

# *Interrogating narratives of heritage in place*

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IN SOUTH WESTLAND, New Zealand, despite the remoteness of its relatively intact and diverse geomorphic and biophysical systems, social and cultural values are significant. These values, however, are not recognised in its designation as a world heritage area. This paper uses narratives from different sources and an interrogative process, to reveal not only a range of approaches to heritage, expressed or implied by different stakeholder groups, but also the paradoxical nature of interrelationships among people, place and heritage. It allows tentative conclusions to be made about the significance of the lack of an explicit management strategy for the world heritage area as a whole, and about the need for heritage, whether regarded instrumentally as natural or cultural, to be reconceptualised as a cultural construct.

HERITAGE IS AN EMOTIVE and frequently contested notion whose meanings vary according to the cultural and spatial context. In this paper the overall theme of the variability of heritage is explored through an interrogative process that focuses on three questions. These concern the heritage and land in South Westland, which is in the South Island of New Zealand and largely within Te Waahipounamu / South-West New Zealand World Heritage Area (see figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

The first question concerns the ways in which the word 'heritage' is used. Even where an officially recognised version of heritage appears to be dominant—as in southwest New Zealand, where heritage as naturalness has been accepted by both the New Zealand government and the World Heritage Committee—the occurrence of intense debate at regional and local level, before, during and after nomination, suggests that other, more culturally oriented versions, also exist. The question is, therefore, *how can these other versions be defined, given their subordinate and marginalised position?*

The second question follows on from the first: if it is possible to define different versions of heritage, whether dominant or subordinate, *what impact have they had on policies and strategies for the management of the world heritage area?*

The third question relates to the difficulty of analysing relationships among people, place and heritage. Many texts, although implying some or all of these notions, do not explicitly and systematically deal with them. It is therefore necessary to ask *how can complexity and difference in approaches to heritage be convincingly deduced from texts whose individual scope is limited and partial?*

Given the dominant concern for underlying meaning, there is need for both a research approach and constituent methods that assume qualitative ways of knowing. These methods are all variants on textual analysis, whether the texts are existing documents (books, archival material, current planning documentation), transcripts of interviews and focus groups, maps, photographs or the land itself. Each text can be 'read' for the superficial story—what happened or appeared to happen; for the processes implied within the story—how it happened; and for its underlying meaning—helping to explain why it happened. Using the term 'story' or 'narrative' in the analysis of texts emphasises the constructed nature and the inherent variability of the realities deduced from them.

## KEY WORDS

*Heritage  
Narrative  
New Zealand  
Place  
Research*

## RESEARCH

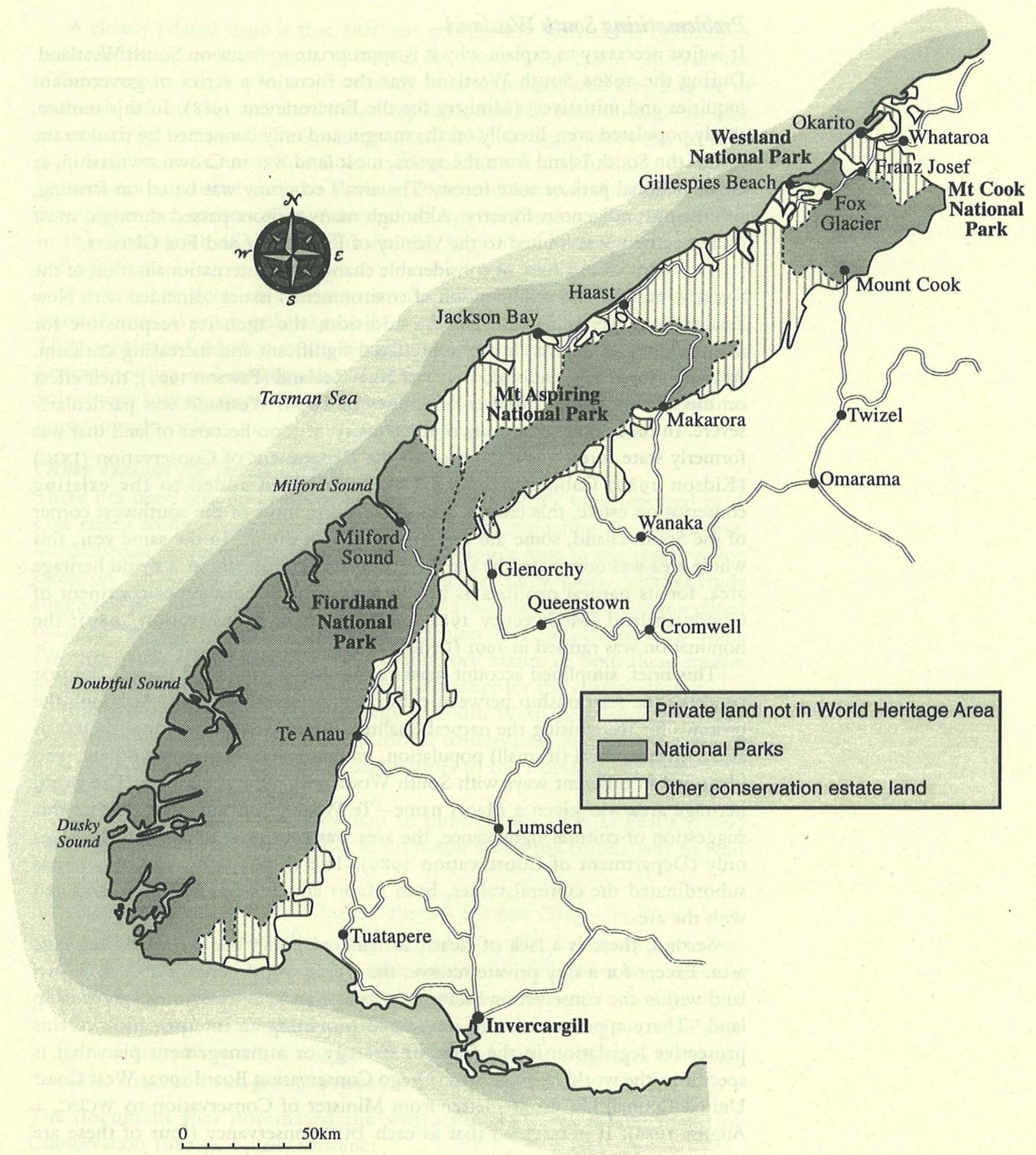


Figure 1: Te Waahipounamu/South-West New Zealand World Heritage Area

### *Problematising South Westland*

It is first necessary to explain why it is appropriate to focus on South Westland. During the 1980s South Westland was the focus of a series of government inquiries and initiatives<sup>2</sup> (Ministry for the Environment 1988). In this remote, thinly populated area, literally on the margin and only connected by road to the rest of the South Island from the 1960s, most land was in Crown ownership, as either national park or state forest.<sup>3</sup> The area's economy was based on farming, fishing and indigenous forestry. Although many visitors passed through, most tourist activity was limited to the vicinity of Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers.

The 1980s were a time of considerable change: the internationalisation of the forestry industry and politicisation of environmental issues coincided with New Zealand's growing fiscal crisis. In addition, the agencies responsible for managing the extensive Crown estate faced significant and increasing criticism. Although these issues affected much of New Zealand (Pawson 1992), their effect on the already marginalised communities of South Westland was particularly severe. In 1989, after some years of uncertainty, 311,000 hectares of land that was formerly state forest were allocated to the Department of Conservation (DOC) (Kidson 1989; Cabinet Minutes POL(89)). When added to the existing conservation estate, this created a block covering most of the southwest corner of the South Island, some 2.6 million hectares in extent. In the same year, this whole area was nominated by the New Zealand government as a world heritage area, for its natural qualities as a remnant of the ancient super-continent of Gondwanaland (McSweeney 1987; Department of Conservation 1989): the nomination was ratified in 1991 (UNESCO 1995).<sup>4</sup>

This brief, simplified account masks a number of contested issues. The first concerns the relationship between cultural and natural heritage. Although the grounds for recognising the natural qualities of the area were strong, there was also a diverse, vocal (if small) population, both tangata whenua<sup>5</sup> and others, who identified in different ways with South Westland's cultural heritage. The world heritage area was given a Maori name—Te Waahipounamu—but despite this suggestion of cultural significance, the area was protected for its natural values only (Department of Conservation 1989). The emphasis on naturalness has subordinated the cultural values, both Maori and Pakeha, that are associated with the area.

Second, there is a lack of clearly articulated policy for the world heritage area. Except for a tiny private reserve, the whole world heritage area is Crown land within the conservation estate, as national park, or reserve or stewardship land.<sup>6</sup> There appears to be no interest in providing an interpretation of this protective legislation in the form of strategy or a management plan that is specific to the world heritage area (Otago Conservation Board 1992; West Coast United Council file RP 8/5; letter from Minister of Conservation to WCUC, 4 August 1988). It is assumed that as each DOC conservancy (four of these are involved in the southwest) has prepared or is preparing its own Conservation Management Strategy, and as world heritage status would not have been approved if the area had not already been adequately protected and managed (UNESCO 1995), no further action is required. DOC does not appear to accept the possibility that world heritage status might have a direct and specific influence on policy and strategy.

A closely related issue is that DOC has consistently blurred the distinctions between the different categories of land in the conservation estate, especially the difference between land that has already been examined and found to be of national park quality, and the stewardship land, that has been through no such process (Department of Conservation 1989,<sup>7</sup> 1994). In 1989, when the decision was made to nominate the whole southwest as a world heritage area, the government stipulated that the National Parks and Reserves Authority should investigate the conservation values of all non-national park land included in the nomination (Cabinet Minutes POL(89)). This investigation has still not occurred.

Prior to the detailed analysis reported in this paper, these three issues were identified from published or reasonably accessible written sources. They motivated further study because they implied connections among heritage, policy and strategy that were more complex than the official view. Subsequent investigation of these connections focused on the questions outlined in the introduction.

### *Other reasons for investigation*

There has been little in-depth research in this area of the kind reported here. One recent study assessed alternative approaches to evaluating the significance, in terms conservation and heritage, of back country huts in the conservation estate on the West Coast (Quigg 1993; Quigg and Kirby 1995). Another study suggested the use of contextual discourse as a way of expressing connections between heritage management and sense of place in New Zealand as a whole (Whittle 1993). The qualitative and introductory nature of both these studies provided implicit support but no tangible assistance for the current project.

Moreover, previous official readings of South Westland's landscapes have been top-down and universalising. National conservation and related agencies have advocated this view of reality and visitors to the world heritage area have also been encouraged to accept it.

The power of this view is evident in publications such as Peat's (1989) guidebook, which leaves the reader in no doubt about the correct way to read the West Coast:

In the South Island of New Zealand there is but one Coast—the West Coast. Geographically, climatically, scenically and naturally, it is out on its own. Outstanding. A world apart . . . You are entitled to feel the explorer here, especially in the South, where there are canyons of trees to drive through . . . and the forest can be glimpsed descending from the snowline to the sea . . . [But w]hat were barriers to explorers of last century are natural and scenic delights to the visitor today, thanks to a well-groomed ribbon of tarseal. (p.ix)

The document that nominated the world heritage area (Department of Conservation 1989) is equally fulsome:

[the] South-West nomination fully meets the requirements of integrity in terms of its superlative natural features. Its overwhelming character is that of wilderness and rugged grandeur. The superlative features . . . are all natural and have been visited by local and international tourists for more than a century . . . the present nomination links all into a unity of landscape. (p.57)

These extracts can be read for direct and indirect messages, both of which are potentially contradictory. For example, they validate tourist activity: the first reassuring potential visitors that despite its wild reputation the Coast has a 'well groomed ribbon of tar-seal'; the second using the length of time—'more than a century'—of tourist activity in the area, to imply that continuing such activity is valid. While they directly communicate the centrality of *natural* heritage, there is an indirect subtext of cultural presence which persists as a contradiction.

Other interpretive material produced for the tourist market similarly gives normative messages to the reader, often implicitly. For example, the illustrations to recent leaflets produced by the New Zealand Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences (1992, 1993: see figure 2) were all taken from the air. The aerial perspective was necessary to convey the breadth, expanse and scale of South Westland, much of which is not accessible to most visitors. Apparently incidentally, the use of oblique aerial photographs reinforces a way of seeing the land that is detached and objectified. In these pictures the objectified landscape is depicted as essentially natural. This view is in contrast to the reality for most visitors, travelling the one main road—a reality which is a complex blend of the almost natural (even in the forest, the road is always present) and the distinctly cultural. Farmland, mostly pasture, is interspersed with coastal scrub and extensive areas of forest; scattered settlements fringe the road. At the newest, most sophisticated interpretive outlets such as those at Haast and Jackson Bay, cultural history is subordinate to the normative version of heritage as nature. Even the tangata whenua are only marginally present in such interpretation, despite the Crown's declaration of partnership (Department of Conservation 1994).

Such readings provide a normative context which also motivated a deeper inquiry into heritage and place.

### *Key terms*

As heritage, place and narrative are key terms in this paper, a brief explanation of each is necessary.

*Heritage* has already been used several times, associated both with the world heritage area and with general comments about variability. A review of published sources confirms this variability<sup>8</sup> which, although perhaps disconcerting, is of such long standing that its persistence into the present is understandable. A range of definitions can be traced back to the thirteenth century (Murray 1933). This range includes both tangible, movable property and land, and intangible ideals, principles or standards of behaviour. Since the emergence of the modern nation state in the nineteenth century, the meaning of heritage has been extended to cover the symbols and ideals that express national identity (Lowenthal 1985). More recently still, the focus has turned to specific cultural, social or ethnic groups, operating at the level of region or locality. In the 1970s, heritage:

acquired its present more specialised usage as the name we give to those valuable features of our environment which we seek to conserve . . . In our time heritage has come to refer to things both more tangible, and more fragile, than the imperishable ideals of our ancestors. (Davison 1991, p.1)

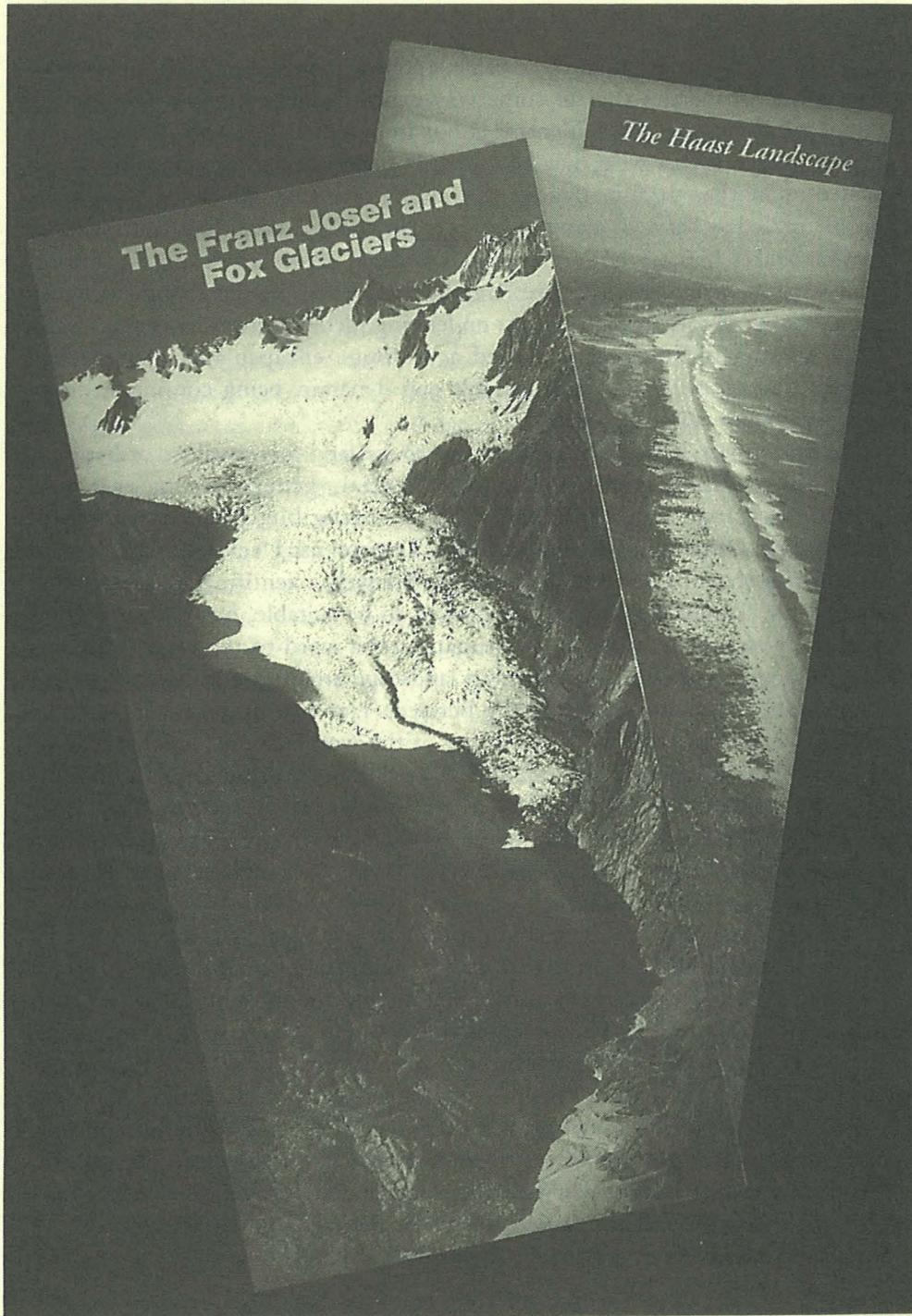


Figure 2: Publications such as these leaflets from the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences (1992, 1993) encourage the tourist to enjoy the landscapes of Te Waahipounamu as detached, objectified natural systems. Photo: David Hollander

places are situated. Space does not so much describe the land itself as locational  
It is not enough on its own to provide space to provide a context in which  
places have been situated. The relationship between the two is complex and  
Place is defined from the point of view of the observer (Hollander 1992, p. 2).  
Place has meaning only in relation to an individual or a group's goals and concerns.

Heritage is thus a statement of value, applied to a wide range of physical or conceptual properties that in some way express identity, whether national, ethnic or communal. This identity is not immutable: Davison's reference to fragility suggests that what may be valued in one place and time may not be so valued in another. It also suggests that at any one time and place, what some people regard as heritage may not be so regarded by others. This contestability is what makes heritage so interesting. It is often expressed in intense debates over what environmental features should be labelled 'heritage' and how they should be cared for. It also suggests underlying ideological associations.

In summary, land that is valued as heritage encapsulates identity and expresses ideology, but is both variable and dynamic, being contingent upon time, space and cultural context.

In this project, *place* is the preferred word for land that is valued as heritage. It implies both spatially locatable, material, generalised people:land relationships and conceptually locatable, intangible, phenomenological associations. Other terms are less inclusive. Davison used 'environment', a word that carries strong associations with a normatively scientific way of thinking about land. 'Landscape' might be supposed to be suitable, but critical analysis over the past two decades has problematised the word to the point where its use has become suspect. To practising landscape architects, landscape may sit comfortably and unproblematically between fact and opinion, or between objective and subjective ways of looking at the world. Some recent landscape theorists have suggested that landscape can be re-positioned in the middle ground between art and science (Meyer 1994). To other commentators landscape has been compromised by its associations with privilege, paternalism and capitalism (Berger 1972; Cosgrove 1984, 1985; Bermingham 1986; Duncan and Duncan 1988; Daniels 1989).

While 'place' does present some problems—at worst risking conceptual overload, as land becomes saturated with a multiplicity of meanings—at best it can usefully avoid the dangers of oversimplifying the meaning of land (Tuan 1974). Often the focus of phenomenological thought (Casey 1993; Duncan and Ley 1993), place can also express breadth of meaning, 'the relative location of objects in the world, and . . . the meaningful context of social action' (Entrikin 1991, p.10). Its particular strength is its potential as an integrating concept, permitting understanding not just from a detached, universalised perspective, nor from one that is narrowly focused, personal and particularised. Place thus provides the two concepts needed to discuss heritage and land—breadth and specificity, a 'view from nowhere' (Nagel 1986) that is still engaged:

To understand place requires that we have access to both an objective and a subjective reality. From the decentred vantage point of the theoretical scientist, place becomes either location or a set of generic relations and therefore loses much of its significance for human action. From the centred viewpoint of the subject, place has meaning only in relation to an individual's or a group's goals and concerns. Place is best viewed from the points in between. (Entrikin 1991, p.5)

Place is not enough on its own: it requires 'space' to provide a context in which places are situated. Space does not so much describe the land itself as locational

relationships; it is therefore useful in exploring the impact that different locations and scales have on representations of heritage (Harvey 1993; Jacobs 1994). Space, like place, can be paradoxical; it is literally an absence rather than a presence, leading some commentators to argue that it serves no useful purpose in social or cultural critique (Werlen 1993). But spatial relationships often influence the balance of power, suggesting that locational difference should not be ignored.

The adoption of the word *narrative*, as a way not just to describe the stories told in individual texts, but also to imply the constructed nature of reality, was an outcome of adopting the above understanding of place. Entrikin, drawing on the work of Ricoeur, advocates using a narrative-like synthesis to position place between decentred objectivity and centred subjectivity (Entrikin 1991, p.25). Although each story or narrative tends to relate to a specific agent or agents and thus represents a specific point or points of view, if it were possible to emplot or interweave a number of narratives, a decentred, multiple-subjective view of place should result. Entrikin does not elaborate on how this view might be achieved: it became one of the major challenges of this project to evolve a way of doing this, in the specific context of narratives about heritage and place.

Narratives have long been the focus of textual analysis. What differentiates the traditional study of narrative from the recent 'narrativist turn in the human sciences' (Kreiswirth 1995, p.61) is the nature of the questions:

having looked at the *histoire* or the **what** of narrative, and the *discours* or the **how** of narrative, what has seemed most pressing in the last fifteen years is to look at the *pourquoi* or the **why** of narrative and to re-examine its potential contribution to questions and disciplinary assumptions that had formerly been approached in other ways and by other means. (ibid, p.63, original emphasis)

Used in this way, narratives can be explored for what they may reveal of underlying meaning, including ideological and philosophical positions. Of particular significance in this investigation about heritage is the contribution of Lyotard (1984) to the analysis of grand or meta-narratives and little or micro-narratives. Lyotard (1984, p.70) believes that it should be possible to increase understanding of, on one hand:

the legitimising operations of grand narratives in order to demystify their totalising power and, on the other, to examine the range, context, and functions of little, or local, narratives in order to see . . . their importantly oppositional, or critical, social and political energies.

The dualism of grand narrative and little narrative appeared to have immediate relevance to the different versions of heritage that were emerging from early analysis of the texts used in this project. But the persistence in New Zealand of the grand narrative of heritage as naturalness appeared inconsistent with Lyotard's wish to do away with meta-narratives and concentrate on micro-narratives. It was necessary to look elsewhere for an approach to the emplotment of the narratives. The approach that was eventually used was an adaptation of ethnographic method, informed by recent feminist geographic, as well as narrativist and historiographic, theory.

### *Rationale and methods*

A qualitative approach was appropriate for both substantive and methodological reasons. First, it was compatible with the emphasis on identifying and explaining meanings, specifically the connections between heritage and place, identity and ideology. Second, the nature of the research was exploratory, given the paucity of previous comparable studies. Texts were needed from a range of sources, in order to approach the questions from a variety of perspectives, thus countering one of the main criticisms of qualitative research, that it is susceptible to unacceptable levels of bias from the researcher.

The sources included already published accounts of South Westland, all dealing in some way with issues that impinge on heritage (Pascoe 1966; McKenzie 1970; Peat 1989; McSweeney 1987). Unpublished documents, including government publications, departmental reports, file records and archival material, were a second significant source. In addition, 51 one-to-one unstructured interviews were held and five focus groups were convened. The interviews took place in a range of locations, both on the West Coast and in Wellington between 1992 and 1995.<sup>9</sup> They reflected a number of perspectives from agencies, communities and individuals, representing a range of insider-outside relationships and stakeholder groups. With participants similarly representing a number of sectoral interests, the focus groups were all held in the largest settlements of South Westland in 1994 and 1995.

The methods used in this project were adapted from ethnography and were designed to reveal theoretical understandings that were grounded in the data (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Glaser 1993). The critical analysis of all these texts focused on the overarching question *why?*, although this on its own was not enough. Some form of rationale was needed to help ensure consistency in the way the texts were interrogated for their underlying values, approaches to heritage and associations with space and place. As well as providing this desired consistency, an explicit rationale assists the interweaving process. Interweaving was preferred to the notion of emplotment, which suggests a dominant plot and subordinate elements. Interwoven multiple-subjective narratives still reflect ideological difference and power imbalances, but these can be treated as contingent rather than immutable.

Although several sources support the value of multiple-subjective views of reality (Ricoeur 1983; Veyne 1984; Entrikin 1991; Nagel 1986; Kreiswirth 1995), they are vague as to how to construct such views. It was necessary to look elsewhere for a conceptual basis for the interweaving process. This process had to be capable of revealing meta-narratives as well as micro-narratives and the relationships between them. It had to work with dualisms (for example, culture-nature, insider-outsider) where these could be clearly identified, but also had to cope with conceptual relationships that were not easily categorised, because of overlap and uncertainty. An appropriate rationale was adapted from Rose's (1993) approach to conceptualising complexity, difference and paradox in the spatial imagery of feminism.

Rose suggests a number of ways in which feminist geographers could attempt to conceptualise the paradoxical coexistence of contradiction and difference in geographical space. She argues that this re-conceptualisation must precede the exploration of alternatives to the spaces occupied by what she terms the 'masculinism of contemporary geographical discourse' (Rose 1993, p.9). To Rose (1993, p.151):

the subject of feminism . . . depends on a paradoxical geography. Any position is imagined not only as being located in multiple social spaces, but also as at both poles of each dimension. It is this tension which can articulate a sense of an elsewhere beyond the territories of the master subject.

This suggests immediate parallels with heritage. In New Zealand the master or normative subject of heritage, especially in areas such as South Westland, is represented in dominant discourses as essentially natural. Just as the spaces of feminism are paradoxical because they coexist with and partly overlap the hegemonic view of masculinist space, as well as sometimes being invisible or marginalised to it, so with heritage. A paradoxical view of the spaces of heritage is an empowering way of establishing the 'positivity of otherness' (Braidotti, cited in *ibid*, p.150), and appeared to be an appropriate way to represent the alternative spatialities, contradictions and silences of heritage and land, particularly in situations where cultural heritage appeared to have been treated as 'other', and marginalised or excluded. Above all it recognises that the normative, objectified *landscape*, viewed as location and scenery, is the *place* of others, who inhabit it, identify with it, associate personal and community meanings with it and depend on it.

### *Interwoven narratives of heritage*

The interrogation process and assumptions underlying it were both critical to the success of the project. From the review of questions and issues articulated by Rose (1993), four areas of interrogation emerged which facilitated the narrative interweaving process: 'simultaneous location', 'silences and omissions' and 'representation' (which are each further subdivided) and, finally, 'somewhere else' (see table 1).

Table 1: Areas of interrogation

<i>Area</i>	<i>Features</i>
Simultaneous location	Subject-object relationships Marginality and exclusion
Silences and omissions	In policy In process Acquiescing in invisibility
Representation	Interpretation Spatial imagery
Somewhere else?	?

Source: Adapted from Rose (1993)

### SIMULTANEOUS LOCATION

#### *Subject-object relationships*

Feminist geographic thought suggests the need for reconceptualising normatively simple, clearcut spatial divisions between subject and object, as the subject of feminism is capable of being in two places at once. Perhaps, as several narratives indicate, the subject of heritage is also capable of being in—or even actually being—two places at once. At first glance the most obvious approach is to regard any one place as simultaneously natural and cultural. A second

glance reveals that this division is too simplistic to be meaningful: further subdivisions within the categories 'natural' and 'cultural' are needed. It is possible to identify regional and national narratives that speak of objectified, iconic natural landscapes, represented to the tourist as scenery and to the scientist as a wide range of ecosystems and habitats; local narratives, about the subjectified, iconic cultural landscapes that define the turangawaewae (place to stand) of the tangata whenua; other local narratives that are concerned with an objectified, prosaic view of landscapes that are potential sources of income from tourism, water exports and minerals; and an even more complex interweave of local stories about hunting, climbing, fishing, tramping, cattle farming and so on. These narratives intertwine in an unpredictable way.

One example that has recently caused much dissension, pain and confusion locally, regionally and nationally was the proposal to export fresh water from Jackson Bay. One of the main supporters of this proposal was also one of the most active and committed members of the local runanga. She saw no conflict between her identification with the whole area from Fox Glacier to the Cascade, or with the knowledge that her grandfather eight generations back is Mount Tutuko, and her support for a commercial project that others believed ran the risk of permanently polluting the coastline (interview 28 January 1992, focus group 22 November 1994).

#### *Marginality and exclusion*

To Rose (1983, p.151), 'the territory of the Same is differentiated between the centre of the Same and the margin of the Other'. It is, however, one territory, with both literal and metaphorical manifestations: people on the margin are still within 'the discursive territory of the same' (ibid). This might suggest that marginalised people and groups can negotiate positions for themselves closer to the centre, thus reducing their marginality. Rose wonders whether there may be something about the marginality of some women that prevents them from attempting to alter their status—they appear to be automatically excluded. This notion seems to fit some heritage issues. The most obvious example in South Westland is the power of the national and regional rhetoric of the natural, which tends both to marginalise and to exclude considerations of the local and cultural.

The nomination document for the South-West New Zealand World Heritage Area (Department of Conservation 1989) was endorsed by the chairman of the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board and included a two-page section on Maori mythology and history. But this section by its very position in the document was firmly subordinate to the central discourse on the natural values of the area. It also ignored the divisions between the different Maori groups on the West Coast, and particularly the views of Te Koeti Turanga, the runanga of South Westland Maori, who:

did not agree to the world heritage, [and who] actually took the trouble of going to UNESCO, [and] tried to take out an injunction against it because our request was that it be made a cultural park, [because] you must take into consideration all the cultural values. (interview 28 January 1992)

#### SILENCES AND OMISSIONS

According to Rose (1993, p.155), the complexities of a paradoxical feminist geography threaten 'the polarities which structure the dominant geographical imagination. They fragment the dead weight of masculinist space and rupture

its exclusions'. A strongly normative version of reality can suppress resistance and alternative versions, even where there appear to be logical arguments for them. Sometimes they are not even expressed. This area of interrogation was particularly hard to pin down, as often there was simply no textual evidence of the notions that were being sought. It is also hard to justify, especially in an approach to analysis that is looking for grounded theory. Despite these problems it was important to try to articulate matters that one felt very strongly should have been present in the texts, but were not. For example, it was surprising that there was so little mention of connections between world heritage status and management policy, or of the debates over the future of the South Westland Environment and Community Advisory Group.

### *In policy*

The classic silence concerned the apparent denial that land within the world heritage area should be subject to any policies that related explicitly to its global status. To understand how looking for such policies might be justified, it is useful to consider the different ways that 'protection' can be defined. To the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN 1985, adapted and cited in Lucas 1992, p.5), 'protected landscapes' include:

ationally significant natural landscapes which are characteristic of the harmonious interaction of People and Land, while providing opportunities for public enjoyment through recreation and tourism within the normal life-style and economic activity of these areas.

The legal definition is more exclusive in New Zealand, where all conservation land is 'protected'. According to section 2 of the Conservation Act 1987, 'protection'

in relation to a resource, means its maintenance, so far as is practicable, in its current state; but includes—

- (a) Its restoration to some former state; and
- (b) Its augmentation, enhancement, or expansion . . .

This definition is more complex than it first appears, its interpretation depending on the ideological position of whoever is doing the interpreting. To people with a strong commitment to the protection of what they perceive as natural, the resource that is to be protected will have predominantly natural characteristics which are valued more than others. To maintain them in their current state, they are what the people of South Westland have called 'locked up'.<sup>10</sup>

When the designation of the world heritage area was being debated, non-governmental organisations emphasised that global status would have no additional adverse impact for locals, and would bring only benefits in the form of increased numbers of international tourists.<sup>11</sup> These assertions were initially made to rebut local concerns about potential loss of sovereignty to UNESCO,<sup>12</sup> but they were later recast to reassure local people that there would be no additional restrictive policies over the land concerned. The argument was that the land, whether with the status of national park or stewardship, was already 'protected' by being in the conservation estate. There were thus no grounds to suppose that further protective measures would be implemented (interviews 24 June 1994).

Real life is more complicated: even with 'protection' there were a number of human activities in these 'natural' areas that, despite the comparatively short length of European settlement, had achieved customary status among local people. These activities included grazing stock along river valleys, taking firewood from river beds, hunting and whitebait fishing. Local people are now concerned about the possibility of being fined for taking dead wood from riverbeds without permits (focus group 15 March 1995). Grazing licences for inland river flats are certainly being looked at critically when they come up for review (Department of Conservation 1991, 1994). While there is nothing inherently wrong with these developments, it is interesting that there is a kind of official coyness that evades questions about the justification for such moves. It may well be that it was necessary to tighten control over certain activities in the area whether or not there was a world heritage area designation. It may also be strategically sensible to try to downplay the effects of the world heritage status to a population that has long been fiercely defensive of its rights and very conscious of the small area of the West Coast over which normal private property rights apply.<sup>13</sup>

The pending inquiry into the conservation values of the stewardship land within the world heritage area also raises questions. There are two distinct views of this inquiry, which has been signalled since 1989, but not yet executed. The regional and national DOC view, expressed in several one-to-one interviews with DOC staff, is that it will not be contentious, because neither the natural values nor the conservation status of the land are now in contention. The other view, expressed by staff of the regional council and by individual local interviewees, is that the inquiry will be long drawn out and extremely contentious.

There are practical reasons why DOC has not held the inquiry. Other management priorities—from the production of a Conservancy Management Strategy to the need to devote scarce resources to other conservation problems (Department of Conservation 1994)—have taken precedence. Also the department's income from central government has been reduced drastically.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, it is tempting to wonder whether conflicting claims on staff time and energy have not been strategically useful. As tourist activity in the area has increased substantially<sup>15</sup> in the five years since the extension of the world heritage area, local antagonism may well already be less than it was; by the time the national park inquiry gets to the top of the priority list, it may well have stopped being contentious.

#### *In process*

The South Westland Environment and Community Advisory Group (SWECAG) was established in 1989 to:

liaise on the implementation of the Government's tourism and recreation package for South Westland to ensure that it is best directed to give maximum benefits for tourism and recreation, and related employment and economic opportunities in the region. (Department of Conservation undated)

SWECAG's main area of perceived power was in the allocation of grants for a three-year period, totalling NZ\$50,000 per year, to entrepreneurs wishing to establish or extend tourism-related businesses. To the residents of South

Westland what was at stake was community viability, the continuance of their own sense of identity and local heritage in the face of external interference. There was considerable cynicism about the relative worth of another committee:

A lot of the Haast community has been involved with other government departments<sup>6</sup> and there hasn't been particularly happy outcomes from meetings—like there have been liaison committees and that set up in the past, and it was just seen to be a formality. You turned up at these liaison meetings and you put forward your case, and then absolutely nothing came of it at the end. So you all went home feeling very very frustrated and saying 'another waste of time, why on earth do we bother?', but you keep on going back in the hopes. (focus group 15 March 1995)

SWECAG members were centrally appointed rather than elected or selected locally, which may be one reason why:

the community has not taken the opportunity to get fully involved. It's really only been when issues have arose along the way that there's been a good turn out of locals and—they have at times changed things—plans—when they have got involved in the process they have been able to have their say and see good results for their efforts. (ibid)

Although appointed purely as an advisory group, SWECAG:

actually got strengthened as a result of the department's [DOC's] own interest, we made it . . . a mandatory process to consult, because we wanted to get over that sort of rubber stamping idea that the community might have, that we just might listen to what people's advice was, and then go and do what we wanted to do. (ibid)

In June 1995 SWECAG had its last meeting. Officially there was nothing else for it to do: all the government grant had been spent and DOC's recreational and interpretive projects were almost completed. Indeed, the attendance at the previous two meetings in November 1994 and March 1995 had been poor. When asked why the group's brief had not been extended, those present at the March meeting were evasive:

In the future we will consult with the Haast community through the various forums that already exist [in] South Westland generally, such as the Haast Residents' and Rate-payers' Association. (ibid)

Despite their keenness to say that 'the key point is that SWECAG had a job to do and it's done it well' (ibid), people were reluctant to talk about the wider issue of community involvement in the world heritage area. No one mentioned the pending inquiry into the conservation values of the stewardship land. There appeared to be continuing conflict within the community, and between community members who were on SWECAG and those who were not. The closest anyone came to talking about further involvement, or the tensions around it, was the comment that:

well, most of us live in South Westland, [but] we were still a group of outsiders saying, along with DOC, what should happen, in somebody else's patch, and OK, we went through that, and then with the public consultation everything started to

come right, but as far as us as a group carrying on, we've been through that, how much longer, what was originally intended was it two years? or eighteen months? We extended it two years, yes, more or less to see the finish of some of the projects, er because we haven't had any money, because the original money ran out, and we've had lunch [laughter] and that's been about it. (ibid)

Another member commented that SWECAG:

had a certain mandate and that mandate did not encompass all the issues that normally come from a community. At this juncture, I think it's a natural thing, it's just winding down because its job has been completed. It's not a reflection—I don't think—on its . . . er . . . yeah [hesitation] its . . . em . . . ability to function or anything like that, its just a reflection that its work has been completed. (ibid)

The hesitation in the above extract suggests that there was more to the end of the committee than the speaker claimed. DOC has recently established another community liaison group in the northern West Coast community of Karamea, modelled on SWECAG, to be a forum for issues that arise as a result of the designation of the new Kahurangi National Park. Given the rapid growth in tourism in South Westland, increased investment in tourism from both locals and others, and growing pressure on the conservation estate, there is no *a priori* reason why SWECAG itself could not have continued. Without it, there is no clear process or channel for communication and debate between the residents of South Westland and the government department that is responsible for most of the land in the area.

#### *Acquiescing in invisibility*

Rose suggests that women often apparently agree to remain invisible within spaces dominated by men. At first sight the clearest parallel in heritage and land in South Westland relates to tangata whenua issues: it would be reasonable to suppose that what may be happening in South Westland reflects a growing suspicion among Maori elsewhere, manifest in a reluctance to continue to share knowledge with non-Maori because of the history of mis-appropriation and lack of proper respect and understanding of such knowledge (Jackson, undated). This assumption is misleading, as certain Maori and Maori-related issues are visible, although the motives behind such visibility—such as in the issue of exporting water (see above)—are not necessarily transparent. Among the tangata whenua there appears to be some strategic, purposeful layering of issues into visible, accessible aspects and invisible aspects. For example, the West Coast Regional Council's Komiti Rangapu at this time represented tangata whenua issues on resource management: the Kaitakawaenga (Maori liaison officer) sifted potential cases for relevance to Maori, and took those issues to the Komiti.<sup>17</sup> Full public disclosure of the detail of Maori concerns was not necessarily required (interview 29 March 1994). This process hardly suggests the wilful invisibility of a group that believes itself to be so powerless that public action is futile.

On the other hand, throughout the project both Maori and non-Maori respondents conveyed a sense that they would engage with regional or national agencies when they had to, or when an issue arose for which there was a defined process within the public sphere. In many cases, however, people expressed a

preference just to get on with whatever it was they are doing—some in the hope that they would not be noticed, some believing that the world heritage area might actually go away. Some people, including people who in 1992 claimed to be committed South Westlanders, by 1995 had simply left the area, rather than face the changes that were felt to be imminent (focus groups 22 November 1994, 15 March 1995, 16 March 1995).

It may be that the demise of SWECAG (see above) is an example of local people acquiescing in invisibility. The file record of the history of SWECAG has still to be analysed: this may shed some more light on the motivations of the different parties in this complex case.

## REPRESENTATION

### *Interpretation*

DOC has established several interpretive outlets in the Haast area, using central government funds targeted to the South Westland area after the nomination of the world heritage area in 1989. This interpretation includes some information on cultural activity, from pre-colonial Maori settlement to colonial and post-colonial activities such as fishing, road making and farming. However the dominant, normative discourse focuses on the natural qualities of the area as a remnant of Gondwanaland. Although some of the interpretation is located *in situ* so that it provides an immediate filter between visitor and landscape (as in the wetland nature trail through the Hapuka Estuary and the information shelter at Jackson Bay), most is top-down, highly polished, well presented information, inviting no greater involvement from the visitor than the opportunity to develop a more informed view (see figure 3). It will be interesting to see whether a more interactive, experiential approach to interpretation is developed by those locals who are becoming involved in ecotourism (Haast focus group 22 November 1994).

### *Spatial imagery*

The use of specific spatial imagery is exemplified in the extracts already quoted in the section on national and regional narratives: these use 'landscape' in a way that is both objectified and proprietorial.<sup>18</sup> A second look at these extracts confirms that the official language of landscape description can be purple in its intensity. Whether intentionally or not, in contrast West Coasters tend to use language that is so prosaic and straightforward that any descriptive term, let alone metaphor, is hard to track. On occasion, however, the language is simple, original and also metaphorical:

I feel like a dehydrated vegetable if I go out of Haast. When I drive back over, when I get to the top of the pass and the bush starts closing in, I feel as if I've been popped in water and I expand. (interview 27 January 1992)

## SOMEWHERE ELSE

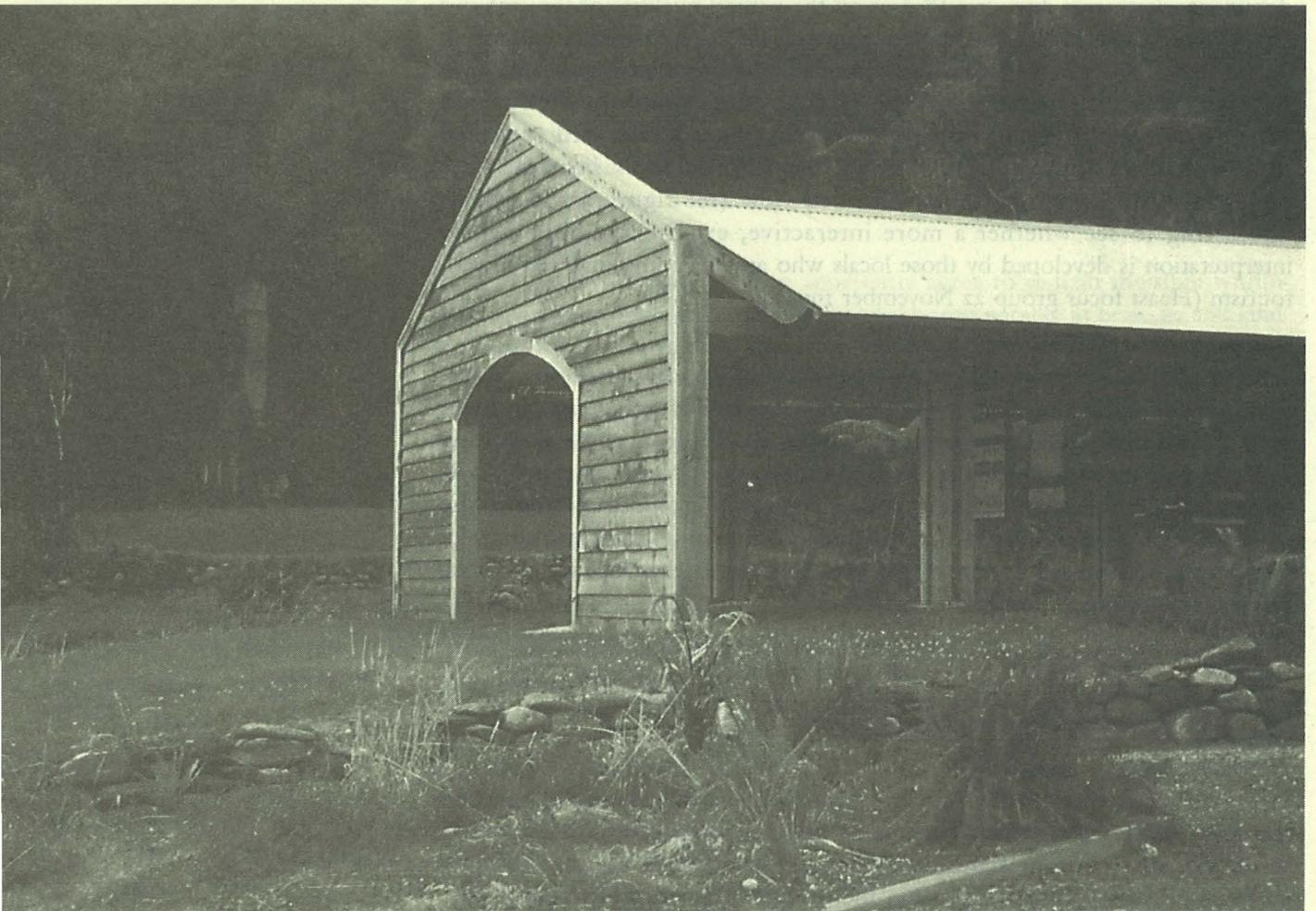
The final question is whether there is a conceptual 'somewhere else', beyond the complexities and contradictions of heritage, where difference can be accommodated without significant power imbalances. Rose has difficulty imagining such a conceptual space in the context of feminism and geography. Although an attractive idea, it is probably too idealistic and impractical to pursue further at this stage in the context of heritage. Even if present contradictions and differences were resolved, others would develop: postmodern

critique advises that there is never a final ending, only a series of more or less incomplete closures. More's Utopia, often used to invoke the idea of the perfect community, was only intended to be perfect for the Tudor merchant classes (Williams 1973); in other words, power imbalances are a fact of life.

They do not, however, stand still. If tourism continues to flourish without unduly adverse effects on natural environments and human communities, then the sharp edges between natural and cultural versions of heritage in South Westland may begin to soften. A less sanguine view of the future imagines greater inequities developing, as the pressures to commodify both culture and nature increase, and issues of authenticity polarise the concerned communities again, perhaps in different ways.

### *Conclusions*

My conclusions relate directly to the opening questions concerning the possibility of defining different versions of heritage, the impact that these versions may have had on policies and strategies for managing the world



*Figure 3: Elegantly sited and evocatively representing hints of old boat shed, the information shelter at Jackson Bay (architect Peter Kent) is self conscious rather than integrated into its setting*

heritage area, and the need for a method that would allow complexity and difference to be deduced from a range of texts.

The interrogative process summarised in this paper suggests that although the official heritage status of Te Waahipounamu refers to a centralised, normative version of heritage as naturalness, other versions coexist. Post-enlightenment epistemology is suggested in the normative version by its representation of time with reference to geological timeframes and a linear approach to history. There are problems associated with labelling other versions on the basis of the material presented here, as they are never directly labelled in the source texts, but are hinted at obliquely. There are however many hints at several cultural versions of heritage, including those of regional government, the tangata whenua, and local people more generally who all identify, yet in differing ways, with South Westland as place.

Both DOC and the South Westland communities themselves seem reluctant to admit the need for any continuous process of local consultation, now that the initial establishment period is past. This comment is not necessarily a criticism of any of the stakeholders, but the attitude is curious. Although nationally DOC is certainly underfunded, Te Waahipounamu is one of only two world heritage areas in New Zealand, and attracts increasing numbers of international tourists. Tourism, even eco-tourism, does not necessarily have a benign effect on natural or cultural settings. It seems reasonable to assume that the special status of the area should result in special effort being directed towards monitoring its increased use and ensuring that the universal values of the world heritage area are understood, respected and upheld. Now that SWECAG has been disbanded, even if such effort is occurring, the process is effectively invisible. DOC accepts that 'unless we've got the general support of the community, in the long run what we're doing won't stand the test of time. Communities are at all levels, from the local right up to the international' (interview 24 June 1994). An issue which may merit further research is which community, which approach to place and whose narratives should take precedence where land with world heritage status is concerned.

The connections among heritage, place and policy are problematic, complex and often paradoxical, particularly when incomplete or unarticulated policy is still implemented, as it appears to be in the South Westland section of the South-West New Zealand World Heritage Area. These policy issues might be handled in a more transparent way if it were more readily accepted that all heritage matters are cultural constructs. If that were possible, even areas such as Te Waahipounamu, with its unique natural qualities derived from the ancient super-continent of Gondwanaland, should perhaps be reconceptualised as cultural heritage.

Using a feminist interpretation of geographic thought as the basis for the interrogation of texts and the interweaving of narratives about heritage, is an exploratory technique and one that is capable of further development and refinement. Yet, although not yet perfected, the underlying theory and the analytical approach derived from it have allowed complexity and paradox in expressions of heritage to be articulated in an encouraging way.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on an ongoing doctoral research project which explores the meaning of heritage at a range of scales from global to local.

<sup>2</sup> Most of these reports were unpublished. Examples include New Zealand Forest Service (1987), Nicholson and Higham (1986) and the Sinclair Report (1982).

<sup>3</sup> New Zealand's national parks and forest parks were established under separate legislation and until recently were managed by different government departments. Public recreation has been a key objective for both; in national parks the protection of natural values is also vital, whereas the forest park system was regarded as consistent with multiple-use forest management (McKelvey 1995, p.247). Since 1987 DOC has managed all national parks and those parts of the forest park system that were transferred to the national conservation estate.

<sup>4</sup> Prior to this nomination, world heritage status already existed for the national parks of Westland, Mount Cook and Fiordland (UNESCO 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Tangata whenua, literally 'people of the land', refers to New Zealand's indigenous Maori population. The local runanga (or Maori committee) is Te Koeti Turanga, with members related but not identical to Ngai Tahu, the dominant South Island iwi or tribe.

<sup>6</sup> Both reserves and stewardship land are in public ownership and largely (though not entirely in the case of reserves) managed by DOC. However, where reserves have an explicit function—there are, for example, reserves for scenic, historic, scientific and government purposes—stewardship areas are more generic, as land taken into the conservation estate from other sources (for example, from the state forest system) and which would otherwise have no conservation status.

<sup>7</sup> The map of the nomination area (in Department of Conservation 1989) differentiates between national park land and 'other land managed by the Department of Conservation', which includes explicitly protected reserves and ecological areas and other 'conservation areas' that are 'deemed to be held for conservation purposes' as well as stewardship land. This 'other land' is described briefly but is not mapped in detail and there is no summary table which allows the comparison of areas of different categories of conservation land across the whole world heritage area.

<sup>8</sup> The most cynical definition suggests that the variability is so extreme that no definition is possible: it can mean 'anything you want' (Hewison 1987, p.32).

<sup>9</sup> The head offices of all central government departments, including DOC, are in New Zealand's capital, Wellington, in the North Island.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, letter from chair, West Coast United Council, to chair, Canterbury United Council, 3 June 1988. *Judgement on what parts of South Westland are so unique that they must be locked up has to be based on objective evaluations yet to be provided.*

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, articles in the *Greymouth Evening Star* (14 October 1985) and the *Christchurch Press* (14 November 1985).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, correspondence between Buller County Council Chief Executive and Executive Director of Federated Futures, 25 March 1986. *Such a proposal is seen as regressive and its implementation would be a totally unacceptable and unnecessary outside constraint on the ability of West Coasters and New Zealanders at large to determine the future development pattern for this most important area of our region.*

<sup>13</sup> Within the area of DOC's West Coast Conservancy, 75% of the total land area is Crown Land within the conservation estate (Department of Conservation 1994). The figure for South Westland is probably over 90%.

<sup>14</sup> See the *West Coast Times* (4 July 1994) 'Effects of \$3 million cut from DOC budget uncertain', which quotes the opposition Labour Party conservation spokesperson as saying that DOC's budget had been cut by a quarter since 1990.

- <sup>15</sup> The Haast Visitor Centre, opened in November 1991, had 57,242 visitors in its first full year. By 1995 the annual figure had risen to more than 70,000 (Department of Conservation file SWAG 3, Agendas and Papers).
- <sup>16</sup> Prior to 1987 three central government departments, now disbanded, had significant presence in South Westland: the New Zealand Forest Service, the Department of Lands and Survey and the Ministry of Works and Development. During the 1980s there were several government-initiated reviews, surveys and working parties all looking at the future of South Westland, and each involving representatives of the local community.
- <sup>17</sup> The Komiti has not operated since late 1995 (Kara Edwards, West Coast Regional Council, personal communication).
- <sup>18</sup> Other emotive language representing wonder and respect for wildness, remoteness and scenic grandeur is strongly related to the emergence of picturesque conventions, which could be the focus for a similar critique. The research currently being undertaken by Jacky Bowring, in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University, into the use and meaning of the picturesque in the discourse of landscape architecture in New Zealand (see Bowring 1995), may interface with this aspect of the South Westland narratives.

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