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MYTHOLOGY of PLACE

the three worlds of

James K Baxter

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text - Lawrence Jones

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During 1993 to 1994 Lawrence Jones and Lloyd Godman worked collaboratively on the Mythology of Place. They retraced the words of one of New Zealand's most acknowledged poets, James K Baxter, searching for artifacts that referenced real places, places where the youthful Baxter's naked feet once trod, places that remained with him until the bare foot days before his death. This project is about the uneathing of three worlds.

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Lawrence Jones

This project began as an idea for a brief paper to be given at the James K. Baxter conference in Dunedin in August 1994. In various walks along the beach and the river road with a friend who had grown up with Baxter, I had noticed how the names she used for places - 'The Giant's Grave', 'Pulpit Rock' -- had chimed in my memory with places named in the Baxter poems. A picnic at Tunnel Beach established some further connections. After all, I did live in a house of Bedford Parade across the street from the Baxter family home, and Baxter's Brighton had very much become my adopted home. Why shouldn't I write about Baxter's use of the place? So I began browsing the Collected Poems for Brighton and other Otago places and realised there was a lot of material there.

As I worked, I had the thought that it would be good to have some slides and photographs to illustrate these places, and I asked my friend and Brighton neighbour Lloyd Godman if he would be interested in taking the photographs, especially as I remembered the photographs he had done for Frank McKay's life of Baxter. I envisaged a few Saturday expeditions in and roundBrighton, and perhaps to Central Otago. However, as we got to work on the images, the project became more complex and ambitious. For one thing, the appropriate places were not always that easy to identify or to reach. Soon I found myself watching from a less precarious spot on Big Rock as Lloyd gained the 'difficult security' (Baxter's phrase) of the cave overlooking the Bay and took his memorable sequence of photos; or trying out my very uncertain tramping skills inching across the bluff above an East Matukituki River in semi-flood, on the way to the Aspiring Hut where Baxter had written 'Poem in the Matukituki Valley'; or scrambling up a hillside at the head of the Otago Peninsula to get a view across the harbour mouth to Aramoana, as a fog bank gathered outside the harbour but did not yet enter it; or sloshing by a muddy track to Duffy's Farm, led by a long-time resident who used to visit the Duffys, all of us aware that there had been a spectacular murder recently at the shed built on the site of Duffy's old house; or standing in the rain on Scrogg's Hill looking down at the flooded Taieri Plain, just as Baxter must have seen it. The project was both less simple and more exciting than I had anticipated.

Something else that I should have anticipated but did not was what happened in the process of taking the pictures. For soon it became evident to me that these were not going to be mere 'illustrations'. In searching out Baxter's places and symbols, Lloyd was finding his own symbols in the landscape, complementary to Baxter's.

The images that emerged were not illustrations but rather were works of art inspired by Baxter's works of art, as so much art is in part a response to other art. The fallen pear tree, the bent metal rod in the wild landscape, the broken platform in the foreground with Baxter's feared and respected mountains and glaciers in the background, the cross emerging from the wild river, the shape of the roof of Baxter's upstairs room on Bedford Parade seen as echoing the shape of Scroggs Hill behind it, the discarded crown of thorns of the seaweed on the beach in front of the 'Prometheus' rocks -- these were not symbols from the poems themselves, but they were consonant with them. As Baxter had done, Lloyd was finding his own symbols in the landscape. It was a thrill and a pleasure to see the prints emerge from the process, to see these works of art taking shape.

Thus when it was time for the conference, the slides were there for my talk, but also the meeting room for most of the sessions had screens around the edges bearing the large prints of the Baxter photos that are now in the Hocken Library. We were surrounded by Baxter's Otago, and those images established a tone for the conference.

The conference was a climax of the process, but for me not the end. In the month following the conference I explored the unpublished materials in the Baxter papers at the Hocken, looking for a few more poems to fit into the argument, and I found tremendous riches -- poems, talks, essays, reviews, supplying surprising and gratifying confirmation and extension of some of my readings. The earlier versions and related unpublished poems surrounding 'Tunnel Beach', for example, supported and enriched my reading of the symbolism of that poem. And there were symbolic clocks and spires everywhere, as well as a striking definition of Baxter's idea of 'paradise'. There was fascinating evidence in the juvenilia to show that Baxter was relatively slow in arriving at a specific use of local symbolism, and that it was when he arrived there that the poetry began to come alive. So the essay expanded into its present form, and an unexpectedly rich learning experience for me came, if not to an end, then to a satisfactory stopping place.

Lloyd Godman (left) and Lawrence Jones enjoying a coffee at Lawrence's house on Bedford Parade 2004

Lawrence Jones (left) and Lloyd Godman (right) outside Lawrence's house on Bedford Parade during the Baxter Conference 1994 (photograph Max Lowrey)

Introduction - THE MAKING OF 'THE MYTHOLOGY OF PLACE'

Lloyd Godman

The power of place is such that it can centre our world. It can become a force that confines, restricts and binds, but the same inexplicable force can also become a different power; a centre from which a vortex of perceptive experiences grow. Brighton is a small seaside township near Dunedin, it is a place where James K Baxter lived and grew up as a boy, a place that inspired Baxter, a place that became the centre of his perceptive world, a place that was important in his writing. A place of personal

Professor Lawrence Jones and myself have also lived in Brighton for 20 years, in fact, close to the Bedford Parade house that Baxter grew up in. While there are deviations in our experiences, between us we have walked the same beaches as Baxter, paused on the very same headlands to watch the same ocean swirl the long thick leathers of kelp amid a frenzy of spray. Smelt the same dense vapours of fresh salt air as the curtains drift off the ocean, climbed over the very same sand enshrined rocks and fished in the same crystal clear pools. Swam in the same embracing sea water, paddled in the same mysteriously black river and hid in the hollows of the same caves. Heard the same haunting cry of the gulls amid the rustle of flax and witnessed the same razored gales that cut incessantly at any obstacle. In essence breathed the same unique airs.

As a component of the Baxter Conference held in Dunedin this year I was presented with an opportunity to work collaboratively with Lawrence on a project called "Mythology of Place" about Baxter and his three worlds of Brighton, Central Otago, and Dunedin. Photographically the project involved locating and photographing areas of significance to Baxter's poems, in some cases the exact rocks or trees that featured in his writing. While there is the undeniable representation in the photographs that locates them both in time and place, the real challenge was the manifestation of Baxter's mythology in the visual image through the use of symbol, metaphor and detail.

This we saw as an acknowledgment of both place and heritage. Affirmation of Brighton as the centre of our experiential vortex and also an explicit occasion to pay homage to Baxter's legacy of mythology.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF PLACE: JAMES K. BAXTER'S OTAGO WORLDS

Lawrence Jones

'What happens is either meaningless to me, or else it is mythology'[1]

- this much-quoted statement of James K.Baxter's is a starting place for a discussion of his uses of Otago places in his work, for it takes us into the heart of the Romantic poetic which determines those uses. To Baxter, 'Poetry is not magical but mythical', presenting 'the crises, violations and reconciliations of the spiritual life in mythical form because this is the only way in which the conscious mind can assimilate them'.2
Myth is central to poetry because it 'is the form the poet uses to crystallise experience'.3 That crystallisation is in the form of symbols, which 'cannot be explained' but rather 'must be regarded as a door opening upon the dark - upon a world of intuitions and associations of which the poet himself is hardly conscious'.4 The symbols in turn are drawn from concrete sense experiences in the immediate environment. This process is most fully described in 'the tenets of the Horse religion' in Baxter's posthumously published autobiographical novel Horse:

Surrounding Horse, not made by him, existed the sky, the earth, the sea, and other less clearly defined creatures, serenely melancholy, neither glad nor sorry that Horse existed. Yet Horse's happiness depended on an intimate contact with this world of substance. . . . By contact with the world of substance Horse had access to a sacred power. . . . This power adhered to particular places and particular people. In his childhood Horse had experienced its manifestation on certain cliff-faces and on the banks of creeks, especially where flax or toe-toe bushes grew freely. His father conveyed it strongly, by the capable strength of his hands, and by the smell of burnt gum-leaves he often carried on his person. As the primitive paradise of childhood fell apart, Horse had been led by meditation and example to look for the signs of this power in women.5

These sense experiences become symbolic by a process of 'natural contemplation' upon 'the testament of sand and the parables of rock - those very humble, very obscure communications from nature'.6 As he wrote in an early poem to his parents, 'For me all earth is symbol'.7 These symbols coalesce into myth as the poet intuitively discovers 'a sacred pattern in natural events', a 'pattern which lies, unknown, like the bones of St Peter under the surface rubble of events'.8 The artist in his 'double vision . . . expresses through an artistic medium, at one and the same time, selected portions of objective reality and a subjective pattern which these are able to signify'.9 This subjective 'animistic pattern which underlies civilised activity' the poet attempts to 'lay . . . bare, and draw upon its strength without being submerged by it'.10 Since the pattern is animistic, 'Animism is an essential factor in the artist's view of the world', a factor available to 'the child and the savage', but lost in 'a materialist technological civilisation', its 'generative power' to be gained only through 'the rediscovery and revaluation of childhood experience'. 11'The Dark Side' vividly presents the child's animistic vision, built 'Upon the grave of savage animism' as experienced by his tribal forebears. 12 Such animism involves the 'passionate sympathy with natural objects' that Baxter admired in Alistair Campbell's poetry, and it provides the 'peculiar power' of Denis Glover's landscape poetry, as 'mountain, river, bushland and sea assume . . . the proportions of animistic powers'. 13

This Romantic poetic clearly underlies Baxter's poetry and is an apologia for it. In that poetry he uses a store of natural images drawn from childhood experience, using 'local places or events as a focus for legend', to form an animistic pattern that coalesces into myth. In a crucial passage he relates that formation of natural myth in childhood to literary myth, both forming part of his education as poet:

Waves, rocks, beaches, flax bushes, rivers, cattle flats, hawks, rabbits, eels, old man manuka trees . . . provided me with a great store of images that could later enter my poems. Among the books at home were one or two of Norse and Greek mythology. I became the companion of Odin and Thor and Jason and Ulysses. That was an indispensable education. 15

When he returned to Otago in 1966 to take up the Robert Burns Fellowship at the University of Otago, he spoke of the importance of that store of local images from childhood: More than half of the images that recur in my poems are connected with early memories of the Brighton township, river, hills and seacoast - especially the seacoast. Sitting down to write in a room in Wellington, again and again my mind would make an imaginary journey over the neck of the Big Rock, across the mouth of the Brighton River, and wander round the domain, or up to the boathouse, or along the sandhills, or out to the fishing rocks where the swells came straight in without interruption all the way from Peru. 16

As that statement implies, there were also other sources of images than Brighton: other places in Otago, India (from his 1958 journey there), such North Island places as Wanganui, Kai Iwi Beach (sounding very much like Brighton in 'At the Bay'), Akitio, Waipatiki Beach, and. towards the end, especially Jerusalem. But the concern here is that little world of Brighton, a fallen Eden fronting the sea, flanked by two other Otago worlds representing those two opposing images that he considered to be 'of peculiar cogency for New Zealand poets', the City and the Wilderness.17 While in his later poetry the City became Wellington and then Auckland, in his early and middle poetry it is Dunedin, 'a different place' from Brighton, 'the town I ventured into when I first came of age . . . . the place where (as all people have to) I broke away from my first family and began the somewhat agonising search for a tribe of my own'.18 And the Wilderness is often the mountain country of Central Otago, especially the Matukutuki Valley, 'the mirror and symbol of the power of God which cannot be contained in human thought or human society'.19 The three worlds together form a mythical structure, a spatial myth against which the temporal myth of his life in his poetry is acted out.

At the centre of this poetic universe is the Brighton township. It was a 'usual enough' place, this 'small town of corrugated iron roofs / Between the low volcanic saddle / And offshore reef where blue cod browse', a town with 'A creek, a bridge, a beach, a sky / Over it', a town of 'gravel roads . . . School, store, and bowling green'. 20 But for the young Baxter, 'the town stood plain, huge at the world's centre'. 21 He observed his 'small stretch of coast on a large island' from a hill-top, noting 'shore, islet, reef'.22 Or from 'the macrocarpa tree, the child's look-out' he took in 'the sea, the tide-river, chief vista of content', or looked inland to the 'gorse on ridged hill-side blown clean by the sea-wind'.23 From 'sea, hills, cattle island', the
adolescent felt 'calmness expands; vast sanity'.24 This Wordsworthian world was primarily the child's Eden, the place which he experienced as a 'natural paradise' in growing up, loading his 'inner mind with images purloined' from it: 'the first cigarette tasted in the top branches of the macrocarpa tree, the mud-eels hooked or gaffed from the creek below the house, the limestone cave where somebody reckons the Maoris used to bury their dead, the girls undressing in the bathing sheds, seen through a crack in the wall. . . .'25 This 'natural paradise' is of course a psychological state associated with the place, not the place itself, as his definition makes explicit:

A sense of absolute value in what is happening; a sense of being in relation to other people and to things; a sense of endless possibilities of fruitfulness; and above all, the habit of natural contemplation, the letting the mind rest upon, draw nourishment from, the images of nature perceived as an organic whole - these things constitute, to my mind, a paradise, as far as such a condition is possible after the Fall of Man.26
The fall from the natural paradise of childhood is inevitable, a second Fall that all must experience. It is dramatised in the two versions of 'The Town Under the Sea': when the poet was eight (in the prose version) or 'At puberty / Or the first deadly sin' (in the later poem), 'the sea rose up in one / Pounding night and swallowed the land'.27The original 'primitive paradise', although it 'stands high and dry in the eyes of a hundred children, peopled, ringing and abundant, like Noah's faithful ark', is 'hidden from us as we go about our deaths'.28 When the adult returns to it, 'the township I grew up in / has a closed, glazed face . . . either I or it / have retreated to the back of a paperweight!' Truly, 'He who comes back with different eyes must see a different land'.29 When he looks at the crab-apple tree in the neighbour's garden from which he stole as a child, it appears as 'A second-rate Eden / nobody expected to find themselves outside!'30 The poet can regain his natural paradise only in memory, and then it is the memory of Innocence coloured by Experience, so that he usually sees prefigured in it the Fall.

Thus the memory of smoking the wild bees out of their hive in the rotten cabbage tree 'beside the stagnant river' becomes an image of the Fall, its treasure not the honey the child coveted but . . . a nectar Distilled in time, preaching the truth of winter To the fallen heart that does not cease to fall.31 Many of the images from the town and the nearby farms are associated with loss and the Fall. There is the simple loss through Time, represented by ruined farms. One is the site of the farm of his great granduncle Duncan McColl, above Black Bridge, which bridged McColl Creek where it joins with the Otokia Stream to form the Brighton River. The first settlers saw in the wild landscape the possibility of 'release, eventual and ancestral peace, / Building the stubborn clans again', but the poet can now see only an overgrown orchard where . . . undergrowth Among stunted apple-trees coiling Trips the foot. Sods grass-buried like antique faith. 32

Returning to the site in a later poem, the poet finds only fire-blackened stones, thistle growing amidst them, finding in the fallen house not a Yeatsian 'Atridean doom that daunted / ***The heart with lidless gorgon stare', but rather a Hardyan 'wraith of dead joy haunted':***

There once the murk was cloven
By hearthlight fondly flaring within:
Adamant seemed their hope and haven.
O Time, Time takes in a gin
The quick of being! Pale now and gossamer thin
The web their lives had woven. 33

The old McColl site was on 'the clay track leading / From Black Bridge to Duffy's Farm'.
At the farm at the end of that track, on the hill above the ruined orchard, with its 'twisted apple trees / that bear no fruit', was the still-standing ruin of Duffy's house, with its memories of Duffy and his common-law wife Sarah still present.
To the poet it presents an accurate image
of what life holds for us:

. . . I cannot

promise more than this, the clods
divided by purgation
of frost, rustling autumn head

of thistle - space, air, light in
a room whose door is broken. 34

While at least the ruins of the orchards remain with Duncan McColl's and Duffy's farms,
along with the ruined house or at least its firestones, nothing, not even the twisted trees,
remains to mark where the orchard and farmhouse had been on the farm on Creamery Road, below Saddle Hill, where Baxter's father Archibald had grown up. A visit to the site with his father shows only an empty paddock, 'not a stone of the house standing', although it all remains there in his father's memories. But for the poet it is another image of loss: 'I inhabit the empty ground'.35 Another visit, this time alone, to the Kuri bush farm where his 'first years flung by / (Earth's) folly unseen yet',36 shows that only a mound stands where the farmhouse was.
But he carries memories of his mother lighting the kerosene lamp and his father taking him outside at night

Holding me up to look at
The gigantic rotating wheel of the stars
Whose time isn't ours. 37

But, in our human time, the farm reminds us of loss and mortality, although he can at least be loyal to memory. The poet takes away a 'splinter of slate' from the old chimney to 'hold [him] back if [he] tried to leave this island' where he hopes he will someday be buried.37 On an earlier visit he remembered 'Here my father showed me Orion and the Plough' and mourned 'The star that fell at midnight will not shine forth again'.38

In Brighton township itself the house and garden on Bedford Parade where he spent most of his childhood and adolescence are associated with his father and mother. His father is seen mostly in relation to the garden and the surrounding landscape, embodying the cycles of nature, including loss but also sometimes the possibility of rebirth or redemption.

He is seen

. . . up a ladder plucking down
The mottled autumn-yellow
Dangling torpedo-clusters
Of passion-fruit for home-made wine.39

The garden where the 'passion-fruit hang gold above an open doorway' is associated with the 'single vison' of the childhood Eden, but 'single vision dies'. In the nearby cemetery the 'bright lizard' is the image of 'The moment of animal joy', but the 'maimed gravestones' imply mortality and loss (the 27 year -old poet is back in Brighton for the funeral of an uncle).40 Earlier, at 21, the poet had returned to the house to find 'no fault' in his father but knew that 'Nor can we thus be friends till we are foes', for he had to break free even from his father's 'light and sympathetic yoke' if he was to grow. He would leave, but bearing with him the image of his father 'rooted like a tree in the land's love'.41Returning at 40 to see his aged father, he is charmed by that smile that 'like a low sun on water / tells of a cross to come', but perhaps the cross implies also rebirth, for he sees his father against the background of spring in the garden, and although he can 'mourn the fishing net / hung up to dry', image of the man whose gardening days are almost over, he can also see 'where crocuses lift the earth'.42 Several years before returning to Otago for the Burns Fellowship, in a poem in which he mourns the 'desecrated earth', the possible destruction by 'atom cloud' in a world where we seem to have only 'our Christ of death . . . A child that has no breath / Not able to be born', he yet imagines a drunk walking Scroggs Hill Road and seeing 'a blaze of light / In a sod hut' that reveals a Maori Mary and a 'Christ of fire' from which vision the drunk would come down to the town.

And praise the living scene

With an unwounded tongue.
In the land where I was born.43

In a gloss on the poem he revealed that 'the Scroggs Hill farm is the place where my own father was born, in a sod house'.44

If the garden is primarily his father's (although his mother has her corner of it), the house is primarily his mother's and is an Eden only in an ironic sense:

Respect an Eden so designed

To occupy the hands and mind,
Whose serpent always lived elsewhere
In other people's tough, disordered lives.45

His mother the poet associates with the kitchen, like the other mothers and female relatives. As the children climbed the macrocarpas out on Bedford Parade, and 'pelted each other with resinous cones',

The boring jailors, far below, indoors
In steaming kitchens floured a batch of scones
Hot-tempered as their ovens, squat and humming
In a closed universe of mutton bones.46

Or she is in the kitchen making 'thick hot winter soup' (in contrast to his father's passion-fruit wine), or is in the rock garden tending 'the gold and pearl trumpets called angels' tears', or she is in the sitting room with the family photographs.47 The 'brown-filmed photographs' link her with the possessive mother on the 'gully farm' who tries to hold Odysseus at home, and the 'macrocarpa windbreak' of that farm links it with the 'old house shaded with macrocarpa' from which 'rises my malady'.48 Thus in Baxter's symbolic world, his mother and her places are associated with family conflict, the rebellion of the adolescent, his struggle to get free of the maternal net. The most painful associations are with the hillside below the Bedford Parade house where, fleeing a 'difficult session' with his mother over his leaving the university, Baxter, like Horse, sat 'on the bare earth under one of McArthur's gum trees,' and wept, gripping 'the huge smooth bole of the tree as if it were a human body'.49 However, he is calmed when he looks down on the river, symbol of the flow of Time (and his own life), the flow that inevitably carries him on to adulthood and independence.

That hillside looks down not only on 'the beer-brown somnolent wave / Of the brackish river' and the cattleflats beyond it, but also on the 'narrow tumulus' of The Giant's Grave standing between hillside and river. The area is associated with childhood memories: racing 'sledges down the hill to the Giant's Grave over dry cowpats to the slimy swamp at the bottom, while the grassheads threshed at your knees'; fishing for eels; sailing flaxstick boats. Fear then seemed irrelevant:

Nothing made us afraid.
No, not fear of drowning, drawn down in weedy arms,
Nor any ghost dragging the eyes unwilling
To gaze on Adam's wound. 50

Yet the young Baxter did imagine Antaeus' bones 'bedded deep' in the tumulus, perhaps an image of the knowledge of Time, Death, and the Fall buried within the child, for he dreamed of seeing the corpse of his 'loved grandmother' with 'her face in anguish smiling' burning on a funeral pyre on the mound.50 Even in the child's paradise, the dark knowledge creeps in.The nearby Brighton River, running sluggishly to sea at the Bay, is repeatedly a symbol of the cycle of Time and Death, seen innocently by the child but now seen more darkly by the adult. The adult poet looks back in memory at the 'daft boy' watching paradise ducks on the 'brackish river shallows' and is brought to 'Thoughts of Eden lost, and the sheen man had broken'. Now, in proper Dylan Thomas fashion, he sees the meaning of the dead duck that he had found then,

Knowing the natural world, like man's, founded
On death, by the same canker grieved and wounded. 51

The middle-aged poet watches the winter river carrying 'a freight of floating pine cones'7 as it runs out to the Bay, remembers his unhappy adolescent sexual yearnings, and thinks of the objects of his resentful lust as they now 'sag on porches, in back rooms, flabby as I am'.52 He remembers following the river back to its source 'among broom bushes / In a gully above the dam', but all he found there was a deserted house and a tree with 'one bitter shrunken apple'. The experience taught him 'nothing but how to die'.53 Where the river runs out between two rocks into the cattle flats with the rotting weed and logs in the swamp like the bones of giants, he and his 'crooked shadow / Bring with us briefly the colour of identity and death'.5 He cannot return to 'the rock bend' up river 'past the cattle ground' as it was when he was a boy, when he could glide in his canoe over 'a hole going down to the world's centre, / Waiting to swallow the sun' or could drop his line into 'the bog-black water' while sitting on 'a branch of the oldest tree'. When he was a youth 'He'd swum in that cavern, down to the bottom' to discover a 'riddle' which the man now answers with death. The adult thinks that if he were there now he would be 'the invisible drowned man' beneath, 'too tightly held / By the weed's arms to rise / Again to the dazzle of the day '.56 If the adult returns, the river is no longer like'a smaller Amazon', but rather now

The river
is foul weed and sludge
narrower
than I had supposed, fed by
a thousand drains. 57

When he returns in the late 1960s, even Black Bridge is gone, 'under fifty bull- / dozed yards of gravel and dry clay'.58

These images of the river as the indifferent process of Time, involving inevitable loss, are all from the Brighton River. The neighbouring Taieri , 'the river that goes / Southward to the always talking sea',59 also features in the poems, but is not so consistently symbolic. Where it leaves the gorge and moves into the estuary at Taieri Mouth the poet sees it as 'the old water-dragon / Sliding out from a stone gullet', while further up the gorge it bends 'like a bright sabre'.60 To the poet on his brother's boat in the river it seems to speak, "Does it matter? Does it matter?" and its tidal nature seems to symbolise his own inner state, 'carrying like salt and fresh inside me / The opposing currents of my life and death'.61 On the other side of the gorge, on the Taieri Plain, it takes on other significances. When the poet looks down on it from Scroggs Hill when it is in flood and has 'covered paddocks, sheds, and fences', the sight moves his 'inward guardian' to say to him 'All / Knowledge, my son, is knowledge of the fall'.62 The process of association is obscure (except that almost everything brings Baxter to the Fall), but it is probably Noah's Flood that provides the implicit link. At Henley, the river before it enters the gorge becomes a perhaps overdetermined symbol to one of Baxter's dramatic monologuists, a suicidal adulterous commercial traveller. He sees the river first as 'Jehovah's book' and then dreams of suicide beneath its 'serpent waves', swallowed by the 'bog-black stream'. 63

In his prose commentary on the poem, Baxter also refers to the Styx and to the Norse world serpent in relation to the river, sees both it and the Leith as symbolising 'the obliteration of the conscious mind by subconscious forces', and points to the traveller's imagined view of himself as a decomposing corpse among the trout and eels as 'a very apt image for any South Islander acquainted with the Taieri and the Clutha rivers'.64

Here perhaps the literary mythology overloads the natural image. Less complexly, when the younger poet sees the rapid river in its other, steeper gorge, between the Strath Taieri and the Taieri Plain, the 'raving river' becomes a metaphor for the blood associated with sexual passion and pain. 'River, cattle flats' thus did supply Baxter with images, but 'waves, rocks, beaches' are even more significant in his mythology of place. Brighton is not only the fallen Eden, but its beaches are places 'at the fringes of the human domain, where the City encounters the Wilderness, [where] artists are able to discover those forms which become the treasures of their race and the real knowledge which liberates the intellect'.66 In 'Symbolism in New Zealand Poetry', he listed no less than four symbolic meanings for beaches:

as an arena of historical change, the arrival and departure of races;
as a place where revelations may occur;
as the no-man's land between conscious and unconscious;
as an arena for sexual adventure. 67

In his own poetry, the first of these meanings is associated with the Bay at Brighton, where the Brighton River flows into the sea. The image of his Gaelic-speaking ancestors arriving at the place and crossing the river becomes the central image in a tribal myth, a myth that incorporates the third, the historical Fall, the Fall into modern rational and technological secularism, but a myth that also looks back to the dream of building a Pastoral Paradise and a Just City. In the uncollected 'Ancestors', the poet has a vision of those first settlers, 'heirs of hopes', as they cross the river, but realises that they are all 'hunched in their last cradles'

. . . leaving our plight
To be fed only by shreds of windy light,
Fibres of dark in the river's rope and fable. 68

The image is picked up in the prose of 'Conversation with an Ancestor', where Baxter describes the image of the crossing, sees the dawn sky as intimating 'a new thing, a radical loss and a radical beginning', sees the settlers, as Scott Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway imaginatively saw the Dutch sailors before Long Island in The Great Gatsby, and eloquently expounds their significance for him:

. . . and the earth lay before them, for that one moment of history, as a primitive and sacred Bride, unentered and unexploited. Those people, whose bones are in our cemeteries, are the only tribe I know of; and though they were scattered and lost, their unfulfilled intention of charity, peace, and a survival that is more than self-preservation, burns like radium in the cells of my body; and perhaps a fragment of their intention is fulfilled in me, because of my works of art, the poems that are a permanent sign of contradiction in a world where the pound notes and lens of the the analytical Western mind are the only things held sacred. I stand then as a tribesman left over from the dissolution of the tribes.69

The view of his ancestors is complex. They are seen as heroic, coming to New Zealand to create 'a Utopia, a Happy Island, a Just City in which the best of the Old World would survive, taking new Antipodean forms'.70 However, they were defeated by history, their 'country virtue' was 'betrayed' by gold when the new colony was swamped by the gold rush. The young poet would not wish them to be alive again to share his Robert Lowell-ish vision that 'their orchard wealth decays' on 'gorse-choked farms' while 'our markets thrive / Dry tinder, touchwood for the final blaze'.71 But their intention went unfulfilled partly because of what they brought with them, a negative Calvinism that knew 'their Christ or no Christ ' only in 'the raging crackle of / These fire-blackened thorns', so that they left us with 'the green blood / Of thorns that thickens in our veins'. Our society, then, has 'a strong Calvinist bias unconsciously received by us from our forefathers, the early settlers', a latent puritanism that it 'carries like strychnine in its bones', or, to change the image, that 'underlies our determinedly secular culture like the bones of a dinosaur buried in a suburban garden plot'.72These forefathers, the poet's great-uncles and great-aunts, had 'strong chains in heart and head', could deal with 'Adam's dirt' only by repression and projection, so that

the lack ate inwardly like
fire in piled-up couchgrass too
green for it, billowing smoke. . . . 73

Thus for Baxter that mythical scene of the ancestors crossing the river at Brighton Bay relates to a complex ancestor myth, one in which the ancestors both, as remnants of the primitive tribe, contrast to the present technological and rationalistic culture, and, as puritans, carry the seeds of that culture's disease. This complex myth appears again in the last section of 'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', when the poet again contemplates Brighton Bay, 'where a thread of brackish brown water is flowing out to the river mouth, where the early settlers crossed once, leading their horses'. He feels an 'unfathomable sadness' as he views the place. He would like to imagine that the bird-tracks left on the hard sand on the beach were 'made by the feet of human dancers, meeting around an altar or a bonfire in a nightlong dance, men and women joined, or perhaps women only, honouring the Earth Mother'. That is, he attempts to imagine a more primitive tribe than his ancestors, unfallen; but present-day Brighton stands in utter contradiction to such a vision:
But the glass-fronted houses above the bay will supply no ritual, nothing to join the intellect or body to the earth it came from - only TV aerials, trucks of bricks, washing hung out to dry, ice cream cones stacked behind the counter of a shop - the trivia of a culture that has ceased to understand itself. The spondaic thud I hear is not the noise of feet but the beating of my own heart.74

The poet turns to the buried rocks in the wet sand flats, which he sees as 'the half-buried limbs of . . . the Titan Prometheus, principle of the rebellious energy in man that enlarges our order by breaking it and allowing it to re-form in another pattern - an energy that our way of life dismembers and disregards'. In the poem that he writes to honour Prometheus, the Titan's pain and gift, both repressed, are brought back to us by 'calamity, time, deeply thwarted desire', and as the poet contemplates Prometheus' limbs he feels the presence of the ancestors:

Only a pressure at
The fences of the mind. From clay mounds they gather
To share the Titan's blood with us. 74

But only the occasional ghostly presence is left to him, 'the tribesman left over from the dissolution of the tribes'. Where his father's uncle could nearly kill a man who taunted him with having no tartan, the poet fears that 'the cloth has worn too thin', that there is nothing like that left to him to fight for.75

Thus the beach as an 'arena for historical change' operates for Baxter as a symbol within an ancestor myth. The beach's other symbolic meanings tend to gather around the sexual one for him. If the beach is a 'place where revelation may occur', the revelations are usually of Venus.
Sometimes she refuses to appear, and the revelation is aborted. In 'Elegy at the Year's End', the poet walks down to the the Bay, but there is no revelation of 'green Aphrodite' rising from the sea 'to transfigure the noon'. Rather, he hears 'the Sophoclean / Chorus: All shall be taken '.76 When at 30 he revisits Brighton, 'Venus with her thunder slept / On tired dunes, in grey maternal / Macrocarpa branches'.77 When he returns ten years later to the 'smooth edge of the flax-covered cliff' below Big Rock that had tempted him to suicide when he was younger, 'gutted by / The opposites of sex and pain', 'No squid-armed Venus rose / Out of the surf', but rather he received from the 'hurdling water' the 'invisible spirit ' embodied in the poem.78 The uncollected 'Encounter with Venus', taking place at Tait's Beach rather than at Brighton, is more sardonic. The poet walks the beach, thinking of 'how great Venus . . . has lately abandoned our shore', when he sees an object bobbing in the waves. He wades out to it to discover 'our islands' emblem, a dead sheep' with 'a great swollen gut, putrefied':

Yes, mate, indeed
a sacred occasion! Through
the surf I stumbled back, dumb-
struck by shades of nationhood. 79

Again, at the Otago Heads, he looks down from 'cliff-top boulders' to see, not any Venus to be 'born / Out of the gulf's throat', but rather the kraken of the fog, whose 'wide / Blinding tendrils move like smoke / Over the rock neck, the muttering flats, the houses'. 80
When Venus does appear, she may be primarily a projection of desire. While the teen-age poet could see her as 'the birth of beauty' as she emerged 'shining from the sea-foam', the mature poet imagines the boys on the beach at Aramoana constructing 'their sensual fantasy, which is also sacred', transforming a girl with a surfboard into 'the image of Venus not rising from the sea but going into it'.82 He preaches to the men at of Holy Cross that 'That long-haired girl upon the beach / With her eyes half-shut' is there because he had 'found / A Venus in the heart', and if they judge her they 'turn her from a pretty girl / Into a demoness'.8 At Brighton, 'That girl in her beach suit loitering among the dunes is no longer a figure of Venus' to the forty-year old poet who is no longer 'fighting the wars of Venus'.8At Long Beach, in contrast, the sleepy middle-aged poet is brought back to life by an 'apparition of the goddess Venus' in the person of 'A girl like a green hard stringy lupin pod', his 'venereal thought / Constructed out of air or nothing. . . .' 85

The most positive revelation associated with a beach is sexual, when Horse and Fern make love on an abandoned gun emplacement above the surf:
It was the hour of the hawk, not the hour of the dove. While the waves chiselled at the rocks below, the mythical identification with all things living was achieved.
'The goddess sex' had 'led him through a low doorway to the only earthly paradise'.86 At Tunnel Beach the 'hour of the dove' is experienced, but the revelation is more ambiguous.
The sexual act seems to 'shut out sea thunder', to bring doves that still 'the lonely air'. But then the poet hears 'the voices of the sea's women riding / All storm to come', and he is not left with the doves of love but rather 'combers grinding / Break sullen on the last inviolate shore'.87
A passage in the later 'Letter to Robert Burns' provides a gloss on that experience, as the poet praises it for putting him in touch with the 'biology' and 'mythology' that our culture represses and that are essential to the poet:

And I must thank the lass who taught me
My catechism at Tunnel Beach
For when the hogmagandie ended
And I lay thunder-struck and winded,
The snake-haired Muse came out of the sky
And showed her double axe to me. 88

Twenty years later the poet returns to the same beach. If twenty years before,'Venus came over the sea' to the lovers, 'Lying (as so many do) / In one another's arms', she had left them 'Like shards of a dish the spade jars on'. This time what the poet sees is the cliff above the beach: 'a high stone Rhadamanthus / Washed by the black froth of the sea'.89 As the notebook drafts make more explicit than does the final version of the poem, Baxter wishes us to recall not so much that Rhadamanthus was king of the Isles of the Blessed, where the lovers may temporarily have beached, but rather that he was judge of souls in the underworld, where the lovers will end, their moments of bliss long ago lost. Thus in the version entitled 'The Tunnel' the poet makes explicit that he had not seen the cliff as a young man, 'made / Blind by Venus', but now he sees it as 'the myth / Of judgement when love dies'.90

If the beach can sometimes be the place of ambiguous revelation associated with Venus and the sexual experience, it is more often a less exalted 'arena for sexual adventure'. As such it is seldom positive in its implications, for it is associated with 'the wars of Venus, the bitterest of all, to lose', which the forty-year-old poet claims to be relieved to be beyond, leaving him 'a little nearer to that community of the living and the dead which I have looked for all my life'.91 The sexual adventure is associated with a complex of recurring images involving lupin, sandhills, the Brighton bathing sheds, the Brighton boathouse, summer, Venus personified in girls in bathing suits, frustrated or exploitive sexuality, condoms, and masturbation. The poet remembers the older boys with the 'big girls': 'Under the lupins, whispering in the dirt, / They imitated dogs'.92 Or, later, he sees himself as 'savage empty boy / Haunting the bathing sheds', drawn to and afraid of the older girls, 'furiously inventing a unicorn / Who hated the metal of Venus'.93 He remembers youth and 'the same sweet lie the lupin teaches' as it drops its 'gay pollen' on the frock and the bare leg and shoulder of the girl.94

The depressed and hungover Horse looks out in the morning on 'the treeless Domain' with a few 'early cars from town' already there, and thinks that later 'A few young men would take their girls into the lupins that grew along the sandhills, to lay down their overcoats and bang them in peace, absorbing the healing influences of the sea and soil.'95 In middle age, the poet walks the beach, 'Beyond the high-banked green domain / Where boy and girl lying in lupin mazes / Pluck the dragon's apple'.96 He remembers that 'From Black Head to the bar of Taieri Mouth' his father's uncle 'scattered lupin seed', and he thinks of the lovers who find cover there, leaving 'pale condoms' under the bushes with their 'bright female bloom' and their 'pollen blown over the wide stretch-marked belly of the sea'.97 The boathouse across the road from the river mouth and Domain he also associates with youthful sexuality. He remembers the 'lifted frock' and 'the boathouse spree and the hayloft bed', 'white legs among the cords and rowlocks', and his attempts 'to learn the tricks of water / From the boathouse keeper's daughter'.98 A married man in middle-age, he is still haunted by 'The floating feather / Of adolescent love' that he associates with the boathouse, and it is one of the icons of Brighton that he 'left behind in going to the city'.99 But it is the lupin that comes to mind most frequently. He imagines the 'rumbustious bad young man' (with echoes of Fairburn) persuading the young girl to 'make the two-backed beast' 'under the yellow lupin', and then leaving her.100 He depicts the young man at the dance persuading the girl to come with him into the dunes at the mouth of the creek to defy the morality of her great grand-uncles 'In tartan plaid and moleskin cloth'.101 At the bonfire on the beach, he imagines how the young lovers later in the evening 'two by two will vanish / Into the dunes', their 'widening flesh' possessed by the spirits of the Maori who made a midden of shells on the beach.102 In his more Dylan Thomas- ish moods, he stands on the 'Low lovers' dune', hears Parson's Rock 'preaching to . . . the lupin-sheeted / Bed of the sway backed sinners', while he 'alive must grieve / For the true flesh time wounded. . .' , or he climbs 'to Barney's pulpit rock' and imagines the lovers:

Among night dunes the moony lovers
In lupin shade far and near
Twined under Venus' carnal star
Mock the power of the prince of air.
Their doomed flesh answers an undying summer. 103

Those rocks between sea and beach obviously symbolise a kind of permanence that contrasts to the transitory flesh. 'The stubborn rocks withstand / The ebb and surge of grief'.104 Barney's Island is a presence reminding us of the limits of our technology and the small scale of our time:

The island like an old cleft skull
With tussock and bone needles on its forehead
Lives in the world before the settlers came
With gun and almanac.105

The poet preaches to the gulls from 'Barney's pulpit island side', and he feels most secure in his work when he is 'standing on the rock of real knowledge'.106 The fisherman on the rocks of Barney's Island becomes the image of the poet fishing into the unconscious to find the dark material for the poem:

While loud across the sandhills
Clangs out the Sunday bell
I drop my line and sinker down
Through the weed-fronded swell,
And what I see there after dark
Let the blind wave tell. 107

I go on the beaches when the tide is low

And fish for poems where my four dead uncles,
Jack, Billy, Mark and Sandy

Let down their lines from laps of broken stone
For the fat red cod and small-mouthed greenbone. 108

The symbolism of the rocks varies. If those half-buried rocks between Barney's Island and the swimming beach become the limbs of Prometheus, Lion Rock out off Big Rock, surrounded by the sea, 'shaped like a lion, fronting the south, / With mane of greybrown kelp alive and coiling', is associated with a cynical love affair between a young man and a middle- aged woman living in a cottage opposite it.109 To the older poet it seems to speak of death:

out there
Where the waves never cease to break

In the calmest weather, there's a hump-backed
Jut of reef - we called it Lion Rock -

Growling with its wild white mane
As if it told us even then

Death is the one door out of the labyrinth! 110

With Lion Rock, as with Barney's Island, rock as symbol merges with island as symbol.
Baxter as critic has interpreted the island in Curnow's terms as 'a symbol of isolation from European tradition, both in place and time'.111 The island in his world is Green Island, primarily a marker of the boundaries of his little world, but also to the young poet in 1944 a symbol of isolation, more natural than cultural:

Stone sea moves southward; the volcanic island
Scrub sides quiet, surf-eaten
In antarctic isolation
Breasts that tideless flow. 112

Islands, however, are not a major Baxter symbol, and rock images relate more frequently to the symbol of the cave or protective ledge. On a stormy night the older poet avoids the cliff-top overlooking Lion Rock, where he had contemplated suicide when he was younger (and where he did not see Venus), because 'the sea's throat / Is filled with the voices of oldest friends / Who offer what the living cannot find'.113However, there is also a 'Rock ledge above the sinuous wave' where the suicidal impulse was quieted by 'A rock carved like a woman, / Pain's torso, guardian of the place', a 'Magdalen of the rock' who can 'ask for us the death hour's peace'.114 There is also a rock chair on Big Rock, sitting 'over the whelming / burst of recurrent breakers / down there in the channel outside / the bay' which offers the reward of 'difficult safety' and seems to relieve the sense of stress.115 Near there is the cave on Big Rock where he could 'listen to some greater I / Whose language was silence', and feel his despair and his sexual tension eased by 'a silence that accepted all'. The cave becomes at the end of the poem the womb of the Earth Mother: "Open, mother. Open. Let me in".116 The poet remembers his first poem as coming when he 'climbed up to a hole in a bank in a hill above the sea' and there 'first endured that intense effort of listening' from which the poem emerges.117 That experience in turn relates to the limestone cave below Saddle Hill, off Creamery Road, where 'The smell of the earth was like a secret language / That dead men speak and we have long forgotten', and he could feel protected from 'age's enmity and love's contagion'.118

If caves symbolically become the womb of the Earth Mother, then hills become her breasts, the landscape her body. When he flies north out of Dunedin, the poet sees the land below in those terms:

My mother Gea below me is undressed
Showing her stretchmarks got by long childbearing. 119

When he flies to Dunedin to take up the Burns Fellowship, he sees that 'a quarry like a cancer / Has cut away half of the smaller breast of Saddle Hill'.120 A prose commentary makes more explicit the significance:

. . . perhaps . . . a wiser but less affluent society might not have allowed half of Saddle Hill to be cut away - a symbolic amputation of one of the breasts of the earth mother.121

At Aramoana he turns away from the Venus figure in the surf , the dream construction of the boys on the beach, to 'my dream, in nooks / below the sandhill cone, where Gea / speaks in parables of rock'.122

The prose commentary spells out the implications:

. . . my own dream, my way of hiding myself from death, from the lack of spiritual support in all created things, is to turn to the least demanding and the most supporting reality, Gea, the earth herself, the oldest of the tribe of gods. The sandhill cone is her

breast, the mats of cutty-grass cover her ancient vagina - my words, if they are to make sense, depend on her and return to her as the symbolic ground of existence - away from her I feel lost. . . .123

But Gea is not the ultimate reality in Baxter's symbolic Brighton world. Rather it is the sea.
If he finds peace in contact with the Earth Mother, a return to the womb in her caves, he still finally turns to the ocean, where

. . . the sea aisles burn cold
In fires of no return
And maned breakers praise
The death hour of the sun. 124

Its meaning is paradoxical:

as symbol of death and oblivion;
as symbol of regeneration. 125

In the semi-autobiographical 'The Prisoner Describes Himself', the speaker remembers how powerful was the formative presence of the sea when he was young on the Kuri Bush farm:

I began my life within sight of the sea. Looking out through the gap in the brushwood fence I would see the blue-grey waves where currents moved like great serpents, and at night the smell of the sea was in my nostrils when I fell asleep. . . .

All night the sea moved in my blood. . . . The sea carried me always on its breast like a floating bundle of kelp. 126

In 'The Waves' 'the slow language of the waves' seemed to the adolescent to 'give hope of truth to come' in a sexual encounter, a 'dark meeting / With a woman with a body like the moon'. However, the moon became 'Goddess of sexual pain' and left the young man contemplating the sea with 'poison crystals' whirling in his blood. The middle-aged poet hopes to find some ruler beyond 'the flux of fire, / Salt tides and air' other than the goddess of sex, a way to share the 'fluid motion' of the waves instead of fighting it, and acknowledges that 'the flesh I love will die, / Desire is bafflement.'

He ends by identifying with Noah, hoping that true knowledge will come as he is keeping watch 'while the dark water heaves'.127 In many poems 'the thunder of the obliterating sea' suggests death, but only in death will freedom be found: 'The ocean I / Once feared, I love more than the frozen land'.128 'The unique left-handed saint', the dark creative force within him, tells him

. . . that Sophocles
Heard in the thunder of Greek seas
On beaches grey with ambergris,
On the recoiling serpent hiss
A voice proclaiming to the land
That men are banks of broken sand 129

The October storm at Brighton, 'the great sea-devil or the wind of middle age', may induce in the poet 'bad dreams / In which the sea has taken charge of the land', but it is finally a liberating force, freeing him from 'the chains of Eros':

. . . turn to watch
The tide flood in at the river mouth,
Washing under the bridge, making the canoes float
Upside-down.
Freedom by death is the chosen element.
The black strings of kelp are riding on the tide's cold virile breast. 130

At Goat Island at Long Beach the poet hears 'the sea god's voice' echo off the cliffs and turns away from 'the young girls in their pink blouses' to the liberating power of the sea:

Blessed be
The sea god's hammer that will break
Dome after dome the cages of the land
And set the dead men free.131

The sea cave, with its 'kelp smell, / Sea smell, the brown bladdered womb' is tempting, but he finally must turn away from comfort to face the sea itself.132 On the beach at Aramoana, the poet finally turns away even from Gea to 'where the black swells begin' and beyond that to

where the serpent current flows
out of the harbour gates, long-
flowing, strongly tugging at
the roots of the world. 133

For the sea

is the image of death, the separating and dividing void, which nevertheless is the source
of my joy. The serpent current betrays the world by delivering it into the hand of God,
yet man is not a creature of earth, his renewal can only come out of the storm, out
of the void, out of the depths of God. And the serenity of God's silence is the
answer to man's prayer. 134

The world of Brighton and its coast was thus central to Baxter, the place where the twenty- five year old poet imagined he would wish to be buried...

Know I loved most when alive
A certain bare coast open to the South
Where ocean and continual gales do strive

In hoarse green breakers by a river mouth. 135

It was the place that formed his poetic consciousness:

There is no coast I can compare to this.
Here is the ampitheatre of my dreams
Where once, a lonely child, I made
My own mythology of weeds and shells
And grew acquainted with the moods of Death
Till we were friends, old friends.136

His Brighton environment gave him the material for a full symbolic world, both a fallen Eden and a world in which natural images body forth the basic powers and patterns of life. As Vincent O'Sullivan has said, 'The Otago coast and hinterland - the only landscape, he said, he ever really loved - provides precisely adequate detail for most moods, and for their mythical embodiment'. Brighton and the coastline from Taieri Mouth to Long Beach are thus at the centre of his poetic world, but they are flanked by two other important aspects of his symbolic universe, the City, represented by Dunedin, and the Wilderness, represented by Central Otago.

The City to Baxter is the human domain, an imperfect emdodiment of the dream of the Just City, 'a City of a kind', one which is 'finite, exact, and reasonable, designed for the fulfilment of limited aims'.138 The crucial symbolic elements in the city townscape (except for the pubs) are all there in a prose passage in which the middle-aged Baxter confronts the site of his youthful rebellion and wonders 'What happened to that stupid sad young man?. . . Who killed cock robin with his drumming heart and his head full of feathers?': 139

Time, said the Town Hall clock, the four-faced master of the windy year. Sin, said the First Church spire, needling up to the Otago heaven of tombstone clouds. But the Leith Stream, the last and only woman in the world, lulling the dead sky in her arms, sighing under bridge and over weir down to the flat crab-wet harbour, had nothing at all to say.139

In the symbolic world of Baxter's City, there are on the one hand the forces of the living death of bourgeois respectability. The three clocks - 'the railway clock, the Town Hall clock, / And the Varsity clock'- are a recurring symbol of them, as they 'clang early summer time / Across the town cold as a Shacklock range', or as they mark off the night hours, 'genteel, exact / As a Presbyterian conscience'.140 They 'fill the conduits of air' with somewhat different messages. The Town Hall clock cries 'honour me', while the railway clock reminds us that 'Each traveller . . . / Has the horizon for a hangmans's noose, / Will end in a small stone cell'.141'The imperative clang'142 of the clock tower of the University is more various. To the young poet it says merely 'learning and secrecy;' while 'frowning at the wicked weirs', while the young man in 'Cressida (a lyric sequence)' associates the clock ironically with the lecturer in the classroom clearing his throat and speaking 'Of McDougall's instinctive drives'.143 It implicitly reminds Horse on behalf of the repectable Dead that he has been wasting his time at the Bowling Green Hotel, while in 'Walking up Castle Street', it speaks to the narrator more directly Its voice reverberated and grew in the Presbyterian silence.

- You're late! You're late! You'll be late when the trumpet's blown. I've seen you, I know you. Where were you on Monday? Drunk in the Bowling Green. Where were you on Wednesday? Smooging in the town belt. Where were you on Friday? Nobody knows. What would your parents say? What will the examiners say? No application.

No team spirit. No sense of decency at all. . . .

Grey as a hangover conscience, the old clock looked down on me; but as the chimes died irreverent sparrows flew back in a cloud to squabble and skitter and nest in his elder's hat.144

In the unpublished 'The Clock Tower' it attempts 'to save / us from ourselves' with its 'fatherly' emphatic explanations, but to the poet it is merely a 'petrified phallus', to be blessed perhaps but not to be loved like the mother Leith.145 The church spire is not so much in evidence as the clock towers in most of the writings, but it too is associated with the phallic fathers, 'Being so finely built / On Calvin's masturbative guilt'.146 Horse takes note of its obscene parody when he walks 'quickly along the edge of the Queen's Gardens where the floodlit war memorial pointed a dead phallus at the stony heavens'.147 The poet in 'To a City Father' puts the point more bitterly, calling the cenotaph 'The great stone prick of Old Man Death'obscenely erected 'to celebrate / A million graves, a million rotting bones / That fertilise your interest and security'.148 Death is likewise associated with the images of secular repectability, the lights of suburban houses, as Horse looks at them:

The lights of Anderson's Bay glittered steadily, each point of light indicating a suburban hutch where people talked and yawned and killed time, afraid of the graveyard night outside their windows.149

The young Baxter similarly watched as 'The lights of a mausoleum-to-be glittered on the hills beyond the harbour'.150 Opposed to the images of 'a culture kept alive by the drug death' in Baxter's symbolic City,'Calvin's town', are those asociated with Bohemian revolt, experienced by the poet when he 'made a mother of the keg, and 'the town split open like an owl's egg / Breaking the ladders down'.151 First there are those 'fat pubs of the harbour town' in which 'it seemed more safe to drown' than to stay in 'this boneyard peace / Of ceremonious dying' at home.152They are there in profusion, the Green Island, the Grand, the Shamrock, the Oban, the City, the Royal Albert, the Robert Burns and, most important, the Bowling Green, the 'student's home from home. . .
where Mahomet's coffin hangs between earth and heaven waiting for the six o'clock judgement', the place where Horse learned 'the basic metaphors by which the human spirit expresses and conceals its tenderness, is grief, and its longing to return to the Garden of
Eden'.153 The patron saint of the pubs is Robbie Burns, 'King Robert' on his 'anvil stone / Above the lumbering Octagon', and Baxter identifies with him, feeling that the reason for Burns' ' mandrake groans / Is wrapped like wire around my bones'.154 The statue, 'dry on his stump above the Octagon, was waiting for the traffic to stop so that he could step down to the Oban Hotel, bang on the bar and order a bucket of gin and harpic'.155The poet imagines 'the sad old rip' grunting 'upon his rain-washed stone / Above the empty Octagon' and saying "O that I had the strength / To slip yon lassie half a length!"156

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The young poet, sleeping off his Burnsian frolics on a bench in the town belt, the hours marked by the three clocks, discovers himself at 'the absolute unmoving hub', with the sense of nada that is 'the beginning of knowledge', so that the bench becomes another symbolic place of revelation.157 A different place of revelation is the Castle Street flat of his first love, the place where 'a certain act' did occur, the place where he 'found the point of entry, / The place where father Adam died'.158 When he returns to the site of flat twenty years later, he finds that 'They've bricked up the arch' that used to lead to the flat, symbolising his inability to return to that youthful ardour.159 The holy places of Bohemia stand against the symbols of deathly respectability, but the most powerful symbol in the city is a natural one, the Leith, associated with sexuality and other natural forces that persist even though channelled and charted. The 'crinkled labia of blossom / On the trees beside the weir' symbolise the sexual experiences that 'Captured and held the fugitive / From time, from self, from the iron pyramid'.160 'The Leith Stream's roar' (in most unlikely fashion heard from his lover's flat on Royal Terrace) symbolises to the traveller of 'Henley Pub' the uncontrollable force of 'natural sexual power'.161

Outside the University buildings, the 'grey Leith water drum[s] / With laughter from a bird's beak at what their learning has left out'.162 She is contrasted to the authoritarian father clock tower, with its 'petrified phallus', for while the poet can only 'bless' somewhat equivocally the clock tower's 'house of learning or obfuscation', he loves 'the untouched breasts of my / mother, dark muse and succubus, / unconnected with our human knowledge', serenely 'flowing below the ledge / where gulls preen feather by feather / a whiteness that will die / soon'.163 The young poet observes how 'On smooth cylindrical weirs Leith-waters glister'.164 The middle-aged poet on a Sunday family walk sees the weirs as 'passionate almost beyond bearing', and the middle- aged narrator of 'Walking Up Castle Street' associates them with a 'girl ghost in an overcoat . . . waiting at the bridge, with dark hair and a voice like weir water'.165 But the passion seems mostly to be sexual pain There is a recurring image of 'a streetlight on / The muscled Leith water' associated with a lovers' quarrel, so that it becomes an 'ikon' that haunts and burns him, a symbol of the failure of love:

For me it is the weirs that mention
The love that we destroy
By long evasion, politics and art,
And speech that is a kind of contraception:
A streetlight flashing down on muscled water, bodies in the shade,
Tears on the moonwhite face, the voice
Of time from the grave of water speaking to
Those who are lucky to be sad. 166

When Fern breaks with Horse, she returns to him a stone phallus he gave to her, and as he goes from her flat to the Bowling Green he gazes 'speculatively at the water frothing over the weirs' and tosses the phallus into the Leith.167 But when the despairing middle-aged poet has a destructive sexual encounter in 'the garden by the river', the river has a calming effect as it seems to symbolise life moving towards death:

Kisses scald. Words crush. But the river
Flowed on, in a bell of calm, to whom I said,
'Pray for us, Mother. We are not yet
Able to die -168

The images of the City, then, from Dunedin, complement those from Brighton and the coast to form a fuller symbolic world, although the dominant image among them, that of the Leith, clearly relates to his other nature symbolism associated with Brighton. But there is also Baxter's third world: 'Alongside the human City, indifferent or even hostile, remains the Wilderness, whose time is still that of the sixth day of creation and whose works belong to the Power that created her'.169 In Baxter's Otago poems the images of the Wilderness come primarily from Central Otago. These images are related to those of the sea, for if the sea can be 'the void white thundering wilderness - which symbolises the negative side of god's mercy', similarly 'the huge ice torrent' that is Fox Glacier represents 'some other kind of love' which could descend on us, 'yearning over our roofs / Black pinnacles and fangs of toppling ice'.170 For Baxter, consistently the Wilderness symbolizes this 'negative side' or 'other love', the fearful power of God that is beyond human understanding.

From the first in his poetry,

Still the great symbols stand:
The mountains and the sky
Commune beyond our day;
And breaks on shores of pain
The unimagined sea. 171

The mountains, like the sea, are symbols, as are the plants, animals, and rivers, 'Expressing in the nouns of a buried language . . . A female eloquence, the coin of death / Turned over'. They are always available, even if we do not see them, 'Explaining to those who dare not love or die'. 172
The dominant symbol of this group is that of the mountains:
as protective maternal symbols
as symbols of ideal purity;
as menacing and hostile powers.173
Of mountains as maternal symbols there is not much in the poetry; Saddle Hill obviously served much better. In his own copy of the early poem, 'The Mountains', where the tiger-like mountains do not appear very maternal (although they do 'wait / As women wait'), Baxter had noted 'Mountains are mothers', and twenty years later,when he returned to the Naseby that had inspired that poem, he wrote that he 'must have been mad! There are no / mountains here'. That later poem, however, is about neither mountains nor mothers but rather about the differences between the middle-aged poet and that 'grim boy' who was his younger self.174 If the mountains take on a female aspect in other poems, it is sexual, not maternal. Mt Iron on a hot day is an image brought to the sleepless younger self of the poet by thoughts of the body of Pyrrha, from whom he has been divided nine days. And in the poem that Mr Grummet recites to Horse in the Bowling Green, a poem that later appears as 'Mountain Poem' in A Selection of Poetry and as 'At Raspberry Hut' in the notebook and the Collected Poems, the 'mitred mountain' becomes 'the black mare of rock' neighing at 'the sky stallion'.176 Sometimes the mountains symbolise purity. In the Matukituki Valley, the mountaineers find 'light reflected / Stainless from crumbling glacier, dazzling snow', and observe 'Sky's purity; the altar cloth of snow / On deathly summits laid'.177 In the Haast Pass the poet sees 'the pure glacier blaze'.178

However, in both poems the purity is a secondary attribute related to glacier and snow surfaces, and the mountains are primarily images of a frightening power that is too much for most humans. And this symbolism runs right through the poetry. In 'The Mountains', 'The mountains crouch like tigers. / They are but stone yet the seeking eyes grow blind'. The blindness is because the mountains
have a 'flame that reaches / Among familiar things and makes them seem / Trivial, vain'. The poet chooses to flee the mountains and 'go to the coastline and mingle with men', just as in 'Haast Pass' he turns away from the Wilderness to 'the tired faces in the pub', and in 'Poem in the Matukituki Valley' he turns away from the mountains:

Therefore we turn, hiding our souls' dullness
From that too blinding glass: turn to the gentle
Dark of the human daydream, child and wife,
Patience of stone and soil, the lawful city
Where man may live, and no wild trespass
Of what's eternal shake his grave of time. 179

Although Baxter himself related 'The Mountains' to Naseby, his mother related it to the Matukituki Valley and an early family camping trip, James' first experience of the mountains,when they had decided not to proceed up the valley because 'we had an overwhelming sense of the menace of mountains, which loom over the Matukituki'.

Certainly that menace appearsin poem after poem. In the generalised landscape of 'Prelude N.Z.' there are man-unmastered mountains' from which Pakehas, unlike the Maori, are not shielded by their gods. In 'O lands seen in the light of an inhuman dawn' the 'nearing mountains stone crested . . . leaning and silted Druid monolioths', seem to be 'murmuring madness' and gaze with 'stone eyes', while in 'Luggate Pub' the poet feels 'the 'snow blind peaks' annihilation'.182 In 'Love-Lyric IV' the 'inhuman natural curves' of the 'skyline silhouette' 'will / never alter while / we watch them'. In 'Naseby', 'the dark peaks will hold / Their peace beyond our knowing' when human beings have disappeared.184

This power and indifference might be read naturalistically as an indication of a world without God, but Baxter reads it theologically, the mountains being 'His flawed mirror who gave the mountain strength / And dwells in holy calm, undying freshness'. As such they can have a therapeutic value as well as a frightening effect, for they provide a perspective beyond our egos and troubles. Thus the almost Wordsworthian tone of the early Wanaka poem, 'High Country Weather', where the vision of the 'red-gold cirrus' shining 'over snow-mountain' can cause the 'stranger' to 'surrender to the sky' his 'heart of anger'.186 In 'Thinking About Mountains (I)', the poet asks himself why he, a middle-aged family man in the city, should dream of taking off up the Matukituki Valley into the mountains 'like a wild goat', and speculates

. . . It could be certain places
Stand for an insight or tranquility that should
Be part of us - or rather, perhaps
Cannot ever belong to us while the world is falling. 187

In the second poem in that sequence, the insight offered by the mountains is dark:

The wind that hurries its way over the icefields
Has no voice and no face, but its manner of moving
Implies the hardship of the human soul -
Exposure, darkness, bleak abandonment
On the crags of light. . . .

However, the darkness is also of God, however obscurely:

What made the mountain also made the soul
But left us there to plough these narrow fields . . .
That are not fields where heroes and ghosts go moving,
Each soul a darkened flame, to their abandonment
In God, but fields of death beside a wakeful river. 188

In a poem about the Milford Track from around the same time (1966-68), the awesome landscape is associated with the state of being 'free / Of all time's rubbish', beyond desire and self-concern, the 'black seed / Of Adam' becoming free from 'its need to be' as the individual comes to accept his death: 'Only the dead / Walk easily through doors of solid stone'.189 In an unpublished addition to 'High Country Weather' the 'troubled breast' and the 'contentless mind' of the 'stranger' are quieted not only by the 'snow mountain-crest' and the clouds but also by 'The torrent voice resounding / In gorges blind'.190 The rivers of Central Otago are rapid, even torrential, not like the sluggish Brighton River, and become, like the mountains, symbols of inhuman, sometimes terrifying, but ultimately divine natural power. There are 'rivers leaping with immense inertia past gorge and derrick', with an 'opaque blindness . . . Showing an eye-universe inanely innately blind', and the Kawarau is a 'grey- green dragon'.191

The Matukituki has 'boulders huge as house's, like 'dice' thrown by the mountains, and is shown as drowning a calf, an experience that Mr Grummet tells Horse about, pointing the moral that "It is difficult to avoid being swept away".192 After heavy rain the river near the old Aspiring homestead becomes a 'waste river turbulent in flood / Where bones of trees roll' and is contrasted to the cows' (and the people's) need for 'the heart's revelation / Of hearth and labour, stall and habitation'.193 This country of menacing mountains and wild rivers is inhabited by appropriate creatures who form part of its symbolic system. There are the birds of prey, hawk, eagle, and falcon. They may symbolise the amoral cruelty of the natural order or the natural killer and hunter in man. The eagle is beautiful in 'the simplicity / Beyond simplicity of the machine / Whereby he drops, kills with curved talons', while the hawk hunting the hare becomes 'man the hawk and man the hare', pursuing 'their unrelenting passage here', and the 'broad hawk. . . blood on the iron talon' is associated with the poet in his fallen adult state, after 'Time slew the first Adam'.194 Part of the hawk in man is his sexuality, especially male desire. In 'Let Time be Still', 'fallen from his cloud / The falcon find[s] / The thigh-encompassed wound', while in
'My love late walking' 'my hawk . . . flies / Down to your feathered sleep alone / Striding blood-coloured on a wind of sighs'.195 In the beast fable poem, 'The Mountaineer', 'the red- winged kea' speaks for the wild element in man and nature, as opposed to 'the fat brown weka', who speaks for timid safety and the evasion of the wild. The kea understands both the death wish and the joy in the fallen mountaineer, but he also eats of his flesh:

'I see the dried blood on your beak,'
Chirped the fat brown weka. 196

The mountaineer himself was also an inhabitant of the Wilderness. At McKinnon Pass near the phallic monument to the explorer (the cross has been added and is 'irrelevant'), McKinnon is grouped with 'mountaineers, deerstalkers, / Guides. . . men of the death-bound kind', and is contrasted to 'You who lie / In dry beds'. 197 Similarly, in the Matukituki Valley the poet contrasts himself to the moutaineers attempting Mt Aspiring (like McKinnon associated with kea) and speculates that they achieve 'a communion with what eludes our net, Leviathan / Stirring to ocean birth our inland waters'. Thus sea and mountain imagery come together in expressing the 'negative side of God's mercy', and the mountaineers, who possibly experience 'the hermit's peace / And mindless ecstasy ' are the contemplatives who seek that aspect of God, men who 'unconsciously aspire to sanctity by way of the discipline of mountaineering'.198

Brighton and the Otago coast, as the Fallen Eden and as the fringe between City and Wilderness, Dunedin as the City, both bohemian and Calvinistic, and Central Otago as the Wilderness - these are Baxter's three Otago worlds, contributing the images that become symbols in his mythic structures. They are the mythic backdrop against which his mythologised life, the central subject of his poetry, is acted out. A study of Baxter's poetic notebooks, putting the published poems in the context of the unpublished ones, shows that there was a definite pattern of development in the use of Otago images. In the very early poems (1937-41) they scarcely appear. The nature imagery is not from the New Zealand world so much as from English poetry and also the English countryside (for he did spend 1937-38 in England at Sibford School). The few specific places evoked are European: Serrieres, Loch Leven, or the countryside around Sibford, with its streamlets, meadow grass, and moorland hills.

A poem from 1941 about a rocky island is not about Green Island, but rather some unnamed island 'Beneath the glinting of a northern sun'.199 When a New Zealand image appears, it is in the tradition of the poems in Alexander and Currie, as the very early 'Ode to a Tui' which opens 'Hail! Feathered songster of the bushland wild'.200 Dunedin is the first named Otago place, but the imagery is conventional and generalised.

Allen Curnow praised the early published poems because they showed that Baxter 's imagination sought 'forms as immediate in experience as the island soil under his feet',202 but that quality actually only slowly emerges. In the poems of 1941 images from Brighton and from Central Otago begin to appear, although unidentified: the rocks and waves of Brighton Bay, the sounds near the Brighton River - the croak of the bullfrogs and 'the far-off beat of the sea', the 'dry shingle- plain' near a lake.208 By 1942-43, local places and experiences are taking definite form as Baxter writes about this 'land of sombre hills and streams', composes a Worsdworthian first version of the poem that will become 'Wild Bees', or describes a glacier-wall or the weirs in the Leith.

The 'Love-Lyrics' of 1944, some of which make it into Beyond the Palisade, are about love of the land, the almost sexual relationship being stated most explicitly in 'At Balclutha':

. . . the land leans to me
That I should praise her grace of form and feature,
That I should laud her gesture and her glance. 205

Such poems exhibit clearly the qualities that Curnow had praised, and Otago images are frequent in the remainder of the poems of the 1940s. They become less frequent in the poems written in Wellington in the 1950s and early 1960s, although in person sometimes or in memory more often Baxter returns to Otago 'to get back a full sight of loss', to be 'Delivered from a false season / To the natural winter of the heart'.206 That 'imaginary journey over the neck of Big Rock' 207 is especially evident in the Pig Island Letters poems of the early 1960s. The poems of the Burns Fellowship years and those immediately following, the poems written between 1966 and 1969, are, naturally enough, full of Otago images taken direct from life as well as from memory (or, sometimes, from the interplay of the two), used in a more mature way than in the early poems. In the last years a new iconcography and mythology arises from Jerusalem and to a lesser extent Wellington and Auckland. What turned out to be the last act in the mythic drama of self was acted out before a different landscape and different cityscapes and with different tribes, drug addicts and social drop-outs rather than his Gaelic ancestors or his bohemian drinking friends. The Otago images recur, however, when Baxter remembers Eden, 'the rocks at MacKenzie's corner / Where the river and the road both take a sharp turn', or when he dreams of 'Lazy swimming greenbone', or when he meditates on his father's death and thinks of 'the demon- / hearted breakers and the worn / elbows of seastone'. 208 Certainly many of his strongest and most characteristic poems start with Otago images, often giving Baxter that 'reality prior to the poem', the 'New Zealand referent', the 'contact with base'209 that Curnow thought that he needed.

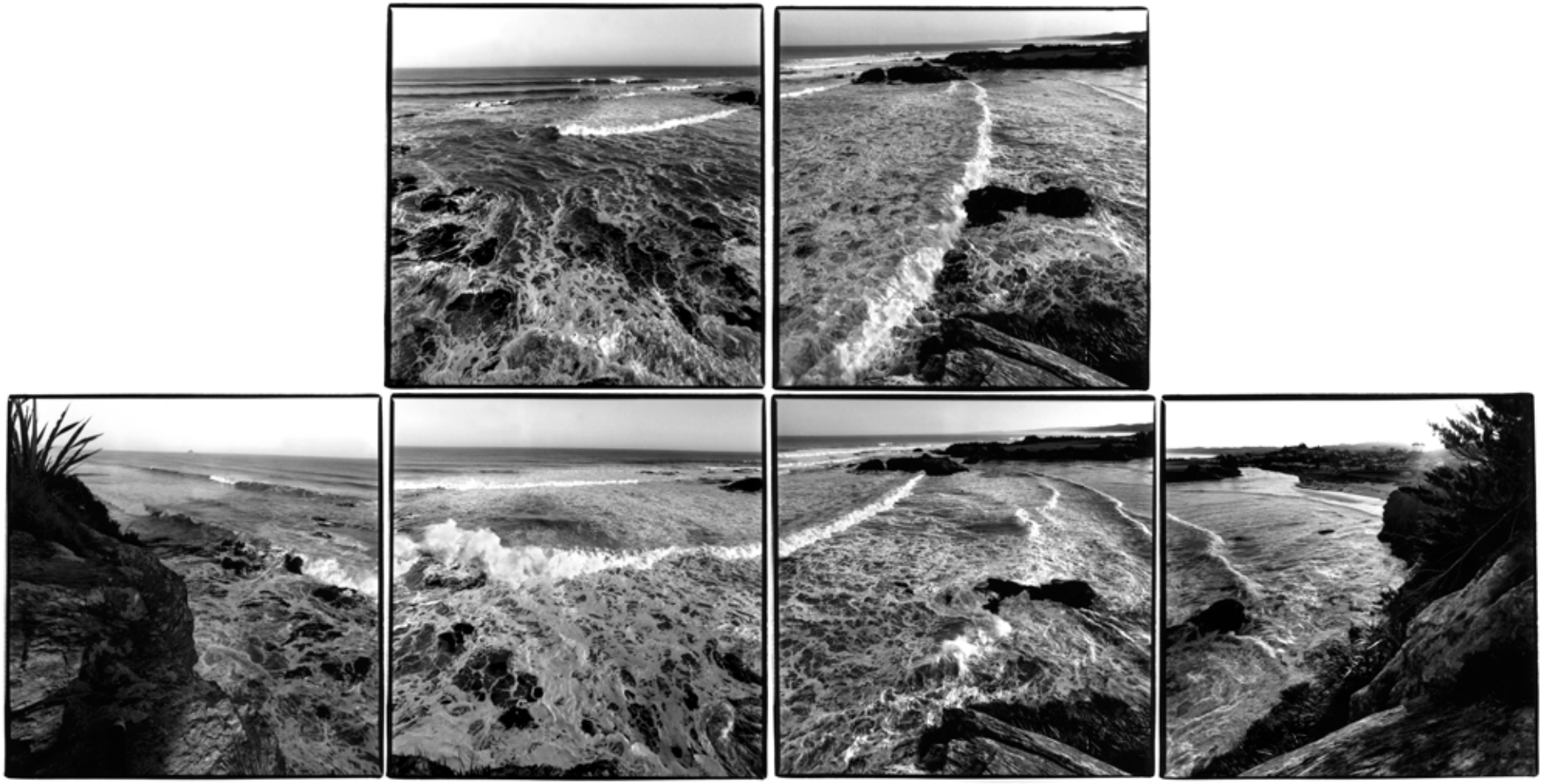
They are an integral part of the material from which he weaves a coherent poetic myth inclusive of and greater than his individual poems, one of the great imaginative creations of New Zealand literature.

Lloyd Godman

Photographs

of
James K Baxter's Three Worlds

- the Brighton Coastal Otago World
- the Central Otago Hinterland World
- the Dunedin Calvinistic World



Homage to Baxter Resonance I - Panorama of Brighton Bay from Big Rock 1994

Resonance I

I knew we needed a special image of Brighton Bay, something that could encompass as many aspects of Baxter's vision as possible. I also knew that if this image was to include a large swell with the right lighting, we could wait about two years to get it. But this image was taken late one evening, there was less than half an hour before the sun sank below the horizon and it was one of those rare events when the swell was very large and yet still clean due to a light westerly wind that was blowing, the sky was bright and clear. It was the low angle of the sun that sent the light kissing obliquely across the face of the waves giving the shot a special quality. I saw this effect driving back to Brighton and had to race home to get my equipment, scramble down the bank and around the rocks to a spot I knew I could get this wide panorama. The problem was to secure the tripod on the crumbing rock and get a series of shots that highlighted the aspects that related to Baxter's work before the light vanished.

This image includes from left to right: The flax covered rock bluff of Big Rock with Green Island on the horizon. Lion Rock in the centre of the bay and Barney's Island the last rock outcrop on the horizon extending from the right. Further towards the right is the Domain, the bridge, the area where the river cuts the sand banks as it meets the sea, the glass fronted houses and the beach. On the far right is more of the rock bluffs of Big Rock.

James K Baxter - Poem references

At Brighton Bay 1966 CP
The opposites of sex and pain
Like new - cut banks the river had gouged out------

Today I hoisted myself
Up the rock stair that's called Jacob's Ladder

This end of the bay, shoving through gorse, and stood
On the smooth edge of the flax-covered cliff

Brighton 1955
Glass - fronted batches stand and look
on the brown hurdling waves

October Water Poem 1963
The wind that cuts the flax like a new pocket knife--------

In which the sea has taken charge of the land.
No one can tell us how to get on good terms with the great
Sea devil or wind of middle age.

Love - Lyric V 1944
Flowers of foam from undersea yeast risen.
that die at a brackish river mouth.

The Rock Woman
Continually, as a boy, I came to this
Rock ledge above the sinuous wave.
The Storm 1961

In the morning I climb the gale-thrashed ridges
of flax and rock, look down on the lumbering surf.

Dirge
The dark swell's thunder
Below the crumbling rock----

where the green breakers rage
are shadows of old torment

Because the Flax Blades 1968

Because the flax blades bend above
the dark bay, this way and that

Homage to Baxter Resonance II - Composite image - inside of the Cave on Big Rock, Brighton Bay- 1994

Resonance II

During the past 20 years while looking for surf, I had climbed over much of Big Rock and knew of a strange hole-like structure at the very end and also a large hollow opening on the Ocean View side of the Rock. I was convinced that one of these must be the cave that Baxter spoke of and yet when I spoke to a long time Brighton resident, Tommy Thompson, there was a third opening that was less obvious and was indeed the cave that Baxter spoke of. On the other side behind a flax bush is an opening that leads to a small cave just large enough for an adult to crouch in. It provides a perfect view out over Brighton Bay towards the domain and yet conceals the occupant. It appeared so hidden that Baxter could well have been the last person to reside inside, and yet I visited this cave twice and between the two visits there had been another occupier. For strewn there, near the back of the passage was the evidence of another juvenile user: a bunch of burnt matches and a cigarette packet. It was a very small space and very difficult to take photographs in as I could only guess at the image the camera saw. It was a darkened chamber, with an aperture to the world outside. Compared to the bright daylight on beach there was little light inside and I used a small flash to bounce light off the back of the cave and give some illumination to the entrance.

James K Baxter - Poem references

I climbed up to a hole in a bank in a hill above the sea, and there fell into the attitude of listening out of which poems may arise....

The Cave 1948 CP
The whole weight of the hill hung over me.
Gladly I would have stayed there and been hidden
From every beast that moves beneath the sun,

The Party 1966 CP
A kind of a cave - still on the brandy,
and coming in from outside,

Homage to Baxter Resonance III - The rock, Prometheus, Brighton Beach 1994

Resonance III

Exactly which is the rock Baxter called "Prometheus" is difficult to tell, for there are several groups of rocks that become covered with sand for even years at a time before being exposed again at the wild hands of an ocean storm, or the bursting flood of water down the river during heavy rain. This rock however is more resilient than the others and appears more regularly. It sits closer to the water at the entrance to the bay and is less likely to be buried by sand and more likely to grow barnacles.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Titan CP
The rock limbs of Prometheus
Lie twisted at the entrance to the bay
Like corroded Iron.....

Think CP
It is a long time since he brought
the fire of Zeus to us Lightening our chaos, for many
aeons Hour by Hour the sea vulture
Has been tearing at his guts.

The Town Under the Sea 1962 CP
Kelp - bladders, tangled thrown
up by the cannibal sea

Letter From the Mountains 1968 CP
And the rock of barren friendship, has another shape....

Despair is the only gift;
When it is shared, it becomes a different thing; like rock, like water.....

Tears from faces of stone.

Homage to Baxter Resonance IV - Panorama of the Brighton River near the bend past the Flats going up River

Resonance IV

Panorama of the Brighton River near the bend past the Flats going up River Road

I had paddled the river many times and initially it seemed impossible to make an image that matched the drama that Baxter found here. Larry and I had even tipped over the canoe with my two young sons on board a year or so before, looking for the right spot. We drove up this day planning that the sun would be in about the right spot and that some kind of image would present itself. At the sharp bend where the river is dark and deep I saw the Manuka stick with the grass wrapped around it from a recent flood, projecting from the water and knew this strange symbol would contribute to the image we were seeking.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Boys 1962 CP
Till at the rock bend
their flailing paddles bruise
A black wide looking-glass where Ngaios gaze
And spread their thighs
A hole going down to the world's centre
waiting to swallow the sun, I think I am
the invisible drowned man.

The River 1966 CP
Nothing as broad as
the river can be seen
these days: it was dark brown and deep----

The creek runs to the sea
finding its way without us

Letter to Sam Hunt 1968 CP
And hear the dark creek water flow
from a rock gate we do not know
Till we ourselves become the breach
and silence is our only speech.

Homage to Baxter Resonance V - The Cattle Flats up the Brighton River.1994

Resonance V

It took several weeks to time a clear sky with the light before sunrise, a heavy dew and the fullness of the tide up the river. Although I had permission to drive up to the farm house at any time it felt awkward at such an early time and I option for a scramble up the steep slope to the top of the hill taught me just how dew-laden the grass is at that time of the day.

The image shows the strange canals that drain back onto the river which can be seen cutting along below the hill. The Giant's Grave is below the white house on the far left and it is here the river like the road takes a bend back towards the sea. On the far right of the photograph on the left the Baxter house can be seen behind the third tree in from the side. Below is river road that runs from Brighton up past Duffy's Farm onto Scroggs Hill.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The River 1966 CP
It was dark
brown and deep
at corners where cattle graze.

The Giant's Grave 1951 CP
Before sunrise, a soaking dew;
the beer brown somnolent wave
of brackish river, cattle flats beyond it.

Homage to Baxter Resonance VI The Brighton River and the Giant's Grave 1994

Resonance VI

Although many of the features are still there, the trees have changed the Giant's Grave area and tend to disguise the nature of the place when Baxter was a boy. There have been ditches dug to drain the flat land, some in one at right angles to form the mark of a cross; however cows rarely graze the banks these days and sheep have taken their place. Across the horizon is a low profile of Saddle Hill.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Giant's Grave 1951 CP
of the brackish river
cattle flats beyond it
Brimmed sluggish under gorse pods,
between them a narrow tumulus
manuka - groved, broom feathered
we called it the Giant's Grave

The Tiredness of Me and Herakles CP
They cut one breast off to draw the bow string
the other breast keep to feed their children

Resonance VII-A James Ka Baxter's Room, Bedford Parade, Brighton

Resonance VII

I was fortunate to photograph inside James K's, fuggy room at the top of the stairs, Frank McKay's book and was fairly happy with the results. In 2008, I was able to scene the original negs and get more detail of both the room and the landscape through the window, so I added this composite of the room to the Baxter series. It illustrates the commanding view Baxter had of his Brighton world. Through the third window on from the right Green Island can be seen on the horizon. Saddle Hill lies through the set of three windows to the right of the bed. Then through the single window is Scroggs Hill.

The Outside of the house has always been difficult to see, as though there were private things that happened behind the hedge while the turret gave a full view of the world. To get this shot I had to back the Land Rover up onto the lawn on the road across from the house and set the tripod up on top of the roof. From here I was able to juxtapose Scroggs Hill with the house and due to winter the leafless Hawthorn hedge gave some visual clues of the lower part of the house. On the right of the house is a apple tree.

Resonance VII The Baxter Home on Bedford Parade, Brighton 1994

James K Baxter - Poem references

Iron Scythe Song CP
up the road's stony edge
to my father's hawthorn hedge

Home Thoughts CP
The tree of time, the dusty wattle grove
And the blind devil on the stair
who guarded and still guards
the spidered room
that I wrote poems in.....

or grafted apple twigs
on stumps of hawthorn

A Family Photograph 1939 1961 CP
I in my fuggy room at the top of the stairs

Mother and Son CP
Saddled and ridden to
Iceland and back by the night as
He learnt early that prayers don't work

Resonance VIII - Panorama of the Orchard at Duffy's Farm 1994

Resonance VIII

The exact location of Duffy"s Farm and the orchard had eluded us for sometime. But I did remember Tommy Thompson (an old Brighton resident) saying that although he knew where it was, it had taken him years to find the location. We were grateful to Tommy who took us down there one winter's day, as without his help we could never have found the site. I knew the light would not be kind but there seemed little else but to find the orchard and get the shot as the weather was bound to turn worse in the next few weeks. We found the spot where the old farm house stood and now stands a barn build by Trevor Gordon, a victim of another kind, who was murdered by a hit man for his wife. A clay road winds down past large gum trees to the orchard which is completely overgrown and abandoned. It seems it was planted by the Chinese in the late 1800s and there are rock embankments and forgotten roads winding further off into the hills. Positioned in a gully it looks down onto the Brighton River and across towards Lawrence Jones' house. Initially it seemed impossible to find the right image until we found this tree. It was actually a pear tree and not an apple tree, but the peculiarity of the ladder and the overturned tree stated clearly here was the image that we were after.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Apple Tree 1960 CP
from that high tree, my love
that somehow bent in Eden----

undo the stubborn bolts and enter
where none have gone before, your body
is my wild apple tree, my poor man's treasure.

A View From Duffy's Farm 1966 CP
She died like a bird
in the frost- No ghost no one will haunt here, because the door is mercifully broken
as hearts, lives, rocks break
Down there under twisted apple trees
That bear no fruit, a river.

The tiredness of me and Herakles CP
My troubles began with an apple -
the apple that he plucked from the oldest tree
Burned in his hand like a sun.

The Farm CP
All tracks led outward then. I did not see
How bones and apples rot under the tree]
In cocksford grass, or guess the size
Of the world, a manuka nut in the sun's gaze.

Homage to Baxter Resonance IX - Sod Hut on Scroggs Hill Road, Brighton. 1994

Resonance IX

I had often driven past this hut and it had always caught a glance. A friend of mine who was conceived in it when her parents lived there when they were first married and is also a relation of Baxter. I had to go there several times to get the light right and while earlier in the day the light clipped the front of the hut well, the strong black "axe handle" shadow did not appear until later in the day. At the time of taking the photograph, I spoke to the farmer who said he knew Baxter and often saw him striding past the hut on the way up Scroggs Hill.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Ode 1964 CP 305

Burnt black - till the axe of dawn
Rise up from a hidden place
To show our flesh, burnt white
that a furious christ is born...
That the pioneering men
had used as a cattle stall
To the desecrated earth
under hooked lawyer thorn...

Towards the Scroggs Hill farm
May see a blaze of light
In a sod hut.

Homage to Baxter Resonance X - Site of the Homestead at Kuri Bush 1994

Resonance X

The level ground where the old Baxter farm house at Kuri Bush sat is between the two large Macrocarpa trees on the right, and I had always acknowledged this on my regular surf trips down the coast. The farmer who owns the land, Mr Druce, helped by shifting the sheep for the night before we erected a tent over the camera to keep the dew off the lens during the extended exposure of 12 hours. The exposure is actually a combination of two exposures, one on twilight and the other later when it was dark. The view is south west and the southern cross can be seen on the right of the star spiral.

Later in 2000 the Macrocarpa tree on the left blew down in the strong winds of an easterly storm.

James K Baxter - Poem references

At Kuri Bush CP
Outside it
My father stood when I was three or less
Holding me up to look at
the gigantic rotating wheel of the stars.
Whose time isn't ours.

Late Poem
4 Song to Father 1972 CP
The water drowns your guardian stars
and the night wills it should be so
This grief is only till sunrise.

The Dragon March CP
One night at the star crowded dragon sky

O Wind Blowing 1943 CP
No Barren cycle is this
no grave of stars for ever more lifeless
Rather a truth living incomprehensible
Clear with the clearness and opaqueness of water

Resonance XI

I had been waiting to get this shot for quite a few weeks as I knew that the light had to be bright and from exactly the right angle to reflect off the water in a way that I wanted. From other trips up the river I had calculated that the light would be coming in from the direction I wanted about 2:30pm. As I finished the climb up the hill side and rounded the bend to where there is a clear view across the scrub tops, it proved that my calculations were right and I had to wait as little as quarter of an hour to take the shot. On the left the river winds up to Henly and the Taieri Plain, while on the right it flows through the rocky gorge to the sea.The track leads off into the darkness of the hills.

James K Baxter - Poem references

At Taieri Mouth 1961 CP 230
... The steel-bright couldron
Of Taieri, the old water-dragon
Sliding out from a stone gullet

The Glass Lamp 1962 CP 255
I remember mainly how
The river bent like a bright saber
Out of the ....gorge.

Homage to Baxter Resonance XII
Taieri River in Flood from Scroggs
Hill - 1994

Resonance XII

It was raining hard and that Friday night Lawrence said "what we need sometime is an image of the Taieri River in flood". Such events are impossible to arrange, and little did I know that sunday afternoon we would be standing on the same hill as Baxter had over looking the brown ponds that engulfed the plain below. It was still spitting pellets of rain and the cold southerly cut straight to our skin as the tussock lashed and the tripod rattled. The bursting patterns of light through the clouds were sporadic and it took sometime to wait for a pool of light to hit the water to shoot these two images.

From Scroggs Hill the vista is out over the small farms and dwellings of Allanton across the flood waters to the dominating hump of Maungatua cutting the skyline. It was from here that Colin McCahon also had his vision of the land further out over the rain obscured-hills to the right of the Maungatua.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Flood 1962 CP 263
From which the farms were bare and small,
houses not even visible...

The fury of the sky father.
and once with light rain still falling, stood
Above the Taieri plain, where the brown flood
had covered paddocks, sheds and fences.

She Who is Like the Moon CP
Pure as the moon influences of torn cloud.
who floods the earth and sky and troubled water.

Homage to Baxter Resonance XIII Composite Image of Tunnel Beach - 1994

Resonance XIII

Tunnel Beach is photographed by many people and I knew we had to search for a new and perspective, but one that also related to Baxter. The day was clear and as the noise of the huge clean swell thundered across the cliff tops it was difficult to imagine how we could find an image that related to the sexual experience that Baxter found in the place, but easy to find one that related to death. The opposites of tunnel and headland offered the symbols we were looking for. I later spoke to a friend of mine about Baxter's symbols for Tunnel Beach and he said for him is was certainly one of death. In his youth he had climbed out onto the flat pinnacle of limestone rock feature in the centre image and had become stranded only to be rescued many hours later.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Waves 1962 - 3 CP 265
Your labia of rock, high breasts of foam

Tunnel Beach 1946 CP. 53

Thunder along her seven beaches.....

From the sea-carved cliffs that
held us in their hand.....

through the rock tunnel whined
the wind, time's hound in leash
and stirred the sand and murmured in your hair
the honey of your moving thighs

Homage to Baxter -Resonance XIV - Smaill's Beach Gun Emplacement - 1994

Resonance XIV

I had also passed this gun emplacement on my surf trips up the Otago Peninsula but never found the time to stop. Perhaps here more than any of the other locations Baxter had taken licence and shifted elements around, for it is Bird Island in the background that is isolated at high tide and contains a large sea cave, perhaps resembling the gun emplacement. It is also impossible to see the surf of the ocean from down at the gun emplacement as the cliff edge drops away almost vertically and there is some distance to the edge from the emplacemant. But from the top, of the emplacement, the view is spectacular. The access around the beach can only be gained at low tide.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Horse

They found an abandoned gun emplacement on a point of rock that was isolated by the waves at high tide..... They coupled on the concrete floor beside the corroded cables. It was the hour of the hawk, not the hour of the dove. While the waves chiseled at the rocks below, the mythical identification with all living things was achieved.

Homage to Baxter -Resonance XV Panorama of Aramoana from Taiaroa Heads - 1994

Resonance XIV

This day the fog was either image-maker or breaker. We had driven out to Taiaroa Head and the thick bank of fog was threatening to engulf the whole scene as I raced up the slippery slope damp in morning dew to the top of the hill. From the road at the bottom I had seen the great clumps of lichen-encrusted rocks strewn across the tops and knew that while this would provide a focus in the foreground it would also offer a higher aerial view of the harbour. The fog drew through the neck and over the hills just enough to show in the photographs. From the left is the Peninsula down to Dunedin and Port Chalmers, across the harbour to the tidal flats and sand spits of Aramoana. The black lines of the various jetties and rock groynes strike across the water. In the foreground of the third photograph the road can be seen and below this is the gun pit and on the far right is Taiaroa Head.

James K Baxter - Poem references

At Aramoana 1966 CP 336
Boulders interrupt the long
Jetty from whose black asphalt
tongue the godwits fly...

where the sighing combs of water
talk under broken jetties, and the long

where the serpent current flows
out of the harbour gates, long-
flowing, strongly tugging at
the roots of the world.

The Kraken 1966 CP 335
Green flats of weed that Heaphy painted
Wait for the withheld kiss of the tide...

You who stroll on cliff-top boulders and
The abandoned gun-pit....

and watch how the kraken's wide

Blinding tendrils move like smoke over the neck.

Resonance XXVI - The Macrocapa Tree on Bedford Parade, Brighton -2000

Resonance XIV

It was in June 2000 when I was compiling the CD and searching for links between the text and the images that I realized that the image of the Macrocarpa tree kept reoccurring in the text. The trees are on Bedford Parade and just up from the Baxter house; one had been cut down and only the large stump remained. Although these images appear dark the original photographs are rich in detail, Big Rock is visible and the Otago Peninsular coastline stretches like a distant arm into the ocean. When I took the image there were hundreds of pine nuts (Baxter remember floating down the river scattered on the ground, and while there was no sign of a cigarette buts, there was an empty beer bottle.

The idea behind the image was not to make a photograph of the tree but a child's like view from the tree, a door from the protection of the tree to the world outside.

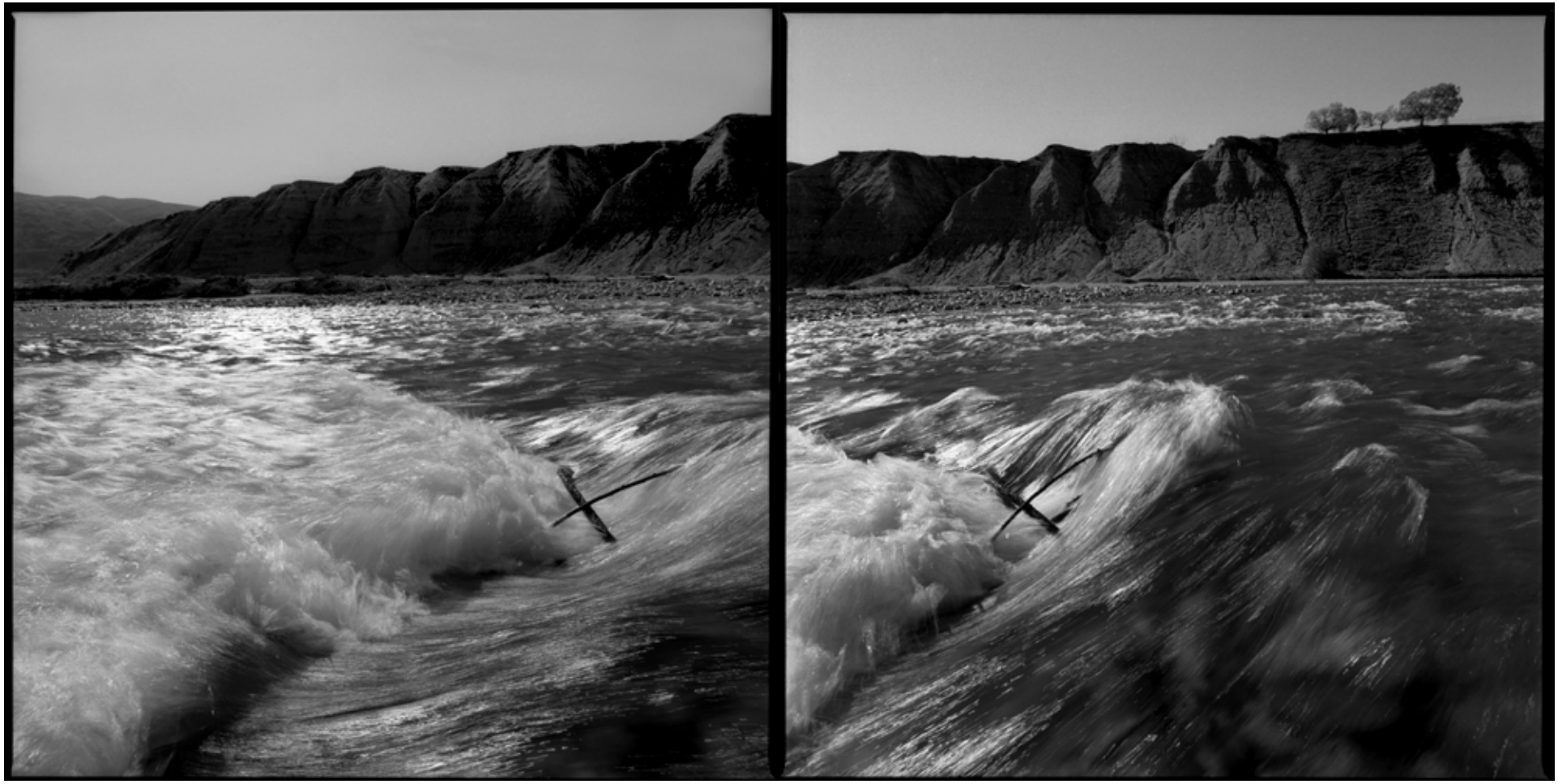
James K Baxter - Poem references

'Prediction', unpublished poem, no. 554, Ms 704/9

"the macrocarpa tree, the child's look-out"

'Poetry and Education', unpublished talk given at the Winter School of the English Association, August 1963 (Ms 75/163, Hocken Library), p. 3.

the first cigarette tasted in the top branches of the macrocarpa tree



Resonance XVI - Lindis River near Tarras - 1994

Resonance XVI

I searched around a wide area of Tarras to try and find an image that related to the project. This is in fact of the Lindis River which caught my eye late one evening and I walked down the right bank searching for an appropriate image that eluded me before the sun sank below the horizon and darkness set in. I returned the next afternoon and walked down the opposite bank until I came to this spot where a rusted cable from the gold-dredging days had caught in the rushing rapid while across it was snagged a thin branch of willow. With the few small willow trees on the horizon, it seemed to complete the image.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Night in Tarras 1947 CP
By Tarras where a shadowless sun beats down
on range and river, scorching snowgrass brown
and dawarfish trees - we came where a small
stream flowed
From the rocks, a fructifying angle, glowed

To My Father in Spring 1966 CP 365
That smile like a low sun on water
tells of a cross to come.

Brown Bone 1961 CP 229
All the way to Gabriel's Gully.

I stretched out like a log
Dreaming of girls and cider,
And death came like a riding man
With hooves of mountain water.

Homage to Baxter - Resonance XVII - Lower Matukituki Valley - 1994

Resonance XVII

During February as Lawrence us drove up the Matukituki valley this bent pole caught my eye an we stopped to take a photograph. However, it wasn't until I returned in winter when there was more snow and rising mist in the valley that I was able to get this image. Exactly how the pole became bent is unknown, but perhaps Baxter's "tigers" attacked it in the darkness of the night.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Mountains 1942 CP 8
But here they stand in massed solidity
to seize upon the day and night horizon....

The mountains crouch like tigers.
They are but stone yet the seeking eyes grow blind

Homage to Baxter - Resonance XVIII - Panorama of the Upper Matukituki Valley before the river branches east and west.

Resonance XVIII

During February as Lawrence drove up the Matukituki valley this bent pole caught my eye an we stopped to take a photograph. However, it wasn't until I returned in winter when there was more snow and rising mist in the valley that I was able to get this image. Exactly how the pole became bent is unknown, but perhaps the "tigers" attacked it in the darkness of the night.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Mountains 1942 CP 8
But here they stand in massed solidity
to seize upon the day and night horizon....

The mountains crouch like tigers.
They are but stone yet the seeking eyes grow blind.

Homage to Baxter - Resonance XIX - Panorama of West Matukituki Valley with the Raspberry Hut - 1994

Resonance XIX

Again, it was the images taken at the Raspberry Hut on the second trip in winter that were more successful. It was interesting that the hut still stands and apart from a different pile of fire wood and a thin layer of paint it appears untouched from the time that Baxter used it. The semicircular rock, the broken circle, surrounding the rock in the centre took sometime to find and seemed to relate to Baxter's ideas of barren friendship.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Letter from the Mountains 1968 CP 515
But these nights, my friend, under the iron roof
Of this old rabbiters' hut....

And the rock of barren friendship, has now another shape....

Tears from faces of stone. They are our own tears.

At Raspberry Hut 1961 CP 236
The water from the mitred mountain.
The black mare of rock.

Temple Basin 1948 CP 75
Invisible multitude of the wind horses ranging
From Peak to mitred peak, from cloud to tumbling cloud

Homage to Baxter- Resonance XX - Panorama of West Matukituki river past Mt Aspiring Hut - 1994

Resonance XIX

This image was taken on the far side of the first swing bridge past Mt Aspiring hut on the track up to Shovel Flat. We were looking for "boulders as huge as houses" and here the river reaches a point where the river and the rocks become wilder and wilder. About lies the evidence of torrents of gushing water and boulders strewn about. In the foreground is a huge slab of schist wiped clean that provided the perfect platform to shoot from. Native beech trees line both sides of the river with the odd one ripped from the bank and left half dragged into the flow of the river.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Poem in the Matukituki Valley CP
and stumbling where the mountains throw their dice
Of boulders huge as houses...

Three emblems of the heart I carry folded
as charms against flood water, sliding shale

Homage to Baxter- Resonance XXI - Railway Station, University and Town Hall Clock Towers - 1994

Resonance XXI

Somehow I wanted to relate the Town Belt to the various clocks and the idea came from a series of photographs I had taken several years ago that juxtaposed the Railway Station with native trees in the foreground and I decided to search for similar links for the other clock towers. While I could find good native trees around the University Clock tower, it was impossible to visually relate these to the clock and the only tree that allowed this was a single Kowhai Tree. The Town Hall was a little easier in that there are a number of healthy trees growing on the balcony of the Mayor's office in the Civic centre. The native trees in front of the Railway Station have since been ripped out to make way for a Flemish Knot Garden.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Dunedin Revisited 1961 CP 235
Three clocks clang early summer time
Across a town as cold as a Shacklock range.

The Cold Hub 1961 CP 256
Laying awake on a bench in the town belt...

Laying awake to the sound of clocks,
The Railway clock, the Town Hall clock,
And the Varsity clock

Homage to Baxter - Resonance XXII - First Church Spire - 1994

Resonance XXI

First Church is a much photographed Dunedin landmark, and at first it seemed impossible to relate the spire to sin. I had to explore the church from a variety of angles before I found the old lamp which appeared to offer a potential. As I framed the image the branches of the tree protruded into the top of the frame and two of the branches split down both sides of the spire like the legs of one of Baxter' lovers to complete the image.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet

What happened to that stupid sad young man...

Sin, said the First Church spire,
needling up to the Otago heavens of tombstone clouds

Homage to Baxter - Resonance XXII - War Memorial, Queens Gardens - 1994

Resonance XXII

While driving past several days before I had seen the sun strike the cenotaph at this interesting angle but did not have a camera with me. For the next few days it was just a matter of waiting until that exact time of day when the sky was clear enough to let through enough direct light. It seemed that this would not happen but on this day I decided to drive down set up and wait. Sure enough the clouds cleared for long enough to get the shot.

James K Baxter - Poem references

Horse

The flood lit war memorial pointed a dead phallus at the stony heavens.

Homage to Baxter - Resonance XXIV - Waters of the Leith below the University area - 1994

Resonance XXIII

If the sky is clear, the sun has just set for the day and the light begins to fade, water takes on a special glow, gathering all it can, the transformation is a luminous liquid. To get this image I had to wait for this time day and then wade out to the centre of one of the concrete weirs to set up the tripod. The shot is taken looking up the Water of the Leith is the Hocken building on the right.

James K Baxter - Poem references

The Weirs 1960-62 CP 262
At someone's flat we had our first quarrel
Above the weirs, on the leith Stream's Bank.....

The muscled Leith water

Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet
But the Leith Stream,
the last and only woman in the world
Lulling the dead sky in her arms,
sighing under bridge and over weir
down to the crab-wet harbour
had nothing at all to say

Homage to Baxter - Resonance XXV - Robert Burns Hotel - 2000

Resonance XXV

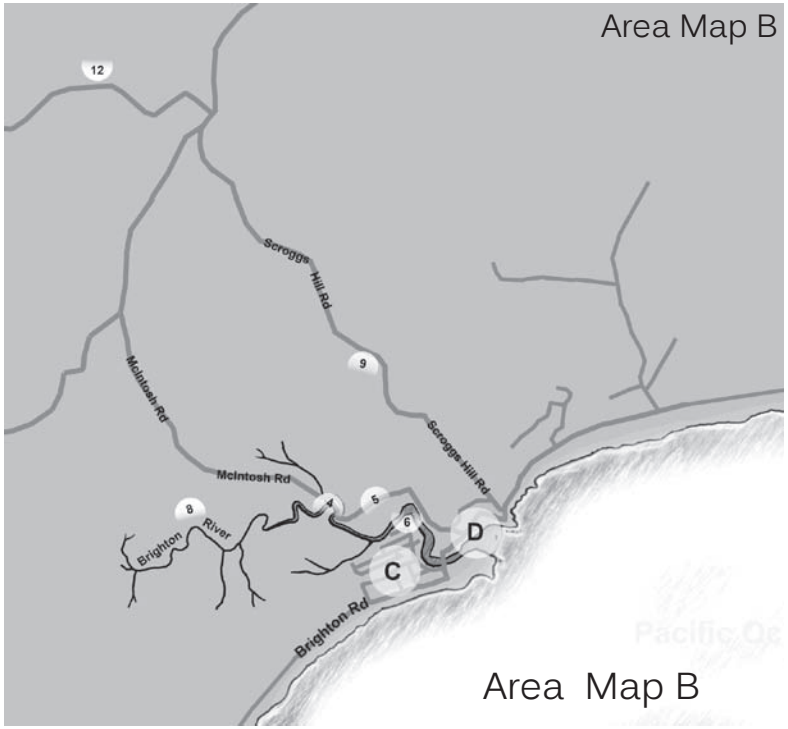
Without doubt, Garry Blackman's image of the Robbie Burns in the Oliver Book is a classic and in retrospect of the time peroiod when it was taken I knew it would be hard to find an image that epitimized the hotel in a similar manner. Because of this I had avoided trying to find an image that might conveye some of this. Also there was the literary images Baxter created of student flats and the authoriterian, calvanistic society that portrayed Dunedin. Initially I looked to photograph only the top half of the hotel's facard from George Street but fortunately the framing was not right and I had to return for another shoot from the same location. Here the framing was much better, but on my return to the car I found another view point (from a car park that is obscured from a back street) that seemed to encompass many of the aspects Baxter referenced.

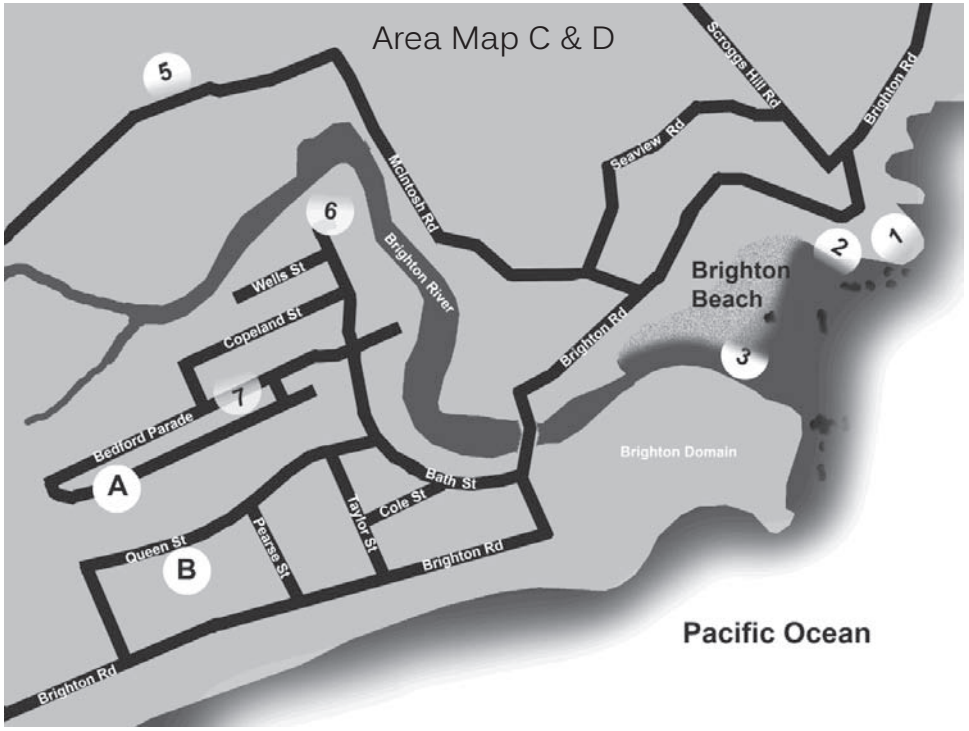
Mythology of Place Maps

Although mythology of place is centred on Baxter's Otago worlds, he also spent time in Christchurch, Wellington, Wanganui and Auckland.

Area Map A

Resonance 1- 12 see Area Map B
Resonance 15 - see Aramoana map - page 76
Resonance 14 - see Smails Beach map - page 76
Resonace 1 -9 & 12 - Brighon area see Map B - page 75
Resonance 10 - 11 - Kuri Bush - Taieri River see map - page 76





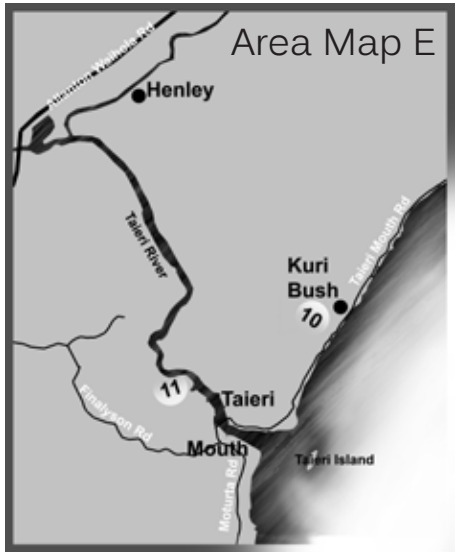
Area Map B

Resonance 4 - Brighton River near the bend - P30
Resonance 5 - the Cattle Flats - P32
Resonance 6 - the Giant's Grave - P34
Resonance 8 - Orchard at Duffy's Farm - P38
Resonance 9 - Sod Hut on Scroggs Hill - P40
Resonance 12 - Taieri River in Flood - 46

Area Map C & D

Resonance 1 - Brighton Bay from Big Rock- P24
Resonance 2 - Cave on Big Rock - P26
Resonance 3 - the rock, Prometheus - P 28
Resonance 5 - the Cattle Flats - P 32
Resonance 6 - the Giant's Grave - P 34
Resonance 7 - James K Baxter's Room - P36

A - Lawernce Jone's House
B - Lloyd Godman's House



Area Map E

Resonance 10 - Homestead at Kuri Bush - P42
Resonance 11 - Taieri River near the Mouth - 44

Area Map F

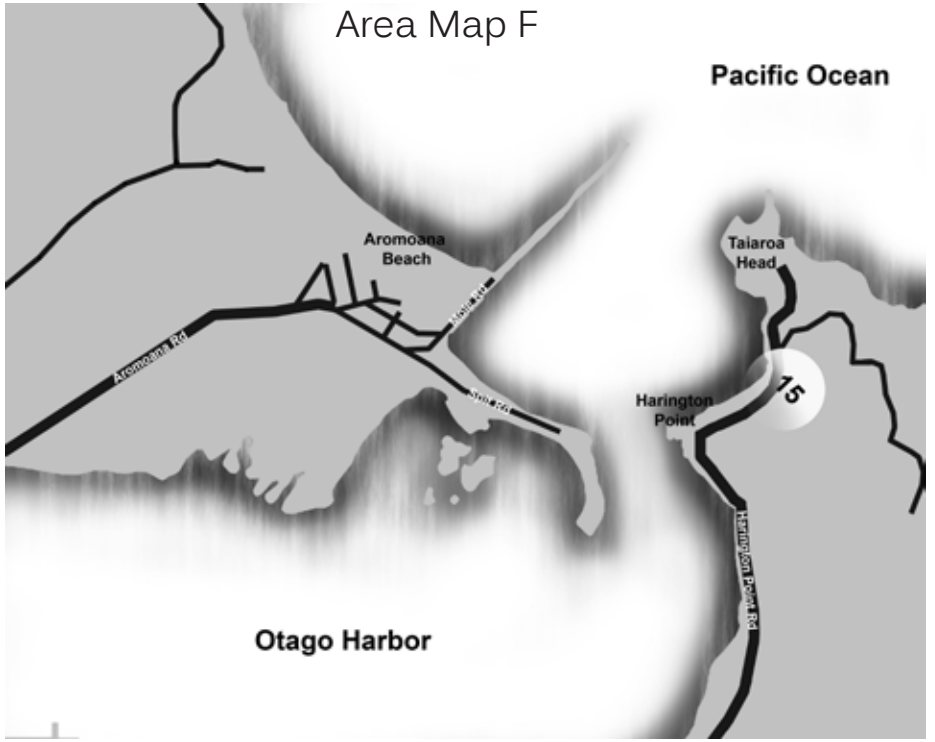
Resonance 15 - Aramoana from Taiaroa Heads - P52

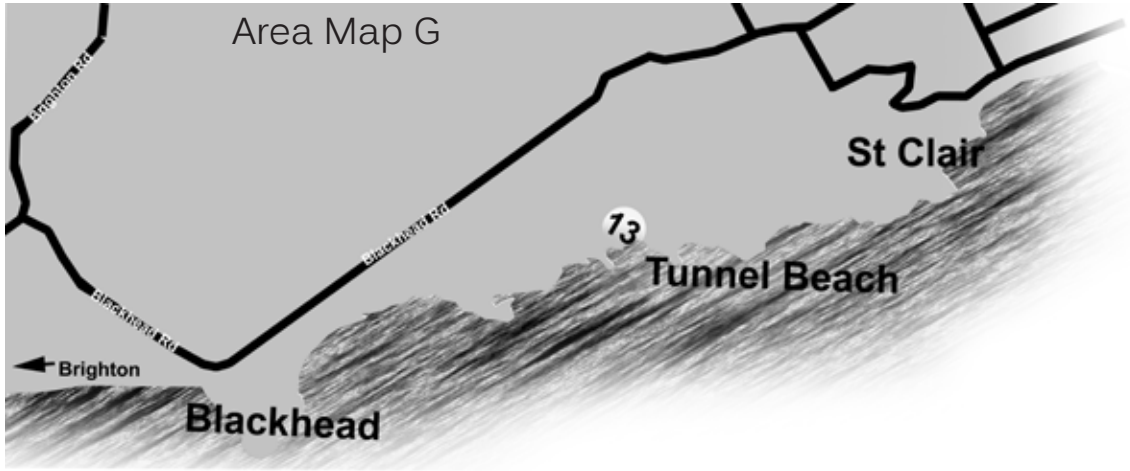
Area Map G

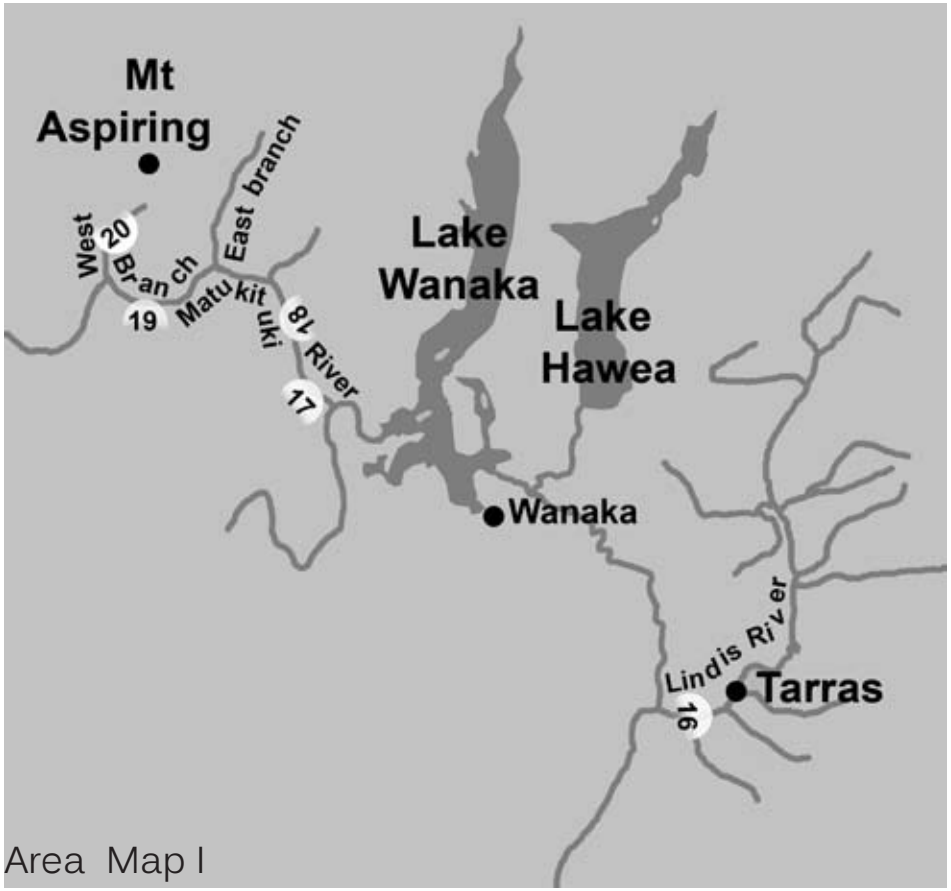
Resonance 13 - Tunnel Beach - P48

Area Map H

Resonance 14 - Smaill's Beach Gun Emplacement - P 50







Area Map I

Resonance 16 - Lindis River near Tarras - P56
Resonance 17 - Lower Matukituki Valley - P58
Resonance 18 - Upper Matukituki Valley - P60
Resonance 19 - Raspberry Hut - P62
Resonance 20 - the river past Mt Aspiring Hut - P64

Area Map J

Resonance 21 - the Clock Towers - P66
Resonance 22 - First Church Spire - P68
Resonance 23 - War Memorial - P70
Resonance 24 - Waters of the Leith - P72
Resonance 25 - Robert Burns Hotel - P74

James K. Baxter and His Family

Lawerence Jones

Although best known for the writings and social witness of the younger son, James K, Baxter, the Baxter family made many and varied contributions to the little community of Brighton and to the wider Otago and New Zealand communities. Archibald McColl Learmond Baxter (1881-1970) was born 13 December 1881 in his grandfather McColl's sod cottage on a farm in the Brighton district. On both sides of his family he was related to early Scottish highlander settlers in the area, His paternal grandfather, John Baxter, first arrived in Otago from Rothesay in 1861, while his maternal grandfather, Archibald McColl, arrived from Ballachulish in 1859. His father, also John, married Mary McColl in 1879. There were six other male sons from the marriage and one daughter. Archibald as a young man worked in Central Otago as rabbiter and ploughman until he got a small farm on Scroggs Hill.

He was a successful farmer and a community leader, but his life was disrupted by World War I. He was, as a convinced and outspoken socialist and pacifist, conscientiously opposed to conscription, leading to his arrest, along with that of his five unmarried brothers, early in 1917 for non-compliance. He and his brothers Jack and Sandy, after brief imprisonment in Wellington, were sent against their wills on a troopship to England in an attempt to force them to comply with the military. He consistently refused military orders but was forcibly sent to France and then Belgium, where he was subjected to the cruelty of No. 1 Field Punishment, then sent to the front to be exposed to artillery fire, and finally confined to a mental hospital to try to force compliance. He stuck to his beliefs, however, and was sent home late in 1918. These experiences are movingly and simply described in his autobiographical We Will Not Cease, first published in 1939. On his return to Otago Archibald worked as a rabbiter and causal labourer.

In 1920 Archibald met Millicent Amiel Brown (1888-1984), daughter of John Macmillan Brown, foundation Professor of English and Classics at Canterbury University College, and of Helen Connon Brown, the first woman honours graduate from a British Empire university and Principal of Christchurch Girls' High School. Born in Christchurch 8 January 1888, Millicent lost her mother when she was fifteen, was zealously pushed by her father to a university education at the University of Sydney and Newnham College, Cambridge. After her return to New Zealand she lived with her father in Christchurch and, in 1920, in Dunedin, acting as his hostess and sometime teaching assistant. Millicent and Archibald were married, against her father's wishes, in Dunedin on 2 February 1921. Late in that year Archibald bought a small farm at Kuri Bush, where they lived until 1931. The first son, Terence John, was born in Dunedin 23 May 1922, followed by the birth of James Keir, also in Dunedin, 29 June 1926. For health reasons Archibald sold the farm in 1931 and bought a house in Brighton. He retired from farming but did casual labour, the family's income being augmented in 1935 by an annuity to Millicent after the death of her father. In Brighton Archibald and Millicent were both active in community affairs and in the peace movement, while Terence and James had the kind of seaside upbringing described in James's poems. In 1935 the family shifted to Wanganui, where both boys attended Friends' School. In 1937 they all went to England, where the boys attended Sibford School and Archibald wrote We Will Not Cease. The family returned to New Zealand in late 1938 and took up residence in Brighton again. James attended Friends' School again and then Kings High School in Dunedin, while Terence went to work in Dunedin. Terence, like his father, was a conscientious objector to war, and in 1941 was sentenced to Defaulter's Detention for the duration of the war for refusing military service. James, who had been a precocious writer of poetry, began to receive publication in 1944 when he attended the University of Otago, and in early 1945 his first book, Beyond the Palisade, appeared. Immediately he was recognised as New Zealand's leading younger poet.

Following the War, Terence and James moved out to form their own families. Terence married Lenore Bond on 22 August 1947 in Dunedin and settled into a life of worker and family man. They had three children, Kenneth, Katherine, and Helen. James, to his mother's distress, dropped out of university and did various casual labouring jobs, taking advantage of what bohemian life Dunedin could offer. Late in 1947 he went to Christchurch, where he attended Canterbury University College intermittently and published in 1948 his second volume, Blow, Wind of Fruitfulness. On 9 December 1948 in Napier he married Jacqueline Sturm, whom he had first met when she was a student at the University of Otago. The couple settled in Wellington from late 1948 to 1965. In those years their two children, Hilary and John, were born, and James consolidated his position as poet with such books as The Fallen House (1953), Howrah Bridge and other poems (1958), and Pig Island Letters (1966) and also wrote works of literary criticism and several plays.

In these years he radically changed his life style, joining Alcoholics Anonymous and the Catholic Church, finishing a university degree at Victoria University College and a teacher training course at Wellington Teachers College, and working as a teacher, an editor at School Publications, and later as a postman. In 1966 and 1967 he returned with his family to Dunedin as Robert Burns Fellow at the University of Otago and remained in 1968 to work in the Catholic Education Office.

During these Dunedin years he wrote much poetry and also a substantial group of plays that were produced by Patric Carey at the Globe Theatre. From 1969 his life took another sharp turn as he felt called to leave his family and make a radical social witness as an advocate of voluntary poverty and communal living based on his interpretation of the spiritual aspects of Maori communal life. First in Auckland, then at the little settlement of Jerusalem on the Wanganui River, briefly in Wellington, and then again at Jerusalem he gathered open communities for social drop-outs, and became a controversial national figure. Finally, exhausted and in ill health, he went to Auckland, where he died 22 October 1972. Jersualem Sonnets (1970), Jerusalem Daybook (1971), and Autumn Testament (1972) were the main books from this final period. His Collected Poems appeared posthumously in 1980, and the Collected Plays in 1982.

During these postwar years, Archibald and Millicent remained together in Brighton in a life of active retirement. Both were accepted into the Catholic Church in 1965. Upon Archibald's death in August 1970, Millicent shifted into a small house in Dunedin, where she remained involved with the Church and peace organisations and other social concerns, independent but looked after by Terence and by her friends, until her death on 3 July 1984.

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In the year before Baxter's death Lloyd Godman had the chance to meet him once in person at the Catholic Administration centre where we spoke briefly and then I later had the opportunity to hear him speak at the town hall in Dunedin during Impulse 71. It was also at this time when I became interested in photography and I took some photographs of him speaking. Although many of the negatives of this period were lost, somehow in my archive of images from this period this photograph of Baxter survived.

James K Baxter speaking at "Impulse 71"
Photograph Lloyd Godman 1971

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31 'Wild Bees', Collected Poems, p. 83.
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36 'First Years Remembered: Kuri Bush', unpublished poem, Ms 704/17.
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48 'The Homecoming' and 'Pig Island Letters 2' , Collected Poems, pp. 121, 277.
49 'Essay on the Higher Learning', The Spike, 1961, p. 62; Horse, .11.
50'The Town under the Sea' (prose version), p. 342; 'The Giant's Grave', Collected Poems, p . 153.
51 'Paradise Ducks', NZ Listener, 2 March 1956, p. 5.
52 'Winter River', Collected Poems, pp. 377-78.
53 'The Millstone', Collected Poems, p. 409.
54 'Here', Collected Poems, pp. 414-15.
55 'I Remember a Boy', unpublished poem, Ms 704/20.
56'The Boys' and 'Eel Fishing' in Collected Poems, pp. 247, 619.
57'The River', Collected Poems, p. 353; 'The Town under the Sea' (prose version), Meanjin, 15, 341.
58 'The Bridge', Collected Poems, p. 372.
59'At Kuri Bush', Collected Poems, p. 371.
60 'At Taieri Mouth' and 'The Glass Lamp', Collected Poems, pp. 231, 255.
61 'The River', Collected Poems, p. 385.
62'The Flood', Collected Poems, p. 263.
63 'Henley Pub (a traveller's soliloquy)', Collected Poems, pp. 324-25.
64 'The Virgin and the Temptress' in The Man on the Horse, pp. 77-78.
65 'Taieri Gorge', unpublished poem, no. 1020, Ms 704/14.
66'Introduction', New Zealand in Colour, photographs by Kenneth and Jean Bigwood, text by James K. Baxter (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1961). In the passage Baxter goes on to quote a passage from 'At Akitio'.
67 'Symbolism in New Zealand Poetry', James K, Baxter as Critic, p. 45.
68 NZ Listener, 14 June 1963, p. 5.
69 'Conversation with an Ancestor', p. 12.
70 'Introduction', New Zealand in Colour.
71 'My father's wintering', unpublished poem, Ms 704/15.
72 'Thorns', Collected Poems, p. 427; 'On Returning to Dunedin', p. 4; 'The Man on the Horse', p.91; 'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', p. 125.
73 'Great-Uncles and Great-Aunts', Collected Poems, pp. 315-16.
74'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', pp. 153-55. See Collected Poems, p. 372; there is an earlier vision of the rocks as Prometheus in the unpublished 'Seascape', no. 826, Ms 704/13.
75 'Not Having a Tartan', unpublished poem, Ms 704/25.
76Collected Poems, p. 135.
77 'The Return', Collected Poems, p. 179.
78'At Brighton Bay', Collected Poems, p. 371.
79 Landfall 75 (September 1965), 243.
80 'The Kraken', Collected Poems, pp. 335-36.
81 ,The Birth of Beauty', unpublished poem, no. 137, Ms 704/3.
82'Conversation with an Ancestor', p. 25; he is referring to an implicit allusion in 'At Aramoana', Collected Poems, p. 336.
83 'At Aramoana', Collected Poems, p. 338.
84 'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', p. 153.
85 'Apparition of the Goddess Venus to a Sleepy Man', Collected Poems, p. 384.
86 Horse, pp. 50-51.
87 'Tunnel Beach', Collected Poems, p. 53.
88 'Letter to Robert Burns', Collected Poems, p. 291.
89 'Rhadamanthus', Collected Poems, pp. 407-08.
90 'The Tunnel', unpublished poem, Ms 704/26; a similar view appears in 'Tunnel Beach Revisited' in the same notebook.
91 'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', pp. 153-54.
92'Early Intimations on Brighton Bridge', unpublished poem, Ms 704/23.
93'Be Happy in Bed' and 'Winter River', Collected Poems, pp. 199, 378.
94'Never No More', Collected Poems, p. 121.
95Horse, p. 5.

96'Brighton', Collected Poems, p. 230.
97'Great-Uncles and Great-Aunts', Collected Poems, p. 315.
98'Never No More', 'Be Happy in Bed' and 'Pig Island Letters 5', Collected Poems, pp. 122, 199, 280.
99 'Two Characters and a Boat Shed', unpublished poem, Ms 704/24; 'Home', unpublished prose poem, Ms 704/24.
100 'The Bad Young Man', Collected Poems, p. 118.
101'The Walk', Collected Poems, p. 123.
102'Bonfire', Collected Poems, p. 390.
103 'The Parson's Rock', NZ Listener, 18 February 1955, p. 8; 'In Fires of No Return', Collected Poems, p. 166.
104 'Letter to Noel Ginn II', Collected Poems, p. 72.
105'The Waves', Collected Poems, p. 286.
106'Praise at Day's End', NZ Listener, 2 March 1956, p. 5; 'The World of the Creative Artist', in James K. Baxter as Critic, p. 180.
107 'The Fisherman', Collected Poems, p. 159.
108 'Brighton', Collected Poems, p. 230.
109 'A Country Idyll', unpublished poem, Ms 704/16.
110'The Rock', Collected Poems, p. 362.
111 'Symbolism in New Zealand Poetry', James K. Baxter as Critic, p. 61.
112'Cold Spring', unpublished poem, no. 832, Ms. 704/13. '
113'[because the flax blades]', Collected Poems, pp. 422-23.
114'The Rock Woman', Collected Poems, p. 154.
115'The Chair', Collected Poems, pp. 353-54.
116 'The Hollow Place', Collected Poems, pp. 251-52.
117 'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', p. 124.
118'The Cave', Collected Poems, p. 69.
119 'Air Flight North', Collected Poems, p. 392.
120 'Travelling to Dunedin', Collected Poems, p. 366.
121 'On Returning to Dunedin', p. 4; the same image appears in 'Irenaeus' Day, unpublished poem, Ms 704/25.
122 'At Aramoana', Collected Poems, p. 336.
123 'Conversation with an Ancestor', p. 25.
124'In Fires of No Return', Collected Poems, p. 165.
125'Symbolism in New Zealand Poetry', p. 51.
126'The Prisoner Describes Himself', unpublished prose poem, Ms 704/27.
127'The Waves', Collected Poems, pp. 287-88.
128'Letter to Noel Ginn II', Collected Poems, p. 72.
129'Letter to Sam Hunt', Collected Poems, p. 431.
130 'October Water Poem' and 'The Gale', Collected Poems, pp. 416-17, 418.
131'At Goat Island (for Hoani)', Collected Poems, p. 426.
132'Poem Against Comfort (for Peter)', Collected Poems, p. 422.
133'At Aramoana', Collected Poems, pp. 336-37.
134'Conversation with an Ancestor', p. 126.
135 'Reflection on the choice of a Grave', unpublished poem, Ms 704/15.
136Untitled draft, Ms. 975/25; see 'Letter to Noel Ginn II', Collected Poems, p. 72.
137James K. Baxter (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 21.
138'Introduction', New Zealand in Colour.
139'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', p. 145
140 'Dunedin Revisited' and 'The Cold Hub', Collected Poems, pp. 235, 256.
141'At Dunedin', unpublished poem, Ms 704/19.
142 'A Fifty-Acre Bedroom', unpublished poem, Ms 704/22.
143'At Dunedin'; Cressida: 1 In the Lecture Room', Collected Poems, p.101.
144"Horse, p. 53; Walking up Castle Street', Meanjin 15 (1956), 344.

145 'The Clock Tower [above the river]', unpublished poem, Ms 704/26.
146 'Dunedin', unpublished poem, Ms 704/21.
147 Horse, p. 75.
148'To a City Father', unpublished poem, Ms 704/26.
149Horse, p. 31.
150'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', pp. 142-43.
151 'Dunedin Habits' and'Pig Island Letter 3', Collected Poems, pp. 340, 278.
152 'Home Thoughts', Collected Poems, p. 255.
153'Walking up Castle Street', p. 343; Horse, p. 45.
154'Letter to Robert Burns', Collected Poems, pp. 289-91.
155'Notes on the Education of a New Zealand Poet', p. 139.
156'A Small Ode on Mixed Flatting', Collected Poems, p. 397.
157 'The Cold Hub', Collected Poems, pp. 256-57
158'Pig Island Letters 3', Collected Poems, p. 278.
159'Words to Lay a Strong Ghost (after Catullus): 13 The Flower', Collected Poems, pp. 362-63.
160 'Pig Island Letters 1', Collected Poems, p. 277.
161'Henley Pub', Collected Poems, p. 324; 'The Virgin and the Temptress', p. 82.
162 'Letter to Robert Burns', Collected Poems, p. 290.
163'The Clock Tower [above the river]', unpublished poem, Ms 704/26.
164'On First Seeing Otago University', unpublished poem, Ms 704/7.
165 'Afternoon Walk', Collected Poems, p. 376; 'Walking Up Castle Street', p. 344.
166 'The School of Love', unpublished poem, Ms 704/21; 'Ikon', unpublished poem, Ms 704/21; Pig Island Letters 7', Collected Poems, p. 281.
167 Horse, p. 116.
168 'The Fiery Shirt', Collected Poems, p. 407.
169 'Introduction', New Zealand in Colour.
170 'Conversation with an Ancestor', p. 25; 'At the Fox Glacier Hotel', Collected Poems, p. 368.
171 'Christmas Poem (for Mrs Hurst Seager)', Collected Poems, p. 37.
172'Towards Te Anau', NZ Listener, 20 May 1966, p. 6.
173'Symbolism in New Zealand Poetry', p. 61.
174 'The Mountains', Collected Poems, p. 8; At Naseby', Collected Poems, pp. 388-89; see Frank McKay, The Life of James K. Baxter (Auckland: Oxford University Press,), pp. 82-83.
175 'Words to Lay a Strong Ghost (After Catullus): 5 The Earth', Collected Poems, p. 358.
176 'At Raspberry Hut', Collected Poems, p. 236; Horse, p. 117.
177 'Poem in the Matukituki Valley', Collected Poems, p. 87.
178 'Haast Pass', Collected Poems, p. 62.
179'The Mountains', 'Haast Pass', 'Poem in the Matukituki Valley', Collected Poems, pp. 8-9, 63, 87.
180The Memoirs of Millicent Baxter, (Whatamongo Bay: Cape Catley, 1981), p. 70.
181 'Prelude N.Z.', Collected Poems, pp. 16-17.
182'O land seen in the light of an inhuman dawn', Collected Poems, p. 9; Luggate Pub; unpublished poem, Ms 704/14.
183 'Love-Lyric IV', Collected Poems, p. 24
184 'Naseby', Collected Poems, p. 50.
185 'Poem in the Matukituki Valley', Collected Poems, p. 87.
186'High Country Weather', Collected Poems, p. 34.
187'Thinking About Mountains (I)', unpublished poem, Ms 704/28.
188'Thinking About Mountains (II)', Poet, (Madras), 1968.
189'The Track', Collected Poems, pp. 341-42,
190 'High Country Weather', unpublished version, Ms 704/15.
191'O lands seen in the light of an inhuman dawn' and 'The Prospector', Collected Poems, pp. 9, 91.
192 'Poem in the Matukituki Valley' and 'The Pass', Collected Poems, pp. 86, 390-91; Horse, p.117.
193'After Rain', NZ Listener, 10 February 1955, p. 12.

194'Eagle', 'Hawk and Hare', and 'Temple Basin', Collected Poems, pp. 12, 3, 75.
195'Let Time be Still' and 'My love late walking', Collected Poems, pp. 52, 64-65.
196 'The Mountaineer', Collected Poems, p. 341.
197 'The Monument', Collected Poems, pp. 340-41.
198'Poem in the Matukituki Valley', Collected Poems, p. 87; review of Paul Powell, Men Aspiring, New Zealand Dental Journal 64 (October 1968), 278.
199 'Rocky Island', unpublished poem, no. 102, Ms 704/2.
200'Ode to a Tui', unpublished poem, no. 16, Ms 704/1.
201 'The City Wakes (Dunedin)', unpublished poem, no. 119, Ms 704/2.
202 'Introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45, in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935-1984 (ed. Peter Simpson Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p. 45.
203 'In One Short Hour' (poem no. 134), 'Xmas Eve, written on Xmas Eve' (poem no. 159), 'Evening by the Lake' (poem no. 154), unpublished poems, Ms 704/3.
204 'They may seek vainly', poem no. 357, Ms 704/6; 'Bees', poem no. 260, Ms 704/4; 'The Glacier- Wall', poem no. 220, Ms 704/4; 'On first Seeing Otago University', poem no. 427, Ms 704/6.
205 'At Balclutha', unpublished poem, no. 765, Ms 704/12.
206 'The Return', Collected Poems, p. 179.
207 'On Returning to Dunedin', p. 4.
208'The Rocks', 'Autumn Testament 9', and 'Meditation on my Father's Death', Collected Poems, pp. 483, 545, 492.
209 'Introduction to The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse' and 'New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition', in Look Back Harder, pp. 172, 199