

His response to Owen, coupled with the dispatch of the collection to Paris was, in a very real sense, Haast's declaration of his own intellectual independence in matters associated with the natural history of the Colony. 'I must conclude,' he wrote,

that you wish me to send you all the specimens unclassified such as you received from Mantell & others; & this brings me to a point, which I wish to clear. You are kind enough to speak of my labours & that I was able to *match* the bones, those described by you: however this is hardly the whole. I with my assistant have articulated from the material at our command & afterwards have matched them with those described by you; but in many cases this was impossible as in many instances you have named only portions of skeletons. All along I have felt that I was in a wrong position, & although my friends urged me on to describe all new species & portions of species named by you, by which many points would be settled, I have refrained from doing so not only as a proof of my respect & veneration for you, but also, feeling that I should never be able to reach the classical standard of your labours. On the other hand "loyalty to truth", as you express yourself, compels me to point out where I think your conclusions are not quite correct. I may in many instances say *I am certain*, having obtained either the specimens in situ or have such material that error is impossible....

And after cataloguing a series of instances where his collection provides a better guide than Owen's laboratory, he concludes:

Thus I really do not know how to act & as I am willing to send you all our type specimens for description, of course, with the understanding that they are considered as such, of course, I am open to correction, & shall only be too grateful for the sake of truth & my own, if you will do so. But I could not do my duty in this country nor to myself if the results of my own labours would be altogether passed over. After having devoted years of close study to our extinct Avifauna, I owe it to myself that at least portions of such points should not be overlooked. You yourself can hardly expect, who have done *more* than anybody else to propagate the study of Comparative Anatomy, that we in the Colonies do not claim at least a share in the future labours. If a study of your works for many years constitutes a pupil of yours, I can fairly claim to be one of yours, although I have not had the enjoyment 'to sit at your feet' & I shall always try that I shall not be unworthy of such claim....⁸⁹

Though respectful, Haast's letter was an unequivocal—even daring—assertion of his rights as a professional. A few months later, he wrote in a more placating vein⁹⁰ to which Owen replied in acknowledgement of the changed relationship: 'I begin to feel that my share in the work of restoration is over. I shall devote the little leisure at my command for application to a favourite old subject, to the completion of my series of memoirs for a compact book.'⁹¹ It may serve in some small measure to help in the comparison & determination of the many—doubtless—additions which will have to be made to the extinct avifauna of New Zealand. You stand at the head of my successors in that Work, and merit every honour