's tourist trade on the Bay of Islands. Inscribed "Make love not bombs!", a prototype soon floats alongside. Its two foot height dances erect on the sea above a lead fishing sinker tied to the knotted end. Shiva smiles. It is an excellent radar beacon. An inflatable launch ferries us back to our yachts, hove to nearby.

"Kela's" crew is busy making all ship shape before motoring with the "Maid" in calm and darkness to our meeting place at 21°40'S, 139°10'W. A French frigate shadows us. We spend the night lying off our drogue forward with the "Maid" on a warp astern. After a quiet night I wake for my watch at 0400. Moonlight settles lazily on a lazy sea. The ensign hardly stirs from its staff. The dinghy clucks astern. Water gulps in cockpit drains. The "Maid's" anchor light rocks quietly, casting reflections on the sea between us. Overnight we have drifted two miles southwest from the meeting point. We call to the "Maid", who casts off our warp. We hand and stow our drogue and warps, motoring at 33° back to the rendezvous, shadowed closely by the frigate. The sky is taking on warm colours all around. Grand thermals are rising over Moruroa as Eduard and Moana start paddling into the exclusion zone towards their ancestral atoll.

Once the Tahitians are away, "Vega" turns out to sea. It is a glorious Pacific morning. Bright sun sparkles on blue water. Eleven distinguished yachts are milling about "Vega". A French patrol boat speeds over the horizon towards us, passing far too close to nine-metre "Babinka", sailed by a lone Chilean, Allan. A French Allioette naval helicopter hovers close over his masthead. "Babinka" heels uncomfortably in the down draft.

Amid this excitement, a forty-foot humpback whale breaches between "Vega" and "Manutea", circling "Vega" twice. Passing the tiller to Claire, Chris jumps overboard and swims with the whale, near its star-



board fin. The French helicopter comes down very close. It buzzes the whale, which goes deep. The helicopter departs. Chris is climbing back onto “Vega” when the whale returns, breaching within seven metres of “Vega”. It circles “Vega” again before swimming through the fleet, repeatedly clapping its giant tail on the sea, applauding the courage of the Tahitians and the presence of the Peace Flotilla. Forgetting the French, we follow the leviathan, repeatedly raising its great fluked tail into the sky above the horizon and clapping it down onto the surface of the sea.



“The glistening black surface is the upper side of the tail, indicating the whale is approaching us,” Nick explains. He calls to other yachts, “Try to photograph the pale, underside of the tail! The underside is patterned like fingerprints, enabling identification and mapping of migrations.”

Seeing any whale is wonderful, let alone in such circumstances. Adding to the spectacle, numbers of crew climb the rigging on several yachts to keep lookout; they are saluting the whale. All are celebrating the whale. Finally, having moved through the fleet, the humpback jumps clear of the water, ahead of “Chimera”, its forty tons returning with a splash raising spray thirty feet to the level of “Chimera’s” spreaders.



"R Tucker Thompson" crew salute the whale.



Who cares if we've strayed over France's arbitrary line on the ocean, into their self-proclaimed exclusion zone? (In the playground at my children's primary school was a yellow line they were forbidden to cross. As a responsible parent, I taught them to cross that line.) We'd all like a shower from the whale. It continues blowing and breaching. We see the pale underside of the tail, but fail to get a snap before the whale is gone. Helicopter and patrol boat continue buzzing and circling. The frigate stands by, takes no action, then draws away.

The day grows brighter and hotter with little wind. Nick is irritable about our dinghy bumping "Kela's" sides. We try hauling it off to the end of the spinnaker pole, but in the swell it bangs and slams on the water with the rising and falling pole. I suggest we solve the problem by taking a social jaunt to "Manutea" to get some stationery. We expected more socialising on this voyage. We anticipated parties on tropical beaches and aboard, but after sailing so far there is no harbour nor anchorage. The only meetings are those on "R Tucker Thompson" for planning manoeuvres. Quentin wants to send a fax. Passing "Vega", Michelle invites us aboard. Of course we accept. "Vega" is an historic vessel. Many hope she will end her days at sea, but New Zealand wants her for a place of honour in a maritime or environment museum.

She's a thirty-eight-foot double-ended ketch, built in New Zealand in 1949 of Kauri pine. She is well fitted out for cruising with sturdy rigging. Inside the main hatch is ample hanging space for wet weather gear opposite a well-designed galley. Mahogany posts for grabbing in a seaway stand in the saloon. Two support a gimballed table. Eight comfortable bunks with deep lee-boards crowd her sides. As we have run out, Chris readily supplies waxed thread for sewing sails. It is getting close to meeting time. We depart for the 105-foot schooner "Manutea", built in New Zealand, registered in Dover and chartered out of Los Angeles by Greenpeace. David McTaggart greets us aboard. Audrey, who we have heard across oceans on radio, gives us stationery. Back in

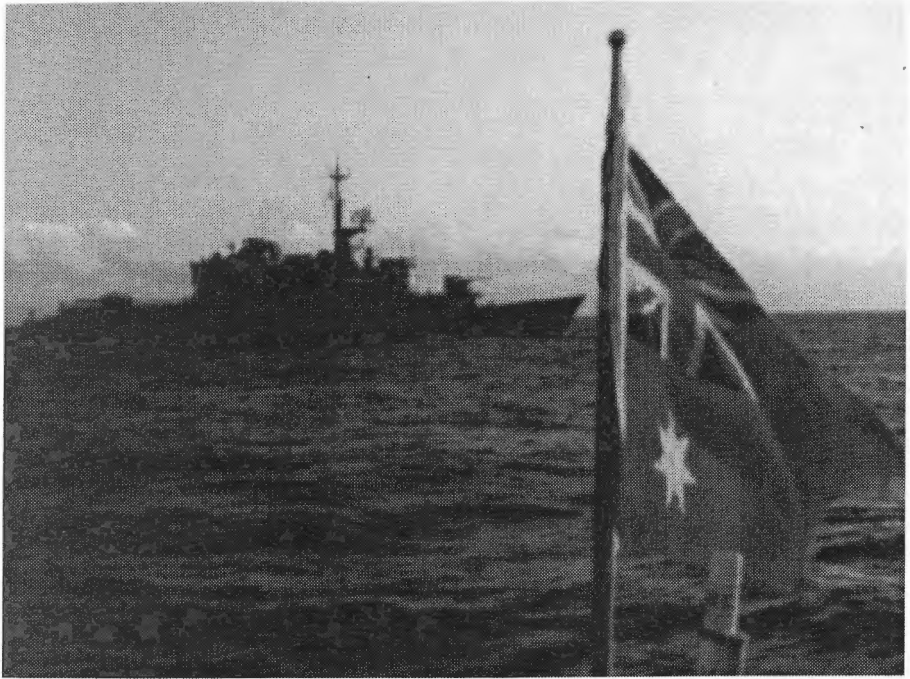
the dinghy, we proceed to "R Tucker Thompson".

McTaggart is already there. With those sparkling blue eyes, he contacts everyone as they arrive. The meeting begins with news: Moana and Eduard paddled eight miles into the exclusion zone before being arrested by French colonial forces. There is a cheering welcome for "Tara". Her skipper, Thomas, announces they come as envoys of Germany's largest environmental association of 200,000 members. Thomas has a petition against nuclear testing in the Pacific signed by more than 100,000 people. Five more yachts are approaching Moruroa: "Anna", "Gemini Galaxsea", "Gwenivere", "Pickety Witch" and "Sudden Laughter". Japanese in Tahiti are planning a protest march through Papeete. The United States Congress is under pressure to cease colluding with French nuclear testing and to ban flights of French plutonium over the United States. At a meeting in Spain of the European Community, the Environment Minister asks France to refrain from nuclear testing in the Pacific until results of safety tests are assessed. The President of the European Community demands France release results of all research. The journalists and parliamentarians who sailed into Moruroa Lagoon are reaching their homes and are about to increase international pressure on France.

The meeting agrees the flotilla will spread out in buddy-pairs around the circumference of the exclusion zone overnight. Yachts will cross the twelve-mile limit simultaneously twice next day to draw a French response. If the French are more sensitive about Fangataufa Atoll than about Moruroa, this will suggest they are preparing for the biggest-ever underground test.

"What is the international law on crossing 'the line' into territorial waters?" asks someone.

"What respect do the French have for international law?" retorts McTaggart. "Over the last twenty-three years they smashed a boat in international waters. They beat its crew in international waters. They



French frigate "Vandermere" shadowing "Kela".

bombed 'Rainbow Warrior' in Auckland Harbour. They caused radioactive fallout over international waters and other atolls, and are probably causing underwater radioactive leakage into international waters."

Audrey calls for help preparing daily press releases. As no one volunteers, I put up my hand. Sitting on the cabin-top, I draft and read aloud the story about the Tahitians and the whale clapping its tail. The meeting echoes the whale's applause. Louder acclaim follows Emma reading her poem about the same event.

Back at "Kela", after the meeting, Nick and Quentin leave for "New Zealand Maid" to discuss tactics that can't be mentioned on radio. Making quarter-hourly plots from the GPS onto the chart, I establish we are half a mile outside the line, drifting southward parallel with it.

I'm in the galley making more bread when on Channel 16 a polite French voice announces pleasantly in English, "French warship 'Vandermere' to 'Kela'! French warship 'Vandermere' to 'Kela'! You are inside French territorial waters. You are inside French territorial waters. You must leave immediately on a course of 270°. You must leave immediately on a course of 270°. Do you copy? Do you copy? Over."

Cathy starts the engine. From the galley I ask about a warning light on an instrument panel. She shrugs. Quarter of an hour later, returning from the "Maid", Nick notices our engine oil pressure is zero. There's never a dull moment around Moruroa. John of the "Maid" and Garry on "Chimera" offer help. While the "Maid" stands by, Garry comes aboard and diagnoses, "Just a faulty gauge". Our blood pressure falls with relief. After forty minutes fussing over the engine, Garry sits in our cockpit. He is a dumpy figure, short of breath, with greying hair and sagging lower eyelids. Beaming with pleasure, he announces expansively, "I've never been this happy in my life before."

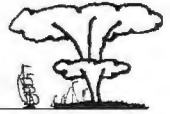
"Who's minding the farm, Garry?" I ask, sharing his enthusiasm.

"Oh, I've only got twenty acres left. The best thing I ever did was selling the farm and my gold mines. My word, there's going to be trouble when I get home," he adds reflectively. "My wife can't stand the boat. Maybe she'll fly to Rarotonga and enjoy some of the islands. Then I'll sail home with a friend."

On selling the farm, Garry built a big shed on his remaining twenty acres. He looked at boat designs then rang one designer saying, "You'd better send me your plans!" From raw steel plate Garry built magnificent fifty-foot "Chimera" in only four years.

"But how did you get such a fine finish to the joinery inside, Garry?" asks Marty.

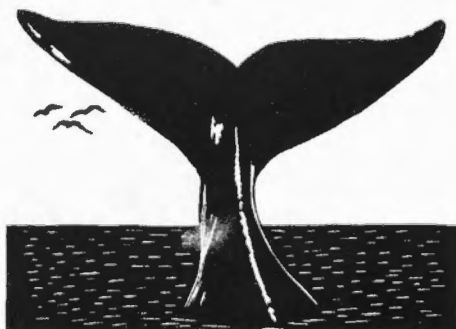
"Aw," replies Garry, "I was a dab hand with a chainsaw, so I got a chap for a few months to help. I learnt from him as we went along. You can do anything if you want to."



“Chimera” with a bone between her teeth.

Garry, who'd never sailed before, now navigates the infamous bar at Greymouth in southern New Zealand where many fishing boats have been wrecked. After a beer, Garry returns to 'Chimera'. In calm, we motor northeast into position for our dawn "line approach". As darkness falls, a French patrol boat shadows us closely. It's a lovely calm night with a waning moon. After a couple of gin and tonics and a meal of sweet and sour beef, I fall tired into bed at 8:00 pm. Nick is on watch. He motors on, setting the sea anchor at 10:00 pm, with the "Maid" hanging off our stern. Waking for my watch at 2:00 am, all is very quiet. Marty is asleep in the cockpit. The French warship is gone. Plotting our position, I find we are four miles off the line. With tea and fruit cake, I'm writing on the saloon table when Nick appears, saying, "You can sleep. The 'Maid' is keeping watch tonight". I can't sleep. Nick soon reappears to check engine oil and prepare for our dawn tactic.

Sharp at 4:00 am a sleepy voice from the "Maid" astern calls, "Hit it!". She casts off. We stow our sea anchor. Together we motor to the line. All on deck, anticipating action, are disappointed. The French don't show. At 7:00 am I'm climbing into my bunk as a military jet whistles close overhead.





INNER WEATHER

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ALL RUSH ON DECK again for action. Nick calls a crew meeting. We are tired from weeks at sea, from strenuous conditions, from excitement and stress. I can hardly keep my eyes open. All are pleased with our achievement and the good feeling aboard. "Kela" is regarded as one of the happiest yachts with best crew relations of the fleet, but our bright red ensign, new for this voyage, is already frayed and tattered.

"You're very quiet, John," Nick remarks. "Aren't you enjoying yourself?"

"I feel delighted, privileged and honoured to be aboard," I reply, and for good understanding and thoroughness I add, "Has anyone anything to discuss about my writing?" The storm of anger breaking from all quarters is astonishing.

"You're breaking confidentiality," accuses Diamuid.

"I'm not doing that," I reassure him. "I am sensitive about the issue. That's why I have raised it. I understand your feelings and respect your concern."

Diamuid is pale. Perspiration stands in beads on his face. His cheeks are drawn, his knuckles white. "I demand a firm undertaking you won't publish anything we've discussed on board!" he shouts.

"I can't give a blanket assurance," I demur, "Nor can I promise you right of veto over what I write, but I do respect your privacy and am careful about your feelings of exposure."

"We need some professionalism here!" shouts Diamuid. "I'll take legal action."

"Working through this will be a step towards freedom," I think. I try to reassure them again of my concern and respect for their privacy and

sense of exposure, adding, "Without people in it an account of an expedition like ours would be unbalanced."

"You are callous," storms Diamuid. "You are sitting there callously denying our rights!"

"I'm not callous," I reply, "it's out of sensitivity and care over these matters that I raise them. I'm not here in any professional capacity. Having retired I am like a dog off its leash now. If I do publish it will be on my own terms, using my own judgement. In protesting against nuclear weapons, we are challenging established practice and values. Nuclear protest is a revolutionary undertaking. Thinking and writing about it requires unorthodox approaches. After twenty years as a psychiatrist, however, I do understand issues of privacy and I am careful with them. You can't write for me. It's my work. It can't be done by committee."

"You must not analyse anything," Nick insists. "You must not put your interpretation on anything between us."

"That's always the risk with history," I reply. "Everyone comments from their own perception."

"Nothing personal can be mentioned," our skipper commands with outrage. His eyes are wide, showing white all round. "I feel very vulnerable. You mustn't write anything personal or about relationships. Relationships must not be mentioned."

"Wow, they're scared!" I'm thinking to myself, "they must feel they have something to hide. They are unfamiliar with the subjective. They're not used to inner weather. How miserable to live like that!"

Living and practising where personal matters are the first concern and first mentioned, I am astonished by Nick's rule that they are off-limits and taboo. I wonder from what strange sub-culture he comes. I'm confronting the culture of science. "Between the microscope and the telescope of science, sits the scientist unobserved." It is the dominant, military culture of patriarchy. Ninety per cent of history's



"Kela" off Moruroa.

scientists are alive today. Ninety per cent of them work for the military. If not one, science and the military are alike They overlap extensively. They are sub-sets of patriarchy. They devalue subjectivity and the personal. They favour objectivity and external, material, measurable things. No blame to Nick. It's the culture. It's bigger than we are. It surrounds and fills us. Last to notice water are the fish. We're steeped in patriarchy. It is not the same as maleness. Nor is it confined to men. Feminists express it. Patriarchy is a mass trance. We are spellbound together.

One sickness of our culture is its "conspiracy of silence". It is part of alienation. British are notorious for their reserve. You can't run an empire on tender feelings. Silence is necessary to patriarchy and the dominant mode. Inner world and feelings are devalued and suppressed. Along with most of the population in our over-objective culture, historians are slow accepting this century's insights from psychology. Women know "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world". For forty years Lloyd de Mause has been editing *The Journal of Psycho-history* but historians are not game to develop an academic discipline relating the culture of childhood to politics. It's the fearful defensiveness of our culture at large.

The head is a safe place to hide. The bony cranium is like a cave into which we flee. Like fugitives, we peep out from windows of the skull. With thoughts, we cover feelings even from ourselves.

As the informing institution of society, the church is responsible. For two thousand years the church subverted its founder, replacing his message of incarnation, embodiment and "the kingdom within" with abstract theology from an institution of worldly power and wealth. Emperor Constantine institutionalised this reversal of the founding myth, doing a deal with the bishops. Christians were no longer thrown to lions but church and state colluding in worldly power robbed people of personal power. Women are devalued. Intellectualisation replaces feeling. Passion and personal empowerment are dangerous and contrary to the interests of state. The insoluble conundrum of the Holy Trinity keeps



the masses enthralled. It is a cultural spell, now parodied by “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” Scholars write commentaries on commentaries on further abstractions. Keeping the culture away from feelings and our flesh, we are alienated further from our biology and thereby from sensitivity to biology in general. This is the basis of our global crisis.

The end of my marriage jolted me from the mass trance of our culture. I came to understand the mass spell that keeps us mystified and in bondage. I adopted the revolutionary principle that “the truth will set you free”. Secrets are powerful. Secrets are sinister. I’ve been glad of having no secrets. Evidently I’ve been living in an ivory tower. Personal openness is a doorway to resolving conflict. Openness clears conflict within ourselves, between people and between nations. Unfortunately there’s no time at Moruroa to say all this. Everyone is paranoid about psychiatrists, but the present fury of my comrades is out of proportion.

I suggest, “I’ve shared my writing with you. You were delighted with it. Stressed for weeks, we’ve weathered storms at sea. I wonder if this inner weather is heavy because pent-up feelings are releasing, intensified by long confinement together in this small space aboard? It’s a navigational hazards. Being at sea is an emotional pressure cooker with no safety valve.”

“That’s a crock of bullshit!” roars Marty warmly.

Daunted, I fall silent. I wish I had time to say, “But can’t you see war and nuclear weapons are about relationships? It’s one big interconnected system from the smallest interpersonal relationships. At our mothers’ knees, we learn patterns of relating we use in later life. Presidents and generals act out scripts rehearsed in childhood. Like bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bombing Moruroa comes from feelings or lack of them inside people. They repeat patterns from their nurseries. The dominant mode is alienating. Return to intimacy involves surrender. How can I not write about relationships? We’re at Moruroa because of

relationships between France and her neighbours, between France and those she'd bomb, or those to whom she'd sell nuclear technology. We are here because of relationships between France and her colonial subjects; because of relationships between humanity and nature, and relationships between sub-atomic particles. We are here relating with France and with each other.

"We are here because of parenting that gives us strength and confidence to say 'No'. We are here by virtue of mothering and fathering setting us free to dissent. We are here by parenting giving courage to brave young men and women who sail across oceans for joy, confident to challenge military power with gentleness. Relationships learnt in infancy are reinforced by culture. Relationships are the realm in which things are bad or good. The atomic bomb is a matter of precise relationships."

In the circumstances, all I can say is, "For relationships we sailed so far".

"You're just playing your rotten psychological games on us!" snaps Diamuid.

"A major reason for moving on from consulting practice," I persist, "is to extend my experience of relationships between people and themselves and with each other to their relationship with the natural environment. Different relationships follow similar patterns. Leaving my practice is my response to the rising cry of despair I hear about the environment, cries of fear, anguish and impotence before catastrophe. How can a nuclear protester not write about relationships?"

More hostility follows.

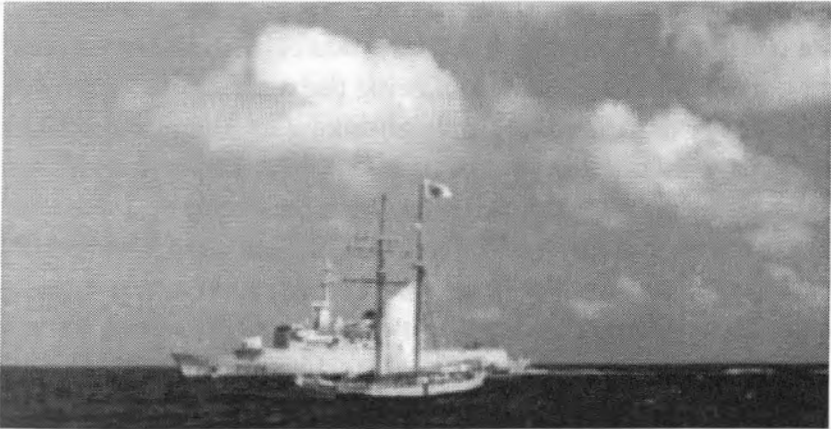
"Grant their request for the good of the ship," Quentin requests.

"That's not the way to go," I'm thinking, "for all his intelligence, skill and courage, our fine skipper is not seeing the big picture. He's spent too much time counting sea-lions. Nick's at home underwater, in scuba gear, among sharks and whales. He's happy in a wetsuit to swim



ashore from a research vessel, waiting for a wave to carry him high onto rocky cliffs where he clings with fingers and toes before climbing to watch sea-lions whose colony he studies. Like other Brits I know, he's fearless in the face of physical danger but shy of the inner world. How dare he censor! How dare he prohibit discussion! How can a psychiatrist not write about relationships? They are of the essence, more nuclear than the weapons we oppose."

"I just wish this hadn't happened," Cathy scowls darkly through pain and sickness.



French frigate harassing "R Tucker Thompson".

The Tuckers from "New Zealand Maid" are invited for morning tea. It is late; the meeting closes with Nick and Marty saying, "We must get resolution on this. We'll have another meeting tomorrow".

Used to sitting quietly with people ranting and raving, I remain composed during this tirade. Paying constant attention to my breathing, I keep it free and open. From practice I know impeding the flow of air is emotionally crippling. I have been feeling calm and collected in the face of anger. Now I feel tired and shaky. My responses are still in my body. It is too hot to sleep. Passing through the focsle, Marty winks.

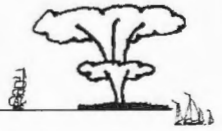
The Tuckers come aboard. Everyone is being social in the cockpit. I have been looking forward to meeting the Tuckers. I have admired their yacht, the love and skill with which they built her and their seamanship over preceding weeks. They are close companions across the water and on radio through many an incident but I feel an outsider now. I try to join in but am shunned by my crew mates. Being very short of sleep I retire to the focsle. "This could get awkward," I'm thinking, "I am outnumbered five to one in an isolated part of the ocean. I accept responsibility for sailing with a yacht and crew I'd never seen before. That was part of the game. We all took similar risks. Getting here we made it work. With our first calm day, however, accumulated feelings burst out. I had no expectation of being the centre of the cyclone. I've been in tricky situations before, hitch-hiking in America and Central Asia." I doze till evening.

Quentin serves vegetable curry as we motor back over "the line". There is no response from the French so we draw away to spend the night uneasily on our drogue in a freshening southeasterly. Uneasy is the motion of the boat. Uneasy is the crew. Diamuid won't look at me, let alone speak to me or work alongside me on the ship. This could be dangerous at sea where cooperation and split-second timing are life-saving. Nonetheless on a brave new day we enjoy reaching back to the meeting place twelve miles off Moruroa Lagoon.

Resuming our difficult discussion of the previous day, we make little progress despite repeated reassurances I understand and respect their desire for privacy. They'll accept nothing but a promise I won't give.

"Given the vehemence of your response, I will be particularly careful," I declare, "but the last promise I made was on my wedding day. Not keeping that promise, I've made none since."

More angrily they demand watertight guarantees that nothing personal or about relationships will be mentioned.



“You’re just sacrificing this protest for the sake of your own ego,” hisses Diamuid.

“That dark stuff is from your own heart,” I reply.

White horses are galloping to the horizon. Steep seas are rising. Interrupting our impasse, a Zodiac comes alongside. Michelle and Hank from “Vega”, both glamorous, both Greenpeace veterans, ask permission to come aboard. Once in the cockpit, Hank talks first to little Jemma, on her mother’s lap. He tells her of his little daughter in Fiji. They share the good news that Moana and Eduard were not harmed and were immediately released. We interpret this as a sign the French are being cautious following the riots in Papeete.

Michelle and Hank outline the next Moruroa action being planned. It’s called “Funky Fleet”. The flotilla is gathering every available dispensable craft ranging from surfboards to old dinghies or liferafts. They plan to wait till the weather settles, to dress the motley craft gaudily with bright flags and banners of anti-nuclear protest, to crew them with activists and tow them into the lagoon. Hank and Michelle are going round the flotilla so those interested in volunteering have time to think it through, discuss pros and cons with friends and skippers, and make arrangements before transferring to “Manutea” to await suitable weather, final preparations and briefing.

“Six off ‘R Tucker Thompson’ are wanting to go in,” confides Hank.

At last! This is what we’ve been waiting for. This is what we’ve sailed three thousand miles across wild oceans to do. Here’s our chance to be real activists, to prove ourselves, to qualify in rights of passage into full deep-green protesters. We can be heroes returning home having really “done it,” shrugging it off as, “Nothing much at all”.

“I’m happy for crew to go provided two remain to sail ‘Kela’ home to New Zealand”, Nick generously volunteers. “Who is interested at this stage? Who wants to think about it and discuss it further?” he asks.

Quentin, Diamuid and I raise our hands.

Quentin asks, "Should we take a camera?"

"You'd certainly have film confiscated and probably your camera also," Hank replies.

"Do we take passports?" I inquire.

"If you take a passport, you'll get it stamped saying you've been deported for terrorist activities," Michelle explains. "If you don't, there'll be bureaucratic trouble. After release from custody, there could be delays having you repatriated from Tahiti to your country of origin."

By now a twenty-five knot easterly is blowing. Steep short seas are running even in the lee of the atoll. There being no anchorage, a dozen yachts are dancing about at close quarters under various sets of sail. Some are hove to and drifting downwind. They sail back later to remain close at hand. Black Zodiacs are speeding between vessels with white spray jetting outwards over blue seas, which are themselves breaking freely. Crews in the Zodiacs wear wet weather clothing of heraldic red, navy, yellow, green or orange, bright against dark ocean.

Hank and Michelle depart for other craft with fresh Kiwifruit traded for the sailmakers' thread offered by Chris on "Vega" a couple of days before. As soon as our visitors are gone, I'm back in the hot seat for a few more rounds. In deference to my companions, I include nothing here of the matters about which they fear exposure. Like an account of a boy scouts' picnic, the chapter on "Madness" skirts them frivolously. It was written before this row. I have, however, described our disagreement subjectively. It illustrates factors central to the global crisis and portrays activist reality. It is fair to record events following refusal to be silenced. Not to do so would collude with more of the same.

"Our only hope for the planet is from anarchic groups and networks," a professor of environmental science advised me recently. "Your best contribution could be to live and work with them, describing events as 'participant observation'."



“Easier said than done,” I’m reflecting ruefully, “green politics are as fraught as any.”

This sticky situation reminds me of Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle: observing sub-atomic particles, their behaviour changes. It is the same with people. Heisenberg outmoded Newton’s physics. He opened the door to quantum physics. Participant observation, however painful, may open doors to new understanding of ourselves, relationships and culture. Rousseau said, “The unexamined life is not worth living!” Such is the power of consciousness we can’t look at ourselves without changing.

“There are a few days till this weather settles enough for Funky Fleet,” I’m thinking, “meantime we hardly have esprit de corps for such an escapade. Since my fellows can’t trust me with my writing, how can I trust them with it? On ‘R Tucker Thompson’ I’d be closer to the action. I could find out more about Funky Fleet and leave my gear with confidence if I ‘go in’.

“There’s no chance of turning our conflict into agreement or growth. This is not the place or time to sort this through. I must seem a dinosaur to my fellows. Perhaps I set myself up for it. I’m elected scapegoat for the group.

Nick is going over “Kela’s” side with Marty for the afternoon meeting. “Would you ask if there’s a berth for me on ‘Tucker Thompson’?” I call and watch their interrupted course slowing and accelerating as they duck and dodge between breaking waves, towards the square-rigged ship.

Lying on the saloon bunk, I’m feeling lousy. Quentin sits beside me intelligently and helpfully questioning me about the impasse, hoping to resolve it. On the radio Nick’s voice says, “Zodiacs will be moving about the fleet in about an hour. Tell John to have his kit ready to transfer to the ‘Tucker Thompson’”.

I pack hurriedly and say my farewells.

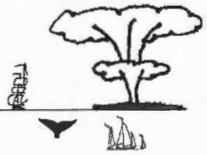
“Why are you leaving?” asks Jeremy.

“I’ve become a protester among protesters,” I reply.

I am concerned about leaving Quentin. He has been my kind and good counsel. On the cabin-top we talk about the possibility of his “going in”. I’m wondering what Funky Fleet will achieve. It’s a colourful idea. It would look great on television in living rooms round the world. Journalists would be satisfied without blood. With media coverage it could stir the sympathies of millions against nuclear testing. It would have the David and Goliath appeal. The small, quaint and frail would score a moral victory over the mighty and arrogant, and with humour. Now the last of the media have gone home on HMNZS “Tui”, however, our aim of creating incidents for a sympathetic press is lost. Funky Fleet would gratify egos of those volunteering. It would allow pent-up crews to let off steam. It would keep the momentum of the campaign rolling. Simply aggravating French naval ratings, however, will not alter their president’s priorities and is not consistent with non-violent, peaceful protest. Meanwhile the sea is becoming more disturbed.

It is time to manoeuvre close to “Tucker” for Nick and Marty’s return and my departure. Quentin takes the wheel. Many yachts are plunging about close together. Surge and swell make movement dangerous. One wave apart, yachts disappear, hull-down behind seas. Only tops of masts show above the crests. They soar up perching on wavetops, with most of their anti-fouling showing. They look like cartoons of boats in a storm. Several times we circle through the fleet before Nick and Marty spring aboard. I leap down into the Zodiac amid four others and their gear. My bags follow close behind. There are only seconds for cordial handshakes of farewell across the lurching gap between craft. Then we’re off, zooming and pausing among the breakers, delivering others to their boats before making our way up-wind to “Tucker”.

Hank is driving the Zodiac. Blond curls fall about his broad fore-



head, wet with spray. His eyes are bright with concentration, navigating perilous seas. Through his half-smile a gold tooth gleams. Strong navy, bright red and iridescent green of Hank's waterproof jacket complete the sketch of this veteran activist of many campaigns. It was Hank and Chris who hid with McTaggart on a nearby atoll at the beginning of this campaign. The daring stunt illustrates McTaggart's style of dropping what he calls "mind bombs" to capture for the environment the attention of the media and the imagination of the world.



TRADE WINDS

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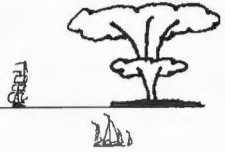
ABOARD “TUCKER” I AM welcomed kindly by her master Russel, his daughter Melanie and Ruth. They show me a comfortable bunk in the quiet darkness below decks. They give me clean sheets, a duvet and pillows. I am astonished to learn the ship sails for Rarotonga in an hour. Things happen suddenly at sea. Quentin calls on the radio, “I’m really glad for you that you are on the ‘Tucker’ and very jealous of you. Congratulations! Good wishes on *going out for dinner!*”

I don’t understand “going out for dinner” till Russel explains it’s code to prevent French intelligence knowing we are leaving Moruroa.

“That’s all very well,” I’m thinking, “but neither did I know I was leaving Moruroa so soon.”

Without time to stow my things, I am on deck fending off tenders, then helping fire barrages of skyrockets in farewell salutes over dark and stormy water. Cascades of stars burst in brilliant showers in the night above. With foghorn blaring and our starboard light casting its eerie green on foaming spray, we turn westward, down wind, through the crowded fleet, into the night. Solemn silence aboard reflects troubled feelings in my heart as in the hearts of all. Concerned for those left behind, fretting we’ve not done enough to stop the bombs, we live with feelings of impotence towards military and political intrigue of France and collusion of Britain and America. I am coming to accept activism changes me more than I change the outcome. This personal change is worthwhile.

Did I sail this far to miss the action? Has my move reduced chances of others “going in” to be arrested? How sad to have no better conversation with my erstwhile companions or negotiate the broader view!



How will they fare without me? I am concerned for Cath and the children. I grieve the loss of comrades. Marty and I had agreeable hours together. I wanted to know Diamuid better. Will I be able to enjoy this unexpected realisation of dreams from childhood of sailing a tall ship down trade winds? The dark column of her sails now towers before. Her mass heaves with unfamiliar rhythm underfoot.

She's a quiet ship. Semi-monastic silence, as in cloisters, pervades above and below decks. Her company is reflective, inward, speaking in soft voices. Radios are switched on for schedules only. Under sail, they stop the screw. Lathering foam muffles grumbling seas astern. Steering is by hand. Soft hands work wooden spokes. Soft feet pad on teak decks. Wooden wash-ports are slamming and banging as water gushes from scuppers. Their irregular clapping accentuate the prevailing quiet. Reverential earnestness honours weather and sea. The master maintains caring, good humour toward all aboard and beyond.

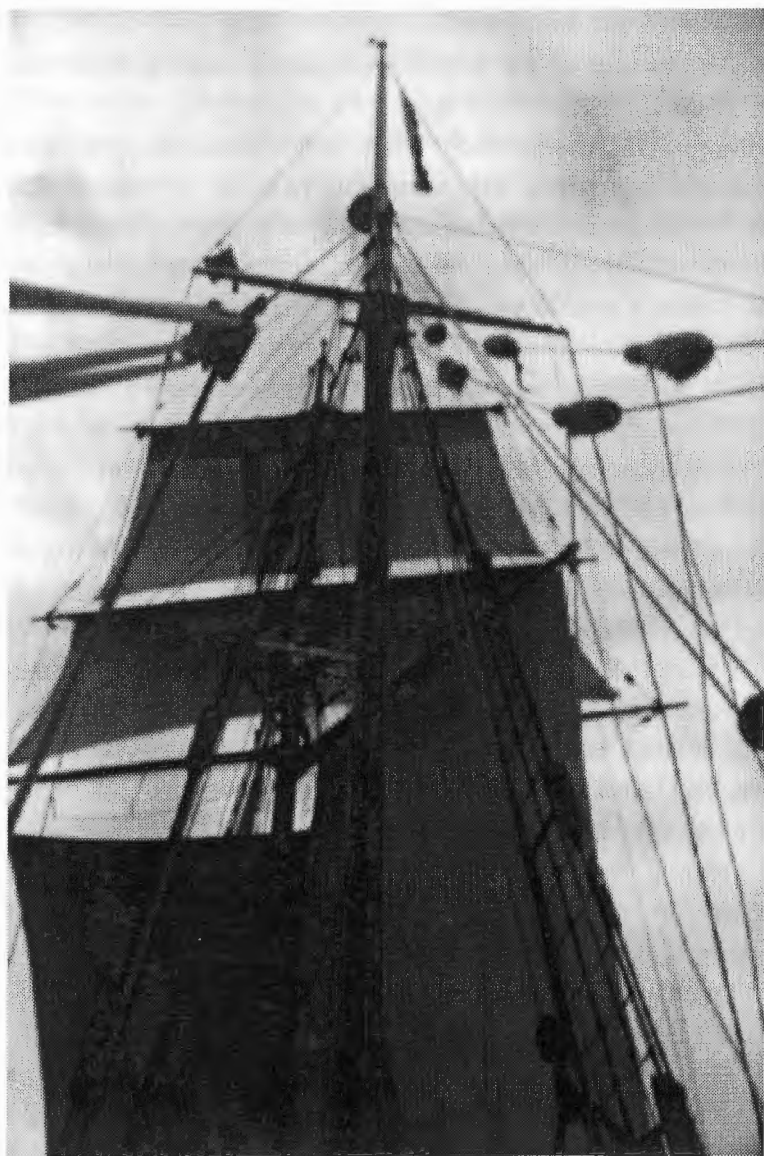
Discipline is kind but strict. Routine is clear. Everyone is ready for their watch ten minutes in advance. We wear harnesses before going on deck at night and notify the watchkeeper before going forward. Safety is paramount. We enter the log hourly. We conserve electric light and water. The mate instructs me thoroughly in routines for fire, "man overboard", liferafts, flares, radio beacons and a rocket firing a line 250 metres. Washing on the foredeck from a red fire-bucket of seawater, I feel wonderfully refreshed. Washing clothes in a bucket of salt water, I peg them on safety lines to dry.

At sea life consists in watches. "Tucker" uses the Swedish system. Three teams rotate through five periods: midnight to 0400, 0400 to 0800, 0800 to 1400, 1400 to 2000, and 2000 to midnight. Like spiritual practice, it is a life of vigil of witnessing. Watching was our main purpose at Moruroa. I join the mate's watch. Six years on "Tucker", Roger is taciturn. The bosun, Joff, an Englishman cabinet-maker, built "Tucker's" wheel and much of her joinery.

Departing Moruroa at night, it is my first watch almost at once. I'm standing in the starboard quarter. Joff is to port and Roger at the helm. Few words pass till Joff kindly explains his preference for silence and solitude, with which I concur. It seems this is the mood on board at present. Everyone is thinking of all we've left behind, concerned for the well-being of friends, reviewing decisions and tired from up to forty days at sea. Keeping station close to Moruroa under persistent French harassment was arduous.

After Roger and Joff, it's my trick at the wheel. What a thrill it is steering sixty tons of tall ship! Her square rig towering aloft is more wonderful by moonlight for its contrasting darkness. Her slender length runs on before me, rolling gently as following seas lift her quarter. Dipping steeply into the wave trough ahead, she accelerates then rears gallantly up to the next crest. Her stout varnished bowsprit soars skywards, proud as the horn of a wild sea-unicorn, cantering, wide-eyed, nostrils flaring among white horses of the main. Her motion, more complex and exciting than a seasaw, recalls delight from childhood, relived with my children and grandchildren.

Different from steering a yacht, a ship's motion is slower, more powerful, quieter and more dignified. Keeping watch on sails aloft, on approaching seas, on the horizon all around, and on the compass, I feel the deck moving underfoot, wind on hair and skin, and listen to wind, sea and the ship. Much depends on anticipation. Keeping the course true, preventing a gibe or backing of sails while running dead before the wind, I act before the movement of the ship. "Tucker's" steering is silent, direct and smooth. With anticipation, movements of the wheel are small and light. Everything is quiet and soft. Any delay leads to wild rolling, lurching and "skid marks" across the water astern. "Will humanity learn to sail Spaceship Earth with timely anticipation and measured grace of a good coxswain?" I'm wondering. "Will we swerve between emergencies, narrow escapes and catastrophes, as many



Square rig towering aloft on "R Tucker Thompson".

expect?” Soon I have the feeling of this ship. Next morning Russel kindly passes on that I am doing well.

“My recurring problem is with people overstating their qualifications,” he adds.

Having said nothing, I wonder what Nick told him. I appreciate Nick’s kindness and generosity, arranging this passage for me, available as “Tucker” is short of crew. Six went to Funky Fleet. Only nine of her compliment of fifteen remained for her home voyage till she recruited me and Claire, a twenty-two-year-old activist from the Greenpeace office in Suva.

“I know nothing of yachts,” Russel adds expansively, “I know only ships.”

He continues with tales of his ship in the North Atlantic surfing at eighteen knots down waves at which they were too afraid to look “Three ships foundered and were lost that day,” he murmurs, looking down.

Russel tells how they built this ship: bored with farming, he went on the stage, directed a few plays and was looking for a new creative project when he found the upturned hull. Built to old plans of a nineteenth century American fishing schooner, by Tucker Thompson who died young of a heart attack, the hull passed to Tucker’s son, Tod, in his twenties. Tod knew square-riggers but could not afford to complete the ship. Russel sold his farm, bought the rusty hull and in partnership with Tod built “R Tucker Thompson” from demolition materials in four years for only a quarter of a million dollars. Tod later left the partnership and became master of MV “Greenpeace”, recently taken by the French at Moruroa.

“That’s a fine hydraulic windlass on the focsle,” I comment.

“Oh, we found that on the back of a D-9 Caterpillar bulldozer abandoned in the bush,” replies Russel, illustrating how they scavenged materials. “The spars are seasoned Oregon reworked from beams of an old warehouse. The ballast is scrap iron retrieved from waste at a building



site. We made the blocks, dead-eyes and spar fittings. Welded and galvanised they're cheaper than castings. Joff built the wheel and did much of the joinery. Box and Ron are builders and helped. Young travellers came from round the world to lend a hand and stayed for months. One on the run from prison did excellent work, devotedly welding for weeks without saying much."

"This self-reliance, resourcefulness and improvisation, we used to think of as 'the Aussie spirit'," I comment, "it seems lost now."

"You'll find it in the country still," says Russel.

Sailing with "Tara", we talk to her by radio and daily exchange good wishes with "Kela" and other yachts. "Kela" departed Moruroa for Tahiti the day after we sailed and is making good progress. Crew transferred freely between all vessels. Lisa sailed out on "Tucker" and swapped to "Manutea", intending to "go in" with Funky Fleet. Changing her mind, she joined "Kela", who therefore has a full complement. Hearing of Lisa and Diamuid injuring fingers in the anchor winch handling the sea anchor, we wince and grimace. To do more for anti-nuclear action, Quentin leaves "Kela" in Papeete to work in the Greenpeace office.

Days and nights of idyllic sailing follow, running almost due west towards Rarotonga, before stiff trade winds. This lone ship romping over empty ocean grieves a witness, as a child at play longs for its mother to watch. Under our stern, water gurgles joyously; hot sun bites our skin. At night phosphorescence sparkles along our way. Black seas hiss across decks with searing sound. Lights cascade halfway up our shins.

She's a rich girl.

She don't try to hide it.

Diamonds on the soles of her shoes.

For two nights we sail in darkness, under cloud with neither moon, stars nor masthead light. The bulb has blown. Only the binnacle lamp, shining from its window, casts a dim red glow on the helmsperson's

chest. Sensorily deprived, I have no clues by which to steer save sounds of rushing water, touches of wind and glimpses of the yellowed compass card. I become absorbed, mesmerised, entranced. The ghostly figures of bosun and mate move silently around me in the gloom or stand, one on either side of me, shoulder to shoulder, like sentinels. They disappear from view. I feel alone. The spell is hypnotic. I'm in a vortex of darkness and power.

During Roger's trick at the wheel, Joff and I talk quietly in the night. Steeped in European history, Joff explains, "Before the Industrial Revolution, towns and buildings were organic in form, like the forests around them. They made furniture without measurement. The eighteenth century "Enlightenment" returned to straight lines and right-angles in neo-classical taste. Things made to millimetres look different. On Australian goldfields, European miners dug rectangular holes, Chinese dug round holes.

Next morning Roger climbs fifty feet up rat-lines to the main spreaders then shins a further twenty feet up the bare topmast to its truck. Replacing the bulb, he swings hand over hand down the backstay to the taff-rail before doing sixty press-ups on the foredeck. It is our watch for cleaning the ship. I polish brass of the binnacle, wheel, scuttles, locks and bell. We clean the head, scrub the decks, and sweep and mop from stem to stern below. It is our turn to wash up after breakfast and wash half a dozen teatowels to dry in the rigging. Russel says, "The more you put into the ship, the more she gives you". I am as happy as a child at play, living out stories from youth.

I continue writing on the saloon table or on deck, with good-humoured encouragement from all on board. I read it to them. They ask for more. I feel more confident. With passionate involvement in the campaign, Claire helps, filling in details from her knowledge.

"Correctly, it should be spelt Moruroa," Claire insists. "The early French cartographers misspelled it Mururoa."



“They got it wrong with Moruroa in the beginning and they’ve been getting it wrong ever since.” We laugh.

Ron breaks his toe against the binnacle. We rig a splint and bandage. Despite the pain, he’s unfailingly good-humoured and wants to catch fish, but hooks nothing.

Emma, a nineteen-year-old student of environmental studies from Auckland, shipped as cook. She turns out wonderful lunches and dinners, fresh bread and plates of brownies with chocolate icing for morning and afternoon tea, served on the cabin-top. How am I so lucky? Who would have predicted nuclear protest could be such fun? It sounds grey, grim business. The urge to sail to Moruroa, however, was immediate and strong coming from my whole being, without an instant’s doubt. It was a decision of the heart being answered now. Self is happening. Happening and happiness are close in origin and meaning.

Tuning into oneself is tuning into universal self, of which it is part. Tuning into the body is tuning into biology. Tuning into our biology is tuning into global biology, of which it is a part. Tuning into rhythms of biology is tuning into rhythms of the universe from which it springs and of which it is part. Noticing a hum in their radio-telescopes, astronomers thought at first it was from their electrical circuitry. Instead they found it is a background hum of the universe. Astro-physicists traced this hum of the universe back to the Big Bang of Creation. They calculate it exploded into space sixteen billion years ago. The primordial darkness was suddenly ablaze with formless light of unimaginable heat and brightness, exploding with violence resonating still.

As light expanded it cooled. As it cooled the amorphous fire condensed. It crystallised into form. First to form was the simplest atom, hydrogen. It has but one electron around a single proton. Expanding further, the plasma cooled below the temperature at which hydrogen can form. This window of opportunity closed forever. Next came helium and so on through all the elements of the Periodic Table. Since



then no more hydrogen atoms have ever formed. We mammals are ninety per cent water, like the ocean from which we came and on which we sail. Every water molecule has two hydrogen atoms. Every hydrogen atom comes to our bodies from the first atoms, via stars from whose dusts and vapours Earth condensed just five billion years ago. On Earth life appeared in the sea. Mammals budded on the evolutionary tree. Apes and humans followed. We are children of the stars. We belong to the universe. We are part of it. We are sisters, brothers and cousins of all living things. We need a new creation story proclaiming our kinship. For the sake of truth, our culture needs a primary myth consistent with astro-physics, geology and evolution. However nostalgic, these fables and make-believe centred on humanity over only two to five thousand years are outmoded and dangerous.

Emma is on the foredeck playing didgeridoo. Its low hum resonates with that of the universe as does the sacred chant of “aum” from ancient yoga. Her humming sounds come and go in waves like those on which we sail. They come and go in waves like tides and phases of the moon, and the menstrual cycle. It comes and goes in waves like contractions of the womb in labour, like the heart beating in systole and diastole, like peristalsis of the bowel. It comes and goes in waves like cycles of life with infancy, youth, maturity, old age and death. It comes and goes in waves like seasons, like cycles of ice ages and global warming. It comes and goes in waves like night and day, like sleeping and waking, like appetite and satiety, like trances and moods, like civilisations and empires, like population explosions and extinctions, including our own. During the time of dinosaurs, ninety per cent of species passed following a meteor strike.

The universe is expanding and contracting in waves. Galaxies form and disperse. Red giants explode and die, contracting into black holes in space. Within the universe biology is expanding and contracting. Within biology, positive emotions like love, excitement, creativity and

joy are expansive. Negative emotions like fear, hatred, resentment and anger are contractions in the body.

Emotions are bodily processes mediated through physiology and biochemistry. The breath is their final common metabolic pathway. Negative feelings convert into their positive counterparts on releasing the breath, which comes and goes in waves.

How better to contact nature than through our own nature? Blessed immediacy! Since charity begins at home, where better to learn and practice intimacy than with the self? Where better to contact our own nature in intimacy and love than in the flesh? How better to contact ourselves physically than through the living breath, coming and going in waves. Deregulated, it moves and pulses in harmony with the dynamic rhythm of the universe from which it springs. In Latin the word for breath, wind and spirit is *spiritus*. In Greek it is *pneuma*, in Hebrew, *ruach* and in Sanskrit it is *prana*. Feeling the breath is union with self, another form of the old in-out, subtler than sex.

Harmonising with the universe, offering oneself to it, is joy. It is intercourse of another order. This is cosmic Tantra. This sea voyage is months of sustained intimate union with the wild. In physical union with her, humanity regains a good relationship with nature. Though we have not stopped the testing, we are improved by holy communion with Earth.

Lunch on the cabin-top, then it's my trick at the helm, reaching on a twenty-five knot wind. Rolling seas under the quarter lift me high. The ship gathers speed downwave. Afternoon sun fills the valley ahead. Quiet beside me, Roger is whipping rope ends. Two women amidships are washing their hair, combing it in the sun and giggling. Shapely brown Emma is in a bikini, the blue of butterfly wings. Further forward, silhouetted against burnished sea, Joff in a scraggy straw hat and grey tracksuit pants rolled to the knee, a knife at his waist, is greasing spars and rigging with a brush from a pot of tallow. He climbs tared rat-lines to the foremast crosstrees and beyond, half-lost from view in webs of



rigging. From Joff my eye keeps returning to the compass card, as yellow as the varnished binnacle top on which its brass enclosure rides, then around the horizon and back to him, precariously aloft. He is a model of preventive maintenance. "Decay is inherent in all compound things." No sooner is a ship in order than work begins again. It is a metaphor for pre-emptive care of Earth.

No sooner is some conservation conflict settled than it is challenged again. Only a year after we stopped gold-mining of an Aboriginal sacred site at Bor Birring in northern New South Wales, the mining company sells its lease to another ignorant of our protest and as urgent as its predecessor to blast the mountain, crush the granite and treat it with cyanide. The company assures us cyanide can't possibly leak into the lovely Clarence River below. The company promises to line its tailing dam with a super new rubber membrane, as if safe sex makes rape okay. The company will leave the mountain better than before by reforesting its newly terraced sides.

The women are quieter now. The ship powers rhythmically on without a sound, save wind in my ears and water foaming along her length and grumbling under her counter. Her unbridled passage seems intrusive as she ventures further into remote wastes of ocean. Coming out of the main hatch, Russel throws his shirt over the compass saying, "My crew is now so expert in every aspect of sailing that my last challenge is to hide the compass, to have them steer by the stars."

For me the sun glows through the third cloth of the great square sail, forward. Sailing by the sun is more accurate than by compass. We're rollicking westward up surfaces textured by wind, extravagantly gilded by sun and glazed more brightly than a million yellow mirrors. Onward, westward, homeward we sail in glories of light. Ourselves reflecting it, we will carry it ashore on landing. From the brilliance of our half-forgotten origin, in the sparkling sea, worthy in herself, from the dazzling wild we bring bright wilderness ashore. We bring reflection to

fellow humanity, self-reflective, the function of whose soul is to reflect. Towards the afternoon sun for hours on end we romp till it hides in clouds, old gold and dusky purple.

*Oft have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen.
Round many western islands have I been,
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.*

“Drenched in all this glory,” I tell Roger, “I’ll die happy now.” He smiles with understanding. Falling into my bunk, exhausted, for a blessed eight hours below, I sleep then wake. The humming and droning of Emma’s didgeridoo drifts down the ventilator. It comes and goes in waves. Eventually it is drowned by grumbling water, coming and going in waves along one side and alternately along the other as our beloved ship rolls comfortably along her way home.

*With a low lull off or all roar,
Frequenting there,
While moons shall wear and wend*

By radio we hear wave on wave of New Zealand yachts setting out across vast oceans to challenge the mighty French navy at Moruroa. “New Zealand Maid” sails on to Tahiti. Greenpeace arranges accommodation for John’s family. Continuing his protest, John returns to Moruroa. Returning, they are harassed more aggressively than before; circled all night by warships and helicopters with searchlights.

“It’s the same old story,” says Russel. “The best young Kiwi blood volunteers to fight a war between France and Germany, only this time Europe exported its war to the South Pacific and the volunteers are green activists, women and men. How much more powerful is their



protest for being spontaneous, independent and not under the flag of the international giant, Greenpeace! However much we appreciate Greenpeace for its vital role, an independent group makes protest more convincing.”

“Yes,” I enlarge, “sharing the Anzac tradition with New Zealand, Australia also lost two generations of its best young men in Europe. We lack models for manhood. Far worthier than war, green activism could become a proving ground for men. It’s a pity so few Australian yachts turned out.”

“New Zealanders are passionately anti-nuclear,” Russel explains. “For ten years the nation felt painfully isolated following Prime Minister Lange’s refusal to allow American nuclear ships to visit. French bombing of ‘Rainbow Warrior’ in Auckland Harbour inflamed our passion.”

On the radio, laughter accompanies yachts reporting their positions quoting street names and parks from a Wellington street map laid over a chart of Moruroa Atoll, supplied by Greenpeace to confound the French who monitor radio traffic. Keeping station around Moruroa was an endurance. Relieved to be sailing free again, Russel reports our position as, “On Easy Street at the corner of Paradise”. Rupe, of Nikau Radio in Rarotonga, adds to the joke replying, “Go for it, but Eve’s no longer there”. The flotilla is laughing on air as some yachts report their positions in streets of Wellington’s red light district.

I’m so happy I’m singing on deck, whistling the refrain of a song.

“No whistling aboard!” the mate rebukes me sharply. “Whistling brings dangerous winds.”

A freak wave slaps under our counter, drenching him from top to toe. As evening darkens into night, the wind does freshen. Water roars continually around our hull. The rush of one surging wave overlaps and drowns the one before, and is drowned by the next, hurrying on.

I’m at the wheel, water washing across the vessel halfway up my shins. The deck sways and lurches in all directions. With feet well apart,

jammed against wooden cleats, my centre of gravity is lower. I can lean and spring continuously and lightly, keeping my body by the wheel, my hands on its spokes. It kicks and heaves to the rudder working in darkness beneath our careering decks. We are in heavy driving rain. Being a tropical storm, I am wet to the skin but not cold. We're doing twelve knots. Whoo! Wheel! What a trip!

Now over-canvassed, the ship is swerving unmanageably. The compass card seems to have shrunk to a tiny disc. There's hardly any circumference between its cardinal points. Roger takes the wheel. With hardly a word, he indicates it is time to down the mainsail. I follow Joff forward to the starboard shrouds. In pitch darkness, I take the thick main halyard, coiled on its belaying pin on the pin-rail at the bulwark. I take the main throat downhaul and main topsail sheet from pins on the fife-rail at the foot of the mast. At Joff's call, I cast off the main halyard, put it under my arm, paying out as I haul down the other lines. Great spars of gaff and boom come swaying down between lazy-jacks. We tie gaskets around the furled sail and coil fathoms of cordage to hang neatly on pins. Even with this big sail furled, the ship roars on into blackness but is under control.

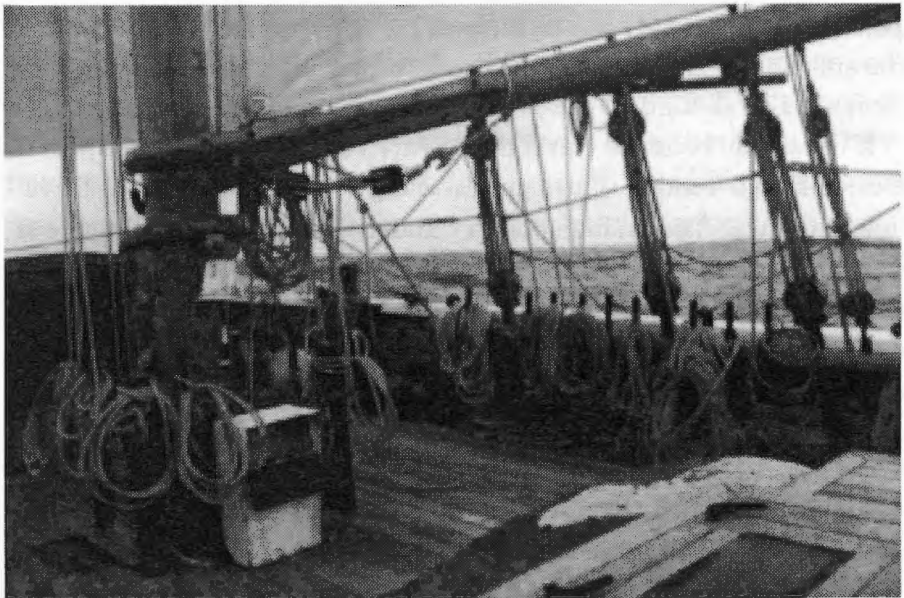
After thirty-five days at sea, I am tired and looking forward to my watch below. On a long sea voyage sleep is as precious as fresh water and needs careful conservation. I go below, tumbling exhausted into my bunk. My salty legs are wet and clammy in tropical heat. I'm growing webbed feet. Oh dear, perhaps I really am a dinosaur! Grateful for rest, I surrender to the uneven motion of the ship. As if struggling to be airborne, long ascents fall suddenly back into the sea. Twisting, lurching, heaving and jumping seem endless till lost in uncanny quietness and blessed sleep.

Like a roll on a base drum, tramping feet on deck overhead wake me. Working together, crew struggle with the motion of the ship. Distant shouts strain above the storm, then more thumping, banging and ur-



gent calling as they work to further shorten sail. It is not only her glorious light we will take ashore from the ocean; our bodies will bear the mystical tattoo of her darkness also and of her heavier moods. In a balanced universe, the union of opposites in equal measure is obvious. Bearing witness to one without the other is but half the truth. Those seeking only enlightenment can't find it. There's no enlightenment without as much *endarkelment*. Enlightenment is seeing the dark, accepting and owning the shadow side, the unsatisfactoriness of life.

If there is bias in the universe, it is towards darkness. From outer space, awesome darkness surrounds Earth. Any bias in the universe is towards darkness, space, emptiness, sleep and death. Matter is an exception. Life is an extraordinary exception. Newton said, "Nature abhors a vacuum". This political disinformation supported eighteenth century western values. Nature loves vacuums. Nature is mostly vacuum.



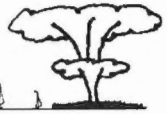
Fathoms of cordage hang neatly coiled on belaying pins.

The billiard balls of schoolday science are a con. There are no atoms, no sub-atomic particles. There are only energy patterns, only consciousness. The solidity of tables and chairs is illusion. Modern physics discovers the Buddhist view. "What is matter but a hardening of the light?" We sailors, keeping watch by night, bring awareness into darkness. We are witnesses and seers.

Whole, healthy, heal, help, holy, halloed and halo all come from the same Old Saxon word, *hælan*. Being whole or complete includes the negative as much as the positive. Returning from our journey we bring back the imprint of light and darkness from nature, from within ourselves, and from the French and their civilisation. Coming home more whole, more complete, a little healed, in greater fullness, both of light and darkness, the journey is a healing one, a holy one, a pilgrimage. Moruroa is a sacred site, made awesome by our contemporary religion, by science. Visiting it, we change. This journey honours fundamental particles of physics. It is a journey to the convergent point of death at the splitting of the atom. It is a modern pilgrimage. Travelling to nuclear sites of all kinds is the pilgrimage of the future.

It is indeed "better to travel than to arrive". Travelling is peripheral. Destination is central. Through travelling we learn and grow. Travelling in Central Asia, in high country under clear blue skies, in the footsteps of great masters, I saw they had not included their plodding journey, the context in their teaching, as the source of wisdom. They taught only text. Clearly, their enlightenment resulted from earthy pilgrimage rather than from orthodox practice. Orthodoxy, the regulated life, is dominant, is patriarchy, but "consciousness is born in rebellion" and the spiritual path, like evolution in society and art, is innately unorthodox. Dynastic succession is conservative. Psycho-social-spiritual evolution is by challenge from outside.

Dwarfing all matters in our time and contrary to French culture, the



environment is critical in world culture. Reversing man-centred and abstract Christendom, Earth becomes the object of worship, for her own sake. If we must have religion and if it's about salvation, we are due for a new model. The major issue is the environment. With god-like knowledge of the universe from atoms to outer space; with god-like powers of destruction, we become responsible for salvation. Transcending faith and superstition, it is in our hands. We can take action to survive, as sailors do. Instead of victims passing the buck to some *god of the gaps*, we can be authors of our fortune.

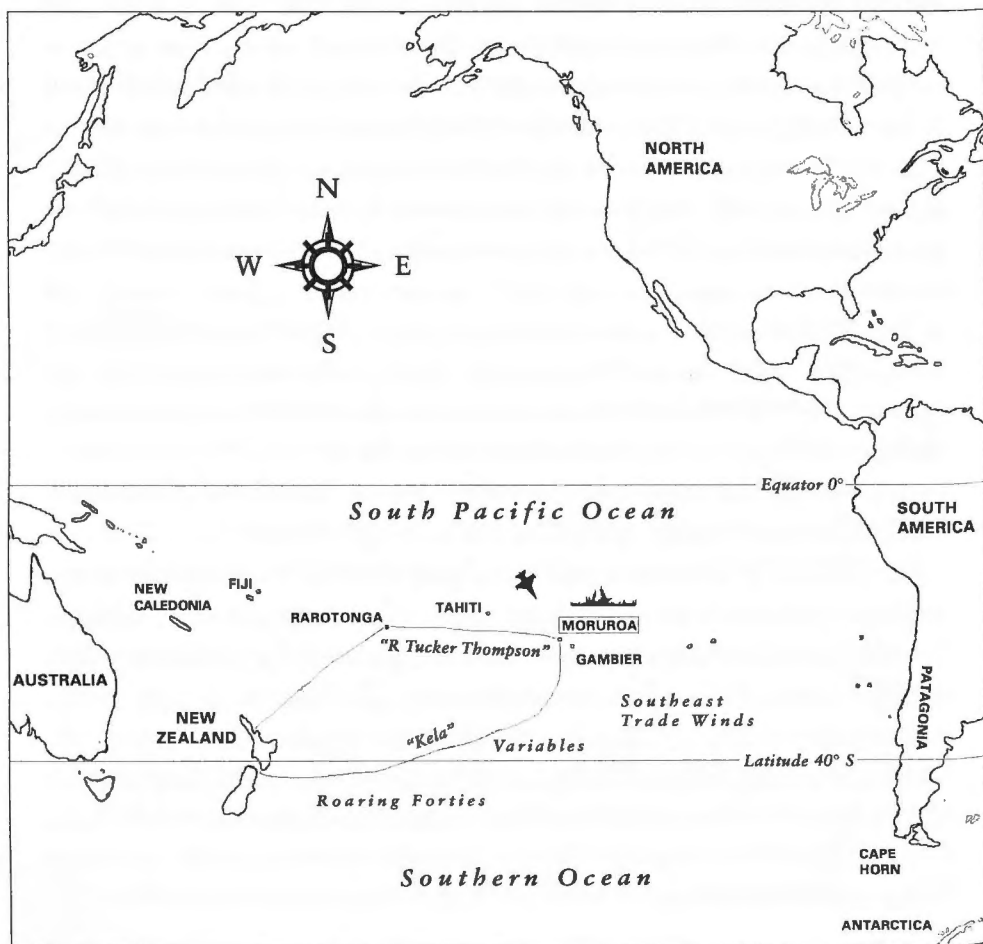
On the evening radio we hear activists Roger and Rachel have "gone in" to Fangataufa. Other than French military they are first to see results of a two-megaton hydrogen bomb exploded on the atoll. No plants grow. Sand is fused into glass. Their reconnaissance finds a new drilling rig preparing for a 100-kiloton bomb. The atoll is too radioactive for anyone to stay.

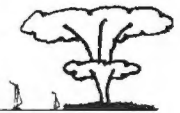
Two Daniels paddle a surfski into Moruroa. Large transport aircraft are landing at the base. We wonder if they bring more troops or concrete to repair plugs in shafts above bombs. Brave little "Vega" sails in over the line to be taken by the French for the seventh time in twenty-four years. This time she has twenty-three on board including some local indigenous people reclaiming their ancestral lands.

HMNZS "Tui" is returning from Rarotonga with new media crew, politicians and a bishop. We meet at sea, flying signals "H-I-T-U-I". She circles and steams alongside us for half an hour while the masters confer by local UHF radio. It's good to see "Tui" again.

Box is running a sweepstake on when we sight land, for some their first in nearly fifty days. The sweepstake is rigged. Nobody minds. At the chart table Roger calculates we have ten hours till landfall at Rarotonga. We need daylight for the narrow entrance into the harbour. If we arrive before dawn we will have to heave-to in an uncomfortable

sea. Reluctantly we shorten sail. We lower the coarse sail that has drawn us powerfully across the Pacific for nine days on this leg of the voyage. I work the halyard. Roger gathers in the heavy cloth. We drag the sail across the saloon skylight. I drag the foot along the deck. Together we flake the weighty fabric into neat folds, roll it up and lash it securely by the forward hatch. Will civilisation have such foresight? Will we slacken pace in time?





LAND-HO!

.....

AFTER A BLESSED eight hours below, it is my watch again at 0400. Sleepily I climb out the main hatch. All is dark and wet. A trawler's light is close astern. We avoid its trailing nets. The night is surprisingly cold. Despite reduced sail, six knots registers on the log. Twenty-five knots of wind astern drives drenching rain. It's hard standing on the rolling decks, harder sitting half-asleep, cold water running down my back. I feel better when asked to take the wheel.

At 0535 lights appear close under our port bow. Rain soon obscures them. We press on parallel to the coast. Land appears occasionally and dimly through heavy rain as grey light dawns. At 0700 we are opposite Avatiu Harbour. Turning hard to port, we sail directly towards the land. Unfamiliar sounds of heavy metal arise as we free the long-idle anchor and its sturdy bar-chain, chipping cement from massive links where they enter the chain-pipe to the locker below.

Like saliva foaming between devouring teeth, white water breaks over dark rocks ahead. Joff is aloft signalling where the channel lies between underwater rocks and shoals to Russel at the helm. I haul on the starboard lower topsail clew then on the lighter bunting line to bunt-up the topsail. As the white water approaches, I see a narrow gap between rocks and breakers. I'm standing by the fore-throat halyard. As we enter the smooth passage between rocky breakwaters, I lower away. Down comes the foresail, its weighty varnished gaff swaying. Its freshly tallowed leather jaws glide smoothly down the brightly varnished mast.

To my astonishment, the harbour is only a hundred metres wide and twice as long. Yachts crowd the anchorage. Cargo ships line the concrete wharf. Russel looks small, sitting at the wheel. We bear down on

a smart yacht, "Casimer". Two Englishmen rush on deck asking, "May we be of any assistance?". Uttering hardly one command, Russel executes an old-fashioned manoeuvre called, "a running moor". Out goes the anchor with a rattle. We square our yards to the wind, driving in the pick, then brace them amidships to clear steamers now close alongside. Our ship halts, turning on the spot and coming into the wind. Her progress is like the bend in a fishhook ending at the barb. She lies alongside a small space between two cargo vessels. Up comes the anchor again. Our heaving line goes ashore. Local wharfies, looking colossal in black gumboots and yellow coats, slowly secure our warps and springs to rusty bollards. Not satisfied with their work, agile Roger, like a trapeze artist, swings ashore on a halyard. At 0815 Russel crosses his arms like the letter X over his chest, indicating, "Hold everything fast, just as it is".

"Will captains of industry stall their headlong career on Spaceship Earth," I'm thinking, standing by the foremast. Sadly I doubt commerce, industry, the military or healthcare can turn themselves around on the spot, to an anchor. Sadly I doubt they can slow their rush to catastrophe. Predicated on growth, our culture cannot stop. It lacks the seamanship to race towards disaster and deftly halt. Dominant, exploiting and competitive patriarchy grows itself to death.

"May ordinary people lead generals, professors, bishops, judges, surgeons, artists, critics and chief executives to come about on the wind," I pray. "May they practice alternative directions with their crews. May they learn to tolerate transition, uncertainty and ambiguity. May commissars of culture favour moral and cultural relativism in the interests of good global navigation. May all learn to turn about from gratification by external things to find satisfaction within our own richly sensual flesh. May our sexuality turn from the dominant, predatory, capitalist model in which men and women exploit each other, to a model of generosity. May we turn to serve Earth, learning to love it as ourselves.



"R Tucker Thompson" at Rarotonga

May our new morality become “Do unto the universe as thou would have it do unto you”.

“Even if all details of their Dreaming escape us, may we learn from Australian Aborigines at least their attitude of “singing up the land”. May we bring Earth to mind, hold her in consciousness, giving her life in our culture for her own sake,” I silently pray. “May we sing up the universe, making that our frame of reference, better than the bottom line of a ledger. May we find vocation as choristers, priests and shamans of the cosmos. May we celebrate its glories, holding its wonders in awe, practising songs and dances of its process. May we become more avid witnesses to its magnificence. May we be mirrors reflecting its darkness and light, telling its wonders, glories and the astonishing lineage of our evolution in it.”

France, the leader of western culture, provokes a reversal of culture against her own. France drives us towards a turning point in history, a point of nemesis of the old culture. Will this bring rebirth? France drives the planet towards the windward mark. On its passage through eternity, Earth and her consciousness are going about onto a new tack. We are changing our point of view. No longer can we regard humanity as the centre of the universe, as its zenith nor as the pinnacle of creation. Now we see ourselves at the periphery, at the rebellious fringe, opposed to such hubris. Like rebellious children coming of age, we are graduating to be servants of the universe, its minions, minders and shamans. We are raising a new ethic.

Raising the atom, France raises fundamentals of culture. Fundamental values are up for review. In terms of dominance, it may seem mad and sacrilegious to contradict Descartes, Einstein, Marx, Newton, Shakespeare and St John, all pillars of our culture. Our culture, however, is falling under its own weight. Without apology, I write as a layman, as an amateur, for love.

Wafting up from the saloon come aromas of coffee and bacon. Sky-



lights are open. Fresh frangipani is on the table. We all tuck into muesli, bubble and squeak and toast then turn to scrubbing the decks, polishing the brass, coiling ropes and tidying neat harbour furls in sails. In running shorts and a T-shirt, the harbour master calls followed by Customs and Immigration officials and visitors. We congratulate each other on covering 1175 nautical miles in eight days and without a quarrel. Our best daily run was 165 miles.

Against the wharf astern is infamous "Kaunitoni", the Fijian steamer in trouble with politicians and journalists aboard. One glance at her shabby condition dispels notions of sabotage as the basis of her engine breakdown. However, rumours are rife. Once in port, a member of her company, jilted in love, attempts suicide jumping from her bow into the propeller of a departing tanker, but escapes injury. There are rumours of French Secret Service agents trying to bribe health officials in the Caribbean to sabotage protest yachts by insisting on inoculation with live yellow fever vaccine.

For lunch Ruth prepares tabouli salad. We relish fresh crisp greens after forty-seven days at sea. We hear that the World Court of Appeal in Brussels has thrown out New Zealand's case, resumed from 1973, against French nuclear testing in the Pacific.

Astern of "Kaunitoni" is "Bifrost", a fifty-two-foot fibreglass copy of a Viking ship, sailed by Boris. He looks like a buccaneer. Lacking only a green parrot screeching "pieces of eight", he is barefoot, brown, with half his head shaved, a gold earring and a long twisted moustache. His sparkling eyes contrast with grubby clothes. Boris sailed "Bifrost" from Denmark and was in Panama when he heard of the French tests. He immediately sailed to Moruroa and remained there for a record nine weeks. He contested every point with the French Navy over their twelve-mile exclusion zone. He even insisted, under international law, that they bring him fresh water at sea. Boris, the only Dane at Moruroa, declares Denmark was anti-nuclear and nuclear-free, forbidding

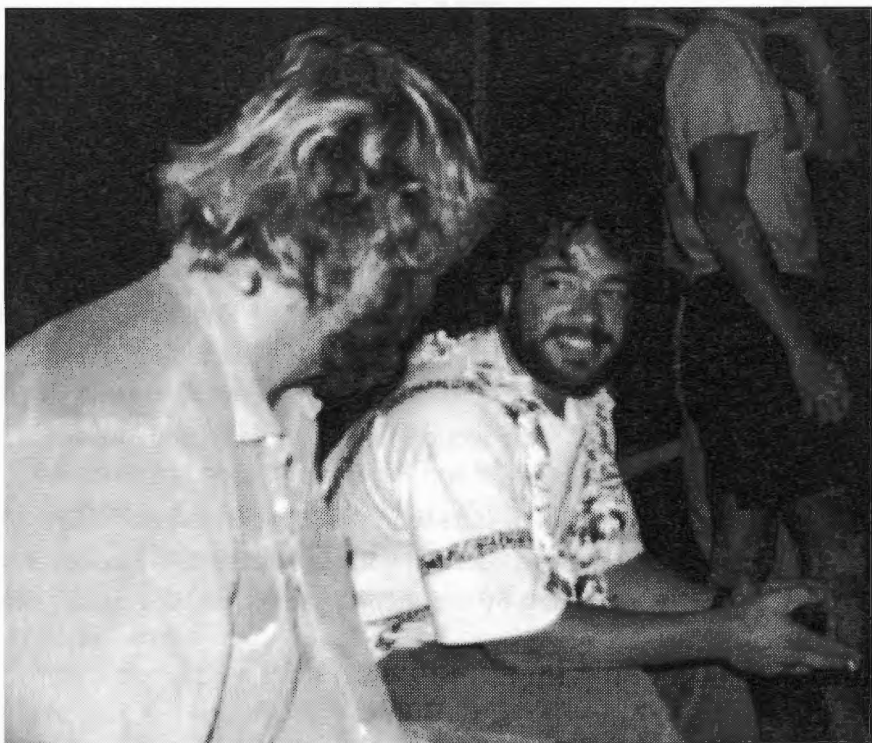
entry to United States nuclear warships, in 1976, eight years before New Zealand. Small nations can take this stand, having less to lose. Boris “steals the hearts” of Claire and Emma, who transfer to “Bifrost” for their next leg to Tonga.

Rarotonga is a tourist trap, hot and boring, but there is a fresh cold shower at the end of the wharf. I ring my children in Australia. We search the island for spare parts for “Tucker’s” engine and receive guests, including Margaret Lange, sister of the former Prime Minister, and her husband. “R Tucker Thompson” is a New Zealand icon. On the wharf is a container sent from New Zealand, full of provisions donated to the Peace Flotilla. Cartons of Foster’s Lager, Palm corned beef, Sea Lord tuna, other canned food, and River Mill cookies, stamped “We support your protest”. Bottles of rum, Kiwi soft drinks and Waimah mineral water, Hansell’s drinking chocolate, Continental soups and Kellogg’s corn flakes, Anchor longlife milk and Oak smallgoods come aboard.

I might sail on with “Tucker” to New Zealand or with “Tara” to Suva, but I’m tired, have drunk deeply of the cup of pleasure at sea and am keen to see how my scrawl looks in type. There are five days till there is a flight to Auckland on which Box and Russel will accompany me. Meanwhile, I am busy with washing and postcards. Replacing Russel as master, Rob arrives with Hanne, who was an engineer on “Rainbow Warrior” when bombed in Auckland, killing Fernando Piera.

From Papeete, Daniel flies to Rarotonga. With a lei of frangipani round his neck, he gets a hero’s welcome aboard “Tucker” before the return trip home to New Zealand. Over some beers, Dan recounts how he volunteered with Funky Fleet. With a friend, also called Dan, they paddled a surfski twelve miles into Moruroa Atoll. They were nearly run down by a French frigate in the night and were followed by reef sharks.

“Only small ones,” Dan nonchalantly disclaims at the party on board, gathered to hear his tale.



Dan (right) tells Box about being imprisoned on Moruroa by the French.

“And how did you get through the reef into the lagoon?”, asks Box.

“We waited for a wave and caught it over the top of the reef,” he casually explains. “We were pretty tired by the time we got to the beach,” continues Dan, “but we arrived at the concrete factory where they used to dismantle warheads. It is known to be contaminated with plutonium radioactive waste,” he explains, “and we weren’t too happy about paddling in that water, but what else could we do?” he shrugs. “So we paddled further along the coast till we came to a watchtower with soldiers. At first they didn’t see us. They were asleep or playing cards. Then one came running around the corner of the building and grabbed Dan and shoved him against the wall.”

“Were they heavy with you?” I ask.

“Not too bad,” answers Dan. “They called military police who locked us in a cell together. They interrogated us for four hours. They wanted to know which yacht we’d come from, but we wouldn’t tell them so they put us back in the cell. We were so tired we just slept. I can remember guards coming in with torches at night. We were too tired to care.”

“What did they feed you?” asks Melanie.

“Bloody hell! They gave us snails for breakfast,” Dan exclaims, “and they gave us wine for lunch. We told them their French wine was piss.”

“After forty-eight hours they flew us to Papeete. We went to the Greenpeace office. There were lots of parties. Greenpeace looked after us well. They paid our airfares.”

In Auckland airport, men in suits scurry like cockroaches. “Never do business with a man in a suit,” Russel confides to me as we collect our bags before being ambushed by the media, filmed, photographed and interviewed



KAURI

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TOURING NEW ZEALAND'S North Island in search of old growth forest, I find scraps of bush with a few kauri trees still standing in Puketi Forest. Notices explain kauri dates from dinosaur times, one hundred and fifty million years ago. The trees are up to four thousand years old. Maori migrated to New Zealand only a thousand years ago. Dense cylindrical columns rise in damp rainforest gloom. I am awed. As I approach, their presence reaches out and touches me. I must stop on the path at a distance before them. The power of their spirit is out of proportion to their bulk. Their girth is up to twenty-seven metres. Their surface is textured like beaten metal or rough-worked stone. Pale gum hangs in beaded veils of amber on giant trunks. The silence around them is arresting. I feel something strong. I pause, uncomfortably. I am touched by the spirit of this place. I do not understand what it is.

Notices say white settlers felled ninety-seven per cent of the kauri. Of that ninety-seven per cent taken, eighty per cent was wasted. Floating logs down rivers, most were pulverised in waterfalls or lost out to sea in floods. The twenty per cent yield built houses and ships in New Zealand and was shipped to America and Australia for flooring. Three per cent remain. It was no longer economical to go into the forests for trees as it is no longer economical to send trawlers after fish like orange roughie. That's called economic extinction. These few trees are now valued for their own sake.

Kauri regenerates readily but takes eight hundred years to mature. My heart is breaking. I ache over wanton prodigal waste of beauty, magic, majesty and of something so wonderful it is hard to describe. It is hard to understand how anyone could do it. I want to make it better.

I know I can't. I feel numb. I want to stay longer in the forest. I want to have a good relationship with it. I know I can't. I want to leave here. I want to be away from the horror of what has been done. I feel bad.

I recall a story Roger, the mate, told me on the "Tucker" about a previous Pacific cruise. They visited an island off New Caledonia, anchored in the lagoon and were welcomed ashore into a happy village. There was feasting with music and dancing. The Kanak people were warm, peaceful and content. Remembering this idyllic village, "Tucker" returned three years later, expecting a similar welcome. The village was deserted and in ruins. Forests were stumps and dead branches. "Tucker's" crew was aghast. They looked for their friends and found them in a nearby town. The former villagers were drunk. Their families were broken and scattered. They were poor, sick and angry. "Tucker's" crew asked what happened. Like missionaries, Japanese came. They gave the villagers not bibles but chainsaws free of charge. They could keep the chainsaws; the Japanese would take the logs.

Where are the missionaries to preach the word of conservation, of reconciliation with the wild? I honour Diamuid in his passionate vocation. I honour Max Henderson, of Rabaul, founder of the Pacific Heritage Foundation, working in danger of his life educating indigenous people to protect their forests. I honour the hippies around Nimbin for staging the first-ever successful rainforest protest at Terania Creek in 1978. I honour ferals for living close to Earth.

I drive on to the kauri museum. It was established and endowed as "a memorial to the grand pioneering spirit of early settlers". The names of Hawkins, Collins, Finlayson and Reed head the honour roll. Their courage and labour opened up the wilderness. Their ingenuity, skill and hard work subdued the forests and won them tons of timber. The museum is a memorial to their indomitable spirit, to the romance of those days. I suspect most visitors to this museum take it at face value, seeing



it in the light intended. What clever dams they built in rivers and creeks to float the logs to the coast! Releasing a trapdoor in dam walls, they flushed out valleys, clearing all vegetation from riverbeds. What grand bridges and tramways they built in honour of magnificent kauri logs as they snigged them from forests, like whales from the sea! What brave women toiled in hardship beside their men! What colourful bullockies drove straining teams through mud!



Four hundred-year-old kauri in Puketi forest, North Island, New Zealand.

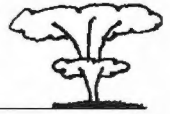


The museum displays swamp kauri up to 44,000 years old. Not valued for its own sake, it is given *added value*. It is cut into slabs. It is made into furniture. It is turned into Victorian banisters. For me the museum is a nightmare of horrors, a shameful record of devastation. After felling and dragging away the timber, they dug the soil fifteen feet deep into muddy gulches, seeking buried gum, some of it millions of years old, some fossilised like amber. Graded and bagged it fetched a price for making linoleum and varnish. After felling the trees and digging the soil, they burnt their debris, still smouldering as they drove flocks and herds into blackened hills. What dedicated missionaries toiled to convert *the savage* to our god and his values!

Wrecking havoc on our environment is but a projection of the havoc and destruction within ourselves. Devastating the Mother, we do it to ourselves, to each other and to our children. Mothers' breastmilk nowadays contains toxic levels of DDT. Their breasts are poisoned, are cesspits to industry, secreting rivulets of death. With my mother's milk, I took in these bourgeois colonial values. My father's house had kauri floors with the best linoleum covering kauri boards in the kitchen. My ancestors helped fell the rainforests in Australia. Ninety-six per cent of old-growth forests were taken. In only nineteen years, sixty thousand tons of cedar was shipped from the Richmond River catchment to Britain for chests of drawers and dining tables. The entrepreneurs of the day wrote, "What does it matter we lost logs in a storm, pulped in waterfalls, washed out to sea? We got them for nothing".

Since white settlement, our civilisation took thirteen billion trees from the Murray–Darling Basin. The watertable rises, salting the Earth.

My school fees, holidays and the bread on our cedar table were paid from the profits. Around our dining table and at my school such things were not discussed. The company spared us embarrassment. It managed things at a distance. It posted a dividend cheque twice a year.



Closing hearts and minds to those things, they remain closed to each other and to ourselves. The exploiter is denatured with the exploited. That's alienation.

Under the conspiracy of silence, in polite society, presided over by "gentle Jesus meek and mild", money, religion, politics, feelings and sex are, of course, taboo. Hoping I would go on the land, my father sent me to agricultural college. Dimly I recognised agriculture as a discipline for ripping off the Earth. I became a psychiatrist to clear my mystification and confusion. I hoped to understand our civilisation. Thirty-five years later, it is enough to say, "We have too much of it. We are over-civilised. We are civilising ourselves and our planet to death".





FIRE

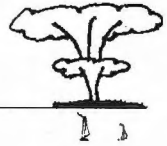
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IN NEW ZEALAND it is spring. Jasmine and hawthorn are blooming. Birds sing. Mount Ruapehu's volcano is erupting. Seismologists say it's triggered by French nuclear explosions. On the east coast of the North Island it is morning as I cross the river into Kennedy. All is quiet. I pass the rural fire brigade. I'm wondering what's producing dirty smoke above the landscape ahead. It must be a farmer burning off rubbish before summer.

Rounding a bend, I see it's a house on fire. Dark grey smoke pours from the kitchen window. I'm first on the scene. An old man stumbles from his smoke-filled doorway with a cardboard box of salvaged treasures. I run from my car into the yard. Pointing in the direction I have come, he calls, "The fire brigade is that way". As I run back to my car he backs his from its garage, crashing into a tree behind him.

Tooting urgently, I rush back to the fire brigade, pursued by a stout woman on a four-wheel drive farm cycle. Breaking the glass on the wall, I cut my hand. There's no time to take off my shoe and break the glass with its heel as I was taught in childhood. The siren starts its doleful wail. The roller door begins to open. The stout woman gathers yellow helmets, silver jackets and black fireproof trousers from pegs on the wall inside. Running from all directions, people are calling, "George's house is on fire!".

I speed back to the burning house. George looks at me helplessly. Dark grey smoke billows from under the eaves. With a sinking feeling, I dump my helmet, silver jacket and black trousers and run to the fire engine as it pulls into the yard, driven by the stout woman. She runs off around the house waving an arm towards the creek across the road.



Helpers come from all quarters. We grab webbing sacks from the back of the fire engine and begin unrolling red collapsible fire hoses across the yard, over the road and through an electric fence. I get a shock but hardly notice in the circumstances.

The hose isn't long enough to reach the river across the paddock. We return to the fire truck for more hose. Smoke is coming from under the eaves along the whole length of the house. Back through the yard, across the road, over the electric fence, and across the field, we carry the hose. It snaps onto the other with an excellent stainless steel coupling.

Realising the pump on the ground by the fire engine must connect to the hose at its end by the river, I run back across the field, over the fence, across the road and the into the yard. A crowd is gathering. I call for help. The pump flies lightly and easily between us back across the yard, the road, the fence and the paddock to the river, but the hose won't fit the outlet on the pump.

Back across the field, fence, road, and yard I race. Dark flames are gushing from along the eaves. That sinking feeling returns to my stomach. It reminds me of something but I don't have time for reflection. We find more webbing bags containing smaller canvass hoses. We unroll them across the yard and road, over the fence and field. Someone pulls one from the centre of its roll, resulting in a long corkscrew. We have to uncoil every twist.

Flame is bursting from gaping windows. The crowd watches passively. There is no help for all the help we need. We are floundering over equipment. We find a chrome-plated Y-fitting. It snaps onto the pump outlet. Each branch of the Y-fitting has a cock with a black steel lever. Each of two canvas hoses snaps confidently onto its respective cock. The pump engine starts at first pull of its cord and runs to its governor. A solid cylindrical hose with a foot valve and strainer connects to the pump inlet.

The pump needs priming. Someone runs for a bucket. Back at the

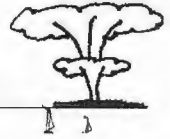


house explosions sound like gunfire. With each explosion, the sinking feeling returns to my stomach. Yes, it reminds me of childhood. I had taken apart an alarm clock and couldn't put it back together. It reminds me of when I tried to fix my great-aunt May's radio, but produced only memorable sparks and a blackout of the house. It reminds me of a recurring nightmare I still have today. The night before my examination, I haven't read the textbook.

These farmers know how to prime the pump. They unscrew a plug on top of the pump and pour in water from the bucket. Water sprays over us. We're getting somewhere now. They screw back the plug. The pump won't lift the water up the bank from the river. The foot-valve won't reach the water. We carry the vibrating pump to the edge of the bank, passing it to others who lift it down to a muddy shelf at the water's edge. In his rush to help save George's house, one man has his firefighter's trousers down around his shins.

Across the field, I see George's hedge is on fire. Hot, dark flames envelope the electric mains transformer on its pole overhead. Voices are crying for water. Again we prime the pump. Men by the water's edge close the priming plug and turn the levers to open the cocks. Water flows into the canvas hoses. A couple of us run back across the field, following the water as it finds its way along the hoses lying in loops on the grass. Bent double, we carefully unfold any kinks in the hoses so water can flow. In our haste we collide with each other where hoses cross. I'm smiling at our burlesque as we scramble over the electric fence, across the road and into the yard where water gushes onto the gravel. Others are connecting further hoses to reach the house. Through holes in the outer walls, I see inner walls are charred skeletons. The flames are too hot for me to approach the building.

That sinking feeling seems justified. The crowd of spectators is now big and still passive, but I must go on doing all I can to save the house, even if it is too late. The stout woman in her yellow helmet, silver coat



Too late to save George's house.

and black trousers starts hosing the house, but to no effect. The fire is too big and hot for the water to make any impression. She moves around the end of the house. We carry the canvas hose behind her, avoiding drag and kinks. She hoses an outhouse whose door is just aflame. She saves the outhouse and the chicken coop. Perhaps three or four per cent of George's property stand pathetically for their own sake. With a roar, the roof of the house falls in. Smoke, flame and orange sparks shower upwards.

With feet wide apart, George steadies himself, leaning against the pole of his clothes' line, his head in the crook of his elbow. A woman on either side frames his figure. A third woman in a white overall hugs



him. George withdraws from her. Aghast, he stares at his ruined house. I can't just stand and watch. I get my camera. First on the scene, sounding the alarm and having done as much as any to save the house, surely I can take snaps! Seeing my camera, Maori rush towards me shaking fists. "Put that camera away!" they shout. I comply, retreating to my car and drive to a shady tree. "Participant observation" is risky. The siren continues sounding as if unheeded.

My patients used to describe that sinking feeling. It was their sense of despair over the destruction of the world, their sense of impotence, being unable to save it; their sense of having left it too late, of being too slow and weak, of the process going too fast and being out of control.

Can we save the Earth? Do we sip champagne while watching Earth's destruction on tele? At Chernoble the Russians disconnected the fail-safe controls while experimenting with raising the temperature of their nuclear fire. The fire got out of control. Beyond the loss of life and land, Chernoble is a metaphor of the world. Even after the cold war there are still as many stockpiles of nuclear weapons. There are more ageing power stations and nuclear dumps bleeding radioactivity, a cold but lethal fire. There are enough weapons to glaze our planet to a bead of glass. Adrift in space it would be a precious jewel, a glistening memorial to life, falling between the fingers of time. Radioactivity burns Earth and sea slowly, fatally for millions of years. Cockroaches survive.

I drive back past George's place. People are looking down. They are shaking their heads. Trucks from other fire brigades, from the electricity board and police stand by a level rectangle of ash, black, white and pale grey, surrounded by burnt trees where George's house once stood. Smoke from human habitation is foul, I reflect as I drive away.



END

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WHENEVER MORUROA is mentioned, people thank me for going. Their gratitude, sincerity and earnestness are touching. They want to shake my hand and hug me. I have been a representative for them. Some write in appreciation. Having such good adventures, I'm taken aback. I want them to know what fun I had. I want them to know environmental action is terrific sport and a worthwhile way of life. I want to encourage others to have direct relationships with the wild. I want to do more to stop the bombing. I want to stop Earth rape. I want to promote Earth for her own sake. I want to bear witness. I want to reflect. I want to share the privilege with others. Even if we can't save the Earth, I want to be counted as one who tried. At least we can pay attention to her decline. We can watch her dying. We can savour moments remaining. We can be with her. We can be together. "Together" is from the Old Saxon, *gad*. Gatherings were *gadderings*. Also from *gad* comes good and god.

Back in Melbourne, jokers ask, "Do you glow in the dark?"

I buy my first computer, a secondhand laptop, helped by my son Sandy. Laughing, he reminds me, "Writing's one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration – even with a Macintosh".

Scrambling for traction on keyboard and trackpad, I head for the bush. Sitting by my campfire at night, moths and beetles gather on the bright screen as I write. I hope they're enjoying the tale.

"Who are you writing for?" many ask.

"For family and friends," I reply, "and those I meet along the way. I think of conversations with them as I write. These are extraordinary times. I write as a layman, as an amateur, for love. Not ready to publish, I'll send it to them for Christmas."



Six weeks back in Australia, I meet an old friend, Michael, long an Earth campaigner. Within minutes he has the text in Sabon font, formatted for printing on recycled paper. In four days a hundred copies will be bound between inexpensive A5 covers. Adventuring into writing, I fear being didactic, reinforced by the power of print. Preferring the live voice, I will welcome discourse. Working electron clouds, surfing cyber seas, tide and wind are with me still...



www.jrewilson.com

MORUROA

FOR HER
OWN SAKE

065 62574

Low-flying military jets shriek past our rigging. Notorious French commandos in red Zodiac inflatables roar alongside. Choppers are wapping close above. Welcome to Moruroa!

This is the story of anti-nuclear activists sailing a Peace Flotilla across the Pacific to confront French warships. A racy yarn of true adventure on the high seas, it tells of ordinary people on a passionate cause.

On a record run from New Zealand, Force Ten gales trouble a crew less than inner weather erupting aboard their 53-foot steel ketch on her first calm day at sea.

At the atoll, civilian vessels are captured by French piracy, pairs of protesters chain themselves to drilling rigs above live atomic bombs, Tahitians "go in" to reclaim ancestral lands. Many are arrested. A whale breaches among the yachts ... this is Moruroa 1995.

A "participant observer" describes the raw edge of green politics, from the subjective and intimate to the grossness of terminal patriarchy. Green activism is portrayed as exhilarating adventure and a pilgrimage for what is now sacred: *Earth for her own sake.*

Unable to stop Earth-rape, the protesters witness her violation. Dissenting from the madness of normality, some find themselves changed and healed by their encounter with the wild.



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