

Getting on to Charles Brasch's *Home Ground*, which appeared in *Islands* 13 (Spring 1975).

In July 1976, as a spontaneous (and surely unprecedented?) tribute to a single artist and patron, Ted Middleton and John Caselberg, with the help of the University of Otago, organized in Dunedin a Charles Brasch Arts Festival. This took the form of a three-day sequence of music, painting, drama, and verse and prose readings with commentary, which traversed a good many of Brasch's special interests; the sessions devoted to his own work clearly illustrated how much wider it was in range (especially in the fields of descriptive prose, and verse translation from German, Russian, Punjabi and Bengali) than most people had supposed. About the same time, my own critical essay on Charles Brasch appeared in the O.U.P. series, *New Zealand Writers and Their Work*.

In that essay, so far as I was able to sketch a biography, I tried to counter the commonly held view that just because he was financially independent, and because he never married, Brasch was somehow in a specially privileged position, both as writer and art patron, to indulge his artistic tastes. Of course it's true that financial independence makes it easier for a man to follow up his own special interests: if he has enough determination and confidence in his judgement, he may become a serious collector or something of a scholar. One thinks here of such names as those of Sir George Grey and Dr Thomas Hocken, or of a less gifted but more single-minded figure like Alexander Turnbull. The first two of these were men with active professional careers; only the last was able to turn a private hobby into his chief interest in life. None of them, I think—not even the moody, devious, intensely ambitious Grey—would have claimed to be a creative artist, with all the agonizing private doubts and fears that so often go with this most demanding of vocations.

Within the commercially prosperous cluster of German-Jewish families already acclimatized in Australia and New Zealand to which Brasch belonged, there were two clear examples of the intelligent use of private wealth for cultural purposes. The first was his grandfather Willi Fels, for many years head of the firm of Hallenstein Bros., who was a serious collector in several fields, did much to foster anthropology and Maori studies in Dunedin, and was a generous patron of the Otago Museum. The second—their names are too little known in their native New Zealand—was that slightly older generation of cousins who left Dunedin to make their home in London while Charles was still at school—Mary, Dora and Esmond de Beer. In terms of the convenient E. M. Forster distinction between the practical managing Wilcoxes who make the