WHY CAN'T SHE STAY HOME?

Expatriation and Back-migration in the Work of
Katherine Mansfield, Robin Hyde,
Janet Frame and Fleur Adcock

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Abstract

My thesis examines changing conceptions of colonial, artistic and female identity. I build on the work of previous critics (including Ash, Parkin-Gounelas, Pride, Sandbrook, Wevers), but I seek to place renewed emphasis on literary-historical context and questions of aesthetic value.

My introductory chapter grounds the twentieth-century works in literary analyses of a sample of published nineteenth-century accounts by British women of their emigration to New Zealand. These women align expatriation with bereavement, yet advocate the colony’s new egalitarianism. The chapter ends with a reading of Victorian fiction by ‘Alien’ (Louisa Baker: once popular, but now seldom read), for whom expatriation was already a complex matter.

For ‘Alien’, the New Zealander’s return to England connotes artistic self-betterment and women’s entry into valuable work: themes crucial to Mansfield, in whose early prose expatriation represents similar liberation. However, connections between travel and social freedom become increasingly questionable; Mansfield’s stories illustrate the restrictiveness of European sexual moeurs, establishing disturbing correspondences between expatriation, the lost past, the undermining of identity, and death.

Hyde takes up Mansfield’s preoccupations, in works which richly dramatise the scope and limits of expatriation for a colonial woman artist. The inclusion of back-migration in her narratives reconciles expatriation with rising literary nationalism.

Adcock’s initial poetry repeats Mansfield’s adolescent depiction of New Zealand as stifling. Although her stance on the relationship between self and homeland grows more conflicted throughout her career, she rejects Hyde’s idea of redemptive back-migration. Return merely leads to reiteration of insoluble debates over identity.

Janet Frame’s novels parody - and repudiate - previous perspectives on expatriation. Her autobiography partially returns to modernist structures (expatriation as arrival at self-possession), yet her total oeuvre finds its only possibility of home in interiority.

I conclude with a brief examination of fiction by Kirsty Gunn and Emily Perkins, both of whom use expatriation to signify moral uncertainty. My study aims to deepen a sense of the intertextual relationships between the selected authors. I hope that my account opens new ways of interpreting the links between history and gender in narratives of leaving home.
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INTRODUCTION
If birth is a departure as well as an arrival, we have all left our first homes. Narratives of expatriation and exile can be traced to the very inception of history and creativity: there are countless such narratives. Michael Siedel reminds us that “the exilic projection is originary, whether the Tartarian and Luciferian expulsions, the trek East from Eden, the saga of Io and Europa, the flight of Daedalus [...],” and his extensive catalogue brings us up to nineteenth-century America, with “the river odyssey of Huck Finn.”¹ We can strengthen this chain by adding numerous journey or exile narratives from other cultures. These would include the Maori myth (which also occurs in several other Polynesian mythologies) of Rangi and Papa, the lovers Earth and Sky, forced asunder by their sons, and the tradition that tells of the departure of ancestral canoes from the homeland Hawaiiki: the founding journey - led by Kupe - in the Maori colonisation of Aotearoa. Such traditions have immense psychological power, as parables of cultural dawn and change; their power derives in part from their doubleness. For alongside the sense of initiation, the start of a new state, these traditions also carry those primal notions of the first separation, and the first loss. Personal narratives of leaving home also inevitably interact with these ancient, Janus-faced archetypes: something is always both lost and found.

For the women writers in this study, narratives of leaving home are also layered by historical notions of femininity and domesticity. These ideas are implicit in the quotation I have chosen for my title. Taken from Hyde’s novel The Godwits Fly (1938), the question is asked by John Hannay, as his daughter Eliza leaves for Australia: “Why can’t she stay home and behave, like any other girl?”² The father’s bewilderment is representative of wider issues: how does a woman leave home when she is still identified with home? Eliza, to her father’s mind, leaves the private for the public sphere - yet as

¹ Siedel, Exile and the Narrative Imagination, p. 8.
² Rawlinson (ed.), The Godwits Fly by Robin Hyde, p. 96.
my chapter on Hyde will discuss, the conditions which have driven her to expatriate give convincing evidence of how "the recesses of the domestic space" are always "sites for [public] history’s most intricate invasions." John Hannay evidently feels the pain of separation - yet what does departure from a place often emotively identified as either motherland or fatherland mean for the women writers in my survey? Such questions are further complicated by notions of a developing national and literary identity in transition from the colonial to the post-colonial context. This study attempts to document some of these complexities.

Over the course of the final two decades of the twentieth century, expatriation and exile have become increasingly popular areas of sociological and literary-critical concern. In two major studies, Paul Tabori in The Anatomy of Exile (1972) and Martin

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3 Bhabha, “Locations of Culture”, The Location of Culture, p. 9.
4 The debate over the definition and suitability of the term “post-colonial” is itself a vast area of literary theoretical specialisation. Within the bounds of this study, I use it to refer to the general period after New Zealand’s political allegiances had shifted from early fealty to the structures of British Empire, towards increased self-determination, and increased trade and political connections with other nations of the South Pacific. While several New Zealanders had already questioned the colony’s relation to empire in the aftermath of the Boer War and World War One, a distinctive governmental turning point can be located in the 1930s. In 1936, the New Zealand Labour government took a stance independent from Britain in the League of Nations, over the proposal for the lifting of sanctions imposed on Italy after the invasion of Ethiopia. (See Malcolm McKinnon, “New Zealand in the World”, Sinclair (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand, p. 250.) Stuart Murray places the beginning of the post-colonial in the 1930s: he argues that post-colonialism is "a ‘project’ [...] a set of practices that are very much grounded in the day to day activities of New Zealand culture in the 1930s, but are also conditioned by the wider context that is the legacy of Empire.” (Never a Soul at Home, p. 253.). Yet it is this very notion of “legacy” that leads to critical anxieties about the “shiftiness of the prefix ‘post’.” (Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 1.) The notion of “legacy” also modifies any description of an author like, say, Hyde, as strictly post-colonial, when her career bridges the 1920s and 1930s, and dramatises the very processes of separation from a close attachment to England. She might more correctly be described as a transitional author. For background reading on the involutions of defining “post-colonial” in specific national and literary contexts, see Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (eds.), The Empire Writes Back; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.), The Post-colonial Studies Reader; Chambers and Curti (eds.), The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons: During, “Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?” in Landfall 155, Vol. 39 No. 3, September 1985; Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism; Mohanty, “Colonial Legacies, Multicultural Futures: Relativism, Objectivity and the Challenge of Otherness”, PMLA Special Topic: Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition Vol. 110 No. 1, January 1995; Moore-Gilbert, Postcolonial Theory; Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Grossberg and Nelson (eds.), The Marxist Interpretation of Culture; Said, Culture and Imperialism; Shohat “Notes on the Post-colonial” (for a discussion of the tension between the “philosophical and historical teleologies of ‘post’”), Social Text 31/32, 1992, p. 102.
Tucker in Literary Exile in the Twentieth Century (1991) distinguish between various malign extrinsic influences - economic, social, religious, and political - which have driven people, all too frequently in mass migrations, away from their native lands. Yet both Tabori and Tucker assert that various degrees of psychic loss may arise whether the individual be expelled by brute force, or whether the decision to leave be voluntary.⁵

Tucker writes that “Expatriation of course is a happier state than exile; for the expatriate, if nothing else, is a willing exile who can take his baggage of home supplies with him.” Although he claims that expatriates “are never at home till they travel beyond their home communities”, he concedes, when trying to distinguish between exiles and émigrés, that “it is more pertinent to refer to each case, circumstance by circumstance, in order to understand and to draw configurations of the exilic complex.”⁶ This is clearly because expatriates, those apparently willing voyagers, may soon discover the pain expressed in Jeremiah 22: “Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.”

“[S]he shall return no more”: departure almost immediately raises questions of repatriation for the déraciné(e). The possibility - or impossibility - of undertaking back-migration is also variously dealt with by the women authors I have selected; it, too, forms an essential part of my discussion in the chapters to come.

In a critical enactment of precisely this second concern - the desire for a return to lost origins - I would like to cite etymology and general definitions of both exile and

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⁵ Bettina Knapp further reminds us that there are types of voluntary exile which occur within the home territory: esoteric exile is the decision to “live inwardly [...] to exile oneself from outside forces, events or relationships.” She cites Hindu, Buddhist and Christian forms of mystic introversion and self-abasement as the epitome of such decisions. Knapp, Exile and the Writer, pp 2-4. My discussion, however, focuses on authors preoccupied with geographical displacement.

⁶ Tucker, Literary Exile in the Twentieth Century, pp xv, xvii.
expatriation to centre my discussion - even if this centring be only momentary. At the most basic linguistic level, exile and expatriation are synonymous. The Oxford English Dictionary, giving the Latin roots of exile as a noun, states that it is formed from the prefix ex signifying “out”, and the verb salire, “to leap”. The opening definitions are 1(a), “enforced removal from one’s native land according to edict or sentence; penal expatriation or banishment; the state or condition of being banished; enforced residence in some foreign land”; and (b), “expatriation, prolonged absence from one’s native land, endured by compulsion of circumstances or voluntarily undergone for any purpose.”

There are, in fact, opposite possibilities offered by the etymology of exile. For exile as an archaic adjective (i.e. as compared to exiled) the (disputed) roots are ex (privative) and ilia (entrails), the primary sense being assumed to have been “disembowelled”. If, according to this derivation, something is “exile”, it is (1) slender, shrunken, thin, diminutive; (2), thin, attenuated, or (3), meagre, scanty. Yet the Latin roots of the noun - the leap out - also lead to more positive derivations. The words “exilience”, “exiliency” and “exilient” variously mean a state of exultation or rapture; an outburst or outcome; to be exultant, bounding, active or alert.

The verb “to expatriate” itself is defined as first, “to drive (a person) away from (his) native country, to banish.” Second, it is “to withdraw from one’s native country: in The Law of Nations, to renounce one’s citizenship or allegiance.” This latter definition -

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7 This may indeed seem to be a questionable nostalgia in the light of post-structural theory - which might at its most extreme argue that the use of etymology implies that one can anchor the essence of a word, when meaning instead is a perpetually shuttling interaction of signs. Yet if “transcendental” meaning is a fiction, it is still a required fiction: there are meanings we must agree to share, in order to have a discussion. I see etymology itself as a contribution to the writer’s, reader’s and critic’s own ‘ceaseless play’ of meaning.
8 See also Papastergiadis, Modernity as Exile - The Stranger in John Berger’s Writing, which gives a particularly lively account of the etymology of exile; Tucker’s Literary Exile in the Twentieth Century also discusses the Latin root salire; several other critics offer various definitions. See Bradbury, The Expatriate Tradition in American Literature; Eagleton, Exiles and Émigrés; Gurr, Writers in Exile; Knapp, Exile and the Writer; Martin, The Great Expatriate Writers.
9 One example of usage given by the OED: “Excellent spirits are often lodged in exile, or small bodies.” (Quoted from Randle Cotgrave’s A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues (1611)).
the active renunciation of one’s allegiances - and, I would argue, the latent resonances of an understanding of exile as the jubilant leap forward - give expatriate writers a particularly troubled status in the development of a literature perceived as national.

Yet against a background of powerful international market forces, rapid electronic communication, and increased air travel, a character in a recent New Zealand novella by Chris Else, *Endangered Species* (1997), asks, “[W]hy should changing countries pose an existential dilemma? Is it any different from, say, changing a job?”

The question is very much of our own social moment: but historically, expatriation has been interpreted as a politically loaded statement. Departure may appear to be a refusal to hear, a turning away from, the struggle to assert an indigenous literary voice: an attitude which in itself stems from nineteenth-century perceptions that British colonies represented not only an expansion of imperial culture and former practices, but also, for some commentators, a rupture from previous traditions.

During the rise of New Zealand literary nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s, the struggle to understand Katherine Mansfield’s departure informed Robin Hyde’s best fiction. After the onset of literary nationalism, expatriates have been viewed with suspicion and even resentment. This is exemplified in two letters to *The New Zealand Listener*, which appeared following the publication of the poet Fleur Adcock’s article on contemporary New Zealand poetry, “Some Dangerous Beautiful Dislocation” (8 May 1982). Amidst her potted reviews of admired poets, Adcock commented that upon her visit to New Zealand for research purposes when compiling *The Oxford Book of Contemporary New Zealand Poetry*, she found local publishing “cushy.” In contrast, “in [...] the United Kingdom [...] those firms which haven’t actually collapsed print only the few poets they feel the world can’t do without.” She went on to say that

> the casual, easy going, anti-intellectual element in
> the national character disposes some New

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11 For specific examples, see Chapter One.
Zealand poets to a kind of laziness in their writing.\textsuperscript{12}

In response, Olga Johnson wrote in hackneyed, awkwardly alliterative, attack:

\[\ldots\] after many years away from New Zealand
[Ms Fleur Adcock] has suddenly returned with
gusto to devastatingly, destructively criticise our
women poets \[\ldots\] The piles of reference books
and journals she boasts of possessing \[\ldots\] have no
comparison with knowledge gained by lengthy
local association with the writers, their clubs and
conditions generally in New Zealand. To fling a
guided missile at us and run away without facing
the explosion is not exactly the act of a friendly
compatriot.\textsuperscript{13}

In Johnson’s view, geographical distance does not give critical distance - it causes
critical blindness - and breeds cultural antagonism. For the expatriate poet-critic then to
repeat her journey, and return to England, is for her to “run away” from civic and
critical responsibility. Similar views of cultural separation and misunderstanding appear
in a letter from Bernard Gadd, who was quick to point out that before her research visit,
Adcock was last in the country in 1963. He then went on to say that
to characterise [New Zealand poetry] as \[\ldots\]
dependent upon overseas pacesetters is to reveal
not much about the verse of Aotearoa today but
more about the difficulties inherent in trying to
understand it from the perspective either of
modern Britain or the New Zealand of twenty
years ago.\textsuperscript{14}

An expatriate, interpreted as a figure who rejects native cultural allegiances, in
turn can be rejected by the local readership. The sniping between Adcock and \textit{Listener}
readers is two-way;\textsuperscript{15} and it turns on issues of local self-determination and separation

\textsuperscript{12} Adcock, “Some Dangerous Beautiful Dislocation”, \textit{The New Zealand Listener}, 8 May 1982, p. 22. See also a version of this article in \textit{Poetry Review}, Vol. 72 No. 3 1982, pp 29-33.
\textsuperscript{13} Letters section, \textit{The New Zealand Listener}, 5 June 1982, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{14} Letters section, \textit{The New Zealand Listener}, 12 June 1982, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{15} In related vein, in her entry for Andrews (ed.), \textit{Contemporary Authors: Autobiography Series} Volume 23, Adcock writes about “editing an anthology of contemporary New Zealand poetry
from England as a literary parent. This clearly has broader political ramifications: yet such notions of supervision and independence are salient reminders of how fundamental the issues behind expatriation are. Leaving home, after all, is also the archetypal drive for that twentieth-century invention, the teenager. Getting away from the confines of a place perceived to be small and constricting, as a means of consolidating mature, self-sufficient identity, informs twentieth-century media as diverse as the expatriate Joyce’s novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and The Chills’ pop lyric “The Great Escape” (1986).

I have said that the drive to leave home is archetypal; yet my particular focus is on women authors. This is partly in recognition of the socio-historical conditions women have written under, and it also arose in response to an essay by Fleur Adcock, which construed literary expatriation in matrilineal terms. Yet even without this latter impetus, there is one work of literary analysis whose burly title demands several critical counter-responses. In his book *The Great Expatriate Writers* (1992), Stoddard Martin has written that “There is, alas, no great female expatriate writer yet”, although he says that “Katherine Mansfield […] may have had the promise to become one.” On one level, his work represents an important, enduring strand of analysis which sees the expatriate as ideally, a cosmopolitan: something with which Janet Frame’s work in particular has sympathies, bringing both an ancient Greek and an eighteenth-century view into the postmodern era. Yet this line of analysis does narrow the criteria for “expatriate”. Martin, for example, excludes Joyce because he writes about Ireland, and

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16 While I am interested in the historical shaping of gender, I would hope that the term “women authors” will not be read as a homogenisation of writers from diverse backgrounds. Focusing on gender does not preclude discussion of other subject positions. Bhabha reminds us of the multiple subject positions “of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation - that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world.” (*The Location of Culture*, p. 1.)

17 Martin, *The Great Expatriate Writers*, p. 11.
so effectively returns to his homeland: Eliot because he desired acceptance as an
Englishman. Martin writes

Shouldn’t the term [expatriate] finally be taken to imply a fundamental discontent with the status of belonging to a *patria* altogether? An expatriate in the great tradition longs to be free of belonging to anything but his own destiny and ideals. Some province of the mind or soul is his proper country, and this province will probably finally have no fixed objective correlative on earth.18

The repetitive style is poor: the soft initial question pleads, despite its trio of intensifiers, and it certainly begs further questions. In Martin’s circumlocutive expression, the expatriate does still desire “to belong”, although “destiny” and “ideals” are vague to the point of meaninglessness - while “probably finally” lacks both the commitment and the assertiveness of the book’s title. Martin’s notion of civic responsibility clarifies things a little: “the ‘great’ expatriate must be in search of transcendence for a whole society.”19

Apparently no woman writer has had such aims: Martin excludes Gertrude Stein on grounds of the narrowness of her subject matter and the eccentricity of her style, saying “Thus the great female expatriate writer for inclusion in this volume must be passed over, despite the fact (as I am told) that one would be wise to include a woman for the text to be representative.”20 This grumbling acknowledgement that he ought to include a woman, hardly exonerates him for the lack of critical explication for how precisely Mansfield, Jean Rhys, Bryher, Nancy Cunard, Anaïs Nin, Djuna Barnes and Pearl Buck, all of whom he lists cursorily, fall short of his criteria. Such omissions do indeed suggest that a later passage has a reactionary agenda, when he states that the great civic-

18 ibid., pp 4-5.
19 ibid., p. 17.
20 ibid., p. 11.
minded and transcendent tradition “could not be filled up by authors mainly in pursuit of ‘liberation’”.

For the women authors I will be discussing, expatriation and its initial associated connotations of liberation into art, work and independent identity, are inseparable from ideas of transcending limited contemporary notions of citizenship. Mansfield implicitly refers to issues of the disjunction between femininity and the patriarchal law which orders home and nation, when in letters and fiction over 1907-08, she dramatises the conflict between a young girl’s ambitions to be an artist and leave for London, and the father’s wishes for her to stay home and lead “the Suitable Appropriate Existence. The days full of perpetual society functions, the days full of clothes discussions. The waste of life.” These issues recur more explicitly when, years later, she underlines a quotation from Coleridge’s *Table Talk*. This reads “I, for one, do not call the sod under my feet my country. But language, religion, laws, government, blood - identity in these makes men of one country.” Mansfield’s terse marginal note adds “The sod under my feet makes mine.” Virginia Woolf, whose work learnt much from Mansfield, and who in turn became a strong influence on Hyde and Frame, gives a more directly feminist expression to this opposition between laws or government, and a woman’s sense of place. She argues in *Three Guineas* (1938) that as women still did not then have full citizens’ rights within their own nations, they cannot support narrow definitions of nationalism or patriotism: “as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a

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21 ibid., p. 18. Martin himself, using dubious adjectival conflations, says “setting up categories may seem prescriptive, even somewhat reactionary, in this tolerant, democratic, all-merging age.” (ibid., p. 11.) His “somewhat” should be cut.

22 Scott (ed.), *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks* I, p. 51; See also p. 79, and e.g. O'Sullivan and Scott (eds.), *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield* Volume I, pp 35 and 41. The former letter uses an ambiguous metaphor suggesting both dreams and also edifices of central national defence. “Castles have been tumbling about my ears since Father came home. Do not mention - I pray you - my London prospects to him […].” (? December 1907], p. 35.

23 Murry (ed.), *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, p. 222. [Entry dated 1920]. This is one of the passages which does not appear in Scott (ed.), *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks* I and II; see Scott’s note, p. xviii.
woman my country is the whole world." This offers a feminist reconstitution of a lack of choice into a transnational link between women: a cosmopolitanism based on negative necessity. For women of Mansfield's and Hyde's generations, leaving one's native land furthers a quest for equality; it is a form of asking how, indeed, women could be members of the local civic society. In my view, Martin's work leaves room for the fuller and further exploration of expatriate writing, as he focuses not on the literary representation of the drama of physical expatriation itself, but on the search for "a city of timeless values of art and thought." My study, conversely, focuses on how the selected authors variously explore narratives of expatriation as commentaries on historically influenced social and artistic roles, and as a phase of psychological transition.

My starting premise, as I suggested earlier, was to open up the ideas behind a statement from an autobiographical essay by Fleur Adcock. In The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Women Poets (1985), Adcock constructs a twentieth-century expatriate tradition of women writers dissatisfied with New Zealand as social and artistic context. She cites Katherine Mansfield and Robin Hyde as "tough imaginative women [...] neither

24 Michèle Barrett (ed.), A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas by Virginia Woolf, p. 234. Woolf discusses the marriage bar to women in the professions, unequal pay, demands that women be kept out of jobs needed by men; she points out that women were not then able to join the Army and Navy, the Stock Exchange, the diplomatic service, the church ministry, and that if they married a foreigner, they lost native citizenship - and numerous other examples of institutionalised sexism.

25 Martin, The Great Expatriate Writers, p. 18. Martin's work declares itself interested in canonical definition and tries to reassert the powers of a Leavisite approach, which he argues "required attention to society, its shortcomings and needs, and a high moral attitude." (ibid., pp 17-18.) Yet his work defaults on several basic Leavisite principles - such as close attention to verbal nuance, close analysis of the texts he dismisses, and the critic's responsibility to a society whose composition has changed since Leavis's era. His argument that the best literature is timeless suggest that it can be separated from social and historical context, and therefore, from nation. While at its worst, a concentration on national identity can become the virulent and violent forms of nationalism which still define late twentieth century politics, arguments for the "timelessness" of great art threatens to overlook the fact that "cultures are historically specific, and so is their imagery." (Anthony D. Smith, Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era, p. 23.) It also threatens to overlook several social, historical and political issues (including the possibilities or impossibilities of national self-definition) with which writers are frequently most engaged.
deterred by her sex from her writing" - and aligns herself with these precursors when she writes: “Eventually, like Katherine Mansfield and Robin Hyde, I found New Zealand stifling; in 1963, I escaped to London […]” Adcock’s description of Mansfield and Hyde follows well known paradigms of the provincial writer released by the freedoms - or indeed, in the cases of James, Pound and Eliot, the traditions - of the English metropolis. This introduction has already implied that some form of liberation is depicted by all the writers discussed: yet this is not a detailed enough account, as it fails to incorporate the Janus’s backward gaze. A more extended reading of Mansfield’s and Hyde’s literary treatment of expatriation refutes Adcock’s image of their careers as suffocation and then escape. Ian Gordon has already questioned the “standardised story of the young writer of promise who breaks with family and home to struggle towards accomplishment and ultimate recognition”, which was applied to Mansfield’s biography, in the years before his publication of The Urewera Notebooks.27 This “standardised” description has, in the past, been applied particularly to masculine and modernist versions of the expatriate artist’s journey. Although Mansfield, Hyde and Adcock do share several thematic concerns, I hope to show that Adcock’s paradigm fails to do justice to the trajectories of Mansfield’s and Hyde’s work. Moreover, it does not illuminate the work of Adcock’s contemporary, Janet Frame, whose novels and autobiographical narratives I also discuss, in order to chart the broad scope of twentieth-century New Zealand women’s literary treatment of the expatriate theme.

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A critical attempt to uncover the nature of the tradition implied by Adcock must delve farther back than a reading of Mansfield’s work for depictions of New Zealand, London, and expatriation from the colonial and post-colonial woman writer’s perspective. This study, therefore, begins with an account quarried from a selection of

26 Couzyn (ed.), The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Women Poets, pp 202-203.
27 Gordon (ed.), The Urewera Notebooks, p. 12.
work by nineteenth-century women: work which the children in Janet Frame’s first novel, *Owls Do Cry* (1957) might describe as “treasures […] better than silver paper […] something out of a museum to be kept in a glass case[:] the handwriting of a pioneer.”

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CHAPTER ONE

CROSSING THE LINE:

NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN AND EXPATRIATION
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Introduction

My chief intention in this chapter is to sketch a sense of the nineteenth-century background to the twentieth-century narratives, by focusing on seven authors who dealt in various ways with the phenomenon of expatriation and emigration. All of the texts studied have been published, so in terms of the real extent of New Zealand’s early settler archival history, my scope is narrow. Several of the texts were published posthumously, and indeed even after Mansfield’s lifetime, so my discussion can not claim the direct literary influence of the settlers’ accounts on the authors who follow. The works, do however, offer evidence of a cultural currency of ideas, from which the later twentieth-century writers certainly draw fictional capital.

Given the history of the development both of the colony itself, and of a national literary scene, there are necessarily few accounts of expatriation from New Zealand to Britain until the early twentieth century. Local forays into traditional literary genres did not commence until the 1860s;¹ the first written treatments of women’s expatriation, which requisitely explore the reverse journey to that made by twentieth-century writers, appear in the letters, diaries and journals of the colony’s first settlers.

While the constraints of these genres differ markedly from those of fiction or poetry, the discussion of these forms is particularly relevant in the context of the history of women’s aesthetics. Feminist scholarship has associated both “self-exploration and self-projection” (the projection of a writing persona as in all literary forms) with the letter and the diary, asserting that they “have traditionally offered women a particularly appropriate form of authorship”, as they offer a negotiation between the historically masculine preserve of the public role of the author, and nineteenth-century constructions

¹ Earliest publication dates are 1861 for the novel, 1864 for a collection of verse and prose, and 1906 for a collection entirely of verse. Sturm (ed.), The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, pp 108, 204, 347. Note that Dumont d’Urville’s Les Zélandais: Histoire Australienne (written in the 1820s) was not published until the early 1990s.
of middle-class femininity as private, domestic, and beyond view. Whether circulated privately or published (even posthumously), these journals and letters also offer evidence that although women might not have been part of official imperial institutions, still "many were profoundly involved within colonialism [...] by teaching, by nursing, by writing", and frequently by assisting husbands employed in official roles.

In effect, the history of all New Zealand literature begins in emigration - and despite the vastly different material circumstances and class backgrounds behind the nineteenth-century women arriving in New Zealand, and the twentieth-century women writers departing for England, similarities of concern persist.

The common explanation for Mansfield's adolescent restlessness within her colonial context is that she "suffered a sense of exile common to all colonial literatures", a perception which endures in New Zealand literature of the 1930s and 1940s. Yet when Mansfield uses the metaphor of journey in her fiction, she shows a literary - and cultural - inheritance laden with connotations beyond the loss of a material, ancestral home.

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In one early work specifically concerned with the promotion of emigration as a commercial enterprise, E.G. Wakefield's and J. Ward's The British Colonisation of New Zealand (1832), the authors propose a picture of the ideal candidates for emigration.

The natural time of marriage is a time of change [...] Those only would remove who were already on the move to a new home; those only to whom, on account of their youth and animal spirits,

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2 Hooton, "Life Lines in Stormy Seas: Some Recent Collections of Women's Diaries and Letters" Australian Literary Studies, Vol. 16 No 1 May 1993, pp 3 and 5 respectively.
3 Mills "Knowledge, Gender and Empire" in Blunt and Rose (eds), Writing Women and Space, p. 39. See also Sarah Mills, The Discourses of Difference.
5 See the poetry of Brasch, Bethell and Curnow; see also Curnow's introduction to The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (1960); see Mulgan's Report on Experience (1947).
separation from birthplace would be the least painful; those only, who had just formed the dearest connexion, and one not to be severed, but to be made happy by their removal. And thus, the least degree of painful feeling, would be suffered [...]  

The starkest impression left by this extract is of precisely what the authors try to pre-empt and avert: the emotional cost of separating people from home culture and family connections. What follows are further attempts to allay such fears. Wakefield and Ward explicate their programmes for colonisation, and give descriptions of the country, in which the adjectival tags "always", "perpetual", and "pleniful", describe the country as cornucopious, creating the impression of an idyll of suspended time and endless resources, consistently exploitable by the British market.

the country abounds in streams and rivers always flowing [...] rain falls plentifully in every due season, though never to an inconvenient degree [...] the rivers and lakes abound with edible fish in a great variety and of excellent quality [...]  

the luxuriance and rapidity of vegetation [...] the never-fading foliage of the trees [...] Innumerable streams [...] supplied from the perpetual [mountain] snows  

Interacting with this portrait is a map drawn with no accompanying mathematical scale. It has Australia and New Zealand snuggled up closely beneath China and Africa, so that these land masses - not vast expanses of ocean - pose the chief obstacle between Europe and its Antipodes. Yet the psychological effects of the oceanic

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6 Wakefield and Ward, *The British Colonisation of New Zealand*, pp 21-22. This book precedes both formalised European government and private settlement by eight years. The New Zealand Company, for whose purposes the book was written, was the sole private commercial scheme promoting emigration; but Keith Sinclair points out that sealers, whalers and missionaries had formed settlements well before the British government's annexation of New Zealand, and the New Zealand Company's commercial promotion of settlement in the 1840s. In addition, a year before British annexation, one French government assisted company had settled on Banks Peninsula. See Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, pp 67, 99-100.


8 *ibid.*, p.78.
distances between Britain and New Zealand, and the difficulties of that sea voyage, are practical realities which run throughout the selection of early settlers’ letters and journals to follow - and which continue to resonate in the country’s expatriate literature.

**Mary Taylor**

(1817-1893)

Mary Taylor’s published letters reveal that she emigrated for economic reasons specifically related to the politics of sexuality. As A. James Hammerton has argued, Taylor’s emigration to New Zealand was an exceptional act of independence for an unmarried, middle-class woman in the 1800s. Taylor travelled with neither family nor husband, nor with the support of one of the official or voluntary female emigration schemes established to assist working-class women in the 1830s; she also expatriated before schemes such as the Governesses’ Benevolence Institute (1847) were founded for assisting women from the middle class. She also emigrated with no intention of marrying. As both a feminist and a writer (her novel *Miss Miles* was published in 1890, many years after her expatriation and eventual back-migration) several of Taylor’s comments foreshadow Mansfield’s opinions on colonial society and the role - or the perceived lack of a role - of literature in the early construction of a national sensibility. There is even, in a letter in which Taylor debates whether New Zealand or somewhere in Europe is best for her choice of home, a comment about Germans which illustrates the longevity of stereotypes Mansfield inherits for fictional manipulation in *In a German Pension*. In 1842, Taylor writes -

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9 Some of Taylor’s letters about Charlotte Brontë were used by C.K. Shorter in Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle (1896), and by Elizabeth Gaskell in The Life of Charlotte Brontë (1900): but Stevens’s full edition of Taylor’s letters did not appear until 1972.


11 Whitlock points out that the British Women’s Emigration Association used marriage as an incentive to encourage women to emigrate. See “Outlaws of the Text”, Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin (eds.), The Postcolonial Studies Reader, p. 352.
What do you think of Germany instead of New Zealand? I have heard they are nice and savage there too - the few specimens we have here are tamed the[y] still however indulge in certain barbarous habits, such as eating enormously, with their mouths open, putting both elbows on the table to guard their plate wearing seventeen petticoats (more or less) speaking the truth in the silliest manner possible even to their own disadvantage.\(^{12}\)

Frivolous as Taylor’s comments may be in intention, the xenophobia they sport with issues a foreboding prognosis for race relations in New Zealand. The culture imported to the colonies has its own cargo of tribal feudings, and a highly reactive suspicion of difference - even of cultures with a much closer resemblance to its own than the Maori to the English. The quick equation that Mary Taylor effects between German and Maori illustrates a cultural sensibility and discourse which

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\text{turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a “subject peoples” [Its] objective is to construe [...] a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.}^{13}\]

Like the work of Wakefield and Ward, and early settlers Sarah Mathew and Charlotte Godley, Taylor’s comments show the pervasive influence of the rise in nineteenth-century ethnographic and anthropological theories of racial evolution and purity.\(^{14}\) The circulation of Taylor’s letters both emphasises this popularisation, and also problematises the notion of a ‘private joke’, as her letters frequently passed between Charlotte Brontë, Ellen Nussey, and other members of Taylor’s social circle.

\(^{13}\) Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 70.
\(^{14}\) For Sarah Mathew, see Rutherford (ed.), The Founding of New Zealand by Felton and Sarah Mathew, pp 96, 101, 106, 134.
Once Taylor is in New Zealand, the extant letters from this period have virtually nothing to say about the "savage" and "barbarous" inhabitants she alludes to before her departure. Her predominant concerns become her attempts both to live out her ideals of financial self-sufficiency, and to overcome what she characterises as the emotional and intellectual impoverishment of her new isolation. The difficulties of separation from affective bonds are acutely clear in Taylor’s work. The first letters surviving from her period in New Zealand are dated three years after her arrival, yet even then, Taylor writes of the mental divisions induced by her expatriate status. Following receipt of a copy of *Jane Eyre* from Charlotte Brontë, she marks the shift in her sense of reality: “I begin to believe in your existence much as I do in Mr Rochester’s. In a believing mood I don’t doubt either of them.” And while Taylor documents neither alien landscape nor Maori culture (she stays firmly within the settler community) her letters are still troubled by her relocation.

I can hardly explain to you the queer feeling of living as I do in two places at once. One world containing books England and all the people with whom I can exchange an idea; the other all that I actually see and hear and speak to. The separation is as complete as between the things in a picture and the things in the room. The puzzle is that both move and act, and [I] must say my say as one of each. The result is that one world at least must think me crazy.16

Queer - meaning, in the context, turned around the wrong way, eccentric, off-centre from her understanding of normality: for Taylor the expatriate is two voices, participant in two realities. The confusion comes not from the division between, but the simultaneity of the two. Taylor’s intimation that her identity is constructed by more than one set of social expectations offers a startling connection to Mansfield’s later *Notebook* entry on

15 Stevens (ed.), *Mary Taylor, Friend of Charlotte Brontë*, p. 73.
16 Ibid., p. 77.
the multiple nature of self. Using terms of madness and reason, Taylor’s conscious self-questioning also presages Mansfield’s witty use of the language of psychoanalysis.

To Taylor and Mansfield, Europe, intellectual development, imagination and art are all synonymous, as Taylor’s choice of metaphor for her life in England (the painting or sketch) underscores. The inequality felt in her social relations in New Zealand is neatly encapsulated in her choice of verbs and their accompanying prepositions: in England the relationships within her circle are those of reciprocity, mutual benefit (“exchange with”); in contrast, the choice “speak to” implies the colony’s more distanced, functional interactions.

Taylor’s sense of mutual care in England is intimately related to class conditions and expectations: complexly so in Taylor’s case, as so many of her political beliefs regarding the work ethic counter conventional contemporary expectations for middle-class women. What she misses is the company of people of a particular educational (and therefore economic) background, although her entire premise for emigration to New Zealand is intimately related to gender and class concerns. Her version of the England-Colony opposition is one of economic restriction versus economic freedom (although Taylor has the advantage of family financial backing for her haberdashers and drapery business.) In 1849, she writes to Ellen Nussey of risk and reward:

I hear from C. Brontë that you are staying in Sussex. What in the world are you doing there? Getting your living in any way? Not at all - you are only wishing to do. Wishing for something to turn up that wd enable you to work for yourself instead of for other people and that no one shd know that you were working. Now no such thing exists. There are no means for a woman to hve in England but by teaching, sewing or washing ... If you do it at all it will be by making a desperate

17 For Mansfield see for example O’Sullivan and Scott (eds.), The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield Volume I, p. 44. Also anticipating Mansfield’s lament over the lack of artistic ‘muscle’ in New Zealand is Taylor’s comment to Brontë after receiving the copy of Jane Eyre: “I lend it a good deal because it’s a novel and it’s as good as another! They say “it makes them cry.” They are not literary enough to give an opinion. If ever I hear one I’ll embalm it for you.” (Stevens (ed.), Mary Taylor, Friend of Charlotte Brontë, p. 75.)
plunge, and you will come up in another world. The new world will be no Paradise but still much better than the nightmare .... You could get your living here at any of the trades I have mentioned which you would only d<...> of in England. As to “society” position in the world you must have found by this time it is all my eye seeking society without the means to enjoy it. Why not come here then? and be happy.18

Taylor’s view is supported by historical fact: Hammerton cites the considerable lack of “respectable” professions for middle-class women, despite the fact that in the 1800s women in Britain outnumbered men, due to mortality, birth rate, and overseas conscription.19 Implicit in Taylor’s final comments is that removing to the colonies itself incurs a drop in social position - a view which recalls Wakefield’s and Ward’s arguments in The British Colonisation of New Zealand that emigration had been tainted by its historical association with penal colonies and slavery.20

Yet Taylor’s acknowledgement of the struggles necessitated by remaking one’s life in the colonies is one in which the sacrifices themselves become recompense: what entails “giving up” also entails release.21 The double-entendres of exile suggested by its etymological roots are working behind Taylor’s arguments for emigration. For Taylor the reward for self-sacrifice is self-respect. Intensifying her persuasion, Taylor slips in a remark which suggests that, although moving from Britain to New Zealand may be

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18 ibid., pp 80-81.
19 Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen, pp 39-45: Hammerton also describes the pitfalls of governessing - such as poor wages and subjugation to the employer. Taylor’s view of her native society persists in twentieth century critical analyses of the opposition between Europe and the New World: e.g. “To the European, the enchantment of America is the variegation of its reality [...] At home, you are assigned a world by the circumstances of your birth [...] and exist in a society which prides itself on having restricted the range of imaginative choices.” (Conrad, Imagining America, p. 4.)
20 Wakefield and Ward accept that fears over emigration and degeneration are legitimate. Penal colonies meant that “it inevitably happened that colonisation and crime, emigration and disgrace, were confounded in common opinion”. They argue that when access to land is unrestricted and everyone is a land-owner, the only answer to the lack of working-class employees is slavery, which means “the transplanted [...] society falls back to the primitive state.” (The British Colonisation of New Zealand, pp 5 & 7)
21 See also letters in Neale (ed.), The Greenwoods, pp 12, 14, 29-3. For this struggling emigrant family, physical hardship offers spiritual rewards.
perceived as a slide down a one-way social gradient, there is less far to fall than elsewhere. Following a major earthquake, when Aucklanders send Wellingtonians money, Taylor writes “This is small inducement, but what do you think of our sending back a subscription raised in Auckland for us because we actually had no destitute? Aren’t we thriving?” A year later, she is still correcting the impression of New Zealand as inferior in class. Of her cousin, who does come to join her (presumably convinced by Taylor’s letters), she writes “Ellen [Taylor] tho[ought] she was coming woefully down in the world when sh[e] came out and finds herself better received than ever she was in her life before.”

In his analysis of the rhetoric of emigration in Anglo-American experience, Stephen Fender indicates that emigrants would not write home until after success, nor would they encourage others to emigrate: “For the rite of passage to work, it had to be self-motivated. An actual reformation - if not of the spirit, then at least of individual consciousness - had to take place before the process could be registered as authentic.”

Contrary to this, Taylor actively evangelises, to convince her readers of the worth of migration. This is true also for Taylor’s convictions of the worth of the feminist cause; her letters are often concerted attempts to convert. In the same letter in 1850 where she announces “I have set up shop!” she writes damningly to Bronte of Shirley (1849), the novel in which a Yorkshire family like Taylor’s - and even a young girl’s emigration - are artistically transformed into enriching textual detail filling out the drive of the main plots and major character interests.

I have seen some extracts from Shirley in which you talk of women working. And this first duty, this great necessity you seem to think that some women may indulge in - if they give up marriage

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23 ibid., p. 91.
24 Stephen Fender, Sea Changes, p. 154.
25 Rose Yorke is envisioned in “some virgin solitude [...] The quiet little girl is a lonely emigrant in some region of the southern hemisphere. Will she ever come back?” (Rosengarten and Smith (eds.), Shirley by Charlotte Brontë, p. 150.)
and don’t make themselves too disagreeable to the other sex. You are a coward and a traitor. A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not and a woman who does not happen to be rich and who still earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault - almost a crime - A dereliction of duty which leads rapidly and almost certainly to all manner of degradation .... Work and degradation is the lot of all except the very small number born to wealth [...].

Opposed to the exemption of women from work on spurious standards of propriety and femininity, Taylor points out that the “degradation” of poverty is by far a more pressing reality than notions of taste. Escape from fear of this degradation - one may even say of degeneration in the context of nineteenth-century emigration debates - is promised in Mary Taylor’s vision of work in the colonies. Taylor’s scale of social esteem and moral worth completely inverts Brontë’s apparent perception of these matters; she who works is seen to be superior to she who is idle.

Despite her powerful refutation of Brontë’s fictional representation of women and work, Taylor’s need to sustain connections with friends in England endures: in fact, after her attack on *Shirley*, Taylor can still lament to Bronte that a local parson is “the only literary man we know and he seems to have fair sense ... Do you know that living among people with whom you have not the slightest interest in common is just like living alone or worse.” A typical argument over new aesthetics for colonial art (see, for example, Emerson’s “The Poet” (1844)), it persists for half a century in colonial literature, as evidenced in Mansfield’s oft-quoted *Notebook* comment from 1906: “When

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27 ibid., p. 95.
28 In his essay Emerson writes “We have yet had no genius in America [...] which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer [...]” Ziff (ed.), *Selected Essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson*, p. 281. Such attitudes persist also in Pound’s “To Whistler, American” (1912); the speaker designates himself as one of those who “bear the brunt of our America / And try to wrench her impulse into Art.” [lines 12-13]. (Pound, *Personae*.)
N[ew] Z[eland] is more artificial she will give birth to an artist who can treat her natural beauties adequately. This sounds paradoxical but is true”. Although Taylor clashes with Brontë, the energy of these disputes appears to speak of precisely the interaction that Taylor sorely misses. The separation from people of like minds - or even of contentious opinions on issues agreed as important - leads to a reiteration of her sensation that reality has been undermined. Once her cousin Ellen has arrived, Taylor writes to Ellen Nussey -

Besides nonsense we talk over other things that I never cd talk about before she came. Some of them had got to look so strange that I used to think sometimes I had dreamt them. Charlotte’s books were of this kind. Politics were another thing where I had all the interest to myself and a number of opinions of my own I had got so used to keep to myself that at last I thought one side of my head full of crazy stuff.30

The emotional burdens of expatriation must be placed alongside the socio-economic benefits Taylor promulgates when we consider her eventual back-migration to England. Her letters affectingly record the enduring disorientation of being separated from those values of her social milieu which she still accepts. The price of her progression, and her wish to reforge an identity independent of English social tradition, is her exclusion from the nurture and support of artistic and personal networks.

In the published letters, Taylor does not directly discuss reasons for her return. Her store goes through a phase of “maintained rate of profit” about which Taylor complains, only to then castigate herself; “I have no right to call this a misfortune but having been improving several years before made me unreasonable”.31 In view of the fact that Taylor retires to Yorkshire, it is difficult to postulate that money or business failures drive her home. It would seem, instead, that the persistent sense of isolation is

29 Scott (ed.), The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks I, p. 81.
31 ibid., p. 128.
the subtext to her decision to return - even after Charlotte Brontë's death.\textsuperscript{32} In 1852, Taylor still admits that "the best part of my life is the excitement and arrivals from England. Reading all the news, written and printed, is like living a life quite separate from this one."\textsuperscript{33} And, in 1857, just two years before her return to Yorkshire, she is still registering that the only people with whom she has any affective and intellectual correspondence are those with whom she literally - or 'epistolarily' - corresponds. She confides in Ellen Nussey, with her typically clipped, humorously acerbic style -

\begin{quote}
I read a good deal ... Then I have some friends. Not many and no geniuses. - Which fact pray keep strictly to yourself for the doings and sayings of Wellington people in England always come out again to NZ. I do not think my acquaintances are inferior to what I should have had elsewhere even with more means and a higher position than my own. They are most of them narrow minded and ignorant. Those of the higher classes only differ by being less practical and more exacting [...] A book is worth any of them and a good book worth them put together.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

It is not entirely clear here whether the higher class is that in England ("elsewhere") or a separate class within the colony itself - what is obvious is that Taylor's discontent has sharpened. Wellington is self-enclosed, yet its gossip so efficient that it even has overseas sources. (In this portrayal we have not just a Mansfield precursor, but also the great, great, great grandmother of Adcock's New Zealand: "ingrained, ingrown, incestuous".\textsuperscript{35} ) It is shortly following this comment that Taylor's back-migration - and implicitly, her return to the world of literature - begins.

\textsuperscript{32} See also Hughes' entry on Taylor, Orange (ed.), \textit{The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography} Volume II, p. 436.
\textsuperscript{33} Stevens (ed.), \textit{Mary Taylor, Friend of Charlotte Brontë}, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid., p.131.
\textsuperscript{35} Adcock, "Instead of An Interview", \textit{The Inner Harbour} (1979).
Charlotte Godley
(1821-1907)
(And Ellen Anne (Dorothy) Hewett)
(1843-1926)

Charlotte Godley is a woman of those "less practical and more exacting" higher classes that Taylor derides. Married to John Robert Godley (partner to Edward Gibbon Wakefield in the Canterbury Association), the background to Charlotte Godley's letters is quite removed from Taylor's; she married an official whose career dictated her travels. Godley's letters were originally written to her mother over 1850-1853, and were first privately printed in 1936. Although she is of a more affluent background than Taylor (or labouring emigrant families), departure from England still brings Godley deprivations. She writes while still on shipboard - "How I wish I could change places with, or get into, my letter." The very absence of reassurance here to those at home shows deep reluctance over the departure.

36 Godley mentions a case of books containing a copy of Shirley in 1850, and she also passes comment on the shopkeepers in Wellington - she is "delighted with the shopkeepers here", who are "generally very civil." (Godley, Letters From New Zealand, pp 93, 103.) Could the new egalitarianism have allowed Taylor and Godley to discuss Bronte's novel over a shop counter? The recurrence of the Wakefield family name in the history of pioneer New Zealand could add force to accusations of insularity. Edward Said points out that the early colonising of all British-taken territories was predominantly performed by an extremely small group of men - whose careers moved them from colony to colony: an official elite. Though Said is speaking about governmental aides, the same can be said for the New Zealand Company. (Said, Culture and Imperialism, p. 10.)

38 Godley, Letters From Early New Zealand, p. 5
39 Cp., for example, Taylor's rhetoric of persuasion, or Sarah Greenwood's assurances to her grandmother that the decision to emigrate is the couple's mutual decision. Neale (ed.), The Greenwoods, p. 3, letter from 1842. As Godley expresses personal misgiving over her travels, ironically, her small son's toys reinforce the rightness of the imperial enterprise. Arthur plays with jigsaw puzzles that depict "the Queen's visit to Ireland, Robinson Crusoe, and the life of a ship." Robinson Crusoe provides a model of the brave, resourceful European who imports his culture and ingenuity to a far off, savage land; the jigsaw puzzles underline the Godley family's purpose in emigration. Crusoe reappears as a model in the government's publication, Vogel (ed.), The Official Handbook of New Zealand (1875), where one author says that Ship Cove, Cook's "favourite rendezvous" is one of the bays "which seem to realise the exact idea of [...] imagination" for any "Englishman whose colonising taste has been inspired by reading Robinson Crusoe - (and with how many is that not the case?)" (p. 14.)
The shipboard journey itself is an unsettling, transformative time: its restrictions lend a perspective that alters the vision of home. Unlike another settler, Sarah Greenwood, whose past material insecurity makes her hopeful for the change within New Zealand, Godley does not project onto the new destination as a possible healing source for lack. To Godley, it remains an unquantifiable entity; the security of even the inadequate familiar is mourned for.

I think of you most often as in London. How ungrateful it now seems to my penitent self ever to have thought those charming streets dirty, foggy or smoky, or the trees in Portman Square not worth looking at; now it is eighty three days since I have seen anything larger in the shape of a tree than the plants under glass on deck, which two gardeners on board are taking out [...]

The constraining hiatus of travel opens up the recognition that the new land is itself a lacuna, an unknown. An acute expression of this is Godley’s commentary on shipboard gatherings.

About a month ago we began some ‘meetings’ three times a week on ‘agricultural and scientific subjects’ [...] and as no one had been in New Zealand, except Mr Wakefield (who is no farmer) and one of the sailors, and they only in the North, the agricultural part soon languished, as no one knows what soil he will meet there, or indeed any of the particulars of his future state; and the subject seemed dying a natural death [...]

Akin to Stephen Fender’s use of Turner’s and Van Gennep’s studies of cultural rites of passage as his means for exploring emigration, Godley’s commentary suggests the undermining of European authority: and hence the voyagers’ “liminal” state.

the state of the ritual subject (the “passenger” or “liminar”) becomes ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of

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40 Sarah Greenwood writes of the colony: “every young person of good conduct is SURE to meet with a profitable and useful employment.” (Neale (ed.), The Greenwoods, p. 3.)
41 Godley, Letters From Early New Zealand, p. 10.
42 ibid., p. 12.
classification; he passes through a symbolic
domain that has few or none of the attributes of
his past or coming state.\footnote{Godley, Letters From Early New Zealand, p. 8.}

Godley anticipates a similar perplexing of the men’s past status in the face of
new forms embodied in their destination. A ship-community recognition of precisely the
idea that all voyagers are undergoing an extreme change of state is the institutionalised
enactment of the Neptune myth upon crossing the equator.\footnote{Two brief additional narratives from early settlers: “we crossed the line without ceremony, except that the captain ordered champagne for the saloon and grog for the rest.” (Stewart, My Simple Life in New Zealand, p. 9.) “[O]n the 15th of January [1842] we crossed the line at 9 o’clock in the morning. Our superintendent, Dr Featherston, ordered a glass of rum to be served out to each adult. In the evening the sailors claimed the privilege of introducing Neptune on board. But there was no shaving or any ribaldry to extort money. Everyone who chose to give did it freely.” (McKain, McGregor (ed.), Petticoat Pioneers Volume One, p. 118.)} Charlotte Godley’s account
runs as follows.

We had our Neptune Day on the 17th of January
with the usual forms. We crossed the line about
eight o’clock on the evening of the 16th, and at
that moment he, Neptune, hailed the chief mate
from the bow sprit, and inquired whether there
were any of his children on board, and we being
invited to reappear, the next moment he took his
leave in a fire boat which we could see for miles
afterwards in the clear dark night. The next day
we had Neptune, his wife and child, paraded
round the ship in the triumph, followed by the
bear, barber and constables, and then five
victims, all the ship, men and boys who had not
before crossed the line, were tarred and shaved
and washed most inhumanly.\footnote{Turner, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors, p. 232.}

As in the tribal initiation rituals Turner discusses, masked figures representing gods (and
authority figures) appear. There is also a momentary reversal of the normal hierarchy or
authority, as a sailor (not the ship’s captain) represents Neptune. A Bakhtinian analysis
of this ritual is a fruitful means of examination. The mockery and degradation of the
victim is typical of the grotesque or carnivalesque inversion of forms in order to
regenerate and renew - although the victims here are not themselves officials, but initiates. That such a shipboard ritual has the potential to release suppressed social energies is exemplified in another account of a shipboard pantomime. Dorothy Hewett’s retrospective narrative of events in the 1850s counteracts the most common argument against Bakhtin’s interpretation of the carnivalesque - i.e. that it is part of the culture within which it appears: a safety valve “which in some overall functional way reinforces the bonds of authority by allowing for their temporary suspension.” Hewett’s account deserves full quotation.

We saloon passengers were all invited to go on deck, and were looking about and asking, “What is there to see?” when suddenly we were all deluged with salt water, which the sailors had taken up the rigging in buckets. We were told that it was our “christening” for crossing the Line for the first time! As to the poor apprentices, they were dragged from their hiding places, blindfolded, and led up on the deck, where a large sail, full of water, was prepared for their reception. After they had been lathered with mustard, and scraped with a rough piece of iron, and a tar pill put into their mouths which held their teeth together, the board on which they were sitting suddenly tilted over, and they all fell spluttering into the sail, and of course they thought they were in the sea. It was horrible and cruel, but most of the immigrants and sailors were much amused, and there was really no danger to life.

Then over the side of the ship came Mr and Mrs Neptune, as though arriving from the bottom of the sea. Neptune wore a hairy coat, with seaweed hair and beard, and Mrs Neptune with dress, bag, bonnet and umbrella. Their questions and answers were very funny, and they amused every one, and all would have passed off pleasantly had the passengers but obeyed the captain’s orders, and not given intoxicating drink to the sailors.

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46 Dentith (ed.), Bakhtinian Thought, p. 73.
47 Hewett’s Looking Back has the primary narrative purpose of recounting a Christian’s journey of faith: “If God, in His grace and goodness, will use any portion of this little book in His service it will not have been written in vain.” Preface, dated July 1910. Cp. to entry on Hewett by Cooper, Orange (ed.), Dictionary of New Zealand Biography Volume I, p. 187.
Instead of this, however, they managed to get and
distribute the spirits too freely, and this resulted
in a serious quarrel amongst some of the
passengers and crew. When the captain and
officers interfered, the sailors all mutinied,
together with a large number of the emigrants.
The ladies in the saloon were ordered to lock
themselves in their cabins, and the men's
revolvers were loaded.

What starts as an initiation rite, marking the significance of sea migration, with
carnivalesque versions of such a ritual's gnomic utterances from the gods, becomes the
trigger for rioting, and an assassination attempt against the ship's Captain. The carnival
element does in fact unleash anti-authoritarian reaction - although the ritual at first
appears to be chiefly a novitiation into an accepted circle (i.e. those who have crossed
the line).

The degradations of the neophyte's bodies in both accounts register the enormity
of the expatriate voyage in the historical imagination. Both Godley and Hewett describe
drenching, tarring and shaving: the body afflicted and abused in a symbolic re-enactment
of the perils of sea travel. Tarring and dunking (i.e. breathing, snorting and/or
swallowing sea water) force the initiates to act out "inversions" of appetite. The
punishment particularly assaults the mouth, provoking thirst (or at least the desire to
purge the mouth of the foul taste): one of the primary fears and afflictions of being
shipwrecked or lost at sea. Such assault against the material body, in a Bakhtinian
account, is a representation of "cosmic terror, the fear of the immeasurable, the infinitely

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[49] Another realistic anxiety about sea travel and the abuse of the body was over the ship as a
potential site of infection. Several of the emigrants in this selection mention sea-sickness and
scurvy. Historically, slum conditions for many other emigrants meant transmission of
potentially fatal illnesses; see a discussion of Irish emigration to America in McCarthy, *The
Expatriate Perspective*, p. 60.
powerful, the starry sky, the gigantic material masses of the mountains, the sea, the
cosmic upheavals, elemental catastrophes [...] it is the fear of that which is materially
huge and cannot be overcome by force."50 The journey’s unfamiliar destination is thus
also relevant: the Neptune ritual symbolises the upheaval of leaving the familiar for the
far, and the potential catastrophes for travellers both en route and upon berthing.51

Once Godley’s particular sea-journey is safely over, the new land does induce
several renovations of perception. Godley is understandably forced to compare the new
to the old. ("It made me think of Wales, of course."52) In the following description we
witness language under pressure of local change, but the failure is honest: it admits its
inadequacies - and via this admission, allows room for awe and wonder.53

the colouring of [the wooded cliffs] would drive
you quite distracted; every shade of bright yellow
and brown, and the foliage is very beautiful and
so foreign, there is not one tree the same as we
have at home. The fern tree is very like the palm,
with its bunch of leaves on top, but very different
in leaf from anything I have seen. There is every
sort of wild bird’s note, too, still to be heard in
the woods. I believe even the parrots sing instead
of screaming ... I cannot describe one half of
what we saw or felt at being once again on land
[...].54

Here the range of the new is expressed in adjectival terms that attempt to encompass
infinite possibilities: “every” colour, “every” bird’s note. The stretching of the range of

51 The origins of tarring (and feathering) are dated, by Hendrickson in The Encyclopaedia of
Word and Phrase Origins at 1189, as a punishment decreed by Richard the Lionheart for any
convicted thief voyaging with the Crusaders. This links the colonising of New Zealand (and
the other British colonies) with “the first example of the rapacity of European overseas
imperialism”, as J.M. Roberts describes the Crusades. He describes their “new militancy and
determination” which in “the name of the Cross was to be one psychological root of the
confidence with which later Europeans went out and took the world.” (Roberts, The Shorter
Illustrated History of the World, p. 267.)
52 Godley, Letters From Early New Zealand, p. 15.
53 As Bruce Biggs writes in his essay “In the Beginning”, the first Maori settlers in New
Zealand also bestowed old names on new forms, until the botanical variety proved their
“vocabulary [...] insufficient and the settlers were forced into coining new, compound names.”
(Sinclair (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand, p. 4.)
54 Godley, Letters From Early New Zealand, p. 15.
her experience extends her expression into what could be called moderated hyperbole, as her comparisons exhibit internal checks, saying something is "like" another, yet admitting, simultaneously, an unlikeness.

In the early stages of her arrival, then, which can still be discussed as part of an initiation according to Fender's use of Turner's terms, Godley represents the "successful" pilgrim. Turner writes that

> Initiation is to rouse initiative at least as much as to produce conformity to custom. Accepted schemata and paradigms must be broken if initiates are to cope with novelty and danger. They have to learn how to generate viable schemata under environmental challenge.\[^{55}\]

In Godley, we see this demand for new definitions arise not just in the language which describes the external, but also the internal world. Following her first (certainly most troubled in itself) description of a Maori pa, Godley writes of the incursions the new have made upon her own identity: "To me it was like a dream, indeed I often feel inclined to say, like the old woman in the story, 'if I be I, as I suppose I be.'\[^{56}\]

Godley's language, does however, repeat known paradigms when she describes the Maori as "degenerate", "frightful", "slid[ing] along like monkeys", and when they are in their pas (i.e. not acting as policemen, servants, or in other recognisably European social roles) having "something very inhuman in their movements" so that she feels "it is a much prettier sight to see that polite little Ourang-outang eating his egg with a spoon, and drinking tea, in the Zoological."\[^{57}\] Godley's picture of the Ourang-outang is the 'wild' contained and disciplined, forced to mimic European actions, and hence more acceptable to her than the independent Maori. There is a need to repeat animalistic

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\[^{55}\] Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 256.
\[^{56}\] ibid., p. 26.
\[^{57}\] ibid., pp 26, 45.
descriptions as unquestioned tropes, when in fact aspects of her own narration counter these. This reiteration of accepted terms fits Bhabha’s analysis of stereotype:

[it] vacillates between what is already “in place”, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated [...] as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.  

Godley’s descriptions tellingly waver: while she reiterates those anxious, fixing labels of “savagery”, she undercuts them with her surprise at the Maori similarity to Europeans.

The natives are, on the whole, both better and worse than I expected. That is, some are quite good-looking, civilised-looking people; among them men, very well dressed, and more like ourselves in colour, size, and bearing, than the Lascars, for instance, or any coloured people that I have seen [...] you hear many stories of them proving that they have no word for thank-you in their language, and people are to be found who add, no sense of gratitude in their hearts; of course, though, there are some very good exceptions.

Hearsay, reports, Godley tries to layer over the troubling alien with the stabilising authority of accepted public opinion - but the meaning will not stay put - those equally troubling exceptions insist on being noticed.

Godley’s letters are particularly valuable for what they reveal about wider emigrant experiences. She is accompanied throughout her residence in New Zealand by a lady’s maid-of-all-tasks - and while Godley’s own letters are discursive, journal-like, she writes of Mary Powles, her maid-

I wish that one of them [Godley’s own family in England] would be so kind as to write just a few words, that a letter has come from NZ and that all are well, and Powles better than she was in England, to her sister, Mrs May, 19 Elizabeth Terrace, King’s Road, Chelsea. She has no time.

58 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 66.
This comment suggests the class-bound nature of Godley’s letters: her activities are recorded not just because of easier access to education and materials, but also to leisure time; earlier we have learned that “Powles is pretty busy, as you may believe, with all the unpacking, cooking, etc.”

Godley also recounts extreme responses to the experience of emigration. There is a bank manager who “became quite mad” after sailing “during the hot weather at the line”; a clergyman who “went out of his mind a few weeks after he came on board [a ship called the Steadfast]”; a woman who, following a ball after the long sea voyage, called on Godley to tell her “how dancing, after so long a pause in gaieties, had made her have hysterics for the first time in her life.” (This reverses Foucault’s account of the fifteenth-century’s perception of embarkation as purification: although if Godley has heard, or is recounting, fictional stories, we might speculate that the literary and iconographic trope of the ship of fools, where travel is a cure for madness, does endure in some form.) The connection Godley draws between the journey and these reactions characterise departure from one’s homeland as a potential trigger of psychological crisis. The break between past and present is narrated as breakdown: a more severe form both of the questioning of self expatriation induced for Godley (“If I be I...”), and of Mary Taylor’s sense of the puzzlingly duplicated self.

As the wife of a Canterbury Association official, Godley evidently had to act as a sounding board for many of the new arrivals. And while her exasperation at the tedium of her role means that her letters resist repetitions of exact details of the “syndromes” she encounters, they suggest that common feelings are experienced during
emigration, and that out of these, a common language of response - or narrative structure - develops.

I expect to lose all my patience if I live here very long, seeing always new people, with always (no, but almost always) the same complaints of the past voyage, and the future prospects; the same wonderments at novelties, and bad houses, and the same assurances of how different it all is from what they were used to at home; and (when a little cross) how none of them would ever have thought of coming if they had had the least idea of all they would have to go through. How Mr Jackson had distinctly promised them this; and how Mr Felix Wakefield had assured them they would find the other, and I have to look sympathetic [...].

Obviously many such complaints arose directly from specific material circumstances, only one of which would have been the gap between promotional images of New Zealand and actual experience. Yet a pattern is apparent: expectations, disbelief, disappointment, a sense of loss, and anger. A later passage (which demonstrates Godley's progress in her own adjustment to a new environment) implicitly asserts that the emigrant response is to the very experience of transition, as much as to the material destination or conditions. The pattern of response does offer one of the most powerful connections between these nineteenth-century documentary narratives of departure from a native land, and the fictional treatments of the expatriate theme in the twentieth-century literature to follow. Even as New Zealand becomes more and more Europeanised, the reactions persist:

I think in each ship they expect more, and have less and less courage for the first start; and it is quite wearying to hear their complaints, and you can imagine how sick my husband gets of it, for half of them complain in the most unthinking way, about things which are the mere necessary

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64 Godley, Letters From Early New Zealand, p. 186. Felix Wakefield was Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s son.
65 For accounts of this gap, see Neale (ed.), The Greenwoods; McGregor (ed.), Petticoat Pioneers; Stewart, My Simple Life in New Zealand.
accidents of so young a place; if they would only complain about the real bad points of the place it would be nothing.\textsuperscript{66}

Some expectations show a (tragicomic) yearning for Utopia; Godley’s narratives of difficult transition stem, in some cases, from expectations of fabulistic metamorphosis, life transformed to miraculous abundance. The very domestic element of the following myth of the new land - its relative modesty in what it cites as wondrous luxuries - has painful implications of the impoverishment experienced by working-class servants prior to emigration.

They have, I hear, a joke in the house against Elizabeth that when she came she expected to get sugar (lump? or brown?) by merely going out to pick it up with a basin. They told her, too, she said, that she would get raisins and currants so too [...] So now, when there is snow or hail on the hills, William begs Elizabeth to fetch her basin and go out for sugar.\textsuperscript{67}

Godley participates in the laughter over these unrealistic visions, yet her own dislocations persist. Unconsciously echoing Mary Taylor, Godley depicts herself on the peripheries of the emotional life she wishes to be living. The interior world of memory and England becomes more real than the exterior:

[...] letters give me a sad longing to be at home, and in the midst of it; when I have read a good many together, it seems at last as if New Zealand were all a dream, and it is not till I look out at the base hills, and the bridle path, and the town of wooden houses, and above all the ‘office’ door at the bottom of our little green slope that the dull reality comes back to me. But dull I ought not to call it [...] \textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{66} Godley, \textit{Letters from Early New Zealand}, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{67} ibid., p. 257.
\textsuperscript{68} ibid., p. 281.
Part of the 'unreality' of colonial New Zealand for Godley is its extremely masculine culture: many of her feelings about the unnatural state of the standard of living and civilisation are expressed as an absence of feminising influence - she links Europeanisation to Victorian notions of womanhood. This is more light-heartedly revealed in her jocund comments about a Mr Wortley and Mr Hamner, who intend to establish a sheep station away from Canterbury:

They will not at all listen to our insinuations that they are going too far off, and will become semi-barbarous [...]! I have begged them to have a lay figure of a lady, carefully draped, set up in their usual sitting-room, and always to behave before it as if it were their mother, or some other dignified lady.

This tension between acknowledging convention, and recognising the ridiculous, has a parallel in Lady Barker's memoirs; both texts illustrate pioneer society trying to negotiate between former models of femininity and the new demands of local conditions. Strong as the notions of women as the symbolic repository of graces and civil behaviour still were, Lady Godley's banter suggests the nascent subversion of, and confidence in doing without, such standards.

Godley's stay in New Zealand in fact became temporary: there is no record in the edited letters of what her homecoming was like, nor of how Godley felt upon leaving New Zealand - although during her stay in Australia en route to England, a brief comment testifies to her acceptance and satisfaction with the general imperial enterprise, in language which recalls Wakefield's and Ward's organicised promotional rhetoric which states "[t]he work of colonising a desert bears a curious resemblance to that of

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69 See also Rod Edmond's work on codes of gentlemanly chivalry in nineteenth century literature, and on other social forms promoting imperialism. Edmond, Representing the South Pacific, pp 152-155.
70 Godley, Letters From Early New Zealand, p. 28. More comically, this comment is interpreted as a statement of fact in Macdonald, MacDonald and Porter (eds.), My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates: "'[Godley] provided a dummy in the shape of a woman for a bachelor's residence [...]" (p. 5.)
transplanting full-grown trees."\textsuperscript{71} Of some willows, Godley says they are "so full of leaf and vigour that, like many of the human transplantations from the Mother Country, the transfer has been very much to their advantage."\textsuperscript{72}

\textbf{Lady Barker}

(1830/32? - 1911)

Lady Barker's \textit{Station Life in New Zealand} (1865) frequently refers to the disjunction between the exigencies of the colonial situation and notions of proper conduct for women. The Preface, written by her husband, immediately focuses on the masculine-feminine division in the colonial enterprise. He apologises on his wife's behalf for making the letters public - suggesting that the proper womanly action is self-effacement. Although Barker takes on the public role of author, her husband's official veto in the Preface acts out the required erasure and deference:

These Letters, their writer is aware, justly incur the reproach of egotism and triviality; at the same time she did not see how this was to be avoided, without lessening their value as the exact account of a lady's experience of the brighter and less practical side of colonisation.\textsuperscript{73}

Lady Barker's account of first landfall (in Australia) is similar to Godley's: a mixture of relief and gratitude upon arrival, which is, however, laced with an unexpected sense of reluctance: "it was with really a lingering feeling of regret that we all separated at last, though a very short time before we should have thought it quite impossible to be anything but delighted to leave the ship."\textsuperscript{74}

Once in New Zealand, even when the colony does not provide the new, Barker transfers amazement to the similarities: it is as if she must reinstate disbelief as fitting to

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\textsuperscript{71} Wakefield and Ward, \textit{The British Colonisation of New Zealand}, p. xix.
\textsuperscript{72} Godley, \textit{Letters From Early New Zealand}, p. 352.
\textsuperscript{73} Kidman (ed.), \textit{Station Life in New Zealand} by Lady Mary Barker, p. xiii.
\textsuperscript{74} ibid., p. 5.
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the process of transition. Barker writes that "New Zealand outwardly [...] is as
civilised as if it were a hundred years old; well-paved streets, gas lamps and even
drinking fountains!" The "even" and the exclamation mark reassert the presence of the
incredible. This preoccupation with the age of New Zealand recurs in Barker's depiction
of a population at an earlier (although not lesser) stage of development; she notes a local
change in the type of femininity, characterised as an historical return to British roots,
without the loss of acculturation expressed in popular tropes of colonisation as
degeneration. In Barker's description, pioneer women have compensated for the
historical loss of particular skills.

I often find myself wondering whether the ladies
here are at all like what our great grandmothers
were [...] for they appear to possess an amount of
useful practical knowledge which is quite
astonishing, and yet know how to surround
themselves, according to their means and
opportunities, with the refinements and elegancies
of life.77

Yet images of freedom from tradition also appear in Barker's work: gardens
(frequently taken in the emigrants' letters as sign of true civilisation) are described by
Barker as showing

a certain absence of the stiffness and trimness of
English pleasure-grounds, which shows that you
have escaped from the region of conventionalities
[...] There is a large kitchen garden and orchard,
with none of the restrictions of high walls and
locked gates which fence your English peaches
and apricots.78

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75 For Barker as a "colonial", not a "New Zealand" writer, see Nelson Wattie's entry on Barker
in Robinson and Wattie (eds.), The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p. 41. For
an unintentionally funny description of Barker (also known as Lady Broome), see Hasluck,
"Lady Broome", in Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand Vol. 7 No. 27, November
1956. ("She is one of those rare women who can remain fascinating after they are dead. Looks
had very little to do with her charm."(p. 291.))
76 Kidman (ed.), Station Life in New Zealand by Lady Mary Barker, p. 5.
77 ibid., p. 21.
78 ibid., p. 52.
Barker's letters imply both that expatriation places a barrier between people which can only be described as a national difference, and that the emigrant as a matter of course adopts a new set of values and referents. Barker feels the change is almost immediately visible in those who have left Britain:

> The look and bearing of the immigrants appear to alter soon after they reach the colony. Some people object to the independence of their manner, but I do not; on the contrary, I like to see the upright gait, the well-fed, healthy look, the decent clothes (even if no one touches his hat to you), instead of the half-starved, depressed appearance, and too often cringing servility of the mass of our English population.⁷⁹

The sense that emigration is a transition from submission to self-reliance characterises the journey as first, an entry into individuality and adulthood, and second, self-renewal. For Barker, renewal is present in the essence of the climate itself: "If the atmosphere were no older than the date of the settlement of the colony, it could not feel more youthful, it is so light and bright and exhilarating!"⁸⁰ A subtext to this animation may be the news of the birth of Barker's child. Earlier in her letter she announces "the appearance of your small nephew" to her sister: the country's atmosphere becomes infused with the sense of new life in her own domestic sphere. Concomitantly, after the child's death, the air of Christchurch, previously described as health-giving, becomes potentially infectious. Barker's assessment of the New Zealand character also changes. The independence which she formerly admired is cited as a negative attribute in the "swarms" of young infants she sees:

> I cannot say that I think colonial children prepossessing either in manners or appearance, in spite of their ruddy cheeks and sturdy limbs. Even quite little things are pert and independent, and give me the idea of being very much spoiled.⁸¹

⁷⁹ ibid., p. 41.
⁸⁰ ibid., pp 48-49.
⁸¹ ibid., p. 58.
The hyperbolic word "swarms", with its connotations of crawling, teeming, and affliction (as in biblical plague) bears the load of great emotion: Barker's loss magnifies the external situation which directly contrasts her own. Her immediate vicinity seems excessively endowed with healthy, self-sufficient children, who exhibit, as her "very much spoiled" declares, a corrupted kind of love. In her expanding description of childcare in the colony, this becomes the absence of care: mothers are overworked, so the children "grow up with what manners nature gives them", although at the same time, there is "a greater amount of real domestic happiness out here than at home." Such paradoxical comments are the ripples sent out by bereavement: these children lack the care Barker would be capable of giving; she lacks their domestic happiness.

Barker's discussion opens into a general survey of the New Zealand character, creating a pastoral picture of an untroubled community, but making a temperate accusation of parochialism which matches Taylor's (and Mansfield's) depictions of a nation pursuing purely material interests. Yet the death of Barker's child is also relevant to this description. Her recent experiences have been deeply spiritual and emotional, yet also alienating (we are no more alone than when we mourn). The external environment thus becomes an agent in that alienation. Where Barker is troubled, meditative, philosophical, her surroundings are the reverse:

I really believe that the life most people lead here is as simple and innocent as can well be imagined [...] but the counterbalancing drawback is that the people [...] have little time to keep pace with the general questions of the day, and anything like sympathy or intellectual appreciation is very rare. I meet accomplished people, but seldom well-read ones; there is also too much talk about money [...] the incessant financial discussions are wearisome [...] 82

82 ibid., p. 59.
83 ibid., pp 59-60.
For several pages, Barker aims primarily to entertain, with anecdotes about picnics, horserides, and acutely visual descriptions of wildlife “all so new and delightful to me”. Novelty is diverting for her: it is when an attempt is made to re-establish traditions in the foreign context that she experiences the dislocation Taylor and Godley note in the absence of the familiar. As in Catherine Innes’s *Canterbury Sketches* (1879), with its catalogue of a province’s firsts (from choral group to railway), Barker’s letters record the symbolic resonance of the initiation of old practices. At their farm-station, the couple celebrate Christmas with their shepherds and shearers. Barker writes

> My overwhelming thought was that it actually was the very first time these words had ever been sung or said in that valley - you in England can hardly realise the immensity of such a thought [...] I think the next sensation was one of extreme happiness; it seemed such a privilege to be allowed to hold the initial Christmas service. I had to grasp this idea very tight to keep down the terrible home-sickness which I felt all day for almost the first time. There are moments when no advantages or privileges can repress what Aytoun calls “the deep, unutterable woe which none save exiles feel.”

Here the church traditions become also an ‘experimental control’ for change. In their sameness, they act as an axis from which Barker measures distance, time and contrast: the life left behind and the stages she has been through since her departure. Although what the extract finally leaves us with is happiness and privilege pushed back by alienation and grief, these emotions become an enclosed limbo within the overall text; Barker’s style does not allow the reader to dwell. She makes a brisk, stoic transition to

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84 ibid., p. 93. As Fiona Kidman writes in her introduction, Barker “incorporated a New Zealand vocabulary into [her] writing, using words which, although they existed in English, had quite different connotations [in New Zealand.]” These include, as Kidman also notes, the lengthy explanations of the “cockatoo” or freehold farmer - and the socio-economic circumstances behind the originally insulting name. (See ibid., pp 109-111.) Barker also records laconic local argot - as in “Jack is as good as his master”, “Ah, but it’ll be a far day first”, etc.

85 ibid., p. 103.
descriptions of weather and dancing, conforming to an ethos of British courage usually
posed as masculine, although Barker surmounts that threatening sense of limbo by
calling on feminine duty.66 Like Godley, Barker sees women as crucial envoys of
European civilisation, devolving higher learning and temperance. She mothers the
shepherds:

[while the shearers' hearts were tender, I asked
them to come over to church on Sunday, and they
have promised to do so: I lend them quantities of
books and papers also so as to keep them amused
and away from the accommodation-house. 67

This perception is carried across a section break, to Letter XV - a thematic
bridging that technically reinforces the image of womanhood as society’s morally
stabilising linchpin. The opening to this letter also justifies the housebound role -

You tell me to discuss our daily home-life and
domestic surroundings [...] for the first time in
my life, I have enough to do, and also the
satisfaction of some little use to my fellow-
creatures. A lady’s influence out here seems to
be very great, and capable of indefinite
expansion. She represents refinement and culture
[...] and her footsteps on a new soil such as this
should be marked by a trail of light.68

Barker’s final metaphor tightens the connection to the previous chapter: the trail of light,
with its link to Christian iconography, sanctifies the model of womanhood as domestic,
well-read, temperate, serving others, and having a religious sense of her duties. However,
Barker’s taste for novelty and adventure belies the portrait of contained, domesticated
angel. She regrets at one point that she has not experienced real pioneer adversities

66 “[T]he imperatives of a ‘hard’ physical manliness [were] first developed in the mid- and
late-nineteenth century public schools and then diffused among the propertied classes of the
Anglo-Saxon world. The hallmarks of this ‘virile’ ethos were self-control, self-discipline, and
the absence of emotional expression.”; “this norm involved the merger of aristocratic and
middle-class norms; it was a secularised version of ‘muscular’ Christianity.” Walkowitz, City
of Dreadful Delight, p. 17 and n8, p. 251. See also Young, Colonial Desire, p. 2.
67 Kidman (ed.), Station Life in New Zealand by Lady Mary Barker, p. 104.
68 ibid., p. 105.
because of the rapid advance of civilisation; she tries to mimic these tribulations by 
camping out one night. Eventually, genuine difficulties hit in full force when the 
snowstorms of 1867 kill most of the station’s flock - which historians explain may have 
meant the onset of financial troubles which led to the couple’s eventual back-
migration. During Barker’s narration of the blizzard crisis, the stylistic choice of time-
frame highlights that throughout the edited book of letters, Barker preserves the effects 
of a still unfolding present, instead of reconstructing a retrospective story. (“It is 
impossible to estimate our loss until the grand muster at shearing […] our neighbours are 
all as busy as we are, so no accurate accounts of their sufferings or losses have reached 
us”). This decision aims to give the events the mark of authentic experience and 
intensifies the sense of calamity: speaking from an uncertain present about the 
unknowable future.

The settlers survive the storm - and Barker undertakes more physical challenges 
(such as mustering wild cattle) apologising for what “does not sound like a very orderly 
and feminine occupation”. Nodding to ideas of what is right and proper, Barker 
simultaneously contravenes the limitations of these: “I enjoy it thoroughly and have 
covered myself with glory and honour by my powers of walking all day.” Such 
comments begin to cluster in the text. Preparing herself for a further stage in an 
excursion, Barker describes her dress:

I dispensed with all little feminine adornments 
even to the dearly-loved chignon, tucked my hair 
away as if I was going to put on a bathing-cap, 
and covered it with a Scotch bonnet. The rest of 
my toilette must have been equally shocking to 
the eyes of taste, and I have reason to believe the 
general effect most hideous; but one great 
comfort was, no one looked at me […] the 
unexpressed but prevailing dread, I could plainly

89 ibid., p. xi. See also Hasluck, “Lady Broome”, Historical Studies: Australia and New 
Zealand, Vol. 7 No. 27, November 1956, p. 292. Both Kidman and Hasluck state that they 
paraphrase L.C. Acland’s Early Canterbury Runs (Whitcomb and Tombs, Christchurch, 1930), 
on Broome’s lack of financial sense.
90 Kidman (ed.), Station Life in New Zealand by Lady Mary Barker, p. 173.
By divesting herself of clothes specifying femininity, the implication is that she also discards constitutional delicacy. The change itself is actively embraced and the implication is that Barker is developing a new self-definition. It is not an easy task: the bush men “objected to [her] presence” and in defiance of their expectations of her weakness, Barker suppresses her own fears:

I may here confess that I endured in silence agonies of apprehension for my personal safety all day. It was so dreadful to see a bramble or wild creeper catch in the lock of the rifle before me, and to reflect that, unless its owner was very careful, it might “go off of its own accord”, and to know that I was exposed to similar dangers from those behind.

Moments like these proliferate during the walk, as Barker defies doubts that she is “equal” to the trials. This suggests that the Preface had been a more covert form of persuasion: seducing readers into expectations of a “feminine” narrative, when Barker’s letters reveal a growing refutation of type. The experience also becomes a form of nationalisation - at the end of her account, Barker “tumbl[es] into bed as early as might be afterwards for such a sleep as you Londoners don’t know anything about.” It would seem that where Barker claimed previously that European femininity was crucial to developing the new land, instead her experience in New Zealand has become that of the land reforging her anew.

91 ibid., p. 179.
92 Compare to Sarah Greenwood’s playful descriptions of liking housework “most vulgarly”, and her enjoyment of her meals “as much as anyone” after she has become “wet through almost to the waist, by cooking out of doors, cutting cabbage, feeding the rabbits etc.” She lightly pretends shame at how thoroughly she has taken to pioneer life, and its deviation from middle-class respectability. Neale (ed.), The Greenwoods, pp 15, 29-30. 93 Kidman (ed.), Station Life in New Zealand by Lady Mary Barker, p. 183. 94 ibid.
Immediately following this reversal of her initial angle on expatriation comes Barker’s amazing chapter about her pyrophilia. (As the fires she sets off have an ostensible purpose - clearing the land - it can not quite be called a mania.) The picture of Barker and her friend, Alice S., alighting tussocks with torches and watching whole hillsides become sheeted in flames, is one of unleashing destruction, not of the feminine principles of temperance and self-denial. Barker says that she “never stopped to analyse” her “sensations; fright was the only one I was conscious of, and yet I liked it so much.” The thrill of survival, of mastering her environment while it simultaneously tests her (which recurs in a boar-killing episode) recalls masculine narratives of American frontier fiction, and foreshadows themes in New Zealand colonial fiction, of which the author G.B. Lancaster (Edith Lyttleton, 1873-1945) is perhaps the keenest exponent.

In Lancaster’s work, nature shapes a unique national psychology. In her short story collection Sons O’ Men (1904), the character Hantock in “Hantock’s Dissertation” declares “‘there are some idiots who imagine that a colonial is merely a transplanted Englishman. He isn’t […] he’s grafted on to something that England doesn’t know anything about […] A colonial is not a product of civilisation, he is a product of the soil.’” Hantock then analyses how national behaviour is directly shaped by the rivers, wind and mountains. “‘You’ll see the New Zealanders in the rivers. They tear out a way for themselves, slap ahead, and ride down to the sea with a strength of reckless you-be-damnedness that is entirely their own […]’”

In Barker’s letters, a final measure of how thoroughly she has undergone the transformative effects of expatriation to this new landscape appears in Letter XXV. Her leave-taking from New Zealand echoes farewells to home that several emigrants include

95 ibid., p. 198.
96 Lancaster, Sons O’ Men, pp 136-138.
in their journals and letters en route to the colony. Barker’s departure is reluctant - and just like the initial shipboard letters from other emigrants, she has to include the apology to the family in England. Wanting to stay away from the home country is confirmation of that presumed disloyalty to bloodties which previous writers connect to leaving their originating locale. Redoubling that reluctance, the text closes with her husband’s poem, “A Farewell”. A thumping piece of doggerel, its eight nine-line stanzas derivative of Wordsworthian themes, the poem projects into a future metropolis that embodies corruption, contrasting with New Zealand’s pastoral innocence:

I will long for the ways of soft walking,  
Grow tired of the dust and the glare,  
And mute in the midst of much talking  
Will pine for the silences rare.  
Streets of peril and speech full of malice  
Will recall me the pastures of peace [...]

[stanza 5, lines 37-42]

As the first and last words in the text, F. Broome’s insertions impose a formal structure, and also corroborate or authorise Barker’s account, a technique also used throughout Charlotte Innes’s *Canterbury Sketches*.

Catherine Lucy Innes - 'Pilgrim'

(1839/40? - 1900)

Written under the pseudonym ‘Pilgrim’ (reinforcing the idea that New Zealand’s European history begins in Christianity and emigration), *Canterbury Sketches* (1879) is a history of the book’s eponymous settlement. As she was a child on one of the site’s first ships, and as her project is a public history as well as a purely personal record,

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98 Kidman (ed.), *Station Life in New Zealand* by Lady Mary Barker, p. 237.
Innes calls on a multitude of other authors for support. 'Pilgrim' includes various poems, a passage from the Very Reverend Dean of Christchurch, and a review of the first edition of the local newspaper, which comes from the 5 July 1851 issue of *The Times* (London). This review reports that a “complete sample of civilisation” has been sent out to the colony, like an Ark full of “casts from all the old moulds”, yet the reviewer is still full of “admiration” that a “highly influential journal” should appear “in an instant [...] on a desert coast”, when the community is “not a month old.” A paradox exists here between the conviction that New Zealand is a faithful reproduction of England, and surprise at that reproduction, arising from the sense that in the new environment, emigrants must begin again, divested of all historical precedents.

The quotation from *The Times* points to the ubiquitous articulation of emigration as a process of loss. Another parallel is ‘Pilgrim’s’ series of anecdotes about initiating “new chums” recently arrived from England. These tales imply that a certain divestiture - or dressing down - of new emigrants is socially (and publicly) regulated. It ritualises the sense that emigrants lose their former identities: the implication is that if “new chums” have not lost attachments to previous conventions, they have not completed their emigration. (One example of late colonial preoccupation with such themes appears in Lancaster’s story of the tolls of an isolated and strenuous labourer’s existence in “Without Proof”. “Tommy Derolles prepared for bed after the English fashion; and it

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101 This belief has other New World antecedents: Sam S. Baskett points out that a defining American literary myth is of America as “life and history [...] just beginning [...] America was not the result of a long historical process, but a new Garden of Eden. The new American [...] was an individual freed from the bonds of history, without ancestors, standing alone and self-reliant, an image of innocence and purity.” (“Beyond Native Grounds: American Literary Expatriation”, *Centennial Review*, Spring 1987, p. 194.)
was the nicety of his pyjamas and sheets that finally keyed Walt up to the knowledge that Tommy was too finely fibred for this sort of life.\(^{102}\)

‘Pilgrim’ recounts anecdotes about pranks, jokes or disabusing of new arrivals: particularly of men who show a “patronising manner” towards the colony or its women. One is hoaxed into believing false myths about the Maori;\(^{103}\) another who “thought that women were only meant to do the ornamental” is confronted with the sight of the married woman he has arrogantly courted, wearing “very thick clumsy boots, a short dress, a large hat, much the worse for wear, and thick gloves [...] carrying a bucket, and going into a newly-ploughed field” where she “began to plant potatoes; and doing it well”. At her request for an hour’s help, the gentleman invents a dinner engagement and leaves – “The lovely creature [...] enjoying a hearty laugh with her husband at the discomfiture of the swell”. Pilgrim herself makes up her mind “to chaff” a gentleman “just come from England [...] and rather inclined to depreciate the Colony”. When he comments on the ugliness of an elderly woman, ‘Pilgrim’ claims the woman is her mother, and reduces him to bumbling embarrassment.\(^{104}\) ‘Pilgrim’s’ recurrent highlighting of the process of transformation for new emigrants, and her representation of womanly independence, are vital indications of the cultural legacy left for the subsequent expatriate writers of fiction and poetry.

In the necessarily restricted selection of material examined here, the overseas voyage is variously cast as a process of loss, change, breakdown, or a destabilised sense of self; yet this can be recuperated positively, as an enabling transformation of identity, for there is a parallel redefinition of middle-class womanhood given in documentation of the challenges endured during and after the voyage. The accounts of physical or


\(^{103}\) ‘Pilgrim’, *Canterbury Sketches*, p. 94.

\(^{104}\) Ibid., p. 95.
emotional travail survived broaden the possibilities of travel for women, and mark a further shift into traditionally masculine or working-class preserves; this is supported by reiterated mention of the dignity of female labour.\(^{105}\) The latter in particular is a recurrent theme in the fiction of Louisa Alice Baker, whose work bridges the autobiographical narratives of these early settlers and the fiction of Katherine Mansfield.

**Louisa Alice Baker - 'Alien'**

(1856-1926)

For 'Alien', a woman’s right to meaningful work is inseparable from arguments over access to the artistic role. Although she lived longer than Mansfield, 'Alien's' final novel was written a year before the publication of Mansfield's first collection; she wrote seventeen works of popular romance, one of which is co-authored with "Rita", and one of which is a collection of short stories: some were published in both the USA and the UK, and went into second editions.\(^{106}\) The genre imperatives of the happy ending in popular romance (be it short story or novel), differ vastly from the fragmentations and ellipses of modernist short fiction, yet 'Alien's' thematic concerns (how a woman can achieve full emancipation into art and career) recur in Mansfield's more technically innovative prose. This suggests that it is not simply the demands of the romance genre that lead, in 'Alien’s' work, to the characteristic lack of resolution over the dilemma of women's choice of independence (which she links to travel and expatriation) or marriage. Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* reminds us that it was not until 1919 and the passing of the Sex Disqualification Act that women were able to enter the professions in Britain;

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105 As well as the specific examples quoted, see Rutherford (ed.) *The Founding of New Zealand* by Felton and Sarah Mathew; McGregor (ed.), *Petticoat Pioneers*; Neale (ed.), *The Greenwoods*; Stewart, *My Simple Life in New Zealand*.

thus both popular Victorian fiction and modernist women’s literature register genuine social constraints, which compound any genre or aesthetic restrictions.

Although ‘Alien’ s collection of short fiction has the most direct generic relationship to Mansfield’s work, I will also examine a small sample of the novels published before Mansfield’s final expatriation in 1908. ‘Alien’ is one of the only local women writers to deal with expatriation to England in fiction before Mansfield: although there is no evidence in Mansfield’s Notebooks that she read ‘Alien’, Baker’s contemporary popularity can be taken - even more confidently than the settler literature - to illustrate the already meaning-laden status of expatriation in late colonial thought.

Baker was born in England, raised in New Zealand, and she repatriated to England in 1894, some years after she had irreconcilably separated from her husband. Her pen-name is particularly resonant given her fictional treatment of the “marriage problem” and expatriate themes. It has literary echoes; “Aliena” is the name adopted by Celia in Shakespeare’s As You Like It, when she accompanies Rosalind in exile to the Forest of Arden. As an obvious play on alias, it also suggests Baker’s self-perception as a colonial, and eventually expatriate, writer. This is reinforced in one of ‘Alien’ s articles from 1900: “New Zealand bred and therefore Liberal by experience, one looks, perhaps, with alien eyes on what goes for religion to those for whom England has always been home.” The adjective “alien” recurs with the frequency of an artist’s signature in the body of her work. The term designates those geographically far from home and cast out from family love (Frances Marlow, bereaved of her mother in Not in Fellowship

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107 See Wattie and Robinson (eds.), The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, and Kemp, Mitchell and Trotter, Edwardian Fiction: an Oxford Companion. Sutherland’s Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction says “presumably” ‘Alien’ married Mr. Baker in England (p. 37); this presumption demonstrates how unusual a woman’s solitary expatriation appears in this era.

108 Nelson Wattie also argues this latter point in Robinson and Wattie (eds.), The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p. 38.

109 ‘Alien’, “By the ‘Frisco” (regular column), New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, September 1900, p. 954.
(1904)), those socially dispossessed through lack of education and material wealth (two London paupers in *A Slum Heroine* (1904)), and women who feel they have irreparably severed themselves from the country villages of their childhood or ancestral past (Julia and Joan Johnson in *A Slum Heroine*; the twin sisters in the short story “Tomorrow’s Sun” (1906); Marah in *His Neighbour’s Landmark* (1907)).

‘Alien’s’ short stories, and the four novels selected here, share further basic characteristics. With the tediously convoluted coincidences and rapid plot resolution of Victorian melodrama, all demonstrate the re-absorption of outlawed characters into a system of moral rectitude. Apparent sinners find redemption by uncovering secrets from the past, drunks and gamblers are reformed by love, ‘white-collar’ criminals posthumously assert morality through magnanimous wills, socially marginal characters rediscover aristocratic roots. Lost family members meet through extraordinary chance: as do mutual acquaintances of main characters - particularly if the main character has reasons for not wanting such people to meet, and particularly if it is at an awkward moment for all involved. If a character has a Nemesis from the past, he or she is sure to meet either that Nemesis, or at least the Nemesis’s blood-relative, certainly if in a location geographically far removed and less populous than the original scene of their encounter. Where another genre would exploit such coincidences for farcical social comedy, ‘Alien’s’ (often unfulfilled) intention is to provide a sense of dramatic wonder, the pleasures of narrative suspense and resolution, and presumably to reinforce the inescapable nature of (a religious sense of) destiny.

There are further intertextual similarities in ‘Alien’s’ treatment of expatriation. Several characters move between the South Pacific and Europe, attempting to manipulate personal destiny: yet even a happy expatriation which results in a “passionate love” for New Zealand is accompanied by “a touch of pathos” and a sense of “exile”.

Thus the New Zealand skyscape is a screen against which her characters see dreams and memories of home - or more specifically, “the lights o’ London” (a phrase from Wheat in the Ear, Not in Fellowship, and A Slum Heroine).

For ‘Alien’s’ women characters, a desire for life in London is synonymous with creative ambition. Frances Marlow, from Not in Fellowship (1902), is a prototypical ‘Alien’ heroine - a young, gifted woman for whom life’s choices appear to lie between the two poles of achieving artistic self-realisation, or total spiritual union in marriage. For ‘Alien’

the emancipation of women was an essential first step in the evolution of a higher Christian consciousness [and it] meant primarily the release into marriage of women’s currently stunted emotional and intellectual capacities.\(^\text{111}\)

Although the artist’s role is conceived in religious terms, as a medium for spiritual communion “with the infinite”, and because of its requirements for “the courage which sacrificed personality upon [art’s] altar”,\(^\text{112}\) reconciling the roles of artist and wife still leads to inner divisions for her characters, which the plots rarely heal.

The story of Frances Marlow’s struggle with these issues begins with her expatriation to New Zealand, where she joins an uncle and cousin. Her travels are prompted by her mother’s death: “She had set out on this journey without any individual desire, except through the break made by changed conditions, to escape what seemed just now beyond her strength - continuity of the old life without the one personality that had made its inspiration.”\(^\text{113}\) Thus expatriation is not an active renunciation of allegiances; it re-enacts the enormity of the final separation between mother and child.


\(^{112}\) ‘Alien’, Not in Fellowship, p. 79.

\(^{113}\) ibid., p. 3.
Without her mother’s “understanding companionship”, Frances is “stranded, an alien” - a condition exacerbated by Frances’s sojourn abroad, and her realisation that the fascination of her new environment will soon be exhausted. Frances envisages spiritual reconnection with her mother through return to the motherland and to her singing studies:

[...] her mother’s world was for her to win. The mountains faded, the rush and roar of London streets outsounded the sea. Return to Germany; her professor; study; to the dreams, no, the reality of life - her life, and later, who knew? her meed of success, a leaf of laurel if not a crown.\(^{114}\)

The final metaphors are typical of ‘Alien’s’ style: traditional symbols offer a stylistic shorthand, contributing to both the formality of her language, and to the sense that plot and dogma are her chief interests. This is a vast distance from Mansfield’s intensely sensuous use of objective correlatives specific to individual characters’ interior worlds. After Frances’s recognition of her artistic needs, she feels that life in New Zealand would be “doom [...]! [...] she would accept any sort of hardship in preference to this dead-level existence”, the opposition between Old and New Worlds is diametric: culture vs. nature, variety vs. monotony. (This is despite ‘Alien’s’ own complaints of imperialist snobbery: “Whenever a reviewer can put in a sneer for colonial literature he is very pleased to do it.”\(^{115}\) When Frances makes a self-sacrificing and loveless marriage to her uncle Mark Hathaway’s ward, Cyril, in order to save Hathaway from financial shame, Cyril’s amazement that she will sacrifice herself for him occasions an angry and impassioned speech from Frances. (It also occasions one of ‘Alien’s’ best pieces of writing: uncluttered and metaphorically balanced, if still conventional, alliteration and assonance underline the rhythms of the rhetoric.) Frances touches on the political

\(^{114}\) ibid., p. 40.
impulses behind the New Woman phenomenon, and suggests that despite her married status, her pursuit of a European-based singing career will continue.

'I have never been afraid, except of leaning on another. [...] Why do so many women sink under life's burden, all individuality and power withering in the bud? Because they talk to her of love, and nothing but this. There is to do as well as to feel. A man knows he must work, and goes straight for his point and attains it [...] But when a woman is taught that her triumph comes of love, and through love only, she learns the lie usually too well; she is captive and bond slave to one conception of her mission. And then, poor thing! what is she to do with her dreary days when she is left alone, deserted, perhaps, and betrayed? Who can gauge the anguish of her isolation, the loneliness that permeates through night and day?'^116

The grounds of Frances's heartfelt argument perhaps recall something of Olive Schreiner's outspoken young character Lyndall, from The Story of an African Farm (1883): and these are concerns still felt strongly by the teenage Mansfield, five years later (see page 80 of this thesis.) However, in this novel the fundamental conservatism of popular romance prevails. Frances Marlow's manifesto is said in the context of a marriage of convenience; when this loveless and un consummated alliance is annulled, and Frances meets an Australian preacher with whom she falls in mutual love, her plans for an independent singing career in Europe disappear from the narrative altogether, except as they are deliberately swallowed in Frances's declaration of marital loyalty:

It would not be easy to keep pace - he would force himself and her to do difficult things, his restless will would find no finality for himself or her. But they would be one in movement. 'I will give all myself,' she said, with a proud smile, 'my brain, my heart, my talent, my future, all that will be - my life is imprisoned in his.'^117

117 'Alien', Not in Fellowship, p. 311.
Christian missionary work in the opium dens of Melbourne alongside her husband offer her life’s project at the close of the novel: this suggests Frances is a Jane Eyre who has married a combination of the passionate Rochester and the principled St John Rivers. Yet Frances’s ‘pride’ in her ‘imprisonment’ presents a troubling oxymoron, even more so when we reconsider those terms from her earlier speech. Frances, who protested against becoming “captive and bond slave” to the “mission” of love, once in love, becomes “imprisoned” in the life of a missionary, her aspirations for European travel and training dispelled. A comparison of these metaphors might suggest that Frances’s marriage is to be read as a bitterly ironic loss of youthful principles. Yet the heavily Christian overtone preceding the finale, and the driving narrative engine of Frances’s and Walt’s unspoken love for one another in the book’s latter third, override a reading of authorially intended double-entendre. Alien’s subsequent works, however, follow similar dramas through to increasingly proto-feminist conclusions.

*A Slum Heroine* (1904), set in London, follows the lives of two young women cousins left to their separate resources after their fathers’ deaths. Expatriation is a minor theme, woven into the larger melodrama of the discovery of inheritances, lost relatives, and the absolution of those presumed errant. The novel struggles with (and sometimes reinforces) the middle-class Victorian sense that poverty bears a close relationship to shame and immorality. Australia and New Zealand are the first retreat for financially and morally disgraced businessmen. Consequently, after her father’s escape from “a folly [he] feared to face” (the florid alliteration is characteristically ‘Alienesque’), one of the young cousins, Phyllis Johnson, is raised in Australia. After her father’s death, she travels to London (“the land of promise in the young girl’s dream” where “a curious sense of home possessed her”) to live with two elderly maiden aunts. A speech from Phyllis as she convinces her frail aunts to allow her to help them with their chores (under

119 *ibid.*, pp 112-113.
the guise of asking for help to settle in to her new life), revealingly elides domesticity, 
femininity and Englishness, in a manner which suggests that Phyllis’s journey to London 
initiates her into womanhood. With awkwardly worked in definitions and descriptions of 
cultural background, Phyllis’s stagy dialogue shows a conservative tug backwards to 
pre-colonial femininity.

' [...] how can a girl know anything about 
housekeeping when she never had a house to keep 
- not even a “Lean to”? [That’s a] colonial term 
for a shanty, a log cabin, it leans to where there is 
anything to support it, from a mountain to a 
backwoods fence. [...] There is a tradition the 
wide world over that the “stately and happy 
homes of England” [...] although largely owing 
their stateliness to their architectural beauty, and 
the art of the upholsterer, are dependent chiefly 
upon the women for their happiness [...][^120]

Throughout the course of the novel, London figures as the locus for both women 
cousins’ return to their rightful social standing. Home for women in the text is a softened 
femininity, domestic interior and ancestral land, but also one’s place within class: Phyllis 
must be removed from the masculinity of her colonial past and taught house-keeping, 
Nell from her associations with working-class poverty. (She is given a private education 
by her rediscovered aunt and uncle; her successful acquiring of musical skills establishes 
her middle-class authenticity).

In a letter to her betrothed, Dr. Keith Carew, Phyllis repeats several of the 
concerns Frances Marlow voices in Not in Fellowship regarding women’s access to 
work and independent identity. Phyllis declares that

[...] ‘genteel poverty [...] falls more heavily upon 
the woman than the man; by reason of her sex 
and temperament she is barred from many outlets 
possible to the man [...]I don’t want sheltering 
from the world. I mean to convince myself that I 
can find my way alone, even in this bewildering

[^120] ibid., pp 103-105.
Yet like Frances’s views in the earlier novel, Phyllis’s directly spoken, podium-style advocacy of womanly self-reliance comes to seem a phase of growth in her passionate youth: one which is built upon as she matures enough to marry. Phyllis’s work in London (as German tutor for her invalid cousin - the blood-tie only belatedly revealed to her employer), alongside her discovery of her father’s history of business failure (restored through an unexpected legacy) contribute to her transformation. From a tomboy colonial in the reform dress of the New Woman, she becomes what her elderly aunts celebrate as a picture of “the submission of a proud girl to the husband of her choice.”

“The three years had changed Phyllis from her short-cropped, boyish appearance to something more womanly. Her fair hair lay in shining coils on her neck; she had discarded the waistcoats and serge skirts for soft muslins and laces made permissible by her ‘fortune’.”

Work and humility make Phyllis more radiantly womanly (those shining coils might suggest Coventry Patmore’s *The Angel in the House*) - but unlike Frances Marlow, Phyllis will pursue a dual career; “Alien” suggests that Phyllis will be able to forge a personal vocation out of her colonial past. Phyllis performs a so-called “Coon” song” at an evening function at her aunt’s and uncle’s house (that one word description so abruptly and casually condensing latent beliefs in what now seems an inhumane right-wing Darwinianism). In the novel, the song is highly successful. “Her audience demanded more and more. Phyllis had striven in vain to find an entrance into the market of labour and had never guessed where her talent lay.”

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121 ibid., pp 116-117.
122 ibid., p. 309.
123 ibid., p. 297.
124 ibid., p. 294.
achievement, the close of the novel has Phyllis resolving dilemmas for Carew over how to offer financial assistance to one of his 'genteely' impoverished patients.

*A Slum Heroine*, therefore, in the midst of several plot strands, tells the story of a woman whose journey between the antinomies of the South Pacific and London is from her "lonely girlhood" begun in financial shame, towards artistic and economic self-assertion, with the peak of these achievements being their successful combination with the role of wifely help-meet.

'Alien's' short fiction in *An Unanswered Question and Other Stories* (1906) repeats - sometimes verbatim - several of the concerns of her novels. In the main, the stories, reiterating *A Slum Heroine*, represent male emigration to New Zealand and Australia as a reaction to family disgrace, and as an indication of lawlessness and indiscipline. In keeping with this is the opposition set up between Europe as the complex, stratified social world, the world of career ambition, and its Antipodes as the natural world of silence and solitude. One story, slightly varying these themes, deals specifically with a woman’s expatriation.

"A Buried Ring" shares its narrative framing technique with several of 'Alien's' short stories: first person narrators begin by introducing a scene or situation in which they meet a compelling character, and subsequently the second character's narration absorbs the first narrator's voice. The initial speaker in "A Buried Ring" tells us that Margaret Dare, a woman writer, first became known to him "at a literary crush as the author of a remarkable novel [...] what struck me almost at first about her was her

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125 Such perceptions were widespread in nineteenth century literature - one example occurs in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, with Rex's father's response to Rex's wish to "go off to the colonies" after Gwendolen Harleth rejects him. The father sees it as a mark of immorality and failure - "'In my opinion you have no right whatever to expatriate yourself [...] I thought you had more sense than to take up such ideas - to suppose that because you have fallen into a very common trouble [...] you are loosened from all bonds of duty - just as if your brain had softened and you were no longer a responsible being.'" Rex's sister, Anna, expresses views about expatriation to the colonies which echo the settler women I have discussed: "I should have done with going out, and gloves, and crinoline, and having to talk when I am taken to dinner, and all that." (Handley (ed.), *Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot, pp 73-74.)
capacity to grind"; again, 'Alien' initially signposts the value of a woman's artistic labour. The evening which the narrator proceeds to recount is one in which Dare for the first time reveals aspects of her past, establishing this new level of intimacy in the guise of a fictional exercise; she asks the narrator to act as her "Dummy [...][t]his was a term she used when she was reading a scene aloud to me to test her idea of its truth." The issue she wishes to confront is "Whether I have 'lived my life' - whether 'I have loved?' Thus 'Alien' reintroduces what she sees as the primary conflict for female identity. Dare tells the narrator that she married and separated before she was 21, refusing her husband's financial support. Although she has become a "self-dependent writer", the cost of this achievement is greater than the rewards.

'The making of a name - what does it signify-'!
Her face hardened and sharpened. 'Death to self, if death be the subjugation of ease, of human joy in life [...] I had made my name which belonged to me by right, separate from anything that had gone before, or might come after. And then I realised how alone I was - and tired. After the long strain of self-imposed isolation, it suddenly became impossible - that negation - that beating back the forces of personal life! And so I broke free.'

This liberation is specifically associated with a sense of spiritual and natural communion which Dare experiences during her travels in the Pacific and New Zealand:

'It was while I wandered from Island to Island of the Pacific that I wrote the series of fairy-tales which were to add to my first reputation [...] the simple joy of living apart from any considerations of estate and position was so great that if our modern seekers after pleasure could but realise it they would drink at nature's fount instead of hunting sensation artificially.'

127 ibid., p. 161.
128 ibid., p. 162.
129 ibid., pp 165-166.
130 ibid., p. 167.
Dare’s association of creativity, freedom from social constraint, and the colonies develops further: she stays in ‘Fieordland’[sic] for six months, absorbed in writing a new novel in “‘a ship’s cabin of an Inn [...] immured in a solitude that was never solitary’” where “‘To work and to be seemed all.’” (The description of the inn is one of ‘Alien’s’ more compelling metaphors: evoking transience, adventure, and physical isolation all in one.) Although ‘Alien’ normally represents the journey to Europe as progression towards artistic skill, Dare’s reverse career shares its forging of the New World experience into art with the careers of other ‘Alien’ heroines. Yet upon the arrival of Frank, a man who falls in love with Dare, her idyll is shaken: “I remembered I had missed the one gift divine. The emptiness of my life had been glorified awhile, that is all.”[^168] Dare’s formal and Romantically tenored monologue continues to vacillate between the two choices -

> ‘My work, honours, were mine [...] my spirit had grown with battling [...] but what of the woman lying under? And yet I do not know if I loved him, that he could have meant to me half - this.’
> She had risen and laid her hand with caressing touch upon the book which had distinguished her name: that which she had written in her mountain solitude. ‘I - I wish I could be sure. When he was with me I was sad with the consciousness of my woman’s loss when [sic] he was away I felt strangely alone, and the mountain fastnesses which before his advent had been peopled by the spirits of beauty and grandeur spoke of an awful isolation.’[^169]

‘Alien’ specifically expresses artistic freedom in the context of a woman’s solitary expatriation - and yet Dare’s travelling and writing come to threaten the loss of the full womanhood which romantic love would offer. She and Frank exchange rings, to show his acceptance of her bondage to another man, and to symbolise their intimacy. The dilemma which Frank has posed drives Margaret Dare back to London, and Frank in turn begins a protracted journey. “‘Because, he said, on leaving me he found the

[^168]: ibid., p. 168.
[^169]: ibid., p. 169.
monotonous life of conventional existence intolerable." He writes to Margaret that "through the noontide heats and homeless nights [...] under the open sky, by river in forest, or round the camp fire - I am a wanderer waiting for his call home." For the man, woman and home are synonymous: the tragedy of Dare's story, as she tells it, is not finally that she can not bring herself to play this role - but that when her first husband dies, and she is able to write to Frank to come, her letter arrives too late: Frank too has died. Yet the story is still given a potentially romantic closure, as the male narrator feels a change in his response to Dare after the night of revelations, realising what she has meant to him when his "territory [is] disputed" by claims upon her from her past. (The imperialist metaphor - woman as homeland and property - says much about contemporary views of marriage.) The story ends with the narrator's appeal to the reader "Wish me - her." This offers a vision of the 'woman' in Dare recognised and loved again, just as Dare's letter to Frank confessed that her final choice was of love over solitary career. In keeping with this, what 'Alien' does not provide is a portrait of the woman artist after romantic union, the woman who has successfully combined designated social role and artistic career.

In the novel *His Neighbour's Landmark* (1907), expatriation again offers the route to a woman's artistic self-realisation. It shares a character type and (preposterous) plot coincidence with 'Alien's' short story, "Taken at the Flood": the Remittance man who leads a wandering life as the result of romantic spurning (also Frank's Barton's reaction in "A Buried Ring", ousted from woman-as-home), and who unexpectedly

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133 ibid., p. 176.
134 ibid., p. 184.
135 ibid., p. 185.
136 This is also true of *A Slum Heroine*: although Phyllis's career was predicted by the text, her life after marriage is not portrayed. In "The Other Mrs Grey", which addresses the subject of female artistic success, Margaret Grey also senses an inadequacy in her life of artistic achievement once she is confronted with a possible suitor. While a woman with no vocation loses the man to Margaret, 'Alien' leaves the question of what happens to Margaret's work upon acceptance of her suitor unresolved: and heterosexual love brings the woman's sense of self-completion.
encounters the child of his ex-love in a remote New Zealand mountain pass, on the very
day that memories of that love have re-emerged to haunt him. Paul Featherstone, the
nomadic older man, and Philip Stroud, the ex-love's son, begin muted rivalry over a
young violinist and singer, Marah, who lives with her father at a miner's camp. The
novel offers, in multiple ways, a confused discussion of the falseness of a social morality
based on class distinctions - the most significant of these confusions is that both Paul
and Marah, who declare their opposition to judgements of merit based on "those who
[...] assume greatness because of men and women of the same name" each rediscover
ancient family titles by the close of the novel.137

Well before such backgrounds are revealed, however, Paul feels it is his duty to
warn the "wild, untutored" Marah away from Philip, and in her shame that Paul
considers her unworthy, Marah is galvanised into action: "I will make my own
distinction, my own world, I can. I will. And when I have made it, he shall acknowledge
it."138 She determines to leave for England on her own - but this bid for complete
independence is swiftly undercut, as en route from the camp, she is caught out in a storm
and rescued from drowning by Paul. The lesson she learns from this escapade is that
"the world was too strong for her to fight alone, that a girl such as she might not cajole
it, that her youth and ignorance and innocence were targets, not a shield." Paul
emphasises "It would crush you with a cruelty more relentless than if the mountains fell
upon you!"139 Marah and Paul swiftly marry after this rescue. Yet the remainder of the
novel concerns Marah's regrets over precisely this swiftness, as she feels "the pain of the
wife lightly won."140

137 'Alien', His Neighbour's Landmark, p. 60.
What is more, past generations of their families have lived within walking distance of each
other in a tiny English village for centuries: a plot resolution which Terry Sturm calls "one of
the hoariest of colonial clichés." ("Popular Fiction", Sturm (ed.), The Oxford History of New
Zealand Literature, p. 501.)
138 'Alien', His Neighbour's Landmark, p. 60.
139 ibid., pp 109-110.
140 ibid., p. 214.
Following Marah's and Paul's melodramatic separation during Tarawera's volcanic eruption (Paul's comment about falling mountains was hammily prescient), Paul presumes Marah dead. The novel jumps in time and location, to reveal Paul's successful Westminster career as a parliamentary minister, and Marah's critically acclaimed debut as an opera singer in London. (Marah's performing name, Te Wahini [sic], infers that she, like Phyllis in A Slum Heroine, has used her colonial past as a source for her trade.) Chaperoned by her father while she has trained in Europe, Marah's expatriation and artistic success are now legitimised through their function as the self-betterment which in fact makes her worthy of her husband: "Every night that ended a day had brought her a little nearer her ideal of what Paul's wife should be." Intriguingly, however, Marah is not torn between art and love: "The artist and the woman were one, conscious of power. No longer might she weigh allegiance to love and allegiance to art in a separate balance [...] Her art and her love were herself." Thus when Paul and Marah do meet again by chance under Shakespeare's monument in Westminster Abbey (a symbolic coincidence utterly typical of 'Alien's' plotting), Marah explains that she always understood Paul's craving for a full career: "It was because I did understand I left you free. Because I knew all the same longing for action, for happiness, for self-expression." While it is no doubt significant that Marah has excelled while effectively outside marriage, during those years Paul presumed her dead, the movement towards closure is rather different from 'Alien's' preceding works. Paul concedes "I hold you justified in breaking free. I should have soured and embittered and degraded your youth and genius in my man's struggle for supremacy." With this comment, the novel seems to be offering a level of mutual recognition of talent and access to a life outside the marriage unit as the key to a fulfilling love. 'Alien's' fiction

141 ibid., p. 208.
142 ibid., p. 215.
143 ibid., p. 259.
144 ibid.
represents female expatriation again as a route to the achievement of a mature womanhood of artistic self-realisation (where mature womanhood also means sharing an equalised marriage.)

The generic leap from 'Alien's' strained plots and Christian feminism to Mansfield's work seems great. Yet Mansfield's technique still differs significantly even from women authors like Charlotte Mew or George Egerton, cited by Showalter as "the missing links between the great women writers of the Victorian novel and the modern fiction of Mansfield, Woolf and Stein."145 Where a Mew or an Egerton, far more akin to the late-Victorian 'Alien', create revelations based on a point of extreme crisis (a woman on her death bed, a ritualistic burial of a woman alive), Mansfield's work illustrates that questions of life and death, justice and injustice, permeate all moments of human interaction and psychological development, and that an understanding of these is a matter of heightened apperception. Although there is no direct citation in Mansfield's letters and Notebooks of 'Alien's' name, juxtaposing their work helps to build a sense of a developing history of ideas, as Mansfield's early writing shares the preoccupations of 'Alien's' popular colonial fiction, in its concern for how women can negotiate a satisfactory role within contemporary social forms. More specifically, Mansfield's early Notebooks and letters repeat 'Alien's' sense of expatriation to Europe as a route to female artistic achievement. Yet Mansfield's short fiction comes to rewrite this point of view. In her body of work as an entirety, the treatment of the expatriate theme develops further in complexity, carrying as it does both the influence of new aspirations for women, and trace memories of those ancient tropes of the overseas journey as an archetype of loss: aspects which had also permeated the accounts of nineteenth-century women settlers' emigration.

145 Showalter, Daughters of Decadence, p. viii.
CHAPTER TWO

THIS VAST, DANGEROUS GARDEN:

KATHERINE MANSFIELD AND EXPATRIATION
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(See bibliography for edition details)


*KMN I- II*: Margaret Scott (ed.), *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, Volume I and II.

*PKM*: Vincent O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Poems of Katherine Mansfield*.


*SLKM*: Vincent O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Selected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*.

Introduction

In 1908, two years before the date Woolf gives as the major shift into the period of modernism, Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) emigrated permanently to England.\(^1\) Contemporary criticism warns against citing biographical events as symbolic turning points in the development of an author’s style. It also warns against persistently overreading biography as an influence on the author’s subject matter.\(^2\) Certainly Mansfield’s work is infiltrated by the presence of England well before her final expatriation; as a nine-and-a-half-year old, five years before her initial visit to London, her first printed story effuses about the advantages of a holiday in Torquay over a day in London.\(^3\) In the late nineteenth century, the artistic consciousness of a colonial child is already shaped by the cultural privileging of a metropolitan literature. Yet it would seem as erroneous to sever the work entirely from the life, as it would be to separate the work from history, particularly as, in the case of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century artistic expatriation, biographical fact can be seen as a direct response to historical conceptions of the literary. While Mansfield’s expatriation can not be said to mark her instantaneous entry into modernism, the overseas journey does become an increasingly prevalent motif in her work subsequent to her own migration.

Expatriation comes already loaded with cultural meaning by the time of Mansfield’s departure from New Zealand. For an author resolutely concerned with the representation of significant moments of psychological time, in a period when “audacious attempts to discern a moment of transition [were] themselves a feature of

\(^1\) "[...] in or about December 1910, human character changed [...] All human relations have shifted [...] And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature."("Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" (1924), Woolf (ed.), Collected Essays Volume I by Virginia Woolf, p. 320.
\(^3\) KMN I, pp 1-2. The story was printed in The High School Reporter in 1898.
Modernist sensibility", expatriation serves as a particularly evocative trope. I would argue that it becomes Mansfield’s quintessential metaphor, broadening far beyond its initial meaning of a hoped-for arrival at artistic selfhood.

Alpers has described Mansfield’s fictional viewpoint as floating, detached from English class, and therefore “assumed [...] most readily in the context of travel and movement, among other déracinées”; yet Pride argues that “the ‘myth’ of deracination is myth precisely because it is predicated on an oppositionary relation to the normative culture from which an individual defines themself [sic] as deracinated.” That is, the myth of deracination is myth precisely because it needs, and is based upon, another myth: that there is a definable home culture from which one is uprooted, or to which one is in opposition. Pride repudiates what she reads as suspect mythologising; yet her reading could obscure the fact that the power of cultural myths of home - and homelessness - are precisely what drive Mansfield’s aesthetic struggle. Desire for the actualisation of the myth of unriven belonging is overwhelmingly registered in Mansfield’s treatment of home and familial relationships in the Notebooks, Collected Letters, and fiction.

Mansfield’s first investigation of the concept of home appears in the long piece of prose, Juliet (1906). This is her earliest dramatisation of the conflict between the appetite for cosmopolitan variety and the losses incurred in leaving home: “I long for fresh experiences, new places, but I shall miss the things I love here”. In this fantasy of a young girl achieving independence and a renovation of identity overseas - “She was alone in London - glorious thought [...] She was to meet total strangers. She could be just as she liked - they had never known her before” - Mansfield uses tropes recognisable

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4 Bradbury and McFarlane (eds.), Modernism, p. 51.
5 Alpers, The Life of Katherine Mansfield, p. 127.
6 Pride, A Home in This World, p. 84. Pride rightly points out, however, Alpers’ misreading of class issues.
7 KMN I, p. 51.
from several early settlers’ descriptions (although she is discussing the reverse journey) and from work like G.B. Lancaster’s and ‘Alien’s’.¹⁸ Expatriation is connected to a sense of family disgrace (the origins of which are not explored in the surviving textual fragments). “Relations at the other end of the world […] have, thank Heaven, cast me off […] my wish fulfilled. I am alone in the heart of London, working and living.”¹⁹ Mansfield’s juvenilia inverts the usual geographical locations of tradition and lawlessness, acceptance and ostracism, dramatising (as mentioned briefly in my introduction) the choice of London over New Zealand as that between “the mode bohème” and submitting to the “paternal authority” of a father who demands a “sane healthy-minded girl” who leads “the Suitable Appropriate Existence. The days full of perpetual society functions, the hours full of clothes discussions - the waste of life.”²⁰

Once back in New Zealand at the end of her schooling, Mansfield’s letters provide a dramatisation similar to her fiction. Her father has opposed her wish to be a cellist (“I suppose it is no earthly use warring with the Inevitable”) and although she turns to writing, a letter of 1907 represents New Zealand as foreign, and England as the focus of her personal (and artistic) longing:

I feel absolutely ill with grief and sadness - here - it is a nightmare - I feel that sooner or later I must wake up - & find myself in the heart of it all again - and look back upon the past months as - - - cobwebs - a hideous dream […] I know nobody - and nobody cares to know me - There is nothing on earth to do - nothing to see - and my heart keeps flying off - Oxford Circus - Westminster Bridge at the Whistler hour - London by hansom - my old room […]²¹

¹⁸ ibid., p. 66.
¹⁹ ibid., p. 54.
²⁰ ibid., p. 67.
²¹ To Sylvia Payne [8 January 1907], CLKM I, pp 20-21. Similar feelings are given to Beryl Fairfield in “Prelude” (1917).
England and New Zealand are set up in extreme binary opposition - life versus death, reality versus unreality: Mansfield's use of dashes orthographically imitates the pressured speaking voice, pausing for intermittent breath; the melodrama reveals she is already aware of how to hold an audience. Her negative catalogue is brief - so short, in fact, that it is barely a catalogue - yet precisely this brevity says the desolation is all-encompassing.

Mansfield's dissatisfaction with colonial New Zealand endures, and is especially exacerbated by proximity to her father, the "Pa-Man", who "spoke of my returning [to London] as damned rot." Her kick against the confines of paternal authority is transferred to her desire to escape New Zealand and family altogether - patria and pater familias becoming one imprisoning force:

Damn my family! [...] I detest them all heartily [...] Here in my room, I feel as though I were in London. In London! To write the word makes me feel that I could burst into tears. Isn't it terrible to love anything so much? I do not care at all for men, but London - it is life.\footnote{\textit{PKM}, p. 4.}

The sensational substitution of London for the romantic other, the consummation of all desire and hope, is reiterated in fictional form in one of Mansfield's early prose vignettes, where London is a woman, a seductress, calling out to the lonely, offering sensual and spiritual gratification; "the answer to all your achings and cryings."\footnote{\textit{KMN I}, p. 79.} The Decadent era's fascination for corrupted urban settings is remodelled in Mansfield's first vignette into an invigorating influence.\footnote{\textit{CLKM I}, p. 21.} (There is a comic historical irony in her early emulation of the Decadents' version of London; in this period colonial life was being...\footnote{\textit{PKM}, p. 4.} \footnote{See also Mansfield's letter to Vera Beauchamp [April-May 1908] \textit{CLKM I}, p. 44.}
advocated in Britain as "a purifying force for urban decadence". Mansfield's fascination also reveals a contemporary sense of the marginalisation of art within the colonial context, and conversely, its sustenance and privileging within Europe; she repeats divisions perceived by Mary Taylor and 'Alien'. By projecting her early vignettes into European geographical space, the young Mansfield both reflects dislocations inherited from the settler generation, and attempts to place her work within a stylistic tradition. This enacts a written migration which foreshadows her permanent, physical expatriation.

Mansfield's disgruntlement with New Zealand continues to centre on artistic issues. Her Notebook comments and letters on this topic are well known: in 1908 she also sketches plans for another novel which involves several shuttlings between London and New Zealand, aligning repatriation to the colony with disillusion and death.

Yet alongside her idealisation of a Decadent London are Mansfield's (also well-known) disconnected Notebook entries on her Urewara caravan journey, which offer a rich treasury of sense-perceptions. These aspects of travel - as dislocation, a series of fleeting impressions, yet also as a full vein of creative ore - combine in Mansfield's later fiction. One entry affirms the possibilities of change and the new:

There is something inexpressibly charming to me in railway travelling - I lean out of the window - the breeze blows, buffeting and friendly against my face - and the child spirit - hidden away under a thousand and one grey City wrappings bursts its bonds - and exults within me.

This clearly contradicts the love-sick longing for London expressed in other pieces at the time; the City is not an energising force, it is constricting, stultifying - and travel away brings euphoric rejuvenation.

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16 Pooley and Whyte (eds.), _Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants_, p. 66.
17 See, e.g., _KMN 1_, p. 81.
18 ibid., pp 111-112. This was the novel she wanted to model on Pater's _Child in the House_.
19 _KMN 1_, p 135.
Yet Mansfield’s quest for an artistic identity still leads her away from the politically and morally conservative New Zealand which she earlier condemned as philistine. ("I am ashamed of young New Zealand [...] All the firm fat framework of their brains must be demolished before they can begin to learn."20) Reacting against the moral climate in the colony, Mansfield’s solitary migration to England also runs counter to contemporary British social reform efforts: from the 1880s to the 1920s (at least), women were encouraged to migrate to the colonies because of local needs for servants and wives.21 Mansfield’s departure implicitly refuses this particular range of opportunities: a refusal supported by her declaration of freedom in the Notebook passage from 1908, where she specifically stresses the damages inherent in conformist myths of romantic fulfilment.22 Her picture of New Zealand differs from the vision of work opportunities seen by Mary Taylor; yet like Taylor, self-sufficiency is still crucial, and she too chooses England on artistic grounds. Mansfield’s earlier rebellion against her family’s patriarchal structure becomes politicised.

Here then is a little summary of what I need - power, wealth and freedom. It is the hopelessly insipid doctrine that love is the only thing in the world, taught, hammered into women, from generation to generation, that hampers us so cruelly. We must get rid of that bogey - and then, then comes the opportunity of happiness and freedom.23

Yet when Mansfield emigrates to England, the experience of never feeling more stifled and isolated than when surrounded by those who uphold a conservative morality recurs in several stories in her first collection. (It is worthwhile noting on this point that

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20 To Vera Beauchamp [?April-May 1908], CLKM I, p. 44. See particularly the list of politically liberal and sexually liberated authors Mansfield gives as recommended reading for New Zealanders in this letter.
21 Pooley and Whyte (eds.), Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants, p. 63.
22 Mansfield’s declaration foreshadows the arguments in Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own (1928).
23 KMN I, p. 88. It seems deeply resonant that Mansfield’s later nickname for her husband is, in fact, Bogey.
when Mansfield expatriates, she leaves a country which had granted women the vote in 1893, and arrives in one in which women’s suffrage was not achieved until 1928 - five years after her death; these social conditions alone might suggest that her treatment of the expatriate motif would be more complex than an evocation of a journey from constriction to emancipation. In *In a German Pension* (1911), the outsider motif is transmuted for artistic purposes into a technique for comic relief: the foreign observer being one who can, with a supposed degree of objectivity, see the absurdities and foibles of the visited culture in a manner which the inhabitants themselves cannot.

**No Place in Which I Can Hang My Hat:**

**Mansfield’s Work 1909-1915**

Prior to *In A German Pension* (1911), Mansfield’s post-expatriation letters and *Notebook* entries express an even greater degree of dislocation than those written during her time in New Zealand. Once the dreamed of land is reached, it is not depicted as the locus of transcendence from the alienation felt within colonial family household and society. Mansfield writes in 1909:

> In this room. Almost before this is written I shall read it from another room and such is Life. Packed again I leave for London. Shall I ever be a happy woman again. Je ne pense pas, je ne veux pas. Oh to be in New York [...] Sick at heart till I am physically sick - with no home - no place in which I can hang up my hat - & say here I belong - for there is no such place in the wide world for me.24

An editorial note warns against literal acceptance of Mansfield’s version of events - pointing to the potential theatricality of her letters. Even so, the biographical context is suggestive.25 Pregnant, forced to separate from her lover, and to book into a Bavarian

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25 *CLKM* I, p. 91. A letter to Garnet Trowell from five months earlier describes the “strange conglomeration of sensations” that a sea journey evokes, and her arrival has her “laughing with
recuperative spa, Mansfield writes a passage resonant of the potential social ostracisms a
cwoman pregnant to a man not her husband could face in this era. She deflects these
concerns onto place, imagining that the psychic pain would be resolved if she were to
leave the location where the situation originated - but then concedes that there is nowhere
to go. While the passage moves her adolescent utopia from London to New York, we
might suggest that the true escape she needs to effect is from a punitive sexual morality.
If the letter is a fictionalisation, we might call it a draft sketch of the concerns in
Mansfield's first collection, where she criticises the social exigencies which a
conservative biological essentialism places on women.

While Mansfield herself describes the early style of *In a German Pension* as
"immature", "juvenile" and "a lie", the narrator's position, in those stories which are told
in the first person, is nevertheless complex ("problematically evasive [...] refus[ing]
allegiance to anything but its own gibes") and it signals several of Mansfield's abiding
preoccupations. There are a number of stories which use a solitary woman traveller as
narrator, providing an alternative voice to women characters either obsessed with, or
physically eroded by, conventional domestic roles. The following two stories under
discussion are typical of these.

As it is expressed in "The Luft Bad", a satirical vignette which centres on the
bathing rituals of pension guests, the narrator's isolation partly stems from the colonial's
perceived loss of a meaningful identity overseas. Following several discussions of "each
other's ailments and measurements and ills that flesh is heir to", the story peaks in a

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(sheet *joie de vivre*. *CLKM* I, pp 78-79.) This change in response to her travels surely speaks
of a change in circumstances.

26 Parkin-Gounelas, "Katherine Mansfield Reading Other Women", Robinson (ed.), *Katherine
Mansfield - In From The Margins*, p. 45. There is a suggestion within the stories that the
narrator isn't one consistent character throughout, as her marital status changes, although in
each story she travels alone.

27 To J. M. Murry, [4 February 1920], *CLKM* III, p. 206.

Modern Soul", "At Lehmann's", "The Luft Bad", "The Advanced Lady".

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small act of rebellion from the narrator. Breaking off the conversation and climbing on
to a swing is her response to a Wildean dialogue which runs:

'Are you an American?' said the Vegetable Lady,
turning to me.
'No.'
'Then you are an Englishwoman?'
'Well, hardly -'
'You must be one of the two; you cannot help it.
I have seen you walking alone several times.' ²⁹

The narrator's native country has vanished from the map known by the general public;³⁰
yet her reaction is to segregate herself even more as she climbs onto a swing:

The air was sweet and cool, rushing past my
body. Above, white clouds trailed delicately
through the blue sky. From the pine forest
streamed a wild perfume, the branches swayed
together, rhythmically, sonorously. I felt so light
and free and happy - so childish! I wanted to
poke my tongue out at the circle on the grass,
who [...] were whispering meaningfully.³¹

The simplicity of the diction (predating the expatriate American Hemingway's similar
style by fifteen years) playfully tilts at nineteenth-century perceptions that relations
between empire and colony reflect a parent-child dynamic, although as the setting is
Germany, not England, properly it could be called the 'parent figure'-child dynamic.
The delicately sensuous enjoyment in this passage counteracts the clinical, disapproving
discussions of the body which precede it; the colonial behaves outside the rules and
codes of the visited culture. While the Germans judge the narrator, she experiences the
child's physical freedom and lack of inhibition; the story ends with her clearly separating
herself from the company of the other guests.

The umbrellas are the saving grace of the Luft
Bad. Now, when I go, I take my husband's

²⁹ CSKM p. 732.
³⁰ See also Dunbar, Radical Mansfield, p. 14.
³¹ CSKM, p. 732.
“storm” gamp and sit in a corner, hiding behind it.

Not that I am in the least ashamed of my legs.32

Refusing to interact in the society of the German women, the narrator has evidently internalised the perception of herself as beyond their laws of etiquette and morality, as she removes herself to the margins of their communal bathing. The ambiguity of such moments in these stories has been attributed to a woman’s inability to escape patriarchal discourse, even as she articulates her defiance to it: in denying her common lot with the conservatively feminine, the narrator repeats the wider culture’s denigration of femininity.33 Yet cumulatively over the Pension stories, the narrator’s voice, when unmediated through dialogue with another character, becomes a contract with the reader for the source of truth or protest. And in this collection, the narrator’s evasions also implicitly object to her marginalisation as someone who is non-German, non-English, and non-American.

In “Germans at Meat”, questions of nationality surface immediately. The title has a potentially derogatory tone, implying not the ritual of a sociable meal, but the basic satisfaction of physical appetite, and Mansfield does exploit easy national stereotypes in this story.34 Here the “I” is accepted as English, and writing about German-English rivalry suggests Mansfield’s attempt to demonstrate her aptitude with national codes - as if she can claim authentic Englishness for herself by accepting national antagonisms. Several of Mansfield’s stories have been read as strenuous attempts to claim “an

32 CSKM, p. 732.
34 “The immediate success of In a German Pension undoubtedly owed something to a rising tide of anti-German sentiment in Britain in the years preceding the First World War.” (Hankin (ed.), In a German Pension by Katherine Mansfield, p. 13.) See also Daly, Katherine Mansfield, p. 14. Daly cites T.E. Hulme’s anti-German sentiment in The New Age as evidence of the contemporary literary mood.
autochthonously European position” which “paradoxically reveals an insecurity about cultural siting.” Conversely, the stories from In a German Pension depict intra-European tensions, not a desire for identification as European, a fantasy of cultural unity in diversity. The experience which Mansfield is most keen to document is that of a foreigner experiencing manners and customs as alien.

In this story, the split between the personae concealed and displayed by the narrator is matched by divisions between Herr Rat’s assumptions about the narrator’s character (which are based on his understanding of stereotypes of English nationality), and the narrator’s deviance from these perceived norms. Split within split: as Mansfield simultaneously uses German types for comic effect, the narrator struggles against her own inclusion in Herr Rat’s descriptions of the English:

He tucked his napkin into his collar and blew upon his soup as he spoke. ‘Now at nine o’clock I make myself an English breakfast, but not much. Four slices of bread, two eggs, two slices of cold ham, one plate of soup, two cups of tea - that is nothing to you.’

[…] I felt I was bearing the burden of the nation’s preposterous breakfast - I who drank a cup of coffee while buttoning my blouse in the morning.

In a sentence which brings together concerns about the vulnerabilities of an independent woman before the penetrative male, and those of a foreigner in an unfamiliar context, the narrator relates that “He fixed his cold blue eyes upon me with an expression which suggested a thousand premeditated invasions.” Alluding to interregional European tensions, it also refers to the relationship between personal and national identities: exhibiting fear that the foreigner’s world view will overtake one’s

35 Pride, A Home in This World, pp 74, 80.
36 Pride defines “European” as “an identification with Northern Hemisphere values”; yet this too implies a greater cultural unity than the history of Europe evidences. (ibid., p. 11.)
37 CSKM, p. 683.
38 ibid., p. 684.
current identity - make one not oneself. It also clearly carries implications of the role of male conqueror and conquered woman in military imperialism: sexual invasion (rape) being both a political weapon of degradation and subjugation, and a means of propagating the invading race.

In the story “Frau Fischer”, Mansfield deliberately ridicules the idea that independence of movement for a woman, particularly across national boundaries, is sexually dangerous. The narrator in this story invents a fictional sea-captain husband to defend her solitary journey; yet Frau Fischer counters: “‘Admit, now, that you keep your journeys secret from him. For what man would think of allowing a woman with such a wealth of hair to go wandering in foreign countries?’” Frau Fischer becomes the comic object, and the figure of Mansfield’s journeying woman offers an alternative to the dominant moeures of western imperialism. In post-colonial theory, white male imperialism is often recounted as the aggressive domestication of the Other, the subjugation and feminising of the new land announces its successful colonisation. Mansfield’s fiction questions western culture’s elision of women and the domestic, as the agency of expatriation refutes representations of women’s homebound passivity. The colonial woman’s mobility in Europe also counters perceptions of the colonised nation as fixed in submission, as it suggests that cultural influence is not monodirectional, from empire to colony; the colonial also bears meaning into Europe.

The trope of expatriation as both refusal and crystallisation of women’s

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35 ibid., p. 702.
36 See the editors’ “Introduction to Feminism and Post-colonialism”; Kadiatu Kanneh, “Feminism and the Colonial Body”; Gillian Whitlock, “Outlaws of the Text”, Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin (eds.), The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, pp. 249, 346, 352; Said, Culture and Imperialism; Prentice, “The Interplay of Place and Placelessness in the Subject of Post-colonial Fiction”, in SPAN 31, February, p. 67; Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism: “From the beginning of the colonial period female bodies symbolise the conquered land”, p. 152; Carter, Nothing Sacred. (Reviewing Anthony Alpers' The Life of Katherine Mansfield, Carter notes “the heroic myth of colonialism, the setting out across the sea to domesticate the unknown”, p. 204.)
contemporary status recurs over the course of Mansfield’s career. Before she picks up this theme again, however, she makes an early fictional return to colonial settings.

“The Woman at the Store” (1911), a story which has a closer relationship to nineteenth-century adventure, detective, or colonial tales than Mansfield’s later work, is the first of her fully conceived, adult pieces to deal overtly with New Zealand. (“A Birthday”, from In a German Pension, peoples a colonial Wellington setting with German characters.) The story focuses on the New Zealand interior, a scene of isolation and emotional aridity, yet it shares a common attribute with previous (and successive) Mansfield stories, in its use of a woman narrator in the midst of a journey. In free indirect discourse, the narrator’s voice is in fact androgynous: this and the strong contrast developed between her and the title character has led to misreadings of the narrator as male, despite the fact that the child later says of her “I looked at her where she wouldn’t see me from.” This androgyny is conceivably less a sign of technical failure, as Alpers implies in his note to the story, and rather an alignment with the “shifting allegiances” of the narrator in the German Pension stories. Treated as an equal by the men she travels with, not overtly romantically or sexually involved with either of them (the men discuss the woman at the store in sexualised terms well before the reader is introduced to her), the narrator is an independent alternative to the woman around whom the story centres. Her freedom of movement is one sign of this.

The title character is crudely and cruelly depicted by this narrator; the harshness of the description shows the degradations the woman at the store has undergone since the

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41 A technique variously called free indirect discourse, deigetic narrative, or character focalisation. See Van Gunsteren, Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism, pp 94, 102. 42 E.g. Nathan, Katherine Mansfield. Nathan assumes the narrator is male, yet, ironically, says that Mansfield fails ever to achieve a male sensibility - that her voice is “innately feminine.” p. 11 43 CSKM, p. 557. 44 The woman at the store will “promise you something else before she shakes hands with you”. (ibid., p. 551.) Note that the narrator refers to Jim as her brother at one point; although this might be a term of endearment.
days when she was “pretty as a wax doll [and] knew one hundred and twenty five
different ways of kissing.”^45 Social isolation, farm-work and childbearing have literally
desiccated and deformed the woman; “there was nothing but sticks and wires under that
pinafore - her front teeth were knocked out, she had red pulpy hands, and she wore on
her feet a pair of dirty Bluchers.”^46 She tells the travellers “It’s six years since I was
married, and four miscarriages. I says to ‘im, I says, what do you think I’m doin’ up
here? If I was back at the Coast, I’d have you lynched for child murder.”^47 The
miscarriages are linked to the infertility of the arid landscape, and, implicitly, the
meagreness of social community; these conditions, we find out later, have driven her to
murder her husband.^48

While the story gives several reasons for the woman’s crime, the title character
is not empathised with, nor is her crime condoned. The mood evoked in a passage
describing the sunset creates an atmosphere of fearful tension, also intended to infuse our
impressions of the woman. The description further suggests both the hierarchical
relationship between empire and colony, and dread of its subversion.

It was sunset. There is no twilight to our New
Zealand days, but a curious half-hour where
everything appears grotesque - it frightens - as
though the savage spirit of the country walked
abroad and sneered at what it saw.^49

Accommodating a foreign perspective, Mansfield creates a sense of dislocation within
the New Zealand environment; the colonial needs a redefinition of familiar language and
concepts (twilight). The passage also reveals Darwinian ideas of progress; the implicit
division between races (and places) is one of low to high, savage to civilised. The

^45 ibid., p. 556.
^46 ibid., p. 553.
^47 ibid., p. 558.
^48 Presumably, the woman has to remain on the isolated farm for economic reasons, or to
escape detection; although her husband has “Bin away a month”, it’s not made clear how
recent the murder was, nor precisely why her husband’s death hasn’t freed her to leave.
^49 CSKM, p. 554.
woman, isolated from the regulating community, becomes lawless, as does her child (the little girl disobeys her mother’s orders, so in a sense inherits the parent’s ills.) In the colonies (British) civilisation is scorned. The little girl’s drawings of the murder scene elicit the narrator’s horrified fascination: “extraordinary and repulsively vulgar. The creations of a lunatic with a lunatic’s cleverness.”

Mansfield depicts a stunted art, a raw expression aligned to the picture of the isolated, uncultivated landscape, which has also led to mental instability. (The picture of colonial isolation and madness may recall G.B. Lancaster’s “Without Proof”, where a male character experiences breakdown).

The portrayal of a gifted but lunatic child-artist corresponds to Mansfield’s earlier comments on New Zealand’s dearth of mature aesthetic sensibility: as if, despite the transfer of British culture, there has been a wholesale erasure of artistic traditions.

The story closes with the narrator’s departure from the eroded scene - “A bend in the road, and the whole place disappeared.” Pride argues that with this closure, “all the violence and lust are displaced back onto the colonial characters.” The narrator ‘expatriates’ in the sense of severing any association or allegiances with the scene; thus she is also a figure of a woman in transit away from the title character’s evident destruction at the hands of (and destructiveness as a result of) a conventionalised social role.

The antithetically extreme version of New Zealand seen in both “The Woman at the Store”, and “How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped” (1912) - with its sugary, romantic idealisation of the Maori - persist in “Millie” (1913) and “Ole Underwood” (1913),

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50 ibid., p. 559.
51 Cp. to Bridget Orr’s comments on a recurring strategy in colonial discourse, where anxiety about the coloniser’s possible degeneration into the savage is at once displaced onto, and articulated by, figures of psychologically disturbed women settlers. Orr, “The Only Free People in the Empire”, Tiffin and Lawson (eds.), De-Scribing Empire, pp 154-155.
52 Akin to nineteenth century accounts of settlement - see Chapter One. Pride addresses this point when she argues the falseness of the binary opposition between European and colonial: “At the founding of the New Zealand colony, a significant structural section of its economic system was, of course, outside itself.” (Pride, A Home in this World, p. 33.)
53 ibid., p. 78.
where characters are broken by their colonial context. Mansfield's recognition of greater complexities in character formation within the colonial scene occurs in the later 1910s.

**The Disputed Traveller:**

**Mansfield's Work 1915**

In the stories which Mansfield sets in Europe from 1915 onwards, themes of travel, transience, and mariginalised characters continue to resurface across locations. One recurrent character type is the unmarried woman, who struggles between the social vulnerability that her single status threatens, and her wish to move freely and at will through metropolitan social spaces.

Questions of independence and the implications of sexual openness in a woman travelling alone are central to a *Notebook* entry, "The Little Governess", and "An Indiscreet Journey", all of which date from 1915. (Only "The Little Governess" was published in Mansfield's lifetime, measuring, perhaps, the degree of the perceived titular "indiscretion" in the posthumously published story.) These stories, along with "The Wind Blows (1915) and later "The Scholarship" (1917-1918), move away from the sharp irony and the more plot-centred narratives of Mansfield's work so far, demonstrating a modernist, elliptical lyricism. They also illustrate enduring and deeply antagonistic perspectives on expatriation in Mansfield's fiction. Travel, taken as a liminal event (as in Van Gennep and Fender's discussions of pilgrimage), an undefined space where crucial revelations of character (including self-revelation) can occur, is partially synonymous with adventure and with those aspects of personality that "desire to 'migrate', to go beyond fixed borders in search of new knowledge". Yet Mansfield's literary journeys are also variously associated with psychological

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54 Grinberg and Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*, p. 4.
displacement, with issues of conservative morality's attempts to immobilise women, and
with the pain of permanent leave-taking.

In “The Little Governess”, a young woman travels abroad in order to begin new
employment. The title character’s excursion offers independence and the fascination of
novelty, but this is mediated by her fears over the moral correctness of her liberation,
which in turn is bound up with fears of men. The old man who takes her under his wing
is seen as a grandfather figure; her use of familial terms an indication that to her, the
encounter is asexual. The fact that she sees him this way makes his sexual approach -
and the hotel clerk’s disapproval of her even prior to this - all the more horrifying to her.
Like Isabel Archer’s fall from her “free, keen” girlhood after her expatriation in James’s
The Portrait of a Lady (1881), the little governess’s journey is ultimately one from
innocence to experience, of optimism disabused. Yet there are lightly done suggestions
that even her innocence is flawed: marked by a wishful naïveté and vanity.

Although her voyage begins contentedly, when the governess is left to negotiate
her own way once she has berthed in France, her vulnerability becomes apparent. A
change sensed in the physical environment has a corresponding psychological register:

> a cold strange wind flew under her hat. She
> looked up at the masts and spars of the ship black
> against a green glittering sky and down to the
> dark landing stage where strange muffled figures
> lounged, waiting [...] and she felt afraid.

The darkness and concealment act as a thematic overture leading to the concealment and
opacity of intention in her encounter with an elderly man. The governess’s own
intentions are initially in keeping with advice from her agent at the Governess Bureau;
she seeks a Ladies’ Compartment on the train. Yet her insignificance in the face of
authority becomes obvious when male travellers enter her compartment, mocking her

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56 CSKM, p. 175.
solitude, and when the porter changes the sign on the compartment, in revenge for her lack of tip, allowing the old man to take his seat with her. This derision and manipulation signify that a woman travelling alone is considered openly available. Movement over geographical boundaries also implies moral instability; freedom of circulation equates with looseness of morals.

The story uses a sophisticated free indirect discourse; from the first sentence, the reader is implicitly confided in: "Oh dear, how she wished it wasn't night-time." There are one or two moments when the narrative voice apparently slips outside the central consciousness to note details of the governess’s appearance. This slippage, however, is thematically driven; it indicates the character’s self-appraisal, as the governess becomes unconsciously complicit in her objectification. Initially described as blushing “a deep pink colour that spread slowly over her cheeks and made her blue eyes look almost black”, the subsequent depiction shows a shift from complete innocence to a youthfully narcissistic curiosity over how the old man may see her.

Alas! How tragic for a little governess to possess hair that made one think of tangerines and marigolds, of apricots and tortoiseshell cats and champagne! Perhaps that was what the old man was thinking [...] Perhaps that flush that licked his cheeks and lips was a flush of rage that anyone so young and tender should have to travel alone and unprotected through the night. Who knows he was not murmuring in his sentimental German fashion: 'Ja, es ist eine Tragoedie! Would to God I was the child's grandfather!'

The story shows the insidious effects of the cultural shaping of the feminine: the little governess’ savouring of this possible appraisal becomes the trait that allows the old man to act unjustly upon her, and does in fact lead to her Tragoedie.

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57 ibid., p. 174.
58 ibid., p. 180.
59 ibid., p. 180.
A fragment from 1917, "The Lost Battle", reiterates similar themes, and also focuses on a sole woman traveller: "the dilemma of the femme seule" has thus been seen as "the special province of [Mansfield’s] feminist revisionary Modernism." In "The Lost Battle", a hotel waiter responds mockingly to an itinerant woman guest, speaking "insinuatingly", as "moving to the bed he slapped it and gave the mattress a pinch which did not seem to be merely professional", while the woman waits "for that ominous infallible thing ... which was bound to happen, to every woman on earth who travelled alone!" Solitary travel (as opposed to the Victorian practice of chaperonage) claims new social freedoms for Mansfield’s women, and yet it also becomes sign and agent of their outsiderhood. Their solitude suggests they are neither wives nor mothers, thus the question of their place in society becomes suspect. In "The Little Governess", "An Indiscreet Journey", and "The Lost Battle", there are visible social legacies left by Victorian anxieties about the liberties gained by the New Woman, liberties which blurred perceived lines between street-walking and 'respectable' women who sought a new openness of movement through urban spaces. These anxieties also remind us that Mansfield’s expatriation offers the reverse journey to that advocated by feminist publications in the late 1800s, which promoted emigration to the antipodes to solve problems of impoverished metropolitan women turning to prostitution. Parkin-Gounelas argues that although Mansfield’s femmes seules follow Collette’s, "Mansfield’s variation on the type was to make her a victim as much of her own insecurity as that of the hostile forces around her." Yet historical evidence of contemporary social and sexual morality suggests that the reading of Mansfield’s

60 Parkin-Gounelas, Fictions of the Female Self, p. 119.
61 SKM, p. 199. See also KMN II, p. 110.
63 Marks, Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers, pp 3-31.
64 Parkin-Gounelas, Fictions of the Female Self, p. 151.
femmes seules can be re-weighted towards the influence of hostile environment, and away from their neurotic introversion.

In “The Little Governess”, the title character’s final mistake (having trusted too quickly, and in the vanity of youth, having assumed old age is free from passion) is that she fails to assert her new found freedom sufficiently. After sightseeing with the elderly man, she expresses concern about not returning to her hotel in time to meet with her future employer, but acquiesces to the old man’s direction of her timetable. She explicitly accepts her own infantalisation: “her grateful baby heart glowed with love for the fairy grandfather.” The blurring of childlike dependency and conscious submission to masculine will indicates severe contradictions in the contemporary status of women. Girlhood is effectively prolonged: whether a woman can fully enter adulthood at all in these conditions is questionable; indeed the definitive mark of womanhood appears to be the potentially violent sexual initiation with which the little governess is threatened.

Although Mansfield indicates that the governess is possibly complicit in her objectification, the old man is cast indubitably in the villain’s role. His assault is compounded by the hotel waiter’s betrayal of the governess’s whereabouts to her prospective employer when she is late, an action which mirrors the train porter’s actions in France, and which seals Mansfield’s depiction of sexism across social classes.

The posthumously published “An Indiscreet Journey” differs markedly from “The Little Governess” in the woman narrator’s entirely deliberate flouting of conventions of contained, domesticated sexuality; the perceived dangers are foregrounded by the fact that as the narrator contravenes the boundaries of morality, she also crosses international boundaries during war.

Despite the story’s title, and continual assertions of the risks the narrator undertakes in organising a liaison with a corporal, the nature of the indiscretion remains

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65 CSKM, p. 187.
inferred; we’re not directly told why the relationship is unsanctioned in contemporary
eyes, apart from the woman’s journey over a war zone (the Notebook entry is more
frankly sensual.)^ The critique of enduring social disapproval of women’s movement
beyond the private, domestic sphere is therefore sharpened, as the focus is not on
intimate details, but on impediments to the meeting.

Flouting the seriousness of her journey, the narrator’s tone is often light. While
her concierge fears for her safety, the narrator offers a mocking fanfaronade over her
choice of travelling clothes:

\[\text{The perfect and adequate disguise - an old}
\text{Burberry. Lions have been faced in a Burberry.}
\text{Ladies have been rescued from open boats in}
\text{mountainous seas wrapped in nothing else [...] the}
\text{sign and the token of the undisputed venerable}
\text{traveller [...]}\]

More conceitedly than the governess in the previous story, and with a self-awareness the
governess lacked, this narrator tries to use her femininity to soften the male officials she
encounters; the fact that these efforts become negligible actually defuses sexual anxieties
(such as her concierge’s.)

\[\text{Trembling, I made an effort. I conjured up my}
\text{sweetest early-morning smile and handed it with}
\text{the papers. But the delicate thing fluttered}
\text{against the horn rim spectacles and fell.}
\text{Nevertheless, [the Commisaire of Police] let me}
\text{pass, and I ran [...]}\]

As the story registers many of the risks that the narrator takes, there is a
simultaneous insistence on their unreality. She comments that the soldiers guarding
bridges, crossings, and stations are each “like a little comic picture waiting for the joke
to be written underneath.”^ She continues to see all evidence of the conflict as part of

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[^66]: *KMN* II, pp 9 -11.
[^67]: *CSKM*, p. 617.
[^68]: ibid., p. 618.
[^69]: ibid., p. 619.
her adventure, and she uses a cloyingly maternal note in her description of the soldiers - one is “A big boy” and there is “Another whose képi had come out of a wet paper cracker [...] What darlings soldiers are!”^70 Another woman on the train, however, censures her: “It is a strange time for a visit [...] You know what women are like about soldiers [...] But [...] they could not get into X. Mon Dieu, No!”^71 Military authority is male, the town X has become a male enclave, and entering it becomes a disruption of order; female sexuality must be controlled.

Yet the narrator reaches her destination. The story proceeds with jarring juxtapositions of the horrific effects of war and the banal; the unseating irony of such connections is the only indication of authorial judgement. This is a particularly strong example of Mansfield’s later Chekhovian remark on the artist’s role; “it is not the business of the artist to grind an axe, to try to impose his vision of life upon the existing world ... We single out - we bring into the light - we put up higher.”^72 Mansfield’s vision becomes much more overtly bitter in “The Fly” (1922), which comes years after her grief-stricken Notebook entries upon her brother’s death during military training, and after her comment that fiction must change in recognition of the consequences of war.

The sensibility of the disinvolved narrator sits uncomfortably with Mansfield’s later view; the “indiscreet” of the title has a double reading: while it is an ironic and critical comment on contemporary sexual morality, it also indicts the narrator’s capacity for judgement.

It is partially in response to the deprivations of war that Mansfield’s fictional and autobiographical treatment of the travel metaphor reticulates: alongside its

^70 ibid., p. 620.
^71 ibid., pp 622-623.
^72 KMN II, p. 267. Chekhov wrote to A.S. Suvorin, 27 October 1888: “I always insist that the artist’s function is not to solve narrowly specialised questions” and that only “the correct formulation of a problem [...] is required of an artist.” (Matlaw (ed.), Anton Chekhov’s Short Stories, pp 271-272.)
representation of social freedoms both desired by, and denied to, single women, it also comes to signal painful change and separation.

Vincent O’Sulhvan has argued forcefully that the combination of Mansfield’s experiences as a colonial expatriate who was also subjected to bereavements as a result of the war, induced a typically modernist sense of alienation which became “the sense of discomposure anywhere, the constant play of feeling absent and present at the same time in almost any place.” Yet an early instance of this sensibility occurs in her story “The Wind Blows” (?)1915), written before her brother’s death: a story in which the overseas journey signifies a degree of loss. As the first of Mansfield’s works to touch on the long term repercussions that the journey from home may have, it is also the first to treat the colonial scene in a more complex manner than as the simple (either the degenerate or noble ‘savage’) antithesis to England.

As in “The Little Governess”, Mansfield uses the physical landscape, or rather here an element-scape of air and light, to register a young girl’s inner world. The violence of the wind in the story disrupts any equilibrium for the central character; her moods change turbulently from hate, to melancholy, to peace, to general restlessness. The piece follows her frustration with her mother, her taking refuge in a music lesson, and a walk along the esplanade with her brother, at which point the story also achieves its evocative pitch. A dream-like episode occurs, in which the image of a steamer coincides with an unusual slide in the narrative present, translating the siblings from childhood to adulthood. The perspective travels from the children noticing the ship in the harbour, to the children watching themselves from the steamer; a technique which plays

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73 O’Sullivan, Finding the Pattern, Solving the Problem, p. 5.
74 Alpers’s comment suggests this also: “the first of K.M.’s lyrical evocations of the sweetness and sadness of growing up in colonial Wellington, a place that must needs be left and lost [...]” SKM, p. 555. Bridget Orr suggests that Mansfield’s “more complex relation to modes of colonial self-representation [was] produced in large part [...] by the anxieties attendant on her recognition in London that she was precisely one of those ‘colonials’ she had so despised in New Zealand.” (Orr, “The Only Free People in the Empire”, Tiffin and Lawson (eds.), Describing Empire, p. 166.)
with concepts of memory and time, suggesting the persistence of the past in the present consciousness, the spiralling interchange between then and now, here and there. The final, broken lines deal obliquely in pain and separation; the enveloping elements echo the absence left in the steamer’s wake:

Now the dark stretches a wing over the tumbling water. They can’t see those two any more. Good-bye, good-bye. Don’t forget .... But the ship is gone, now.

The wind - the wind.75

The innovative time shift in this prose minuet, with its suggestions of the complexities of memory and emotion (such as the nostalgia hinted at in the older sister’s recollections of the town as they leave it, despite her earlier range of feeling) articulates the competing sense of prospect and retrospect in the migrant experience.

"I walked with you, my brother, in a dream":76

Mansfield’s Work 1915-1917

In a study of the particular problems of adjustment experienced by a range of immigrants, L. and R. Grinberg describe migration as itself “a mourning process - for the lost objects or/and the lost aspects of the self” 77 a “wholesale loss of one’s most meaningful and valued objects: people, things, places, language, culture, customs, climate, sometimes profession or economic/social milieu.”78 They also comment that the trauma of migration, rather than acute and instantaneous, can be protracted well beyond departure and arrival.79 The symbiotic relationship between migration and other experiences of loss or emotional deprivation, is movingly clear in Mansfield’s oft-quoted 

Notebook passage, when the death of her brother is depicted as a painful impulse to write

75 CSKM, p. 110.
76 KMN II, p. 29. From “To L.H.B.”
77 Grinberg and Grinberg, Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile, p. 96.
79 ibid., p. 12.
about New Zealand. Her response to Leslie Beauchamp's death, overdetermined by the machine of war, interacts with the more submerged losses of migration.

I think I have known for a long time that life was over for me, but I never realised it or acknowledged it until my brother died. [...] The only possible value that anything can have for me is that it should put me in mind of something that happened or was when we were alive.  

Now - now I want to write recollections of my own country. [...] Not only because it is a 'sacred debt' that I pay to my country because my brother & I were born there, but also because in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places [...] Oh, I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the old world ...

Leslie's death leads Mansfield to recognise and revalue what else is lost of her past. Her fictional project reverses her early adolescent desire to animate New Zealand with old world forms - with that "mad wave of pre-Raphaelitism, of super-aestheticism" that she felt "should intoxicate the country." The undiscovered country refers to the land which, in the German Pension stories, was missing from the European world view; yet it is also, as the echo of Hamlet makes clear, the country of death: "The undiscover'd country from whose bourn/No traveller returns." It is the country of her girlhood, recoverable, and only partially so, through aesthetic shaping of memories. In Mansfield's work, the expatriate's journey now becomes more frequently cast as the journey of leave-taking, whereas earlier, it represented the migration towards the renovation of (artistic) identity, independence, and escape from family stultification.

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80 KM11, p. 16 (1915).
81 ibid., p 32 (1916).
82 To Vera Beauchamp [April-May 1908], CLKM I, p. 44.
83 Hamlet's soliloquy, Act III, Sc. I. lines 43-49.
In “The Scholarship” (1917-1918), Mansfield again explores the to-ing and fro-ing of perspectives seen in “The Wind Blows”. Dramatising the cusp between elation and sadness in the period before a young boy’s departure from his hometown, it becomes an affecting statement of the paradoxical dynamics of loss and discovery in expatriation. The story gently evokes the dual nature of home as a concept for the migrant, as it illustrates ironic doublings of inner and outer worlds. The boy projects his sense of release (one of the etymological possibilities in the roots of exile - *ex salire*) onto the location he is to be released from: and in turn, location feeds his elated mood. This duality is what postmodern criticism describes as

> a sense of home always existing in the virtual space between loss and recuperation. Home [...] is the imaginary point where here and there - where we are and where we come from - are momentarily grounded. 

In “The Scholarship”, here and there are rather the place the boy is leaving, and the place he is going to. Bammer suggests that home “might be thought of as an enacted space within which we try out and play roles and relationships of both belonging and foreignness” - a process which is intensified for migrants, or potential migrants. It is a process which is highly evident in Mansfield’s *Notebook* entries, where in New Zealand she pushes against family restrictions, claiming difference and exception: and where, once in Europe, she feels her isolation and foreignness, seeks belonging, and dreams of an ideal home with Murry, which her illness always defers. (This dream home is named “The Heron”- Heron being Mansfield’s brother’s middle name - her projections for a private utopia incorporate aspects of return to the family past.)

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84 Alpers omits this story from his edition of Mansfield’s stories; it appears in Gordon (ed.), *Undiscovered Country* and in *KMN II*, pp 121-124.
An interchange between foreignness and belonging occurs in “The Scholarship”, when the boy’s ensuing overseas journey illuminates home to him: a perception which marks his withdrawal from the familiar, and his sense of his potential foreignness following departure. Ironically, or perhaps inevitably, if we accept that home is “a hybrid, it is both here and there”, this recognition of the ‘foreignness’ of his home is its discovery. Seeing it anew brings the boy a deeper recognition of the value of his origins.86

The complexities suggested in “The Wind Blows” and “The Scholarship”, where what constitutes home, past and present, are in a constant process of renegotiation, negate the critical view that the exiled artist is “deliberately concerned to identify or even create a stasis, because home is a static concept, rooted in the unalterable circumstances of childhood.”87 Mansfield’s depictions of the past and home are concerned to show contradiction and multiplicities of feeling and experience, where even nostalgia for these is a composite emotion, comprised of tenderness and regret. The range of feeling in the first half of “The Wind Blows”, which contrasts with the sister’s later focus on one music lesson, exposes the tendency of nostalgia to obscure the variety of past experience. Contrary to the view that the circumstances of childhood are unalterable, memory frames, colours and interprets - and so alters; home does in fact become an elusive category. If it is the place where here and there are momentarily grounded, the very temporary nature of that moment is Mansfield’s subject. Her later work also illustrates childhood run through with flux and change, not constituted by a static, definable essence.

Interacting with Mansfield’s fictional treatments of childhood are the autobiographical texts which repeat the travel motif, which reiterate phrases such as “my people”, “another country”, “undiscovered country”, and which express desire for

86 ibid., p. ix.
87 Gurr, Writers in Exile, p. 23.
home. Mansfield also frequently uses these phrases to express intensity, or to convey the
closeness (or lack) of affective bonds. An alignment of this with the political occurs
when disaffection with Murry’s and his brother’s dream of a life of sober, traditional,
countrified Englishness (as opposed to Mansfield’s desire for the new) becomes “They
were of one nation, I of another, as we sat talking.”88 In addition to letters and
Notebook entries which express fear and alienation, metaphors linked to expatriation
provide a language for other periods of change, crisis, or augmented feeling. The phrases
can variously refer to the artistic process, or ideal worlds: she writes to Murry in 1917,
of his work on a verse play, “Are you still walking in that enchanted country?” 89, and
she articulates intimacy in terms of the shared experience of relocation and
foreignness.90

The “undiscovered country” of Mansfield’s impassioned pledge to repay a debt
to her youth in New Zealand through art reappears in her fantasy of emotional
settlement. What distanced critical theory cites as “the myth of deracination”
nevertheless underpins this passage as a formative, psychological influence.91

[...] there will come such a brightness and a sweet
light from [The Heron] that all sorts of little
travellers (young ones) will draw near ... my
whole soul waits for the time when you and I
shall be withdrawn from everybody - when we
shall go into our own undiscovered darling
country and dwell therein [...]92

88 [1919], KMN II, p. 167.
89 CLKM I p. 352.
90 The passage that best illustrates this appears in Murry (ed.), The Journal of Katherine
Mansfield, but does not appear in the new edition of KMN or CLKM I-IV. See Margaret
Scott’s introduction to KMN I, p. xviii; this explains that there are some short passages from
the Journal for which the ms material has disappeared. The Journal passage runs “I did not
realise, until he was here and we ate together, [...] how much I was really at home with him. A
real understanding. We might have spoken a different language - returned from a far country
[...] There is a division: people who are my people, and people who are not my people. He is
mine.” p. 123.
91 Pride, A Home in This World, p. 84. My italics.
92 [8 June 1918], CLKM II, p. 227.
Such metaphors of ships, boats, waves or membership of "nations" proliferate throughout the autobiographical texts, expressing both progress and complications in relationships, or the measure of her disaffection from a particular ethos.\textsuperscript{93} Alongside the evolution of this personal nomenclature, Mansfield develops her most detailed fictional representation of a New Zealand family - where the ship-like aloe tree offers an image of desired social freedoms.

Before a full discussion of Mansfield's treatment of the expatriate theme and femininity from "Prelude" onwards can proceed, her sketches for a theory both of the writing process, and the nature of self, require separate consideration.

\textbf{Miraculous Apples:}

\textit{Mansfield on Art and Identity}

In the same year as the composition of "Prelude" (and in a comment that recalls Keats's description of the "poetical character") Mansfield's discussion of the creative process describes an intense fusion with any subject of her fiction.\textsuperscript{94}

When I pass the apple stalls I cannot help stopping and staring until I feel that [...] at any moment I may produce an apple, miraculously, out of my own being like the conjuror produces the egg [...] When I write about ducks I swear that I am a white duck with a round eye [...] I don't see how art is going to make that divine \textit{spring} into the bounding outline of things if it hasn't passed through the process of trying to \textit{become} these things before recreating them.\textsuperscript{95}

The italicised \textit{spring} might remind us of the etymological possibilities in exile; yet here Mansfield describes the writing process as involving travelling across and \textit{closing} the

\textsuperscript{93} For a small sample see \textit{CLKM} III [30 November 1919], p. 130; [11 February 1920], p. 216; [13 February 1920], p. 219.

\textsuperscript{94} See Keats's letter to Richard Woodhouse, Tuesday 27 October 1818: a poet is "continually filling some Other Body [...] When I am in a room with People [...] the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me [...]" (Forman (ed.), \textit{The Letters of John Keats}, p. 227.)

\textsuperscript{95} KM to Dorothy Brett, [11 October 1917], \textit{CLKM} I, p. 330.
distance between self and other: an identification which Fullbrook describes as “an escape from a specific if not fully knowable self. It is an aesthetic that concentrates on the removal of limitation from the individual and part of that limitation [...] is that of gender.” Mansfield’s view of the creative act also infuses her sense of fictional structures: Hankin points out “the frequency with which the climax of a story centres on [...] a character’s sense of union with an object in the external world.” This presence of empathy and identification, an enlargement of the self to include the other, is the antithesis of the alienation expressed elsewhere in Mansfield’s work: it represents those positive ideals she initially associated with expatriation, as it constantly re-enacts the migration towards new knowledge. In this sense, the fiction recuperates the losses which Mansfield’s material experience frequently incurred.

Mansfield’s view of the writing process as an expansion of the boundaries of self has a clear relationship with her Notebook entries on identity and the “glimpse”.

Which Self?

Mansfield’s discussion of the nature of self post-dates the writing of “Prelude” by three years, yet her citation of the contemporary surge in writing on childhood offers it up as a retrospective gloss on her own fiction. While her language recalls psychoanalytic theories, she resists their formulaic application: their reduction of diverse

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96 Fullbrook, Katherine Mansfield, p. 25.
98 Nikos Papastergiadis argues for the correspondence between empathy and metaphor, suggesting that the forging of metaphors has an essentially moral drive. His discussion of language is uncannily resonant for Mansfield’s work. It also shares its interpretation of empathy with Hélène Cixous. Both critics draw on the journey as their definitive metaphor for empathy. “[...] apprehension involves a sense of journeying: [...] empathy with the other approximates a sort of exile from the self, and the term which describes this process of approaching and retreating [...] is metaphor.” (Modernity as Exile - The Stranger in John Berger’s Writing, p 4.) Cixous describes the process of vision and empathy as “a movement...like a voyage”; “To understand the other, it is necessary to go in their language, to make the journey though the other’s imaginary.” (“Conversations”, Sellers (ed.), Writing Differences, p. 146.)
experience to the repetition of basic patterns. (In 1920 she criticises “the sudden
‘mushroom growth’ of cheap psychoanalysis everywhere [...] it’s turning life into a case
[...] people who are nuts on analysis seem to me to have no subconscious at all. They
want to prove - not to tell the truth.”)^ Mansfield’s own search for truth, for an
authentic account of self, is enigmatic and conflicted: anticipating post-Lacanian notions
of the divided subject by at least fifteen years:

... True to oneself! Which self? Which of my
many [...] hundreds of selves? For what with
complexes and suppressions, and reactions and
vibrations and reflections - there are moments
when I feel I am nothing but the small clerk of
some hotel without a proprietor who has all his
work cut out to enter the names and hand the keys
to the willful guests.

Nevertheless, there are signs that we are intent
[...] on trying to puzzle out, to live by, our own
particular self, [...] free, disentangled, single. Is it
not possible that the rage for confession,
autobiography, especially for memories of earliest
childhood is explained by our persistent yet
mysterious belief in a self which is continuous
and permanent, which, untouched by all we
acquire and all we shed [...] shakes the flower
free and - we are alive - we are flowering for our
moment upon the earth.\textsuperscript{100}

In this account and in her fiction, there is a recognition that the self is built from
and subjected to multiple, contradictory impulses, and yet there is an equally powerful
desire for the re-establishment of Cartesian certainty, a desire also evident from her
letters and her later enrolment at the Gurdjieff Institute. Yet despite the bewildered
humour of the first paragraph, and her hypothesis that the genre of autobiography
demonstrates a belief in an essential self, the framing of the penultimate sentence as a
question (although without a question mark) is crucial; this doubt resonates again in
Mansfield’s similarly divided account of her version of the Romantics’ intimations of

\textsuperscript{99} Hanson (ed.), \textit{The Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{100} [Entry dated 1920], \textit{KMN II}, p 204.
immortality. (Her passage may well be answering lines from Wordsworth’s The
Prelude.\textsuperscript{101}) In this description, Mansfield intuits not only eternity beyond, and
simultaneously within, the world of phenomena, but also selves submerged beneath the
self who observes. This acknowledgement of the multiplicity of identity, however, leads
again to the desire for unity - and for romantic fulfilment, which echoes nineteenth-
century women’s fiction.\textsuperscript{102}

\[\ldots\text{one has these ‘glimpses’} \ldots\text{The waves, as I}
drove home this afternoon, and the high foam,
how it was suspended in the air before it fell …
What is it that happens in that moment of
suspension? It is timeless. In that moment […]
the whole life of the soul is contained. One is
flung up - out of life - one is ‘held’, and then -
down, bright, broken, glittering on to the rocks,
tossed back, part of the ebb and flow […] while I
watched the spray I was conscious for life of the
white sky with a web of torn grey over it […] of
the dark woods blotted against the cape […] of a
huge cavern where my selves […] mumbled,
indifferent and intimate … and this other self
apart in the carriage grasping the cold knob of her
umbrella, thinking of a ship […] Shall one ever be
at peace with oneself […]- without pain - with the
one whom one loves under the same roof? Is it
too much to ask?”\textsuperscript{103}

Framing the final two sentences as questions shows the extent of the division felt.\textsuperscript{104}

Mansfield is unable to wholly assert one or other of the potential descriptions of identity,

\textsuperscript{101} Mansfield’s letters show that she was steeped in Wordsworth’s poetry. The lines the KMN
passage suggest (as does the project of her colony-set fiction) are “The days gone by / Come
back upon me from the dawn almost / Of life: […] / I see by glimpses now […] and I would
give, / While yet we may, as far as words can give / A substance and a life to what I feel: / I
would enshrine the past / For future restoration.” ( [lines 334-343],Gill (ed.), The Prelude
(1805)). For the 1850 version, see The Prelude in De Selincourt (ed.), The Poetical Works of
Wordsworth, [lines 277-286].

\textsuperscript{102} The closing lines of Mansfield’s discussion of the glimpse suggest, e.g., Jane Eyre and
Rochester’s proposal to Jane: “I ask you to pass through life at my side, to be my second self,
and best earthly companion.” (Mason (ed.) Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë, p. 285.)

\textsuperscript{103} KMN II, p. 209.

\textsuperscript{104} Pamela Dunbar describes Mansfield’s discussions of identity as envisaging the self “as a
dual identity composed of multiple superficial sense-impressions and a unified spiritual aspect”
(Dunbar, Radical Mansfield, p. 85.) - a summary which under-emphasises the notion of
multiplicity and the troubled division in Mansfield’s description.
and while the questions may be a consciously ironic reversal from the perception of multiplicity, they demonstrate how far the notion of a single self has been destabilised.\textsuperscript{105}

Also particularly telling is the frame given by the onward movement of her journey - as is the fact that the "other self apart" in the carriage is reflecting on yet another journey ("a ship [...] ropes stiffened with white paint & the wet flapping oilskins of sailors").

The context of travel, of passing by, quietly emphasises the impossibility of remaining at the height of perception (as do the divided thoughts.) Continuity or eternity can only be accessible to the human psyche - paradoxically - within that evanescent moment; the glimpse, evoking the cessation of consciousness, encapsulates the nature of mortality.

Thus Mansfield's fictional epiphanies are microcosms of the larger journeys that her characters make: they offer an ecstatic release from the socialised self ("all we acquire and all we shed"), and yet, as they fade, they subsequently suggest the lost past, lost possibilities.

There are salient differences between Mansfield's "glimpse" and the two best known modernist descriptions of instantaneous perception. Whereas the epiphany in Joyce's \textit{A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man} (1916) is partly what separates Stephen from his peers - epiphanies mark his artistic sense - for Mansfield, all human consciousness is structured this way: several characters have such camera-shutterings of insight.\textsuperscript{106} Woolf's version in "Moments of Being" (1939) shares Mansfield's sense of the commonality of consciousness: "behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern [...] all human beings - are connected with this [...] we are the words; we are the music; we are

\textsuperscript{105} This quality leads Fullbrook to call Mansfield "at times one of the toughest and darkest of the modernists." (Fullbrook, \textit{Katherine Mansfield}, p. 19.)

\textsuperscript{106} A letter from 1919 reinforces the association between Mansfield's description of the glimpse and her aesthetic technique: of the ocean she says "that lift of white seen far away - as far as the horizon [...] it is the very thing I should like to express in writing." (\textit{CLKM} III, p. 19.) Jonathan Trout's declaration of carpe diem in "At the Bay" (1921) is also triggered by the crest of a wave.
the thing itself".\textsuperscript{107} Yet Mansfield's "glimpse" still suggests distance between self-consciousness and world: Mansfield catches sight of, Woolf is'. (Conceivably this reflects their differing social status; each sensed outsiderhood because of exclusions based on gender, yet Woolf, a gentleman's daughter, had greater access to ruling-class privileges.) Woolf's concern is also for how these "moments of being" endure as memories structuring her world view, while Mansfield's emphasis is rather on how time passes: as in her fiction, each moment is constantly on the brink of annihilation.\textsuperscript{108}

We can trace this sensitivity, essentially a relentless awareness of mortality, back to Mansfield's own deteriorating health; yet it also signals her sense of a tectonic cultural shift in the 1910s. Her emphasis on transience is the artistic manifestation of her argument that in the aftermath of World War One, "there must have been a change of heart" in modern fiction, because "we have died and live again. How can that be the same life? It doesn't mean that 'the common things of light and day' are gone. They are not gone, they are intensified, they are illumined [...] its [sic] a tragic knowledge".\textsuperscript{109} She argues that the "deserts of vast eternity" must permeate art, yet obliquely. ("I might write about a boy eating strawberries or a woman combing her hair or a windy morning & that is the only way I can ever mention them. But they\textsuperscript{110} must be there."

\textsuperscript{107} Woolf's childhood 'moments of being' include the decision not to hurt another, recognition that a flower "is the whole", and horror at a family acquaintance's suicide - all of which formulate her adult perception that "behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern" (Schulkind (ed.), \textit{Moments of Being} by Virginia Woolf, pp 79-81.

\textsuperscript{108} Mansfield's entries on the glimpse and the self had a particularly strong influence on Woolf, who reviewed the \textit{Journal} for the New York Herald Tribune in 1927; see "A Terribly Sensitive Mind" in Woolf (ed.), \textit{Collected Essays} Volume I by Virginia Woolf, pp 356-358; Woolf writes "the moment itself suddenly put on significance and she traces the outline as if to preserve it." p. 356. Woolf's "The Moment: Summer's Night" was first published in \textit{The Moment and Other Essays} (1947); no composition date is given. Woolf's \textit{Orlando} (1928) shows the most striking effects of Mansfield's \textit{Journal}. In its closing scenes, Woolf sets Orlando's questioning of her past, multiple selves against the context of a car journey; Orlando also talks about the persistent desire for a "true self", a "real self"; she even uses a metaphor of the multiple selves locked up by a "key self", which suggests Mansfield's image of the self as a hotel proprietor handing out keys to the wilful guests. She also moves on to mention Shakespeare and ship imagery in her meditation on identity. See Bell (ed.), \textit{Orlando} by Virginia Woolf, pp 201-205.

\textsuperscript{109} CLKM III, pp 82 and 97.

\textsuperscript{110} ibid., p. 98.
Really Only the Prelude:

Mansfield’s Fiction from 1917

These issues of fleeting perception and identity (of which both metaphors and contexts of travel are particularly apt expressions) are embodied through Mansfield’s increasingly refined technique of merging in and out of various characters’ interior worlds. The musical connotations in the title of her first Burnell narrative evoke this: the characters’ thoughts are played over, moved away from and returned to, in the manner of a symphonic motif. 111

“Prelude” as a title has numerous possible interpretations. It recalls Wordsworth’s poem following the growth of a poet’s mind; it also occasions Mansfield’s discussion of technique and intense identification with fictional subjects. This “whole process of becoming” each subject

“is really only the ‘prelude’. There follows a moment when you are more duck, more apple or more Natasha than any of these objects could possibly be, and so you create them anew.” 112

This increases the sense that the story itself is about “becoming”, growth, and the course of identification; it also offers readings for the moments of heightened perception from individual characters in the story. When such moments occur - as when Linda feels discovered in cold moonlight, or in fact, when a duck is vividly described partly through Kezia’s sensibility, the sense is that the characters escape from one level of self-consciousness, and briefly reach the potential for self-regeneration. 113

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111 C.f. Mansfield’s early training in the cello.
112 CLKM I, p. 330.
113 There are other moments in Mansfield’s stories which are revelations of darkness, of that side of life which, in a letter to Murry of 20 October 1919, she calls “this vileness - this snail on the underside of the leaf - always there!” (CLKM III, p. 35.) Perhaps they could be more properly called occultations, or eclipses; something is seen, yet it is also shadowed. (See “Revelations”, “Miss Brill”, “The Lady’s Maid”.) Either this, or the concealment of truth is so sudden upon its discovery, that the concealment becomes the dominant fact. “Life of Ma
The initiating narrative events for the story - the liminal experiences of the family move, and the first day in a new home - are also pointed to by the title's resonances of beginning or overture. The smaller move - from town to country within the same region - is a family's "prelude" to the more painful scissions of migration (and back migration) which Mansfield explores elsewhere.

The story opens with the children comically dressed as if for a major sea voyage; they are "all ready for the fray in their coats with brass anchor buttons and little round caps with battleship ribbons" - and although this is a mock ceremonial touch, the events are in fact a rite of passage for Lottie and Kezia. The first intimation that the move will touch on a nascent experience of loss and separation occurs when Linda teases the children. The girls' first experience of dislocation comes as they are ousted from their proper place (locus) during a material change of home, as the mother divides herself from them: "There was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy. 'We shall simply have to leave them. That is all. We shall simply have to cast them off.'"^115

Kezia's resultant altered perception is shown as she trails through the empty house, and replays an evidently favourite game: peering through two squares of coloured glass in the corners of the dining-room window, which now becomes a re-enactment of her own estrangement from the familiar and familial:

One was blue and one was yellow. Kezia bent down to have one more look at a blue lawn with blue arum lilies growing at the gate, and then at a yellow lawn with yellow lilies and a yellow fence. As she looked a little Chinese Lottie came out on to the lawn and began to dust the tables and chairs with a corner of her pinafore. Was that really Lottie? Kezia was not quite sure until she had looked through the ordinary window. ^116

Parker" stands out for its depiction of grief as an unbearably constant state of revelation. There are similarities to Chekhov here: Renato Roggiolo has cited his use of "negative epiphanies". See Roggiolo's "Storytelling in a Double Key", Matlaw (ed.), *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories*, p. 309.

^114 CSM, p. 11.
^115 ibid.
This passage combines the child's embryonic aesthetic sense (her exploration of an artificially framed scene), with the destabilisation that the move has caused: the combination of stimulus, the 'foreign', and uncertainty persists with later passages. The sudden shift in Kezia's mood that accompanies the change of light, expressed as fear of a disembodied IT lying in wait for her, powerfully distils the bemusement engendered by the move. This concentrated fear ebbs, however, in Section III, where the unfamiliar betokens adventure. Where Lottie falls asleep on the cart journey through "unknown country", Kezia "could not open her eyes wide enough. The wind blew and shivered; but her cheeks and ears burned." Through Kezia's reactions, Mansfield gently evokes the dynamic between alienation and release (exilias; ex salire) in the child's first experience of a form of exile.

As the story blends in and out of the consciousness of various characters, it also slips into a voice which documents the New Zealand bush landscape, as the envelope enfolding all the characters. It is a living presence, described in animate verbs and a panoptic sweep that arcs down from the sky to the detail of single water drops on grass blades; the dissolution of the stars and the breeze, and the running, hiding and spilling of the creek, sound out Mansfield's embracing themes of process and change. The profusion of forms and colours recalls Mansfield's impressionistic documentation of the North Island landscape in the Urewara sections of her Notebooks, and suggestively closes over the England-NZ dichotomy of her adolescent letters from New Zealand.

Yet "Prelude" is neither pastoral nor Edenic, despite the loving attention given to the native bush. The beauty of the countryside never stands in for the perfection of the domestic existence Mansfield portrays: ruptures within the family structure are depicted

\[117\text{ibid., p. 17.}\]
\[118\text{Mansfield's concern for the differing perceptions of her characters suggests one point of stylistic difference between her work and early male modernist fiction, which in Jane Lilienfield's description, is experimental, audience challenging, and language focused, rather than story or character centred. See Scott (ed.), The Gender of Modernism, p. 49.}\]
right from the opening sentence. Mansfield’s New Zealand based stories have been read as offering a stronger sense of community than her European metropolis based fictions: yet the former are not without their social and class divisions.\textsuperscript{119} Transforming and preserving a past personal home in literary form for Mansfield also entails incorporating the wish to leave aspects of it behind. Wevers says it is notable that those of Mansfield’s stories “in which filial or familial structures break down or are unregenerative, unproductive or self-defeating [are those] located in the country of modernity, of Europe”.\textsuperscript{120} Yet while the Burnell stories envision a family of three generations together, portraying brief spells of correspondence between particular characters, these New Zealand narratives also carefully demonstrate the restrictions, limitations and ostracisms of such familial structures. Wevers states that in Mansfield’s post World War One work, “As Europe scatters itself, New Zealand gather[s] together, becoming itself, a country, a people, a family, visible and present.”\textsuperscript{121} Yet even in Mansfield’s Burnell family, the relationships are constantly being renegotiated, forming and unforming.\textsuperscript{122} Thus Lottie and Kezia feel their helplessness and subordination in “Prelude”, and Linda, ensnared in the domestic, has a self whom she conceals from her children and husband, who wishes “that she were going away from this house, too […] she saw herself driving away from them all in a little buggy, driving away from everybody and not even waving.”\textsuperscript{123} Contrary to the view that Mansfield’s childhood based stories are a “final

\textsuperscript{119} E.J.S. Smilowitz, overlooking several of Mansfield’s early colony-set stories, as well as “The Doll’s House” and “The Garden Party”, mistakenly says that the only Mansfield stories where poverty appears are set in England. She also mistakenly groups Mansfield with other authors whose homelands are “consistently portrayed as havens of comfort and security.” (Expatriate Women Authors from the Former British Colonies, PhD Thesis, pp 13-14.) Lydia Wevers reads Mansfield’s NZ based stories as “an entry into the country of belonging through memory and work, a country which must be continually rediscovered out of the losses and absences of everyday existence”. (“The Sod Under My Feet”, Leggott and Williams (eds.), Opening the Book, p. 35.) Mansfield’s stories also portray losses and absences in the everyday existence of the past.

\textsuperscript{120} ibid., p. 37.

\textsuperscript{121} ibid.

\textsuperscript{122} See also Dunbar; she argues that for Mansfield the family is “a site of tension and distress.” (Radical Mansfield, p. 131.)

\textsuperscript{123} CSKM, p. 25.
"retreat" from "a society that condemned a free woman", "Prelude" is infused with her critique of such a society. Thus Mansfield's revisiting of the New Zealand past can be aligned with "a politicisation of memory that distinguishes [...] that longing for something to be as it once was [...] from that remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present."  

In evocative contrast to Linda's stasis and her yearning for escape from the confinements (restrictions and pregnancies) of her domestic role, Mansfield depicts Kezia's solitary exploration of the new house's large garden. There are two sides to Kezia's garden, the frightening side, and the side which invites lingering attention: a division which extends the themes of alienation and renewal offered by the move. Her exploration is another aspect of her small migration and its movement towards new knowledge. As Kezia moves from the "tangle of tall dark trees and strange bushes," she passes by a gardener's 'heroic catalogue' of growth: seven types of roses, camellias, syringas, geraniums, verbena, lavender ... until the list widens beyond her ability to name each element - "all kinds of little tufty plants she had never seen before." As Kezia moves slowly through all this clustering colour, shape, scent and texture, she decides to prepare "a surprise for grandmother", which involves a form of artistic framing. (Such correspondences as those between Kezia and Mrs Fairfield are the lightening, sustaining vision of family love that make rare - yet still notable - appearances in Mansfield's fiction.)  

First she would put a leaf inside with a big violet lying on it, then she would put a very small white picotee, perhaps, on each side of the violet, and  

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126 CSKM, p. 32.  
127 ibid., p. 33.  
128 A close grandparent-grandchild bond recurs in "The New Dresses" (1912), "At the Bay" (1921), "The Voyage" (1921), and "Life of Ma Parker" (1921). Moments of intense love, or correspondence, between individuals also occur in "The Stranger" (1920), "Six Years After" (1921), and "The Doll's House" (1921).
then she would sprinkle some lavender on the top,
but not to cover their heads.\textsuperscript{129}

Nature’s procreation feeds the child’s creative impulse, which involves both “picture”
making (Kezia’s word), and theatrical effect, as she anticipates concealment and
revelation. Mansfield gives the counter view to New Zealand as an impossible context
for nourishment of the aesthetic eye; Kezia thus represents a complete rewriting of the
disturbed and disturbing colonial child artist from “The Woman at the Store.”

As the narrative passes from each character’s voice and perception, so too does
each character step in and out of moments of enlarged vision. With Linda’s comment “I
believe there is going to be a moon”\textsuperscript{130}, and Mansfield’s description - “with the cold wet
dew on her fingers, she felt as though the moon had risen - that she was being strangely
discovered in a flood of cold light”\textsuperscript{130}, the story traces the unpredictable rise and fall of
emotion.\textsuperscript{131} Linda shivers; the transition in mood suggests a hidden life, which is not
fully understood - or at least not fully articulated - by the character herself. The moment
turns on a number of axes. It shows Mansfield’s Paterian inheritance, yet the scene is
not only sensuous.\textsuperscript{132} Linda’s intimation that the moon will rise is akin to a levitation
from her social self, into the numinous: the perception that there is something other to,
other than, her current existence.

As Mansfield’s brief forays into Catholicism and her final enrolment at the
Gurdjieff Institute would suggest, her work has not entirely left behind questions of
spirituality.\textsuperscript{133} Tough as her questions about the nature of self can be, the post-

\textsuperscript{129} CSKM, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{130} ibid., pp. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{131} Mansfield “understood the way in which the critical moments of a life are constantly in
danger of being engulfed by a host of small irritations and distortions.” (Lowry, “Pull Up Now
Yourself”, review of KMNI I and II, Times Literary Supplement 4 September 1998, p. 3.)
\textsuperscript{132} In CLKM, Vincent O’Sullivan has pointed out Mansfield’s debt to Pater. Pater writes of
“those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles
down” which “are in perpetual flight [...] each one of them is limited by time, and [...] as time
is infinitely divisible also [...] all that is actual is it being a single moment, gone while we try to
apprehend it [...]” (Pater, The Renaissance, p. 151.)
\textsuperscript{133} See CLKM III, pp. xii, 231, 240, 271; KMNI II, pp 286, 288.
Darwinian, post-Nietzschean annihilation of God has not yet become the post-existentialist, post-modern perception of "the human self [as] an organic cell, style-based object."¹³⁴ Linda's perceptions are only indirectly inferred by Mansfield - an aesthetic necessity for the expression of spiritual apprehension when the inner and outer life meet in such close affinity that the artist, who must work in concrete imagery, pictures, colours, etc., in order to be effective, cannot find expression for the purely mystical experience [...] in the mystic state, the consciousness and the world meet directly in a world that transcends them both.¹³⁵ Yet equally, such moments can still be given a political inflection as a typical trait of modernist women's writing, demonstrating an "indirectness [...] repeatedly allied with the identification of the unknown, the unsaid, the hidden as a constituent part of the condition of women."¹³⁶ The mystical and the socially revolutionary align: both see beyond present social structures; each vision becomes ineffable precisely because it pushes beyond current language and social forms. The glimpse of the "unknown, the unsaid, the hidden" therefore offers the site of change and renovation - although the fading of insight is also crucial to Mansfield's aesthetics of elegy.

The moon (with its associations of womanhood) and the dew, also amplify a scene when Linda watches the aloe in the evening. She and Kezia have met briefly beneath the plant, during daylight; it has already acquired an aura of mystery, after Linda's secretive smile to her daughter, and her comment that it only flowers once in a hundred years. Part of Linda's identification with it is to do with this; Linda's own "flowerings" have led to a bitter lack of fulfilment.¹³⁷ The plant, touched with dew and Bradbury and Ruland, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, p. 371.
¹³⁷ The aloe's juice is, in fact, bitter to taste.
moonlight as Linda has been, becomes a clearly defined projection of her desire for freedom.\textsuperscript{138}

[...] the high grassy bank on which the aloe rested rose up like a wave, and the aloe seemed to ride upon it like a ship with the oars lifted. Bright moonlight hung upon the lifted oars like water, and on the green wave glittered the dew.\textsuperscript{139}

Linda envisages herself travelling away again, riding the ship-aloe from the physically debilitating constraints of marital sex and child-bearing; the image of the sea journey articulates her yearning for some other life, some other self. These separations between an ideal self, and the identities forged as social personae, receive both the most literal - and most light-hearted - discussion in the passages concerning Linda’s sister, Beryl; as in “The Lost Battle”, a woman’s recognition of conflicting demands pivots around the moment when she judges her reflection.\textsuperscript{140}

For Beryl, the move of house to the country means isolation from society, which she articulates as a death: “One may as well rot here as anywhere else”, she muttered savagely” and “‘But buried, my dear. Buried isn’t the word.’”\textsuperscript{141} Mansfield’s recreation of colonial society involves recording an internalised sense of inferiority for

\textsuperscript{138} The aloe as an associative vehicle evoking Linda’s private moods again shows Mansfield’s inheritance from the symbolist tradition. See Gurr and Hanson, Katherine Mansfield; see also Kaplan, Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{139} CSKM, p. 253.

\textsuperscript{140} Mirror scenes for Mansfield’s women often bring sudden and brutal psychological revelation - recalling the nineteenth century fascination with a Doppelgänger - as in Poe’s “William Wilson” (1839), or Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890). (See also Fullbrook, Katherine Mansfield, p. 16.) The crises of such mirror scenes turn on the recognition that women’s social and economic position is only as secure as their role as objects of desire; this bears fruitful comparison to the Lacanian theory of the mirror stage of development. Mansfield’s women are effectively arrested at this stage: if the function of Lacan’s imago is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality, the women in Mansfield’s stories have absorbed that image dominates all their relations to society. In “The Lost Battle”, the woman’s self-control shatters upon sight of her reflection; Linda in “Prelude” can’t bear to look in mirrors while she is alone; Beryl’s steady objectification of herself in a reflection leads to her recognition of inner division. See the antithetical treatment of mirrors for the pimp Raoul Duquette in “Je ne Parle pas Français” (1918), SKM, p. 278: and for the title character in “Mr. Reginald Peacock’s Day” (1917). CSKM, p.146.

\textsuperscript{141} CSKM, pp 31 and 55 respectively.
the inhabitants of what is perceived as a satellite, not a centre: Beryl’s words recall Mansfield’s criticisms of New Zealand from the early 1900s.

As Beryl dreams of escape, however, she moves from dissatisfaction with place to dissatisfaction with herself: the careful itemisation of her features in the mirror leads to the sense of complete disconnection from her reflection. “What had that creature in the glass to do with her, and why was she staring?” Beryl recognises that the apparent narcissism shows her submission to trivial social preoccupations: “plainly, plainly, she saw her false self running up and down the stairs, laughing a special trilling laugh if they had visitors [...]” And yet her understanding that some other potential identity exists beneath these false projections (“for what tiny moments she was really she”) is again relegated to the transient moment. The juxtaposition between her question “And was there ever a time when I did not have a false self?” and Kezia’s arrival, hints that the true self may be located in childhood; but Beryl’s glimpse of the subcurrents which might move her to reject the demands of conventional femininity is quickly obscured. When asked to come down for lunch, she fusses about her crumpled skirt, and powders her nose. The scene is humourous - yet the discarded perception is placed carefully alongside the presence of a social and familial law which compels Beryl to comply.

The closing scene, in which Kezia is left alone, shows her already absorbing knowledge of the required artfulness of feminine self-presentation. She plays with image, in the way she sticks “the top of the cream jar over [the cat’s] ear” and “sternly” (punitively) says “‘Now look at yourself.’” This suggests that she is trying out social roles, as elsewhere in the story, children’s games have been a means of learning and testing these. (E.g. the play tea party, with servant, mistress, and discussion of children.)

142 ibid., p. 58.
143 ibid., p. 59.
144 ibid.
145 ibid.
146 ibid., p. 60.
Kezia’s tiptoeing away “far too quickly and airily” when the jar’s lid falls suggests that she is submitting to the laws of a socially conforming self, as she conceals her real actions and absorbs a sense of shame - “But for Kezia it had broken the moment it flew through the air, and she picked it up, hot all over ...”\(^{147}\) The move of house has precipitated several such lessons. Kezia has encountered brutality and death through the beheading of a duck, she has received an intimation of women’s unhappy social conditions, as she witnesses something secretive about Linda’s response to the thorny aloe, and in the final scene, we see an incipient layering over of impulsive feeling - which reflects both Linda’s and Beryl’s characters. Yet the element of parody in Kezia’s actions simultaneously works away in the conclusion, undercutting these darker stems. Mansfield’s prevailing theme is change, played out in her landscape imagery, the farmyard death, the character’s fluctuating moods and thoughts, and the informing structural pivot of the house-move itself. The parodic moment interacts with these, suggesting that Kezia may have the chance to adopt changes in the social identity of woman.\(^{148}\) Where Linda and Beryl have not escaped the dictates of early colonial society, Kezia may still.

Two years following Mansfield’s story about the development of a girl’s identity within the matrix of family relationships, her *Notebooks* record a sense of unhappy return to the powerlessness of girlhood, as a side-effect of her broader social marginalisation in England: an experience previously touched upon in 1916, when Mansfield recounted an occasion when her school-principal dismissed her classroom response with “I am afraid you do not count. You are a little savage from New Zealand”\(^{149}\) Flippantly as Mansfield relates this anecdote - and as it may have been

\(^{147}\) ibid. See also Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield*, p. 148.

\(^{148}\) Kezia’s earlier fascination for the jewellery worn by Pat, the handyman (“She never knew that men wore ear-rings”), also suggests her openness to redefinitions of gender roles beyond her family’s examples. (*CSKM*, p. 47.)

\(^{149}\) *KMV* II, p. 31.
intended by the principal - such attitudes reflect the popularisation of nineteenth-century fears that there was a direct relationship between colonisation and moral degeneration: that the British who emigrated and settled in the colonies moved beyond the bounds of rational government, and slipped into "savagery".\(^{150}\) (It is an attitude which clearly infiltrated Mansfield's own earlier work; the most telling example occurs in her poem "To Stanislaw Wyspianski" (1909-1910) in which she cites "the taint of the pioneer in my blood".\(^{151}\) Virginia Woolf's startling diary comments upon first meeting Mansfield and the South African born Lesley Moore, are also indicative of how widespread these perceptions were:

We could both wish that ones [sic] first impression of KM was not that she stinks like a - well civet cat that had taken to street walking [...] I am a little shocked by her commonness at first sight; lines so hard and cheap ... A munitions worker called Lesley Moor [sic] came to fetch her - another of those females on the borderlands of propriety, and naturally inhabiting the underworld - [...] without any attachment to one place rather than another.\(^{152}\)

Mansfield's "little savage" anecdote reverberates more seriously in view of this anxiety about those who do not have a clearly defined 'place': the dis-placed expatriates who somehow transgress with their very presence in England, and thus who are seen to bear associated evidence of sexual immorality and bestialisation. The "Geraniums" section from Mansfield's *Notebooks* from 1919 expresses the costs of such attitudes.

Once moving in those artistic circles which, before her departure from New Zealand, she

\(^{150}\) See my discussion of Wakefield and Ward's *The British Colonization of New Zealand* (1832), Chapter One.

\(^{151}\) *PKM*, p. 30 [line 7].

\(^{152}\) Bell (ed.), *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* Volume I: 1915-1919, p. 58. Class bias also appears in the language with which Woolf criticises Mansfield's work: she writes that Mansfield "touches the spot too universally for the spot to be of the bluest blood." (Bell (ed.), *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* Volume 2: 1920-1924, [12 March 1922], pp 170-171) Woolf also writes of the work's "cheap sharp sentimentality [...] if one felt this cheap scent in it, it reeked in one's nostrils." (Nicolson and Trautman (eds.), *The Collected Letters of Virginia Woolf* Volume IV, Letter 2418, Saturday [8 August 1931], p. 365.)
had envisaged would entail an arrival at a true sense of family. Mansfield encounters unexpected ostracism. The "Geraniums" piece appears in two forms: in each the flowers are seen as a symbol of English manners and society.

In "Geraniums", the flowers are given an historically designated social position, and hence they displace the speaking persona: "The red geraniums have bought the garden over my head. They are there, established, back in the old home, every leaf and flower unpacked and its place [...] why should they make me feel a stranger? They burn [...] with arrogance and pride." In their analysis of the psychopathology of migration, the Grinbergs describe such attributions of persecution as a "dissociative mechanism", resorted to in order to avoid the "confusion and anxiety" of a complete breakdown between judgements of good and bad, which could result from the migrant's sense of outsiderhood, and the new culture's apparent inversion - or lack - of previously unquestioned values. In the earlier Notebook entries, the back-migrating Mansfield asserted this differentiation when New Zealand was characterised as dead, restrictive, claustrophobic, and England became the revitalising, yearned for Utopia. Initially, according to the Grinberg analysis, such strict oppositions are drawn up to avoid "the mourning, remorse, and depressive anxieties which would otherwise be aroused and intensified by the migration". Following Mansfield's brother's death, an expression of mourning for her homeland is released; it is partly manifested in "Geraniums" as a feeling of persecution within English society. However, the "little savage" anecdote and Woolf's language illustrate that the migrant's sense of inferiority is not only the result of a disturbed psychological state; it has grounding in social fact.

Note 153: Note the way Mansfield writes about her music teacher, Mr. Trowell, after he expatriates from New Zealand to England, "he is my father." (KMN I, p. 107.)

Note 154: KMN II, p. 166.


Note 156: ibid., p. 8.
Although Mansfield uses terms of purchase (the “red geraniums have bought the garden over my head”), the rightful ownership is associated with historical family inheritance; the garden is likened to the English “old home”. If one does not inherit through birth, one’s entire legitimacy is jettisoned. The geraniums appear to positively shout […] ‘Look at her, lying on our grass, pretending she lives here, pretending this is her garden, and that tall back of the house, with the windows open and the coloured curtains lifting, is her house.’

The persona is “the little Colonial walking in the London garden patch - allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger.” The epithet “little” shows the beleaguered assimilation of imperialist snobberies, where size is an implication of centre and margin, significance and insignificance, insider and outsider. Nineteenth-century settlers’ assertions of a separation between Old World and New, because of an increased egalitarianism in the new colony, echo in Mansfield’s piece. The geraniums say “She is a stranger - an alien. She is nothing but a little girl sitting on the Tinakori Hills and dreaming […]” A class-based society implicitly rejects (the artist’s) attempts to reconceive the self.

If we acknowledge this sense of alienation, Mansfield’s fictional back-migrations to her New Zealand past can be read as a retreat to the origins of identity, often trivialised and misunderstood during her experiences as an expatriate. Accordingly, the Notebook entries which propose multiple identity, yet seek what is consistent within those multiples, may be seen as an attempt to redeem and rescue enduring value, following the fragmentations that result from her expatriation.

157 KMN II, p. 166.
158 ibid.
159 ibid.
160 The first, shorter version of this piece speaks of the immigrant’s efforts to adapt, which involve acceptance of, or invitation to, the community the geraniums represent, and yet the continued sense of discrimination she feels. (ibid., p. 158.)
While the absence of the Maori in Mansfield's later fiction has been noted ("The invisible Maori lie beyond the boundaries which construct structures and legends of white nationhood") passages such as "Geraniums" are evidence of a crucial, if embryonic, stage in the intellectual development towards post-colonial thought, as Mansfield struggles in England for equal literary and social recognition separate from class background. Similarly, Mansfield's youthful desire for the cosmopolitanism of London, although it harboured the paradox of the perceived necessity for departure from supposedly inferior origins, also actively asserted the colonial's artistic capacity and adaptability.

Expanding "Geranium's" themes, "The Man Without a Temperament" (1920), originally titled "The Exile", confronts erosions of identity upon an obligatory long term expatriation, concentrating on a far more corrosive leave-taking from home than the child's half-fearful, half-exhilarated experience in "Prelude." Here, the separation from a familiar context is made permanent, and is overdetermined by the illness which has prompted the central couple's removal to a foreign country. Mansfield undertakes a portrait of characters emotionally exiled from one another because of the sacrifices of companionship and lifestyle enforced by illness. The Salesbys are also alienated from the other hotel residents, who are given nicknames, but remain otherwise nameless and unknown beyond their daily routines; there is no community of ideas or spirit.

The extent of the couple's abscission from one another is conveyed through the story's final title, and also through subtle linguistic turns. Told largely through Mr

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162 Although several of Mansfield's letters express a sense of separation from community, another angle on the restrictions of her illness is given in an entry in Virginia Woolf's diary. Mansfield has pointed out the invalid's need for constant care: "Illness, she said, breaks down one's privacy so that one can't write." (Bell (ed.), The Diary of Virginia Woolff Volume I, [Saturday 9 November 1917], p. 214.)

163 A horror of hotels is recorded several times in Mansfield's letters and KMN I-II; dating from pre 1918.
Salesby’s eye, his wife, Jinnie, is described with “A hand, like a leaf, fell on his shoulder”, and as “the light, dragging step.” The determiners “a” and “the” are detached, distancing, ‘othering’ markers; there is no tenderness in Salesby’s responses. Jinnie is warm, chatty, animated, despite her ill health, while Salesby only ever speaks in truncated sentences, and he rarely initiates physical contact. This existence is juxtaposed to Salesby’s memories of their relationship prior to their move abroad, where he is involved in the household, exchanges conversation instead of silently consenting to Jinnie’s requests, and where a gesture of kindness towards a kitten is, in fact, kindness towards his wife.

When Salesby finally shows his first spontaneous sign of physical affection, holding Jinnie, the gesture is depreciated by one of Mansfield’s objective correlative images, which takes us back to the couple’s separation: “The sky flamed, and the two white beds were like two ships.” Vincent O’Sullivan has pointed out the cruel ambiguity in the monosyllabic answer from Salesby that ends this story. In the context of the story’s flashbacks, the sense in which Salesby’s word, “‘Rot’”, means ‘of course I don’t mind being here with you’ is patently untrue. The whole story has been infiltrated with his recollections of a warmer way of life, which included immersion in an affective community of like minds. Salesby’s concealment of his distress from Jinnie seals his spiritual exile both from an ideal self, and from love. The story is a moving depiction of the harm done to intimate relationships through uprooting from both

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164 CSKM, p. 130.
165 This story echoes Chekhov’s “In Exile”, where exile to Siberia brings on Vasily’s daughter’s consumption, as she pines and then falls ill. In Mansfield’s story, the division between two of Chekhov’s characters becomes separated into past and present aspects of the one man, Salesby. In Chekhov’s story, the Tartar admires Vasily for his attempts to save his daughter and for his belief in companionship and love, while the Ferryman believes that happiness in Siberia comes from submitting to exile, renouncing all bonds and material comforts. To the Ferryman (i.e. the man without a temperament), the Tartar says, in broken Russian, “you not alive - you stone, you clay!” (Hingley (ed.), The Steppe and Other Stories by Anton Chekhov, p. 166.)
166 CSKM, p. 140.
167 CLKM III, pp. ix.
168 CSKM, p. 143.
independent, private home, and supportive community; physical exile is given a patent psychological parallel. Salesby lives in a no-man’s land emotionally, his numb suspension further isolating him from his wife.

This story interacts with Mansfield’s letters as a fictional counterargument to her own desire for companionship, over the final three years of her life. She writes to Murry, in October 1920:

> Whatever my feelings are I am not justified in giving way to them before you or in letting you see even the shadow of the border of that shadowy country that we exiles from health inhabit.  

Such a metaphor is heavily influenced by Romantic and early twentieth-century conceptions of tuberculosis (i.e. that TB is mysterious, leading to a moral and emotional separation of patient and society, so the ill become incomprehensibly alien to the well). Contemporary medical treatments of TB necessitated the patient’s removal to warmer climates; Mansfield’s metaphor thus understandably connects mental and physical well-being to a sense of place: health and ill health are articulated as separate countries. The language which describes the absolute basics of her existence, her health and her body (concerns apparently removed from discussions of her nationality, home, or being the “little Colonial” in England) fuses with metaphors already linked to the experience of immigration. Notions of libidinal economies are also informative here: “Language is a translation. It speaks through the body. Each time we translate what we are in the process of thinking, it necessarily passes through our bodies.” In Mansfield’s comment, the libidinal economy works in the reverse direction as well: as

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169 SLKM, p. 178.
she expresses the particular bodily alienation of the invalid (or as the body passes into language), she uses terms already resonant of the social ostracism she felt as a colonial.

In two further stories from 1920, "The Escape" and "The Stranger", the travel motif becomes a correlative for the breakdown of personal relationships, and in "The Stranger", the sea voyage is linked specifically to a young man's death. This ancient metaphor connecting death and a journey over water (Charon and the River Styx), is present again in Mansfield's letter to Murry of 18 October 1920 which tries to articulate the enormous psychological side effects of her own confrontation with mortality.

[...] bodily suffering such as I've known for three years [...] has changed forever everything
[...] We resist - we are terribly frightened. The little boat enters the dark fearful gulf and our only cry is to escape - 'put me on land again.'
But [...] the shadowy figure rows on.\textsuperscript{172}

When Mansfield writes again about the colonial Burnell family, it is both in poignant resistance to, and articulation of, this hovering on the brink of self-dissolution.

Mansfield specifically calls "At the Bay" (1921) a "continuation of Prelude",\textsuperscript{173} this fictive return to her New Zealand past is discussed again in a letter a year later. Listing aspects of the ordinary, daily life that she wants to rediscover and relive, she writes:

Really, I am sure it does a writer no good to be transplanted - it does harm. One reaps the glittering top of the field but there are no sheaves to bind. And there's something, disintegrating, false, agitating in that literary life. Its petty and stupid like a fashion. I think the only way to live as a writer is to draw upon one's real familiar life [...] Our secret life, the life we return to over and over again, the 'do you remember' life is always the past.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{172} CLKM IV, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{173} ibid., 12 September 1921, p. 278.
\textsuperscript{174} [Dated March 1922], SLKM, pp 257-258.
Mansfield’s image of the self as an uprooted plant, and then the artistic product as what is reaped, opposes surface, the ephemeral (the shift and passing of light, the temporary blossom) to something more substantial; the sheaves being what lasts beyond the harvest’s original season. This fight against the evanescent suggests the desire to build a personal history, to layer and store up memories and connections, and to replenish her store at its source.175

This view is the very opposite of the sense of exile exemplified by the American expatriates James, Pound and Eliot, who in varying ways sought out European art and hierarchical institutions as the foundation of an ideal aesthetic which would have been blunted down at home; it also contrasts with the modernist sense articulated by Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus - who declares that his art will best be served by a life free of his past: “the past is consumed in the present and the present is only living because it brings forth the future.”176 Yet when Mansfield returns to her treatment of the enigma of personality and self in “At the Bay” (1921), she also returns to a more hopeful inflection of the voyage motif. “At the Bay” again centres on a context in which the characters have been removed from their ordinary routine; set at a summer beach retreat, the Burnell family

175 Why memories should give particularly compelling material for the artistic imagination could be inferred from the ‘social interaction model’ in psychology - which posits a direct relationship between narrative structures and the processes of memory. In explanation of differences in improved recollective powers in childhood growth, the theory proposes that autobiographical memory development in very young infants depends on an increasing ability to use the narrative form - something which S. Engel has related to the ways in which events are communicated to children - i.e. those with “elaborative” mothers tend to recall more than those with “pragmatic” mothers. (Elaborative mothers talk about events in narrative terms, pragmatic mothers talk predominantly in functional terms.) Katherine Nelson also says that Tessler proposes a difference between narrative and paradigmatic conversations between mothers and children - paradigmatic mothers ask categorical questions - e.g. ‘what does the squirrel have in its mouth?’ Narrative mothers ask more descriptive questions - e.g. ‘see the squirrel burying the nut?’ See Nelson, “Explaining the Emergence of Autobiographical Memory in Childhood” in Collins, Conway, Gathercole, and Morris (eds.), Theories of Memory. See also Betz, Larsen, Skowronski and Thompson (eds.), Remembering What and Remembering When, pp 3-4.

176 Deane (ed.) A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) by James Joyce, p. 273. There are frequent mentions in Mansfield’s notebooks and letters towards the end of her life of a wish to return to New Zealand; one can’t help but speculate that this impulse was to replenish that “real, familiar life.”
and their neighbours undergo a temporary displacement, which moves them closer to the untouched native bush. Brimming with natural life, the opening scenes again depict a New Zealand of fertility and variety: taken alone, they might suggest the pastoral. Yet again, Mansfield’s work is not nostalgic about the peace and simplicity of the chosen setting; the complex social world comes with the small summer colony.

One of the recurrent images which Mansfield uses in “At the Bay” for the division of possibilities open for men and women, is that of exploration (which also recalls Kezia’s exploration of the tangled, divided garden in “Prelude”). This interacts suggestively with the early Notebook entries which proffer Mansfield’s expatriation as an active critique of Victorian colonial society. The trope of exploration, on one level, articulates discontent with women’s role within the colonising culture.

Linda’s wish for more private space for discovery (“If only one had the time to look at these flowers long enough, time to get over the sense of novelty and strangeness, time to know them!”) becomes more specifically a desire for the freedoms of travel and exploration, which are encoded within the masculine model of explorer. She dreams over her girlhood, and remembers her father’s pact:

... Now she sat on the veranda of their Tasmanian home, leaning against her father’s knee. And he promised, ‘As soon as you and I are old enough, Linny, we’ll cut off somewhere, we’ll escape. Two boys together. I have a fancy I’d like to sail up a river in China.’ Linda saw the river, very wide, covered with little rafts and boats. She saw the yellow hats of the boatmen and she heard their high, thin voices, as they called ...

“Prelude’s” image of the aloe as a ship is given its roots in Linda’s formative past. In this sense, she and her brother-in-law Jonathan are kindred spirits; her wish for depth and breadth, for adventure and the acquisition of knowledge that goes beyond the...
role of motherhood, meets his longing to "leave the office", to be fully engaged in a meaningful life. His desire is expressed in a related motif: "all the while I'm thinking, like that moth, or that butterfly, "the shortness of life! The shortness of life!" I've only one night or one day, and there's this vast dangerous garden, waiting out there, undiscovered, unexplored." Jonathan and Linda are able to communicate about their (divided) inner selves because they share a sense of restriction; this opposes Jonathan to the stereotypical masculine model that Stanley Burnell's bluster represents. Jonathan's identification with Linda is that of prisoner to prisoner; yet Linda's sense of suppression is arguably more socially determined than his. He concedes that the only reason he does not leave his employment is that he is "Weak, weak. No stamina. No anchor." As he rightly says, he could "cut off to sea", he has "two boys to provide for, but after all they're boys" - it is assumed his sons will grow more certainly into self-sufficiency, where daughters might not; Jonathan, unlike Linda, is "not [...] tremendously tied." Beside Jonathan's and Linda's articulations of their desire for fulfilment through the travel motif, Mansfield's description of the Burnell girls, as they rise up on a hill before the beach, is resonant with potential. She writes -

At the top they paused to decide where to go and to have a good stare at who was there already. Seen from behind, standing against the skyline, gesticulating largely with their spades, they looked like minute puzzled explorers.

"Puzzled" shows the children tested and questioned by their small journey; their preconceptions may still be broken down. Subsequently, their activities with Jonathan's children are animated, breathless discoveries of the extraordinary in the ordinary. In depicting the children as pre-lapsarian, where gender divided social roles will become the fall, Mansfield suggests that equality is the 'natural' state, before children become fully

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179 ibid., p. 237.
180 ibid., p. 238.
181 ibid., p. 214.
socialised. In this sense, the scenes with Beryl, as she moves between an interest in Mrs Harry Kember and Mr Harry Kember, show her on the point of consolidating social and sexual identity; yet her visions of escape and discovery, as in “Prelude”, are narrowed into romantic and sexual terms.

Seen together, both “Prelude” and “At the Bay” offer a critique of those characters who do not accept adventure and its accompanying migrations of identity, and they hold up as the hopeful future those children who still embrace the risks of their small journeys.¹¹² This is also a latent reading in “The Voyage” (1921), although here the sea journey is again modulated by the presence of grief. An interpretation of the journey as a liminar experience is at its height in this story, as Fenella’s emotions swivel on a fulcrum of loss and hope.

“The Voyage” is perhaps Mansfield’s clearest use of the travel motif to parallel a character’s psychological development, although the story avoids the cruder symbolic treatment of the voyage-as-death, and rather focuses on the absorption of the knowledge of privation into a young girl’s consciousness. The voyage is the passage of mourning which Fenella must undertake after losing her mother, rather than explicitly or simply towards her own death.

The newness and strangeness that Fenella experiences is all registered in the small, oblique detail, rather than in her mother’s absence; the awareness of time is handled in a similar way - through the hurrying crowds, the small girl struggling to keep up with her father and grandmother, the father’s minute-by-minute sensitivity to the hour on the clock. Anxiety and fear are channelled into the grandmother’s and Fenella’s

¹¹² This might seem to be a promotion of the imperialist enterprise - yet see Rod Edmond’s work on the boy adventurer in nineteenth century children’s fiction as a prototype for the imperial explorer - i.e. there were far more overtly didactic literary modes available which served the promotional function. Alongside Edmond’s plot accounts of boys coping with shipwreck on South Pacific islands, a reading of Mansfield’s work as sanctioning imperialism would let a literary-critical political agenda elide distinct aesthetic and thematic differences between artistic modes. See Edmond, Representing the South Pacific, pp 142-152.
concern for the safety of the swan’s head umbrella, into Fenella’s modesty over
undressing in the shared cabin, and in her remarking the difference in her grandmother’s
appearance when her head is uncovered. Through these smaller dislocations, Fenella is
coming to register the enormity of her loss, yet in her very ability to register these, she
simultaneously shows the possibility of psychological recovery. She is responding to the
outside world; in a classic Freudian description of mourning (the language of which
analysis Mansfield would argue belongs firmly outside the work of fiction - within the
story it would be “nuts” or “cheap”)183, she has passed through the initial phase of
intense grief to a reconstruction of reality, and acceptance.184 The story shows what
would be in Freud’s terms the successful enactment of mourning’s psychic task; i.e. that
of detaching “the survivor’s memories and hopes from the dead.” 185

The alteration is expressed in Fenella’s amazement upon the sight of dry land;
hers first voyage, even within the same country and of only a few hours’ duration, is
momentous enough for her to feel that “they had been at sea for weeks together.”186 The
sight of land is also the trigger for Fenella’s first direct confrontation of the grief which
has formed the background for the trip: “[…] she was trembling. Oh, it had all been so
sad lately. Was it going to change?”187 Landfall becomes hope; in Fenella’s small
personal migration, new land and new life become momentarily synonymous.

Fenella’s girlhood is particularly relevant to the tone of “The Voyage”; for
Mansfield’s adult characters, the journey is frequently overdetermined by longer
histories of loss - as it is in “Six Years After” (1921). Here, Mansfield interweaves a
boat journey with the impact of terrible personal bereavement; the voyage becomes the
bass note to a woman’s recollections of her son’s death. The mother’s grief continues

183 Letter to J. M Murry [13 October 1920], CLKM IV, p. 69.
184 Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume Fourteen, pp 244-
245.
186 CSKM, p. 328.
187 ibid.
with its initial intensity: here the classic Freudian description of mourning’s “successful
task” is less apt, as it would seem that the mother is suspended in the initial stage of
mourning, when “the existence of the lost love object is psychically prolonged. Every
single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is
brought up and hypercathected.” Mansfield’s story insists on a personalised,
unformulaic exposition of grief.

The story reaches its apex when the woman watches over the open sea, the rain,
and the rise and fall of passing gulls. The motion of the steamer and the counterpointing
of these natural rhythms trigger her sense of “a presence far out there, between the sky
and water; someone very desolate and longing watched them pass and cried as if to stop
them - but cried to her alone.”

The passage of the steamer and the passage of ageing are gently drawn together
here; as the parents travel physically, their journey evokes the distance in years between
their son’s death and the present moment. Yet the crux of this story is that psychic and
chronological measurement are out of joint; the mother still anticipates a future that will
contain the memories she has always longed for. The spiralling sense of time in these
words and their acute rendering of the nature of grief make them almost unbearable to
read. The slide of tenses embodies the irreparable rupture of the perception of physical
reality:

But - did he go back again? Or, when the war
was over, did he come home for good? Surely, he
will marry - later on - not for several years.
Surely, one day I shall remember his wedding and
my first grandchild - a beautiful dark-haired boy
born in the early morning - a lovely morning -
spring!

188 Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume Fourteen, pp 244-
245.
189 CSKM, p. 458.
190 ibid., p. 460.
Although Alpers argues that the story is a manuscript fragment, as it stands, “Six Years After” has the integrity of a fully achieved work.\(^1\) The final lines gather bereavement and the theme of time’s relentless transit into an apposite image; the ellipsis at the end, rather than suggesting unintentional incompletion, seems contextually apt, and consummately modernist. (Modernism, after all, was concerned with “the violation of expected continuities” and inaugurated “the power of ellipsis and parataxis.”\(^2\) Mansfield writes “And the little steamer, quietly determined, throbbed on, pressed on, as if at the end of the journey there waited...”\(^3\) The ellipsis evades a concrete, ‘monosemantic’ symbolism; it encompasses the mother’s feeling that her life is always moving towards her son, that a reunion between them must be attendant, with some kind of peace: and it renders such hope provisional, evoking silence and the unknown. (It is also shrewdly self-referential, as the sentence in the penultimate paragraph protests “But it can’t end like that - so suddenly.”\(^4\) In this story, there can be no psychological landfall; unlike “The Voyage”, which was about a much younger girl, here the journey can more realistically be read as that which the mother makes towards her own death.

The final work of Mansfield’s to deal with an interrelationship between voyages and change is “Father and the Girls” (1922). As with the title characters in “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” (1920), Edith and Emily have had their own lives compromised in their dedication to their father’s happiness - yet where Con and Jug in the earlier piece have been stifled through staying bound to a paternal law that keeps them at home, Edith and Emily have been compromised by not having settled. The story unfolds two perspectives on the concept of home. The old man seeks to escape thoughts

\(^2\) Bradbury and McFarlane in Bradbury and McFarlane (eds.), Modernism, p. 48.
\(^3\) CSKM, p. 460.
\(^4\) ibid.
of mortality in the distraction of travelling, yet Mansfield's image of the dried husk subverts this desire, indicating that his journey is still haunted by death:

Home! To sit around, doing nothing, listening to the clock, counting up the years, thinking back ... thinking! To stay fixed in one place as if waiting for something or somebody. No! no! Far better to be blown over the earth like the husk, like the withered pod that the wind carries and drops and bears aloft again. 195

Pressing against this is the reiterated "Rest! Stay!" which is channelled through Edith's consciousness. Responding to one of the rooms they have chosen at their current hotel, she feels that

its shaded brightness, its beauty, the flutter of leaves at the creamy stone windows seemed only to whisper 'Rest! Stay!' .... 'Rest! Stay!' Was it the sound of the leaves outside? No it was in the air; it was the room itself that whispered joyfully, shyly. 196

As Edith's gaze trails over the room, her meticulous observations of the colours, patterns and forms show an aesthetic eye which embraces and in a sense, familiarises; this is the antithesis to the local girl Ernestine's frustrated (and perhaps also feared) desire to leave: "She felt an ache in her bosom. Wings were tightly folded there. Why could she not stretch them out and fly away and away?..." Edith's search for somewhere to rest is by implication the wish to reside somewhere that confirms an identity. Emily's similarly bewitched (yet comic) response to the room affirms that while their father has sought to sever his ties to the past, the women seek roots: "Oh,' cried Emily, in rapture. 'Isn't it all too perfectly historical for words, Edith!' 198 Like "The Man Without a Temperament", this fragment moves towards an exploration of how alienation from home may have the potential to destroy a richer emotional life.

195 ibid., p. 470.
196 ibid., pp. 470-471.
197 ibid., p. 467.
198 ibid., p. 471.
Mansfield's *Notebook* comment on her own enforced transience in the same year expresses this overtly - "in the night I thought for hours of the evilness of uprooting. Every time one leaves anywhere, something precious, which ought not to be killed, is left to die"\[^{199}\] - something of and beyond the self has been abandoned. While Mansfield, the year before this comment, had affirmed a friend's love of adventure - "By Adventure I mean [...] the wonderful feeling that one can lean out of heaven knows what window tonight - one can wander under heaven knows what flowers and trees"\[^{200}\] - her own travels were dictated by her illness. Likewise for several of Mansfield's characters, travel represents an ideal, an illusion of freedom which becomes hampered by the deprivations or limitations of social inequalities. While Mansfield can advocate a life of the excitement of constant 'arrival' for her (healthy) correspondent, many letters and stories depict a falling away from this vision.

By 1922, the absence of a deeper cultural identification than one with "the sod under [her] feet"\[^{201}\] has become a permanent sense of loss, and one for which there is not the chance of full restitution, as an enforced nomadic existence becomes not that of progression towards, but of repeated severance from, a transcendent state. The transient lifestyle becomes a continual series of endings, and hence like a ritualisation of the mortality that her tuberculosis already underlines. The uprootings effect persistent mourning for the lack of continuity with a personal past; so they repeat the altering experience associated with her initial immigration. Across Mansfield's oeuvre, her treatment of the tropes of home and journeys from home, changes from an early sense of liberation from childhood dependence into adult independence, to the sense that any 'arrival' is highly provisional.

\[^{199}\] *KMN* II, p. 325.
\[^{200}\] Letter to Dorothy Brett, [29 August 1921], *CLKM* IV, pp 269-270.
While in her fiction, her child characters' journeys represent the positive 'leap', the possibilities latent in those still capable of change, for Mansfield's adult characters, journeys and smaller migrations become increasingly tempered by their evocation of severance from the (tangled) roots of identity in family and personal history, of loss, endings and death. As the child in Mansfield's work never has unconflicted membership of the family - so familial loss also encompasses the original loss of a mythically unified genealogical group - the longed for ideal home that never was.

In a letter to one of her sisters in 1922, the bitter-sweetness of the connection Mansfield draws between music and loss, seems a fitting final commentary on the creative cycles within her own work. She writes -

How hard it is to escape from places. However carefully one goes they hold you - you leave little bits of yourself fluttering on the fences - little rags and shreds of your very life. But a queer thing it is - this is personal - however painful a thing has been when I look back it is no longer painful or more painful than music is. In fact it is just that.\(^2\)

The gentle equivocation here over the level of suffering that departure inflicts is telling. It is first of all, not painful, second of all, at least not more painful than music, and then at the last, just as painful as music. There is an equivalence between departure and elegiac art. The gradual shifting of stance in this statement echoes the very reluctance to leave which Mansfield articulates in the first sentence; it offers a miniature replica of the change in Mansfield's treatment of the expatriate theme throughout her fiction. \textit{In a German Pension, "The Little Governess, "The Lost Battle" and "An Indiscreet Journey"}, all include overseas journeys representing the wish to escape restrictions on female sexuality, yet which clarify the power of these restrictions. In "Prelude" and "At the Bay", small migrations from house to house, and from town to summer retreat, offer


The shredding and tearing of the self which Mansfield’s imagery associates with the journey away, presents a very different model of the relationship between identity and expatriation than is found in other modernist texts. In the consummate and emphatically masculine example, James Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), Stephen Dedalus celebrates separation from his allegiances as an end to personal subjugation. In Section V, Stephen says “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church.”203 Stephen’s expatriation from Ireland seems validated by the authorial inscription of places and dates at the foot of the final page, where Joyce writes “Dublin 1904, Trieste 1914.” These inevitably reflect an image back upon the novel: “Trieste” and the lapse of ten years, implicitly nod assent to Stephen’s “Welcome, O life!” as he quits Ireland. The Italian place-name suggests that departure has initiated Stephen into authentic experience, self, and living art: he has enacted that wish to, as he says, “try to express myself in some mode of life or art [ ... ] using for my self defence the only arms I allow myself to use - silence, exile, and cunning.”204

Stephen’s use of the word exile, as he declares his artistic purpose, turns on its more positive etymological possibilities: exilience, exiliency, exilient. Yet Mansfield’s treatment of expatriation incorporates its more sombre derivation: exility, meaning thinness, meagreness, or poverty. Her intricate fiction and autobiographical texts often dramatise the fact that for a woman in this era, the house, home, and family cannot as

203 Deane (ed.), A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) by James Joyce, p. 268.
204 ibid., p. 271.
resolutely and definitively be 'left', or separated from psychologically, as they are implicitly by a figure like Stephen Dedalus. Mansfield's emphasis on the duality of exile is stronger than Joyce's; this ambivalence and sense of alienation modify the paradigm of expatriate artist fulfilled through departure. Yet because of Mansfield's material literary success as an expatriate writer, which seems to conform to the Joycean paradigm, the women writers who follow her receive a highly complicated literary inheritance from her example. When all the subsequent authors in this study write about expatriation, it is with an acute - even if sometimes ironised and dismissive - awareness of Mansfield's powerful and ambiguous precedent.
CHAPTER THREE

IN THE HOUSE OF HER MIND:

ROBIN HYDE, EXPATRIATION AND BACK-MIGRATION
CONTENTS

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List of Abbreviations Used in Footnotes

(See bibliography for edition details)

AHITW: Derek Challis (ed.) *A Home in this World* by Robin Hyde.

CTYK: Robin Hyde, *Check to Your King*.

DG: Gillian Boddy and Jacqueline Matthews (eds.), *Disputed Ground* - Robin Hyde, Journalist.

DR: Linda Hardy (ed.), *Dragon Rampant* by Robin Hyde.

NTYC: Phillida Bunkle, Linda Hardy and Jacqueline Matthews (eds.), *Nor the Years Condemn* by Robin Hyde.

OED: *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

PTH: D.I.B. Smith (ed.), *Passport to Hell* by Robin Hyde.


SP: Lydia Wevers (ed.), *Selected Poems* by Robin Hyde.

TGF: Rawlinson (ed.), *The Godwits Fly* by Robin Hyde.

WC: Susan Ash (ed.), *Wednesday's Children* by Robin Hyde.
Introduction

Of all Mansfield’s successors, Robin Hyde (Iris Guiver Wilkinson, 1906-1939) is the most consciously indebted to the earlier writer’s example, and yet she is also the first to question concertedly the expatriate artist’s role. Adcock forges an expatriate female literary line dissatisfied with a parochial and claustrophobic New Zealand scene when she aligns Mansfield and Hyde; yet this line is a ‘forgery’. The growth of Hyde’s oeuvre refutes Adcock’s image of her. Charting Hyde’s work from the poetry of The Desolate Star (1929) to the war memoir Dragon Rampant (1939) shows Hyde growing into, not away from, many of the concerns of the literary-nationalist group of the 1930s. New Zealand was not the yoke from which she had to escape, but the material for art to address.

Past criticism has also misread some nuances in Hyde’s work, under-emphasising the role of expatriation in Wednesday’s Children, and of expatriation (and back-migration) in The Godwits Fly. It has evaded the tragedy and the barbed social analysis in the finale of Wednesday’s Children, simplifying Hyde’s treatment of gender issues, and suggesting her failure to provide positive images of women. Paradoxically, this punishes Hyde on grounds of a 1980s revisionary feminism. I hope to show, through a close analysis of selected poetry and prose, that Hyde’s dramatisation of issues of gender and expatriation are more densely layered than the earlier readings allow.

1 Kai Jensen argues that “literary nationalism” as a term for the 1930s-1940s should be renamed “the high masculinist period” because of the dominance of male writers at this point. Yet such a term, despite Jensen’s sympathy for Hyde, does threaten to exclude her work from a general understanding of the period, so I keep the earlier phrase. See Jensen, Whole Men, p. 170.
2 See also my entry on Hyde in Sage (ed.), The Cambridge Guide to Women’s Writing in English.
3 See notes 79, 81, 82, 83, 105, 131, 132, 141.
Hyde’s first collections are trained closely to their romantic tutelage, although her tireless genre-hopping, and her work’s self-referencing (suggesting a modern’s redefinition of literary categories) eventually infiltrate her perceptions of the capacities of poetry. The Desolate Star (1929) and The Conquerors and Other Poems (1935) (as with many young writers in English, of any nationality, and of many eras), are concerned with attachment to English literary tradition in form and frequently in content; like the young Mansfield, Hyde is a ‘psychological expatriate’ well before her final departure. The pen-name is suggestive of this. Potentially androgynous (where Mansfield’s nom de plume was not) it is the name that Iris Wilkinson gave in 1926 to her first, stillborn child. It offers her writing as a memorial, yet the choice indicates several further issues, borne out by the substance of Hyde’s work. The pen-name is a transformation of the self which immediately recalls Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886), a literary fantasy of crossing into the culture of the other - in Robin Hyde’s case, the androgyny suggests the desire to cross over into cultural privileges designated as masculine. In Stevenson’s work, Henry Jekyll recognises that

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4 Hyde’s cross-referencing is multiple: single lines of poetry echo one another between poems; journalism leads to fiction (c.f. Douglas Stark and the Starkie novels: “Cross My Palm”, an article about clairvoyants (See DG, pp 223-235) and the fortune-telling in WC); a divided parental relationship appears in fiction, autobiography and poetry; Hyde’s novels use her poems for epithets, forewords, quotations and postscripts.

Sandbrook comments on the difficulties in categorising Hyde’s prose; he sees this as a mark of Hyde’s originality, yet doesn’t cite it as characteristically modern. Sandbrook, Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work, PhD Thesis, pp 156-157. See also for summaries of contemporary reviews of Hyde.


6 Hyde’s consciousness of the name (or of naming) as a potentially literary choice is implied when she writes about registering her second son’s birth: “I gave him the Forest of Arden’s name for a second title”. (AHITW, p. 54.)
man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point [...] man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens.  

Stevenson’s novella is a precursor to Mansfield’s thoughts on the multiplicity of self (which Hyde later borrows); yet the notion of duplicity is fitting for the author whose heroine in *The Godwits Fly* says that she is “not a woman, not for any ordinary purposes”, and who writes of the colonials’ sense that they are “English and not English”. Reinforcing Hyde’s confession, written in 1938, that she had “spent a good many imaginary years in England”, the forename recalls the English bird, the full name is a near repetition of Robin Hood, figure of English outlawry and exile, while the surname is quintessentially one of English literary history, recalling London’s Hyde Park, and the politician Edward Hyde Clarendon. Reflecting division, the surname also points to the potentials of artistic nationalism; in that it may recall Douglas Hyde, pioneer of the Irish literary revival. Robin Hyde’s early poetry quickly offers evidence of such fractures.

The tensions between a highly Anglicised romantic vision and a nascent fascination for the Victorian Yeats of the Irish bardic and mythic revival, offer vast material for discussions of the colonial writer’s heightened sense of the referential nature

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7 Calder (ed.), *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, p. 82.
8 TGF, pp 165 and 34 respectively.
9 DR, p. 17.
10 The wordplay between Hyde’s given name, Iris, and Robin Hood as an archer, may also be relevant; cp. note 64. Note also that in Wheatley (ed.), *Percy’s Relikes of Ancient English Poetry, Volume I* (1876), which includes “Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne”, a comment on Hood reads “He suffered no woman to be oppressed, violated, or otherwise molested, poor men’s goods he spared [...]” p. 103. This seems evocative also of Hyde’s feminist and socialist concerns.
11 Historian of the English civil war, whose profits from the sale of his history led to the establishment of the Clarendon printing press at OUP. See Drabble (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*.
12 See Gregory, *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish, including Nine Plays by Douglas Hyde* (1903). Lady Gregory’s essay on “West Irish Ballads”, which specifically mentions Hyde’s translations, comments on the lyrical folk tradition in which ballads frequently centred on “emigration, loss of life by sea, the land jealousy.” p. 46.
of language, versus the possibilities of local self-determination. Such tensions appear in
two poems particularly relevant to the enquiries of my study. “Home” and “Homing”,
from The Conquerors and Other Poems (1935) deal with a theme frequently coloured
by expatriation.

“Home”, with its rhyming couplets and general cohesion of line ends with
complete syntactical units (offering regularity despite varying metrical stresses)
translates a New Zealand childhood into terms immediately accessible to a wider British
readership. In Georgian mode, “Canterbury bells” evokes England (as the province’s
original name intended); the natural forms documented are imported: blackbird, thrush,
larkspur, cherries. (Coprosma berries’ is an exception - but the Latinate term - not a
Maori name - itself offers European familiarisation.)

The basic argument of this Hardyesque, neo-romantic poem (I’ll always
remember my childhood background) may seem to preclude an ‘England-as-home’
double meaning in her title. Yet that meaning forces itself up through the surface;
“Home” could easily be taken to represent a generic English childhood.

Ah, how shall I ever be torn away from these grasses?
Out of the deeps where the Canterbury bells,
Gravely rung by the bees, have whispered the knells
Of purblind road and a mad world’s shadowy riot?
Out of the charmed [sic] circle, the blackbird’s singing,
Eventide’s sable winging?

[“Home”, lines 1-6]¹³

Such mimicry is Hyde’s home throughout her first three collections: a borrowed
voice, a feature not just of the colonial but also of the modern writer becoming au fait
with poetic practice, forced to be godwit and cuckoo. “Homing”, a poem which
examines the adult’s self-made home after the departure prefigured in “Home”, initially
sketches in the living, physical context. Yet part way through, at lines six and seven, the
register shifts. While the rhyme scheme is looser than Hyde’s usual form, it recalls De la

¹³Hyde, The Conquerors and Other Poems (1935).
Mare in its incantational repetition of single words within a confined space (golden, rustle) and in the development of a quasi-mythical character, the girlish wind. Elaborate personification is a signature of Hyde’s style; the indirection is characteristically Georgian, the metre moving from the trochaic (De la Mare) to the iambic (Yeats):

The dark heads of flax
Whisper stealthily together,
The pools of golden leaves,
Crisp and golden on the pavement,
Rustle softly, rustle dimly
‘Neath the white feet of a wind
That goes walking in the twilight ...
She is young and dewy-eyed,
And the daughter of a star ... [Lines 1-9, Hyde’s ellipses]

While the title implies that the poem will be about the need for a safe interior, the first nine lines metaphorically convey another need, i.e., the impulse to wander away from that centre. Although the content proceeds to depict home and hearth as sanctuary, the “laughing rover wind” infiltrates this space, and Hyde’s choice of compound adjective (“sword-sharp”) complicates things. It is not immediately clear what Hyde means to retreat from; what the poem offers escape into is home as solitude and privacy: where inanimate objects take the comforting role that nature or the implicit family had in “Home”:

But behind the orange curtains
Dance the sword-sharp golden shadows ...
And shadows of the flames
On my own hearth lit in welcome!
[...]
There is nobody to see
(But the laughing rover wind)
How my own house bids me welcome
With sleepy warmth, with dim tears that have gathered
In the dying roses’ eyes, that had thought me far away... [from lines 10-22]

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14 ibid.
The mawkish sentimentality of the closing two lines speaks of an over-hasty resolution to a more interesting conflict (over the ostensible divisions between outside and inside, risk and comfort) than the conventional (and again, partly Yeatsian) ideas of ‘beautiful symbols’ - roses and dew - here provide. The tear-filled roses are clearly a metaphor for the persona’s gratitude at her return into the secure private space; from these lines, a view of what she is retreating from becomes apparent. The opening images of the flax and leaves - with the heads bowed and whispering secretly, convey a sense of gossip or social censure. This implies that the private space also involves private morality, eliciting through its defiance the opposed tone of gossiping disapproval: the retreat inwards rejects public standards. The division between the impulse to ‘rove’ and the impulse to ‘home’ recurs in Hyde’s treatment of the expatriate theme; a push-me pull-you dynamic which is partly so intense because of Hyde’s recognition of the literary possibilities latent in her colonial context. Hyde herself announces her revelation over these possibilities at least three times in 1936.

When Hyde reviewed *New Zealand Best Poems 1936*, she implicitly expressed her wish to expand beyond the romantic in her own work, which so far had been characterised by its love of Shakespearean diction, pretty ephemera (rainbows, bubbles, blossoms, “chimaeric troubled dawns”), chivalric code, fairytale, and gaudy symbolism (“Now [...] Shall silence like a god / Drive them with whips of starlight from his stairs”) Hyde’s review runs

The nature note is insistently struck, not in the sugary beams-dreams-and-streams fashion of old years, but in a strong and interesting landscape representation [...] New Zealand verse seems to

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15 ibid.
16 This reading is reinforced by Hyde’s vision of the island retreat in her fantasy novel *WC*, her later autobiographical works (which recount the need to conceal her ‘illegitimate’ baby from family and employers), and by her article in *Woman To-day* (June 1937) on issues of women’s sexuality: “Less Happy Parenthood - The Problem of the Unmarried Mother”, reprinted in *DG* pp 198-201.
have [...] immersed itself in the real feeling of the world it lives in [...]\textsuperscript{18}

Another comment from 1936 sounds a more pleading, goading note: "[...] it's just dawned on me that I am a New Zealander, and surely, surely, the legends of the mountains, rivers and people we see about us should mean more to us than the legends of any other country on earth."\textsuperscript{19} Hyde's revelation also resounds in her enthusiastic praise of Walt Whitman in "The Modern Trend: Points About Some Poets" when she says that in his "Song of the Pioneers", he "gloriously achieved what he wanted - a great poem, with real people, real animals, straining their sinews across it."\textsuperscript{20}

The exclamatory tone of "Red Berries" (1936) offers a poetic version of this manifesto. The emphatic first line mimics awakening and realisation - "O, red berries, red berries!"; using a newly colloquial diction (the language of Whitman's "real people", perhaps), the piece literally argues, in the third line, against the pressures of the "colonial England-hunger" which Hyde examines in The Godwits Fly. The pared down, visual similes show a new closeness of vehicle and tenor in her writing (although the phrase "fairy tubs" [line 14] appears, like a family trait revealing Hyde's literary ancestry.)

\begin{verbatim}
Surprise in the wilderness,
Coral on dark green dress.
Nay, don't tell me she's blank,
My own land; she makes things -
Insects like sticks, insects with leaf-shaped wings,
Wise fishes, no-winged bird -
Surprise so absurd
They leave the singer dumb [...]
\end{verbatim}

[Lines 2-9]\textsuperscript{21}

Using the implied absence of white space after "blank" and "dumb, Hyde achieves a rightness of line ends beyond the location for rhyme; this simultaneous literacy and free speech also voice Hyde's movement from the Georgian to the modern. The relationship

\textsuperscript{18} DG, p. 223
\textsuperscript{19} Quoted in Rawlinson (ed.), Houses By the Sea by Robin Hyde, introduction, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{20} The Press, Saturday, 31 October, 1936.
\textsuperscript{21} Hyde, Persephone in Winter (1937).
between word and landscape is symbiotic: the land itself offers the poetic prototype, when by an artistic sleight of hand, the forest’s jubilant voice precedes her own: “the full crimson shout / of rata” [line 16] and “Rowan-round, but their own dark, / A forest’s exclamation mark, / Berries, red berries!” [lines 19-21] Hyde’s jaunty humour infiltrates the sound “Bugs with big odours; white repellent grubs” [line 13] as she collects natural forms to fill in the already refuted “blank”, with an emphasis on shape and appearance (rather than the Maori or European names), as if the forms are seen for the first time. The plurality of forms also argues that the absence of British flora and fauna is not absence all told.

The celebrations of this poem are counterbalanced by Hyde’s recognition of the seriousness of Maori displacement caused by European settlement. During this period, several long, meditative poems articulate the difficulties in imagining a way forward in New Zealand, after the damages of the colonial encounter; yet in their treatment of Maori history and mythology, they suggest where the nations should look for reparation of Maori losses.22

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Hyde’s explorations of the importance of nationality in “Red Berries” occurred even earlier in her fiction. Her first novel, Passport to Hell (1935), which touches briefly on an expatriate’s sense of dislocation in England, is based on interviews with the soldier Douglas Stark (nicknamed Starkie) following his war experiences in Gallipoli and on the Western Front. The novel seizes on events which signalled New Zealand’s entry into the international arena as an independent nation.23 Mansfield and Hyde are

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22 See Wevers’ introduction to SP; see “A Song for Mokoia” (1936), “Arangi-Ma” (1936-37), “Young Knowledge” (1936-37). This is something readressed in one of the counterplots in TGF; it also deeply permeates NTYC. See also note 112.
23 Hyde had actually confronted this theme in the de la Mare influenced “The English Trees” (1929); even here a slipperiness in the syntax and juxtapositions point to a more questioning
thus connected through literary responses to World War One: Hyde’s novel could even be seen as an expansion and fictionalisation of the impulse behind Mansfield’s 1915 *Notebook* entry on her brother’s death, and her wish to write about New Zealand (comments published in the *Journal* in Hyde’s lifetime.) Both writers focus on losses which highlight the contradictions inherent in imperialist attitudes, which marginalise the “little colonials,” yet claim that Empire is theirs to fight and die for.

*Passport to Hell* was once called “remarkable for its picture of the tough male world which [Hyde] could only know of by hearsay”,[^24] Hyde’s close identification with her main character (tantalisingly reminiscent of Mansfield’s discussion of empathetic technique)[^25] suggests another link to Hyde’s journalism, as it enacts the wish to break down gender categories, offering support for theories of the bisexuality of writing[^26].

While Hyde’s main fascination is for the psychological complexity of Stark’s character (his acts of extreme heroism during the war and his trouble-making during peace), the novel is also an impressive documentation of New Zealand landscape, social phenomena and history.[^27] The depiction of Stark’s itinerant labouring before he leaves for war evokes a diverse, sprawling land, incorporating West Coast gold rush towns, a ship that serves coal markets, a Canterbury sheep-station, flax-cutting and wharf-

[^24]: Stevens, *The New Zealand Novel*, p. 55. See also Frank Birbalsingh’s comment in *Landfall* 124, Vol. 31 No 4, December 1977: “We should expect Stark’s brutal experiences to repel most people, most of all a woman, less than thirty years old, living in New Zealand in the 1930s”. p. 369.
[^25]: See p. 103 of this thesis.
[^26]: See Woolf’s *Room of One’s Own* (1928) and *Orlando* (1928) for examples contemporary to Hyde; see e.g. Hélène Cixous in Sellers (ed.) *Writing Differences* for a postmodern theoretical exposition.
[^27]: The novel, despite Hyde’s growing recognition of the validity of alternative cultural perspectives, is itself full of contradictions regarding Stark’s racial identity. This bears fruitful comparison to *CTTK* (1936), where moments of racialism are believable historical recreations of a nineteenth century perspective: and to Hyde’s representation of Maritana and Joe in *WC*. This is a vast topic which deserves monograph length discussion in its own right; unfortunately there is no room to do it justice here.
As Hyde interweaves Stark’s experiences with her recreations of place, she maps New Zealand geographically and emotionally:

> As the fog rolls back on a sudden from the Canterbury hills and reveals them broad-bosomed, tawny and gracious […] so for a whole week the penalties of outlawry disappeared from Starkie’s horizon.  

The passage suggests that the sense of majesty and generosity in the landscape lends Starkie respite from troubles; similarly, when Hyde describes Wellington, the memory of landscape is redemptive and healing. This spiritual mapping of New Zealand foreshadows Stark’s displacement overseas. When Stark is sent to England from France for field punishment, after being AWOL for 42 days, Hyde confronts the expatriate colonial’s experience well before she has undertaken the journey herself. Away from the harsher derangements of war, Starkie describes England as

> the queerest, cussedest, most contradictory spot on earth, the one place where you haven’t a dog’s chance of telling what’s going to happen to you next […] you can’t ever make up your mind if England is terribly old or terribly young.  

Evidence of history is specifically what alienates Starkie - parts of London (the monuments, the places and even the people) make him “feel it’s like the beginning of Time”. This means that “It’s no place for a New Zealander, then; he has to whistle to make sure he’s alive at all.” The passage underlines Stark’s earlier, bitter confusion over the battles of the Egypt campaign (“What did we get out of it anyhow? […] What’s

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28 Stark’s itinerancy recurs in the sequel NTYC (1938), which the editors see as “an ideal of freedom and equality.” Similarly, for the character Macnamara in the second novel, tramping is “the serious work of defining, knowing, articulating, creating New Zealand.” NTYC, pp 276-277.

29 PTH, p. 24.

30 ibid., p. 63.

31 PTH, p. 205.

32 ibid.
Egypt got to do with New Zealanders? Witnessing the mechanisms and symbolic power displays of the political institution for which he was conscripted ("The stone lions folding up their paws, quiet as the rock of ages") he feels a small death; a spiritual emptiness when faced with the 'Cause'; not an answer to that earlier question. Empire does not speak to Stark of himself; it does not illuminate his position, but seems to erase him. As part-American Indian, as well as New Zealander, his sense of not belonging, of barely being alive in this context, is a commentary on imperial history's dominance over the stories of indigenous peoples and Empire's 'lesser' dominions. The passages question New Zealand's relationship to Empire in a way which is specifically post-war.

The Stark formed by New Zealand landscape finds English gardens defy comprehension:

he [...] finds himself in a round sort of little green, not much bigger than a bowler hat [...] things seem to be happening around him for the first time in history. Bright green wash of buds over thin sticks of black trees; squirrels carrying their dandy tails over one shoulder and making faces at you; kids sailing boats on a bit of pond, their cheeks red as pippins. [...] There's no way of explaining it. It's a good place for a soldier to think about, but I don't suppose he'd get on any too happy living there. If he didn't turn out to be a million years too old, he'd be a thousand years too young.

This sketch resembles received images of England that Hyde's fictional character, Eliza Hannay from The Godwits Fly, struggles with in her poetry; there is also a trace of Mansfield's "Geraniums" passage from her Notebook, where the "London garden patch" represents the imperial heritage which specifically excludes the "little colonial". Hyde's

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33 ibid., p. 110.
34 ibid.
35 See Malcolm McKinnon, "New Zealand in the World": "Labour's gains in the 1918 by-elections showed that voters were at the very least sceptical of the extent to which the war had been fought with a true equality of sacrifice." (Sinclair (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand, p. 242.)
36 PTH, pp 205-206.
description represents a simultaneous attraction to and recoiling from literary England; the portrait of the park is lovingly detailed, yet Stark is baffled by his sense of existing on an altogether different timeline from metropolitan London.

In *Wednesday's Children*, Hyde’s fantasy novel of 1937, *Passport to Hell*'s momentary view of England and New Zealand as competing realities becomes a central theme.

**Full of Grace and Woe:**

*Wednesday's Children* (1937)

*Wednesday's Children* opposes views of the colony as Europe’s cultural inferior: attitudes which Mansfield’s initial expatriation had arguably supported. The first of Hyde’s novels to deal with expatriation and the role of the woman artist in New Zealand, it is underpinned by her predecessor’s biography.

Hyde first sets the action in Auckland, then for three paragraphs, proceeds to analyse readers’ predicted reactions to this location. As in her novelised biography, *Check to Your King* (1936), Hyde up-ends clichés of colonisation (the colony as insignificant, site of degeneration and diminution, a tiny place not worth knowing about) so that readers unaware of New Zealand’s existence are the butt of her joke. A reference to Swift points to satirical intent, and indicates the colonist’s provincialism:

37 This was also an American self-perception. Malcolm Cowley writes of the 1920s, in his memoir of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Crane and others, that general education for him and his peers was “a process of deracination [...] the only authors to admire were foreign authors.” (*Exiles Return*, p. 28.)

38 *CTTK* (1936) focuses on local heritage. The story of Baron de Thierry, who emigrates to New Zealand on the promise of land ownership, it charts his failure to set up a utopian state in the early days of Maori-Pakeha negotiations before the instigation of British law. A story of deception and misunderstanding, it ends badly for de Thierry. The novel plays with clichés of the dominions as marginal and invisible (“Where the deuce, then, is New Zealand? Stuck on the tail end of the world...”, *CTTK*, p. 58) and has some remarkable recreations of English scenes prior to de Thierry’s departure. De Thierry projects his “Canaan” onto New Zealand, visualising the immense colonising projects of Rome and North America. As Stuart Murray
At precisely 7:30 on the night of June 22nd a small woman in a fur coat entered the advertising department of a newspaper office (The Comet) in the city of Auckland, New Zealand. There are still some Flat-Worldians, or as Swift called them, Big-Endians, who have not yet been trained by crossword puzzles, the increasing strangeness of politics, or the mystery of the League of Nations [...] to use their imagination. To these, such a statement as the above will convey nothing. It will be heard absently, with one or with half one ear, received into a brain like cotton wool, and for ever forgotten.39

Recognising New Zealand requires no more than the education required by a crossword clue, as the country participates in issues of pressing contemporary relevance through its membership of Woodrow Wilson’s vision of international community, the League of Nations. The detail in Hyde’s subsequent description of a social incompetent, digressing freely from her prosaic first sentence, intensifies her ridicule: the novel proceeds in high-spirited vein.

Wednesday Gilfillan, Hyde’s main character, has an outlook which locates New Zealand firmly within the international scene.40 Although she lives on an isolated, otherwise unpopulated island off Auckland’s shores, her house is named “L’Entente Cordiale”, and her children, fathered by men of different nationalities, have names which reflect that hearty understanding (Attica, Dorset, Naples, Limerick and Londonderry) - the family itself a microcosm of the League of Nations. The novel’s citations of fascist Italy’s 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, over which New Zealand took an independent stance from Britain within the League, give an allegorical dimension to Wednesday’s romance with the British Mr. Bellister.41 The most recurrent socio-political concern in Hyde’s discusses, it shows Hyde exploring “the multiple possibilities of the New Zealand story.” (Murray, Never a Soul at Home, p. 180.)

39 WC, p. 13.
40 If her name were pronounced “jillfillan”, it would suggest a wordplay on the gillyflower, a clove-scented wallflower.
41 See also Pride, A Home In This World, pp 192-197.
novel, however (and the one which propels the novel’s dramatic closure) is for women’s position within a sexually repressive society: Hyde depicts an urban New Zealand of ‘woman alone’, broadening masculinist national narratives of men pitted against the land.42 Wednesday’s life with her children is Hyde’s vision of an ideal community, where the bonds of friendship outlast the sexual, and where Wednesday can raise her five illegitimate children without persecution from family or wider society.

Ash’s critical introduction to the 1989 edition argues that Wednesday’s story is an “allegory of the female artist in a hostile, male-dominated society”.43 This may be true, but the most domineering and self-righteous presence in the novel is Brenda, Wednesday’s sister-in-law, who succeeds in remodelling her relatives to conform to her standards of propriety, but feels she has failed “to make the slightest impression on the little brown creature who had seemed always underfoot”.44 Hyde’s criticism turns on the fact that a right-wing ideology needs the participation of both men and women to succeed in the promulgation of its ideals.45 Brenda’s social circle joins in her censure of Wednesday, but Ronald (Brenda’s husband and Wednesday’s half-brother) does not: and, as Hyde flippantly puts it, Brenda is less forgiving than Crispin, the parson who “is supposed to be a man of God, and to love sinners.”46 Conversely, Great-Uncle Elihu sees Wednesday’s repeated publication of her children’s birth notices as a sign of real “spunk”.47

42 A line later epitomised in the title of Mulgan’s *Man Alone* (1939). Several colonial short stories, and Hyde’s first Starkie novel, however, predate this.
43 ibid., p. 5.
44 ibid., p. 29.
46 *WC*, p. 31.
47 ibid., p. 44. Elihu perhaps half-recalling Elidure, model of fraternal love - e.g. see Wordsworth’s “Artegal and Elidure” (1820), De Selincourt (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*. 154
Despite the obvious seriousness of Hyde’s social message (particularly if we read the novel alongside her memoirs, which reveal the personal cost of single motherhood in the 1920s-30s), the novel moves lightly, with comic brio. In a tone quite unlike her poetry and social-realism, Hyde undertakes a form of burlesque clowning; sober themes are dealt with in slapstick scenes and ludicrous plot twists which revel in the capacities of fiction. Hyde also reserves full knowledge until the novel’s dénouement, itself a metaphor for art’s revelatory and subversive properties.

As a novel so deeply concerned with fiction’s role, it soon confronts questions surrounding New Zealand art. Attica, Wednesday’s daughter, and an aspiring sculptor, learns from her Greek father

\[\ldots\text{what niminy-piminy things are the simpering white marble statues of dead and gone Greeks, compared with the splendour of muscles moving beneath a sheath of tawny skin, in which the blood is alive and beating.}\]

In line with Hyde’s praise of Whitman, Attica practices observation of the living human form, against mere fidelity to artistic precedent; she tries to model from Wednesday’s Maori nurse-help, Maritana (whom Hyde represents stereotypically), as the Auckland museum’s statues “look like they haven’t been washed, and they’ve got dead eyes.” Yet when the Vienna Boys’ Choir tours the country, Attica, desperate to see them in performance, says

\"We don’t know anything here, and when you start to read the short stories and things in the papers, you can tell the others don’t even know as

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49 *WC*, p. 54.
50 Pride notes the stereotypical representation of Maritana and Joe, and the contradictory relocation of racism to the Northern hemisphere, as Attica fumes against white Italy’s invasion of East Africa, before she sets to working on her sculpture of the Maori nurse. (Pride, *A Home in This World*, p. 202.) Yet even Attica’s protest reveals precisely these contradictions: “I would say to [the British Consul]: ‘If you interfere with my blacks, I’ll shoot you like a dog.’” (*WC*, p. 64.)
51 ibid., p. 79.
much as we do. You can’t be famous when it’s sea and sky and nothing else but goats.52

Attica’s argument reflects Mansfield’s of thirty years before: New Zealand lacks a vigorous artistic community of local practitioners to whom young artists can become apprentice, or with whom they can debate and argue. Her last comment gives a sense of overwhelming, unpeopled space - and, like those early comments of Mansfield’s, have melodramatic overtones, here suited to Attica’s adolescent character.

Wednesday’s response poses the counterargument which Mansfield’s achievements made possible; the image of the ‘citified artists’ is also indebted to Mansfield’s acerbic stories about the shallow aspects of metropolitan artistic society.

‘I think that’s just how the biggest ones did start to be famous ... The purely citified artists always strike me as being such slick little affairs [...] always trying, trying to be human, leaving out the space for the skyline, which is the most humanising thing of all, if only they had the wit to realise it.’53

Wednesday’s comment on the skyline reiterates descriptive passages from Passport to Hell, where Stark’s identity is shaped in relation to seasons and geographical forms; it also recalls Hyde’s poetry, in its romantic depiction of the artist tutored by sublime nature. Yet Wednesday’s actions partly counter the counterargument. Her means of earning a (meagre) living is art of a kind, intimately involved in Auckland’s city community; her fortune-telling as Madame Mystera combines theatre, story, and confessional.54 Wednesday is Hyde’s attempt to fuse the roles of mother and artist, which in another feminist narrative of a family on an island, Woolf’s To the Lighthouse (1927), rest between Mrs. Ramsay, with her flock of eight children, and Lily

52 ibid., p. 192.
53 ibid., pp 192-193.
54 Ash also points out the artistic nature of Wednesday’s work, ibid., pp 291-292.
Briscoe, the independent painter.\textsuperscript{55} Wednesday carries Mrs Ramsay's nurturing, her work for others, and her pragmatic sense (which Woolf deliberately \textit{contrasts} with Mr Ramsay's abstract philosophising) into the artistic role. Of the women who congregate for Wednesday's tea-leaf readings, Hyde writes (with a deliberate reversal of context in the final biblical allusion, which seeks to sanctify the ordinary lives):\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{quote}
Very seldom did they pay anything, but they were, in a way, the most important part of Madame Mystera's duty. They were the women who lived, moved and had their being in these back streets, with no escape at all [...] -\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Wednesday's journeys to inner urban Auckland confront a busily populated, economically stratified city with a complexity of social relations which Attica's "sky sea and goats" comment omits. Attica fails to explore her own nation thoroughly; Hyde's depiction of Wednesday's activities argues that the lives of ordinary New Zealanders provide urgent material which should be recorded. If the children are each "an extension of Wednesday's heroic self", \textsuperscript{58} then Wednesday and Attica represent those demands which each artist must reconcile: involvement within and retreat from the world.

Hyde's paper from New Zealand Author's Week in April 1936, "The Writer and His Audience", indicates just how seriously she examined the artist's public role, and it supports Wednesday's particular model. In the European name of the country, Hyde sees the possibility of a new definition of art, and the artist's relationship to his or her public:

\begin{quote}
It's [...] the new land out of the sea. Isn't it just possible that in this new land [...] we might become [...] the will of the people [...] couldn't
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} Evidence that Hyde had read Woolf appears in her article "Women Have No Star", \textit{The Press}, 5 June 1937, reprinted in \textit{DG}. Interestingly, Hyde says Woolf "laid a finger on the fringe of philosophy; but there is too much of speculation in [her] work, not enough of the calm and lofty air of abstraction." (\textit{DG}, p.205.)

\textsuperscript{56} "For in him we live, and move, and have our being [...]" (Acts of the Apostles, 17:28.)

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{WC}, pp 116-7.

\textsuperscript{58} ibid., p. 290.
we be the organ of the voice, given back to the
body, which is the people?^9

To this vision of a closer affinity between artist and nation, Hyde gives a
specifically political reading, offering a form of collective identity in direct opposition to
fascist tyranny in Europe.^^

Wednesday’s active, artistic involvement in Auckland’s economically deprived
areas seeks this envisaged unity: Attica, however, as youthful apprentice, is concerned
with technique and perfection, which Hyde deliberately exaggerates when Attica kidnaps
a Viennese choir-boy. Her ‘crime’ is another of Hyde’s mad-cap plot-twists; it is the
colonial’s hi-jacking of high art.^^ Hyde routs the earnest adherence to traditional forms
which she came to note in local writers of the 1920s-1930s.^^

The English Mr Bellister’s growing preoccupation with Wednesday is another
conduit for this impish iconoclasm. Adding to the novel’s manifold reversals of received
ideas of empire and colony as high and low culture respectively, Bellister revises the
Montaignesque negative catalogue. Instead of a lament about the new country’s lack, it
offers a critique of sedately suburbanised European civilisation:

[...an island, especially an obscure island like
Wednesday’s, could still stir his imagination [...]
only consider the things that could not happen
there. No railways. No telephones. No radios.
No contract bridge. No dressing for dinner. Not

^9 DG, p. 325.
ibid.
^^ James Bertram’s comment on the “real-world kidnapping” as a “major flaw in the
construction” seems a curious misreading; all events in the text are deflated by its presciently
postmodern, and even presciently Frameian, ending. (The Flight of the Phoenix, p. 17.)
^^ A passage which describes the choir’s music confirms Hyde’s view of art as the voice of
protest, unity and redemption: “There have been wars and rumours of wars. The singing voice
has remained at peace with God. Out of the vault it pours, making a bridge as when the
rainbow was set for covenant.” (WC, p. 199.) The reference to (Hyde’s) art here is layered: c.f.
Michele Leggott’s comment on Hyde’s games of self-concealment in her poems, through
“endless references [...] to rainbows, prisms, bridges and arcs. The rainbow is the sign of Iris,
she who connects heaven and earth.” “Opening the Archive: Hyde, Duggan and the Persistence
of Record”, Leggott and Williams (eds.), Opening the Book, p. 271. See also critical note,
NTYC, pp 288-289.
unless, dammit, the inhabitants were stark, staring mad, and didn't deserve an island.63

Akin to characters in American frontier literature and New Zealand colonial tales, Bellister feels himself transforming under the influence of the landscape and culture. “In a land where everyone perpetually intones, 'We are more English than the English,' he was rapidly becoming more New Zealandish than the New Zealanders”. The compendious inventory of all Bellister likes about the country (and which offers an alternative to his negative catalogue) leaves him realising “Something [...] had him by the hair. He was a haunted and a humbugged man.”64

Bellister’s story is a mock metamorphosis on more than one level. Hyde confidently satirises stock, nineteenth-century narratives of colonial regeneration, yet the connotations of “humbugged” also forewarn us that Wednesday will see through Bellister’s belief that his New Zealand experience has brought about a full renovation of identity.

Alongside the depiction of Bellister, various characters offer perspectives on the relationship between New Zealand and the globe, so that the novel becomes a jocular digest of New World versus Old World arguments. Giuseppe’s cousin, an Americanised Italian, escapes conscription into the Italian fascist army and visits New Zealand to “learn the maarl lesson of the decay of the Old Waarld”, aligning America and New Zealand as locations for Western culture’s rejuvenation.65 Dorset, born of an English father, struggles to reconcile familial and national loyalties. Reading the newspapers, “[h]e could never understand whether he belonged to a nation of thieves and swashbucklers (as one side declared), or to a nation of Saint Georges in golden armour, possessing bank balances and the greater part of the globe purely by a series of

63 WC, p. 101.
64 ibid., pp 161-163.
65 ibid., p. 131.
fortuitous accidents. Through the nine-year-old boy, Hyde again dramatises the colonial artist's dilemma; together Wednesday and Dorset compose a poem about Dorset's father, which leads the boy to ask, "Is it a true poem? Is England really like that - all sort of cool and peaceful and whispery, with squirrels and nobody wanting to grab?"

Wednesday's response slides tellingly into another discussion of art (and not, for example, what Dorset's father might have told Wednesday of his experience of England); this obliquely comments on the artist passing beyond a conflict between a poetically mythologised England and a supposedly inferior local reality.

The dissonance between England as the realm of ideal art, and the urgent realities of Wednesday's home, are foregrounded again when Bellister requests a visit to Wednesday's island, and proposes marriage. This potentially romantic resolution brings on an abrupt wrench in tone which is supremely effective: Hyde drops her animated comedy as her heroine commits suicide. This twist also accompanies the revelation that Wednesday's children have been elaborate inventions in a private, ongoing imaginative drama: the suicide says it is impossible for Wednesday to maintain her fiction-making alongside the role of wife, which could, of course, involve having real children. The roles of artist, and wife-and-mother, are violently separated.

Wednesday's death operates on multiple levels. It endorses her earlier debates with Attica over the development of a native art and the need to break away from convention's overweening influence. Integral to Bellister's marriage proposal, is his wish to take Wednesday away from her island (which she fears she and he will then look back on as "a stupid discarded toy") and have her emigrate to England. Wednesday's suicide rejects that option. Her visionary home is not the Arcadian England of Dorset's poetry; it was her island, where her imagination had free, epic, and theatrical range. Her

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66 ibid.  
67 ibid., p. 143.  
68 ibid.  
69 ibid., p. 274.
earlier comment to Bellister - "'The worst of it is, if I had known you years ago, I might
never have had my children.'"^70 - now takes on fiercely pointed irony. As her children
were fictional characters, she feared the loss of an indigenous art.

In Wednesday’s explanatory letter to Bellister, Hyde echoes Mansfield’s
Journal entry of 1920, on the nature of identity (headed in the 1927 edition with “The
Flowering of the Self”). Mansfield’s entry quotes and questions Shakespeare’s “To
thine own self be true”; Wednesday’s letter strikingly echoes Mansfield’s work - which
reinforces the idea that her role as a local and woman artist would be specifically at
stake were she to marry and emigrate to England.

It’s all William Shakespeare’s fault [...] 
Shakespeare, at all events, began it [...] It was
Shakespeare who in after years kept saying to me,
‘To thine own self be true.’

And then when it all went so badly - living where
I wasn’t wanted, and looking such an
insignificant plain kitchen pot, and dropping
stitches in knitted bedsocks no sane person would
have worn, anyway, I began to wonder, ‘Which
self? Which self? True to which self?’ You see,
Mr Bellister, most surface selves are such lies
 [...] I was always in bad trouble [...] with the
truth. Not so much knowing what it is as which
it is. My truths were amoebae, they had second
selves, split personalities, double faces.^71

Hyde’s use of Mansfield’s Journal entry points to fiction and the imagination as
a realm in which social relations and feminine identity can be tested; by contrast,
marriage becomes an institution which would restrict Wednesday, in a manner similar to
the domestication advocated by Brenda. The Shakespearean axiom comes from Hamlet,
drama of filial revenge, which suggests that Wednesday refuses the role of colonial child
to Bellister’s usurping, imperial fathering.^72  Wednesday senses that marriage to

^70 ibid., p. 268.
^71 ibid., p. 273.
^72 Sandbrook quotes the maxim but doesn’t source it to Hamlet (or Mansfield’s Journal).
(Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work, p. 152.)
Bellester would involve conventionalised feminine submission to his views; she notes his "tombstone effect", when "Nothing of him [...] remained extant save the smooth determination to have his way." Yet Wednesday wants intellectual independence, a fluid identity: of which her children were an expression, and which she loses under Bellester's determination to explore the "reality" of her island. (This quietly echoes the effect that Mr. Ramsay's "exactness" has on Lily Briscoe's attempts to paint in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*; "Let him be fifty feet away [...] let him not even see you, he permeated, he prevailed, he imposed himself [...] She could not see the colour; she could not see the lines [...]"

In her representation of the New Zealand woman artist separating herself from marriage and England, Hyde, by implication (albeit in a fleeting reference) relates the constant redefinition of self that Wednesday's independence allows, to the changing political relationship between New Zealand and Britain. When Wednesday pulls away from Bellester, she and her imaginary League of Nations withdraw from his England, and that aspect of him which, even in one of their most intimate moments, she senses represents the hardened phallic conqueror (bellicose/Bellester): "[...] it did not seem that a man stood there [...] A granite shaft, a dead, grey, magical thing, potent with too great a power of drawing to itself and striking out at enemies, waited in silence."

Wednesday's unexpected suicide locates Hyde's work firmly in a line of female narratives from George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) (where a rebellious Maggie drowns) to Kate Chopin's early modernist *The Awakening* (1899). Whereas in nineteenth-century romances marriage is the crucial moment around which the heroine's social and sexual decisions centre, "after which her choices and identity are lost forever", Hyde's

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73 WC, p. 260.  
74 ibid., p. 261.  
75 Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, p. 140.  
76 WC, p. 260.  
novel attempts to break away from this structure, using an aesthetic solution which has literary precedence in some earlier women writers’ efforts to feminise the traditional male Bildungsroman, in which death typically represents a failure to mature.\(^{78}\)

It has been argued of *Wednesday’s Children* that “Magic is essential for the heroine’s survival. But magic passes off [...] Worst of all, once it has gone it leaves the real world totally unchanged.”\(^{79}\) Yet the suicide is a more powerful fictional statement about the lack of options for working, single women (particularly those who are artists) in Hyde’s contemporary world than a preservation of Wednesday’s imaginary society would be. As in works like Mansfield’s “The Little Governess”, Hyde’s novel questions whether women could achieve a truly adult autonomy and maturity when not accorded equal civilian status with men. Where a utopian ending might risk deflecting a critique, the suicide makes readers consider more seriously exactly what social conditions have driven Wednesday (and Hyde) to choose this ending.\(^{80}\) Conversely, reading the suicide as “an affirmative sign”,\(^{81}\) or a liberating choice avoids the tragedy of the gesture; Wednesday’s actions are not so much a statement of “disavowal” of inadequate society, as an indication of the crushing power of social marginalisation.\(^{82}\) Neither society nor aesthetics have room for believable alternative endings; for while Wednesday’s death rejects the expatriate model, it also suggests the still tenuous survival of the local woman artist in Hyde’s era, despite Mansfield’s precedent. Or rather, Mansfield’s precedent is also at issue: Wednesday’s demise expresses fear that the struggle to reach artistic

\(^{78}\) For a description of this aspect of the male Bildungsroman, see Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield*, p. 60.


\(^{80}\) See also the returned servicemen’s discussion of a young woman’s suicide, *NTYC*, pp 269-270; they immediately relate her death to post-war, depression era socio-economic conditions.

\(^{81}\) Murray, *Never a Soul at Home*, p. 185.

\(^{82}\) Ash argues both cases, saying “[i]t is true that Hyde did not succeed in creating new alternatives for her central female figure” yet also that “Wednesday’s suicide is not a failure to live in the ‘real’ world, but rather a disavowal of a society which marginalises and trivialises female experience.” (*WC*, p. 295.)
achievement, and defiance of sexual and social conventions, may result in the woman artist's destruction.

In several of Hyde's poems, death is a powerful undertow; death and suicidal thoughts are also a deep motivating source in the texts of *The Godwits Fly* and *A Home in This World*. Thanatos is managed in *Wednesday's Children* and *The Godwits Fly* to amplify social and psychological conflicts; suicide is by no means a hasty resolution or a convenient artistic 'trick' in either novel. It speaks, instead, of agonised severance: of the individual's terrible inability to resolve competing social demands.

The closure of *Wednesday's Children*, however, is not entirely pessimistic, as Bellister absorbs Wednesday's vision. Price has argued that an imperialist Bellister wished to annexe Wednesday's island for himself; yet against this reading, by the close, he sees the landscape in Wednesday's terms. Wednesday has given the island a community memory, a new mythology, to parallel the storytelling traditions known by Maritana, her imagined helpmeet. Bellister believes that he sees Attica (that most artistic of Wednesday's children) and the novel ends:

No footprint set its beautiful shapely seal on the edge where the pale foam was sucked down into the sand. But foam and sand sprayed up together, as though the runner's foot had touched and adored them.

Confirming this more optimistic conclusion, a slightly altered version of "Paraha", from *Persephone in Winter* (1937), appears as the novel's after-word, retitled

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84 Tim Armstrong writes that "Last works are often seen by both writers and readers as significant, as bearing the stamp of death and carrying weight in a way that finds its parallel in the performative authority of a last will and testament." ("Final Gestures", in *Modern Language Quarterly* Vol. 49 No. 4, December 1988, p. 363.) In Hyde's case, there is the sense that this quality is potentially borne by several works, as 'biographical' suicide attempts, and the artistic depiction of suicide, interact at separate points in her chronological career.
86 *WC*, p. 286.
"The Poem for the Island." Its inclusion suggests that the aesthetic boundaries of fiction (be that fiction satirical, fabular, critical realist or impressionist), can not fully contain the accounts of marginalised lives that Hyde wishes to give. Despite its emphasis on the transience of each visionary moment ("All else was nomad" [line 26]), its fusion of a close focus on an indigenous form (the paraha flowers - "veined mauve petals / Sea-born convolvulus" [lines 17-18]) and the depiction of the speaker "in a white boat rocking, / Rocking and dreaming in an island place" [lines 29-30], its inclusion implies that Hyde's work (and more broadly, the literature of the 1930s) will continue where Wednesday was silenced.

An Estranged Face:

The Godwits Fly (1938)

Hyde's autobiographical novel, The Godwits Fly, overtly states the theme which informs artistic questions in Wednesday's Children. In this novel, Hyde withdraws the comic, avant-garde possibilities of Wednesday's Children, yet her prose has intensified in lyricism and poetic detail, while its sharper social realism makes her criticism of a punitive sexual morality more overt. The author's foreword characterises the sea-passage to England as a rite that initiates New Zealand youth into full adult identity.

[...] she thought, most of us here are human godwits; our north is mostly England. Our youth, our best, our intelligent, brave and beautiful, must make the long migration, under a compulsion they hardly understand; or else be dissatisfied all their lives long. They are the godwits.  

87 This poem does appear in the first edition. The changes aren't radical; the order of couplet rhymes is swapped - e.g. rung and swung - although the poem is modernised and the symbolism made less immediately feminine, as the more archaic 'spake' is changed to 'spoke' in the collected version, and the 'moon aughting' becomes the 'wind aughting'. Otherwise semantics, mood and diction are maintained.

88 TGF, p. xviii.
Hyde's novel begins in contradictions and divisions. While "most" and "mostly" are gently equivocal, the godwit image likens those who do migrate to the natural and cyclical. This pilgrimage, neither consciously willed nor a rational act, is a "compulsion they hardly understand" - where compulsion is instinct, yet carries overtones of constraint, obligation: to compel is to bring about by force, or moral necessity. The nuances of "force" may imply some resistance from the young; certainly the narrative voice demurs: "they hardly understand" is both expository and implicitly critical. In her journal, Hyde declares that this contradictory impulse, inherent to the culture, is the book's originating purpose: "I'm going to write a fairly autobiographical novel called "The Godwits Fly" ... telling about the Colonial England-hunger [...] they that depart, and they that stay home". Those who stay at home are "dissatisfied all their lives long" - the obverse side to divisions arising from the expatriate experience is the incompleteness of the colonial who fails to undertake the pilgrimage of self-discovery. The godwit compulsion becomes the history of loss from either side; not only does the country lose its best and young, either through continued absence or irrevocable change, but the country's history began in loss and absence; Hyde gives the transplanted English trees a voice which echoes immigrants seeking reconnection with their past. These historical figures receive literary treatment in Shakespeare's history plays, from Henry IV to Richard III; Hyde's England is bookish England, and yet throughout the novel, Hyde's allusions also reach beyond England, interweaving her work with an international literary tradition.

'Where is Mowbray? Where is Mortimer?'
whisper the old leaves of their history. 'Nay, and more than all these, where is Plantagenet?'

90 Sandbrook argues that the godwit motif is a "complex symbol of the search for identity" and that it relates less to the colonial England-hunger than it does to this quest. (Sandbrook, Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work, p. 5.) Yet in the novel artistic identity is worked out in specific relation to England's status as literary home.
91 TGF, p. xviii. See Pride, A Home in this World, pp 119-120, for commentary on Hyde's use of the Latin "ubi sunt" motif common in Old English poetry.
A local historical voice competes with the first; its grievances are more numerous, extending into unnamed losses:

But ours, darker, might cry, 'Where is Selwyn? Where is Rutherford? Where is Katherine, with weeds on her grave at Fontainebleau, when what she really wanted was the dark berry along our creeks? (Don't you remember? We call them Dead Man's Bread.)' Nay, and more than all these, where are our nameless, the beautiful and intelligent who went away and died, in wars and otherwise, the beautiful and intelligent who went away and hopelessly failed, or came back and were never themselves any more?

In this expanded list, Hyde dramatises the need for a reconstruction and re-ordering of the historical record: the powerfully lamenting tone questions the traditional pattern of departure. The intensity of this mourning can be explained on various levels: England's role within the family relationships developed in the novel, the autobiographical (subtextually the novel becomes an elegy for Hyde's first love, who died in England), and the political/intellectual; expatriation theoretically reinforces the bonds of empire and colony which the nationalist 1930s sought to redefine. Another elegiac stratum within the passage comes from the local literary historical citation. This recalls Mansfield's bereft dialogue over her New Zealand past, intensified by the quotation from her poem to her brother, with its image of the berry and its ominous colloquial name; Mansfield wrote "To L.H.B." after Lesley Beauchamp's expatriation and subsequent death during military training. Hyde's unequivocal attribution to Mansfield of the desire to return crucially weights the colonial record.

Although the subsequent passages try to embrace English and local history ("Passing judgements on any circumstance, compulsion, fate, is no use at all, she

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92 TGF, p. xviii.
thought. England is beautiful: this also is beautiful. They are the godwits.⁹³), the narrative voice can not rest at that point. The argument circles, reflecting the conundrum and compulsion of migration. The narrator’s perplexity comes from the sense that national self-definition is fractured or impeded by the persistent departures of the young.

In fabular, rhetorical mode, Hyde gives the land a voice:

> We are old and can wait, said the untamed soil [...] although it, more than anything else, was awake and aware of its need to be a country [...] the integration of a country from the looseness of a soil. Maybe, responded the girl ... And of course, there’s something fine [...] about having the place almost to oneself. Fine but lonely ...

> Only fools, said the sparse-ribbed rock, are ever lonely.⁹⁴

“The looseness of a soil” implies that cultural roots have not taken hold; Hyde again argues that the New Zealander’s fully developed sense of self and nation is to be defined in relation to the landscape (its essential difference from all others); although the patient voice here differs from the harsh, testing land of previous literary representations. Hyde refutes another aspect of these - i.e. concerns over the country’s cultural and physical isolation. The landscape’s “we are old” shifts tropes of a youthful colony; the final comment begins to construct an alternative paradigm of maturity for the New Zealander: “Only fools [...] are lonely”: if traditionally youth and foolishness are aligned, interpretations of New Zealand as isolating are, in fact, adolescent. Ten years later, John Mulgan’s *Report on Experience* (1947) regresses (in terms of an assertion of the equal validity of local experience) to the idea that New Zealand’s isolation is a key to the will to expatriate: “New Zealanders [...] come from the most beautiful country in the world but it is very small and very remote. After a while this isolation oppresses them and they

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⁹³ ibid.
⁹⁴ ibid., p. xix.
Mulgan’s work is clearly influenced by Hyde’s. In terms that echo the foreword to *The Godwits Fly*, he combines masculine narratives of solitary struggle with the idea of a cultural rite of passage:

Those who do not go abroad and do not travel are afflicted with the same sad restlessness [...] One way and another, those who are going and those who are staying have all the time within them this sad inner conflict and frustration.  

Yet within the first five pages of Hyde’s novel, the sense is not of isolation and loneliness, but the antithesis: i.e. the difficulty in establishing space of one’s own within colliding family dynamics. The novel opens with the Hannay family’s constant changes of house; citing these as the first experiences to shape the family and Eliza’s consciousness aligns the novel with Mansfield’s “Prelude”. As the similar prosody of the names Eliza and Kezia suggest, there are several other minor echoes of Mansfield’s stories of girlhood throughout Hyde’s novel. These details point to Hyde’s concern to establish an indigenous art; she roots her novel in a tradition by incorporating subtle memory traces of Mansfield.

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95 Mulgan, *Report on Experience*, p. 3. See Murray’s comments on Mulgan’s work as an under-realised draft. *(Never a Soul at Home*, p. 205.)
97 The social-realist and psychological aspects of the novel are successful enough that upon its re-release in a new edition nearly 40 years later, Stella Jones wrote that the mainspring of the “remarkable, perceptive” book is not the godwit hunger, but “the fierce stresses and strains of living here and now.” *(Auckland Star*, 13 July 1970.)
98 One of Eliza’s earliest memories, in which she “could see ferns growing under a doorstep, fine as green lace, and above them a little window of sad blue glass” (*TGF* p. 2), recalls the scene of Kezia and the coloured glass window in “Prelude”; Kezia and Eliza both witness an adult man killing a small animal (*TGF*, p. 63); there are two unattainable toy houses in Hyde’s novel, which recalls Mansfield’s “The Dolls’ House”; Eliza’s first dance suggests Mansfield’s “Her First Ball”; her journey to Day’s Bay Mansfield’s “At the Bay”. After the latter, Eliza thinks of writing about the beach: and comes up with the first line “Out of the Tower of Babel I save the one word ‘Greeting’” (*TGF*, p. 120), the rhythms and syntax of which recall the Shakespearean epigraph to Mansfield’s story “This Flower”: “Out of this nettle danger, we pluck the flower, safety.” *(Henry IV Part I*, Act II, Sc. iii, line 10 (Hotspur)). This is also the epitaph J.M. Murry chose for Mansfield’s grave. For other links to Mansfield, see Murray, *Never a Soul at Home*, p. 189.
The thematically layered novel has the basic chronological progression of a story of growth, as both Künstlerroman and family chronicle. Yet Hyde is less concerned with narrative tension and dramatic revelation than in *Wednesday's Children*; here she writes a dense, textured, descriptive prose, which in its adjectival richness and highly wrought imagery recalls her métier as poet.99

The types of memory that Hyde enumerates at the close of one chapter and the opening of another (e.g. Christmas Eve, a summer sky, sweets, hopscotch, tonsillitis, sewing, jam-making) are evoked with a uniform intensity. The formal divides do not exploit dramatic hiatus, but could come between any of a number of such recollections; this offers a structural mimesis of memory's idiosyncratic selectivity, and gives a sense of plenitude and significance to Eliza's background (similar to the aesthetic treatment of childhood in other modernist works - Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), or Woolf's *Moments of Being* (1939)). Where Hyde's work differs from Joyce's Künstlerroman, but reflects the structure of a Mansfield story, is in her passing in and out of first and third person, and in the fragmented, democratic movement from Eliza's consciousness to that of other characters, which expands on the complexity of the themes, and strengthens our sense that Eliza is formed by a group dynamic.100

Although Hyde's preface expresses troubled incomprehension at the youthful desire to leave New Zealand, the first chapter instantly suggests the origins of that restlessness. While for the children "their migrations were no trouble, but adventure", for their Australian born mother, Augusta, who has also lived in South Africa, living in New Zealand means a slow process of adjusting to the moeurs and manners of a new society.101 Questions of national identity and allegiance become intimately bound up in

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99 See also Sandbrook, *Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work*, p. iii.
100 This negates Sandbrook's opinion that "attention is paid unremittingly to Eliza herself" (ibid., p. 150.) Hyde writes chapters through the points of view of John, Augusta, Carly and Timothy.
101 *TGF*, p. 1.
family loyalties in the novel, as Augusta’s and John’s marital conflicts are both constituted in and iterated by arguments about British Empire. Soon their arguments come to reflect the major political differences in New Zealand in the 1920s - Augusta’s pro-Empire ideas align her with the Reform Party, while John’s increasingly passionate working-class sympathies align him with the Labour left.

Augusta said, ‘Dear old England,’ and had been longing and longing to go there ever since she was a little girl [...] but then she got married, and had Carly, Eliza and Sandra instead of finishing up in London. John, though he had been in England at school, and would show them pictures of forests and cottages if he felt in the mood, said, ‘Curse your bloody British Empire,’ when he was angry.

Britain is the ‘mother’ country, as it represents Augusta’s longing for self-fulfilment: thus to side for Empire, to wish to expatriate, is to participate in a primal family conflict. Augusta’s dream of England and a “white house like a Greek cross, her two blue vases sitting on the mantleshelf” is recounted several times, until Hyde writes on the point of Augusta’s relinquishing of her ambition that

All her life from girlhood, she understood now, had never been lived at all, unless a woman is nothing but the machinery for producing and manipulating her children. In England the white house stood empty somewhere, the little clenched fists of bracken thrusting up beside its paths, its windows like golden blinded eyes.

Augusta’s dream is a wish for material comfort not had with John in New Zealand; it is also a dream of the aesthetic, as her imagined homemaking reveals the desire to express herself through colour, shape, form and taste. Here Hyde repeats the trope (familiar from ‘Aien’ and Mansfield, and which Wednesday’s Children was written ‘against’) of

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102 Sinclair (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand, pp 185-210. See also Rawlinson’s introduction, TGF.
103 TGF, p. 45.
104 ibid., p. 178.
expatriation to England as a realisation of the artistic feminine self. The white house in England is Augusta’s dream of escape from - and belated recognition of - biological, emotional and economic constrictions; the two nations are shorthand symbols for the present conditions which she struggles against, and the conditions of a desired future.\footnote{Augusta’s ideal England is tangentially linked to the visions of escape recurrent throughout Hyde’s first three collections of poetry. Rawlinson notes in her introduction to Hyde’s posthumous \textit{Houses By The Sea} (1952) that Hyde used several “symbols of that visionary country she had long sought under so many names - Nirvana, Sarras, Camelot, Ultima Thule” (to which we can add Arden, Avilion and Avalon.) (Rawlinson (ed.), \textit{Houses by the Sea}, p. 16.) While Hyde’s journalism tackles specific material conditions with a view to social reform, the poetry doesn’t envisage a political Arcadia where perfected social relations are achieved, but liberating death, release from consciousness, or from the writer’s vocational strivings. See “Nirvana”, “Meeting in Sarras”, “Eden Gates”, “Freedom”, “Prayer for a Woman” in \textit{Persephone in Winter} (1937). These poems argue against Wevers’ view that “[i]t is not an escape from the human race that [Hyde’s work] evidences.” (\textit{SP}), p. xiv. At times Hyde’s urgent sense of the faults in society becomes a wish for self-dissolution.}

Augusta’s children gradually come to an acceptance of place which she never fully achieves. Augusta berates Carly for leaving a secretarial post for maternity nursing (“‘If you saved, you could be home to England. Why, when I was your age, and with no more education than a servant girl, I’d worked my way half round the world’”) but for Carly there are other definitions of success. “Carly didn’t want England, she wanted the nearest thing to the baby Trevor Sinjohn hadn’t condescended to give her.”\footnote{\textit{TGF}, p. 221.}

Eliza’s journey to this point is more complex than Carly’s. For Eliza, as the more literary daughter, Augusta’s dream has a more pressing influence, although the origins of her romanticising of England can also be found beyond family context and literature; Eliza’s colonial childhood is destitute of an indigenous education:

\begin{quote}
Something there had been, something delicate, wild and far away. But [...] sticking a dead twig of it into a hole in the playground, or a rotten poem in the school journal, only made it sickly and unreal. You didn’t really have to think about it - Maoris, godwits, bird-of-my-native-land [...] History began slap-bang in England [...]\footnote{ibid., p. 33.}
\end{quote}
The realisation that England's history is not fully synonymous with New Zealand's is not a liberating knowledge; it is a loss of innocence, recognition of an original deception. The child's value system is still, even in the moment of recognition, permeated by what now seem the false standards.

You were English and not English. It took time to realise that England was far away [...] One day, with a little shock of anger, you realized that there were no robins and no snow, and you felt cheated; nothing else was quite as pretty.¹⁰⁸

The influence of these standards of beauty and value persist in Eliza's dreams of England and her poetry, which, although she calls them "horrifying little jingles with Union Jacks on their breasts and laurel-leaves in their hair",¹⁰⁹ assert her individuality within the competitive dynamics of the family; the impulse to write "was the first thing she had ever had that she could truly call her own."¹¹⁰ As Eliza develops this separate sense of self, the local landscape makes a stronger impression, yet there remains a significant split between her vision of the 'natural' self, and the persona she expresses through poetry. Eliza exhibits aspects of what Jonathan Crewe describes as "the symptamatology of the colonist-subject" where an "intense animus towards the culture of origin" (c.f. 'shock of anger', 'you felt cheated') "and a desire for local identity, contradictorily [co-exist] with a desire to reclaim a share of the lost cultural goods and re-enter the realm of originary privilege."¹¹¹ Demonstrating a "desire for local identity", Eliza imagines a symbiosis between self and land, in a mythic metamorphosis (presaging Frame's Toby and the Lost Tribe from *The Edge of the Alphabet*). Hyde's passage

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 34.
¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 71.
¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 72.
suggests a form of romantic primitivism: the return to a 'natural' relation to the land which Eliza's European education has suppressed.\textsuperscript{112}

The bush loves Eliza, wants her. [...] 'I'll run away,' she thought, 'I'll run away, live with the bush and never be turned out. It wants me, if nobody else does. Its berries will fall deep on to the soil, my soil, and the fantails come in surprised graceful arcs straight at me, and when they have found a twig behind my eyes they will sit there, preening themselves.'\textsuperscript{113}

Yet this mindscape exists separately from her art. Instead, she writes imitative poems such as her "crib from John Masefield's 'West Wind'", representing England (realm of originary privilege) as Arcadia and panacea.\textsuperscript{114} Eliza's perception confuses the lyrical expression of poetry, which articulates feeling suppressed within her family, and the vehicles (i.e. England, English nature) which serve as her poetic tools. Tellingly, she fails to write about her first intense friendship with the self-sufficient Simone, who has grown up near the untouched bush. In response to one of Eliza's poems, Simone asks, "'Why England, Eliza, why pain?'" and Eliza responds "'Wouldn't we be different there, more ourselves?'"\textsuperscript{115} She has adopted Augusta's dream, seeking a resolution for inner divisions by projecting a fantasy of wholeness onto England. Thus the scene in which the friends stray together into the bush may be taken as the inception of Eliza's transformation from the longing state of "colonial England-hunger" to an ability to focus on immediate concerns. The landscape is accorded a new value, as the setting against which Eliza's first important emotional tie outside her family is strengthened. The lush,

\textsuperscript{112} Eliza's response to the land is reinforced by Augusta's recognition that in dreaming of an unattainable England, she has sacrificed the opportunity to redefine herself through expanding her range of local knowledge. The recognition points to the potential role of Maori mythology in providing narrative traditions which incorporate the geographical inflections of a New Zealander's experience. (\textit{TGF}, pp 178-179.)

\textsuperscript{113} ibid., p. 89.

\textsuperscript{114} ibid., p. 100.

\textsuperscript{115} ibid., p. 101.
Hardyesque description, with its overtones of fertility and ripeness, also corresponds to the youth and potential of the girls:

Moss cushions squelched with bright dew under their feet, sometimes spurting up in a bright, tall jet. Out of the Manuka bushes [...] were shaken great globules of rain, and millions of grey moths, as fine as silver powder. They fell into the girls' hair and beat on their eyes, they were part of their skin, part of the thought one thinks and leaves behind, only to find it waiting at the very end of the trail.\footnote{ibid., p. 104. This particularly recalls descriptive passages in Hardy's \textit{Tess of the d'Urbervilles} (1891) - presaging, perhaps, Hyde's treatment of the unhappy consequences of Eliza's sexual initiation.}

In a variation on narratives of regenerative identity based on the central character going solo in the bush, this scene with Eliza and Simone strengthens affective social bonds.\footnote{See Mark Williams, \textit{Leaving the Highway}, for a discussion of the narrative line alternative to Hyde's. Pride notes that where in Mulgan's \textit{Man Alone} male community "is produced in reaction to the hostility of the land itself", Hyde suggests "an affinity with the land can start to build a specifically local sense of community." (Pride, \textit{A Home in This World}, n. 74, p. 120.)} While their relationship so far has been based on moderate rivalry, Eliza feigns unconsciousness to save Simone from her father's wrath over how long they have wandered away together. The girls' fidelity to one another consequently survives many tests; from petty sexual jealousies to Eliza's crisis over her illegitimate baby.

These bush scenes, Simone's influence, and Eliza's winning of financial independence through journalism, are perhaps what we are to take as the things which enable Eliza to say - unexpectedly in the past tense - that she was once a godwit, and only "sometimes" still is, when she meets Timothy Cardew, her first love.\footnote{TGF, p. 165.} The unexpectedness of this announcement is typical of the consciously loose and fluid narrative structure, in which Hyde makes several surprising adjustments of focus: there may also be an intentionally troubling subtext, as it is soon evident that Eliza's relationship with Timothy intersects painfully with a residual inner debate over her
colonial and artistic identity. Timothy becomes the novel’s strongest representative of the expatriate theme; his departure for Birmingham overlays Eliza’s remaining “colonial England-hunger” with an intimate sense of loss.

Although Eliza has won herself a professional liberation still remarkable in the era (at “seventeen, enterprise and scraps of rhyme got her a job […] scribbling notes for a little paper on Woman (of whom she knew nothing she would have told)”\(^{119}\)), the social inequalities between genders are increasingly highlighted in the novel. The difference between Timothy’s freedoms and Eliza’s position as a single woman are a bitterly poignant element in their discussions of his intended expatriation. In Timothy’s explanation of his dreams, Europe becomes representative of life, New Zealand of death (recalling Mansfield’s adolescent letters and Journal). Travel is his consuming ambition, a meaning in itself: “In his dreams, Timothy was the complete godwit, always boarding ships for London, working his passage among the roaring black and gold gizzards of furnaces.”\(^{120}\) Although Timothy confesses that he loves Eliza “as much as I can love any girl”\(^{121}\) he wants “to travel and live […] I’ve got to prowl over Europe, and sleep out with fuzzy tramps, and steal turnips, and live as Jack London lived. If I don’t do that, I might as well not have been born.”\(^{121}\) When he refuses Eliza’s companionship, he relegates her to this metaphorical death, trivialising her ambitions and similar wish to travel. Their dialogue runs -

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"I can come too"
"You can’t, a woman couldn’t."
"I’m not a woman, not for ordinary purposes."
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\(^{119}\)ibid., p. 139. Hyde’s bracketed comment points to the cultural censorship to which Eliza must submit in her work as a journalist. It also suggests articles such as Hyde’s “The Cost of Being Beautiful” (1931), which shows both the expectations held of women journalists, and Hyde’s ability to subvert standard images of women. She mocks her subject, making clear the financial and physical difficulties of “keeping up” appearances. See DG, pp 181-183; also the editorial commentary, p. 92, on Hyde’s deceptively ‘sweet’ opening paragraphs.

\(^{120}\)TGF, pp 123-124.

\(^{121}\)ibid., p. 164.

\(^{122}\)ibid., p. 165.
Timothy laughs, and agrees, as long as Eliza puts up her hair and acts as his cabin boy: thirty years after Mansfield’s emigration to Britain, Hyde’s novel depicts an unmarried woman travelling for adventure and experience, as an inversion of the norm. (Although in terms of the decade in which the novel is actually set, this would be twenty years after Mansfield’s expatriation; in this sense Hyde is writing an historical novel.) Timothy’s eventual solo journey indicates that the masculine model of adventurer still dominates.

Where Timothy’s travels embody the social freedoms remaining restricted to women, the final reason which he gives for his desired pilgrimage indicates persistent beliefs in the colonial artist’s limitations. He manages to work his passage to England on board ship, excusing the strike-breaking and betrayal of the working men whom he has ideologically supported until now, with “Well, I’ve got to be a poet and a sculptor - just as important as your being a seaman and a striker - and I’ve grabbed this while it was going.”

What in Hyde’s foreword was the depiction of expatriation as a rite of passage marking entry into full adulthood, has additionally become an initiation into full artistic identity.

Yet significantly, once Timothy is on board, and “the great dream, the England dream, became solid and true”, his immediate impulse is to narrate his own, extremely localised story. In an extended passage of declamatory rhetoric, combining lyricism and cooling irony, part interior monologue, part invocation of London as patriarchal Emperor, Timothy seeks affirmation and recognition. His manner simultaneously suggests servitude, and the vigorous wish to affirm a separate national persona:

A barbarian I come to you, O Caesar, smelling of gorse and the rank fleece of sheep, able to tell you of a red-flowering tree in my own land, of winds stalking in the flax like the great lost bird, the moa, and of a green weapon-stone whose cold

123 ibid., p. 180.
touch is more beautiful than the kiss of a woman. \textsuperscript{124}

Timothy - like Attica - omits his urban experience and his education in this description: he erases those replications of British culture upon which Pakeha New Zealand's heritage (i.e. much of his own upbringing) is based, and which impelled his desire to explore ancestral origins. In listing rural, indigenous forms and Maori artefacts, he creates an expansive picture of the New Zealand which represented dearth and death to him before he travelled. Expatriation brings about a repatriation of perspective and identity. His enumeration continues: a cultural genealogy including natural phenomena, and activities that emphasise the colony's self-sufficiency (impis, toi-toi, boat-building, oysters, campfires, ambergris, a cinnabar mine, a sulphur island, an iron-sand beach) then asks, "If I come before you now, Caesar, and roll these discoloured pearls out of the piece of beaten flax in which they are wrapped, will you not look up, satiate though you are?"\textsuperscript{125}

The latter combines two stereotypes of colonisation: first, that the New World forms are impure, rough, unfinished, and second, that they are potentially rejuvenating to the jaded Old World. (This of course is also an economic fact regarding the relationship between empire and colony, where raw materials and new commodities were used to boost European markets.) While the passage has a supplicant tone, Timothy’s journey is finally that of a pilgrimage of self-discovery.\textsuperscript{126} He believes the trip will be his

\textsuperscript{124} ibid., p. 181.
\textsuperscript{125} ibid., p. 182.
\textsuperscript{126} Sandbrook argues that Hyde's references to Tacitus' account of Caesar's galleys colonising Britain and Africa indicates Hyde's view that it is not "Eurocentrism or an inability to come to terms with the New Zealand environment which makes New Zealanders go to England, but some fundamental human need to partake in an enterprise greater than oneself." (Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work, p. 173.) Yet Eliza's response to Timothy's journey clearly refutes the view that his travels have been made in the wholly admirable spirit of "service motivated by idealism and love." (ibid.)
apotheosis, enabling him to return transformed: “in six months he’d be back, crowned and bronzed with adventure.” 127

In Chapter Seventeen, we learn that Eliza cannot accept this notion of the triumphant return. She “had burned Timothy’s two letters from London, because in both he had said that he was coming back to her, and that was more than she could bear.” 128

Although she still loves Timothy, his promised return precludes her own embarkation. Eliza refuses the classical role of female lover as patient Penelope, and so defies Timothy’s limiting and categorising of her because of gender - those essentialising beliefs from which he was unable to escape in his earlier, discarded efforts to sculpt a woman’s form. 129

Timothy’s expatriation as an indication of men’s greater social freedoms interacts with each of the very different responses from Eliza’s parents, when she is forced to travel to Australia alone:

Augusta’s shoes were hurting her, but […] she had put on her best because Eliza’s going to Sydney, where she might really strike it rich, was a kind of festive event; and John, uneasy, worried, thin in his shabby suit, was muttering under his breath, ‘I can’t understand her - can’t understand her at all. Why can’t she stay home and behave, like any other girl?’ 130

Augusta’s optimism reflects her life-long dreams of escape, and her ambitions for her daughters to achieve a career success denied to her generation of women. John’s response reinforces Timothy’s view of women’s travel as an illicit freedom. Eliza’s departure is seen as rebellious, not as a shared family success; good girls stay put: women and domesticity are mutually identified. Here sexism has a stronger control of

127 TGF, p. 182.
128 ibid., p. 189.
129 ibid., p. 146. Hyde’s Journal [193-] uses the classical analogy. When Harry Sweetman (unnamed here) promises to return after his travels, Hyde burns his letters and writes “my name was not Ariadne or Penelope” (NZ MSS 412 A, Auckland Public Libraries, p. 36.)
130 TGF, p. 196.
social relations than class politics; Augusta, upholder of conservative institutions of empire and church, envisages a future of equality between men and women, but John, supporter of socialist revolutionary change, cannot shake free from beliefs in gender-specific roles. The irony behind each of these reactions is that Eliza’s journey is a form of social exile: her departure is a reaction to the ostracism she would experience were she to bear her illegitimate baby within her home community.

The conditions which bring about Eliza’s temporary expatriation exacerbate her feeling of alienation upon arrival in Sydney: there is none of Timothy’s exuberance or vigorous self-discovery; only the isolation of her concealed pregnancy. Pride reads Hyde’s descriptions of the Australian wild and Sydney as a means of securing “New Zealand national identity as whole and coherent [through] the projection of anxiety about the nature of the colonial onto Australia.”131 The dislocations of context in Sydney, however, are considerably aggravated by Eliza’s pregnancy, and the difficulty of adjusting to its physical and emotional changes. Pride also argues that “The city of Sydney is represented as threatening […] the fear at points becomes paranoid or hysterical.”132 Yet the text - and Eliza - consciously acknowledge the distorting projection of inner demons. Of the confusion, exhaustion and the “orgy of cowardice” Eliza undergoes negotiating her way around Sydney, Hyde writes that Eliza

Dimly […] realized, ‘I wouldn’t feel like this if I weren’t ill.’ But at hand there was no relief except the bright flagrant colours of the flowers, lovely Australian colours, piled high on handcarts […]

It was a nightmare, but it had the saving grace of almost complete unreality: to be all the time in a daze, heavy and stupid, too heavy to save yourself.133

132 ibid.
133 TGF, pp 197-202.
The blurring of inner and outer realities (as with other treatments of expatriation in this study) is symptomatic of the degree of psychological adaptation which Eliza must make: to the role of social pariah, as well as to geographical context. The overseas journey becomes a symbolic re-enactment of society's expulsion of the unmarried mother - Eliza both castaway and outcast. \(^{134}\)

Hyde's deliberate use of the active tense ("At nights Timothy came back in a ship"), and the avoidance of any otherwise direct statement that Eliza is dreaming, both mimics the experienced crossover of timezones, and intensifies the expression of feeling:

> At nights Timothy came back in a ship [...] The ship's cabin had the old furze smell of his tweed coat, the one coat Eliza had ever seen him wear. There was no quarrel between them, though everything was known: only the quick, ecstatic flinging back into old companionship, old laughing love. But somehow they were never able to land, though they could see the streets steep in front of them, black and silver, wet with moonlight as with heavy scouring rain. \(^{135}\)

Eliza's expatriation causes a resurgence of memory, more sensuously real than her boarding-house environment; pregnancy and the move overseas exaggerate her separation from love and the closeness of a shared sensibility. The imagery in this passage forcefully recalls the final four paragraphs of Mansfield's "The Wind Blows" (first collected in 1920): Hyde's ship also becomes a symbol of separation and loss, foreshadowing Eliza's miscarriage and Timothy's death.

In an expansion of the novel's discussion of artistic issues, Eliza feels the sudden return of the creative impulse upon the death of her baby.

Eliza, still heavily drugged, recognised in her mind an old companion. She felt neither happy

\(^{134}\) Jean Rhys (1894-1979), a contemporary of Hyde's, opens *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), a novel about expatriation from the West Indies to England, with a similar trope: "Sometimes it was as if I were back there and as if England were a dream. At other times England was the real thing and out there was the dream, but I could never fit them together." (*Voyage in the Dark* in *The Early Novels of Jean Rhys*, p. 17.)

nor unhappy, merely still [...] When she was alone, words ran in her mind, measured themselves [...] It was years since her poems had fallen into a foolish little rubble of shards and ashes [...] This was [...] the old power back; but with a stronger face, an estranged face, it sat down in the house of her mind.

Hyde argues for the lyrical voice that speaks out of specific material conditions: the personal, the local, are the source of originality in art. While the “estranged face” suggests the emotional distance between the past and present self, and links this impulse to Eliza’s recent experience of alienation, both as an expatriate and as a ‘scarlet’ woman, a darker implication in this vision of intense crisis is that the child’s death releases Eliza into the artistic role. Wednesday’s ability to combine the roles of artist and mother was fictitious; here the ‘real’ baby’s death allows Hyde to move partially beyond the contemporary paradigm of women’s social maturation involving “initiation into descent” as they “become vessels [...] not borne aloft by the boat that carries them, but themselves bearing and carrying: childbearing.” Subsequently, Eliza’s initiation into social roles will be as a poet, freed from the role of descent which for her was also the potential social descent of the deemed ‘fallen’ woman, and the threatened economic descent of the single mother into poverty.

It takes yet another death for Hyde to work through the theme of the coming-into-being of the woman artist. Past criticism has found the end of the novel “cobbled up” and “not worked out”; more recently it has been argued that “the godwit theme” finishes when it leads “Timothy to his death and Eliza to the Sydney slums” to bear her

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137 Sandbrook reads the death of the baby as “the traumatic event in [Eliza’s] life which has awakened her to grief but also to pity and understanding.” (Sandbrook, Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work, p. 244.
child; similarly that "the abandonment of the godwit theme demonstrates that that particular way is lost." Yet Eliza's brief expatriation is clearly a crucible of experience, and a fulcrum for Hyde's exploration of gender issues; it still has been aesthetically necessary in her narration of the development of the artistic consciousness. Eliza's journey most directly differs from Timothy's in two ways. First, in its enactment of her need to escape a conservative sexual morality, and second, in its opposition to the motives behind his expatriation and the way these reflect his attitudes to artistic practice. He desires to leave in order to forge closer links with European tradition, and in deference to the English (and American - c.f. Jack London) artistic scenes as culturally superior to the colonial. Similarly, his sculptures have been formed less out of experience than from abstract ideals. Thus while his death in Birmingham is a specific, personal loss for Eliza, it also becomes symbolic on the level of the novel's arguments over artistic voice. Timothy chose England as 'life' over the metaphorical death of New Zealand, and Europe as artistic centre over New Zealand's marginality: a choice which becomes his real death. Eliza, left behind, emerges from a separate journey, and a breakdown after the loss of her baby and Timothy, to write her first collection of poetry. Her artistic achievement contradicts Reid's Nietzschean reading which holds that "Timothy is one of the few people [...] strong enough to make the symbolic journey of self-liberation [...]" while Eliza "never finds [...] an exit from her static condition because she lacks the will to do so." Eliza's recovery from the breakdown is not directly portrayed in the novel, but Chapter 23, which focuses on the public reception of her collection, implies that the writing and healing processes are linked. Where Eliza's discussions of her poetry thus far have centred on its lack of robustness and contemporary relevance, the publication of

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140 NTYC, p. 276.  
142 Reid, Fiction and the Great Depression, p. 114.
her collection suggests that these issues have been resolved. During an argument between John Hannay and a bookstore manager over the display of Eliza’s book, which the manager insists will not sell precisely because it is “a local production”, the book falls open upon a version of “The Farmer’s Wife” from Hyde’s *The Desolate Star*. From her Yeatsian phase, its alignment with Irish bardic models suggests Eliza’s nascent attempts to separate from literary England, while the content concerns the division between a woman’s ambitions and the demands of “menial needs and base” which have led to her “forsaken quest”.\(^\text{143}\) The portrait suggests Eliza’s mother: the hounding domesticity and straitened finances which disable her dreams of England. This understated reference to the politics of Eliza’s family household reminds us that Eliza’s generation of women has at least begun, to achieve social freedoms at home which for Augusta were projected into a fantasy of self-realisation overseas. The novel ends with an even more significant assertion of Eliza’s vision; it closes with her still in New Zealand, and focuses on a moment of her empathy for the ordinary citizen. Eliza’s capacity for love has changed from her youthful passion for Timothy, through loss, expatriation, back-migration, breakdown, and the reparations of art, to an embracing, humanitarian love of the community. The scene of men huddled together on the waterfront evokes the depression of the 1930s; their similarity to John Hannay recalls his socialist activism and anti-empire views:

> They were old enough to be Eliza's father, few of them had shaved, their clothes were hopelessly battered, and their odd disjointed thoughts about their homes and life's work were the hermitages in which they dwelt. [...] Presently one of them got up and slouched away home [...] When she reached the doors of her lodging and stopped, his footsteps still went on [...] They would go on for ever, and she stand on the pavement, smiling and listening.\(^\text{144}\)

\(^{143}\) *TGF*, pp 229 and 228 respectively. \(^{144}\) ibid., p. 236.
This paragraph suggests Ehza’s work will treat the specific economic and
spiritual conditions of the urban poor (she offers a female and local ‘Jack London’ to
Timothy’s thwarted desire to model himself on the American expatriate.\textsuperscript{145} ) Her art,
encompassing local issues, accepts its social responsibility; Eliza’s debate over the
legitimacy of New Zealand concerns is settled.\textsuperscript{146} The final scene suggests Hyde’s
novels about Douglas Stark, representative of the underprivileged, ordinary man.\textsuperscript{147}

Yet Ehza’s progress from adolescent mimic to published artist still has involved
a temporary journey from home. What her brief expatriation and Timothy’s hold in
common, is that each is enabled, through their departures, to emotionally relocate to New
Zealand. The inclusion of the desire to return, Eliza’s actual back-migration, and her
implicit ‘cleansing of perception’ (her sight of the infinite in the diurnal), reconcile the
overseas journey with the premises of contemporary literary nationalism. Eliza is
Wednesday resurgent, the woman artist who has overcome the dilemmas inherent in the
model of success represented by Katherine Mansfield. \textit{The Godwits Fly} “offers an

\textsuperscript{145} Jack London might well have been chosen by Timothy as a biographical model because
London himself includes New Zealand and the “South Seas”, in his work. E.g. London’s
autobiographical novel, \textit{Martin Eden} (1909), describes Eden’s journeys to Hawau, Tahiti, and
the Marquesas, and at one point, Eden and cohorts discuss “everything from labour conditions
in New Zealand to Henry James.” (Sinclair (ed ), \textit{Martin Eden} by Jack London, p. 373.) Note
that \textit{Martin Eden}, predating Hyde’s \textit{WC}, is another work which ends with the drowning by
suicide of its artist protagonist.

\textsuperscript{146} See Rawlinson’s discussion of the ending in Hankin (ed ), \textit{Critical Essays on the New
Zealand Novel}, p. 58; also Pride, \textit{A Home in this World}, p. 134 and Ash, \textit{Narrating a Female
Subjectivity}, pp 47 and 242. All argue that the closure asserts the local voice over the godwit
theme. Yet Ash argues that Eliza has accepted the human isolation that the role of female
artist necessitates. (ibid. p. 242.)

\textsuperscript{147} Both Curnow and Hyde cite the depression as an era which forced New Zealanders to focus
on local conditions more intently. See Curnow’s introduction to \textit{The Penguin Anthology of
New Zealand Verse}, and Hyde’s article “The Singers of Loneliness” in \textit{DG}. \textit{NTYC}
also deals with one of the godwits who “went away [...] and came back and [was] never
[himself] any more”. The (Robert) Laurence Binyon quotation from “For the Fallen” in the
title is ironic; in this sequel to \textit{PTH}, Stark is condemned to economic penury during the
depression, and irrevocably changed after the war, as are concepts of gender-identity
following the soldiers’ long absence from home. Through Stark’s itinerant work, Hyde charts
events and phrases in national politics which offer up the novel as a form of epic; a master
narrative of the New Zealand social formation which, unlike traditional epics, doesn’t pretend
to fix the values of the society it portrays, but exposes them in the midst of tumultuous
redefinition.
enquiry typical of women's plot: can the heroine survive her own growth?" and despite attenuating sacrifices made during that journey of growth, it answers yes.\textsuperscript{148}

\textbf{Not Here Our Sands:}

\textbf{Hyde's Poetry after Expatriation}

Eliza survives; yet the incomplete memoir \textit{A Home in this World} (1937) reminds us that alongside Hyde's discovery of 'home' as artistic material, there is, throughout her oeuvre, the distinct sense of alienation of women within their 'home' society: "I know now what I am looking for. It is a home in this world. I don't mean four walls and a roof on top, though even these I never had."\textsuperscript{149} There is an artistic clumsiness in this work which separates it from her crafted fiction (and as it is also incomplete, I omit a full literary-critical commentary here, although it offers ample matter for discussion). Yet it does become a powerful historical document testifying to the pain caused by a morality which holds that women's sexual activity must be licensed by marriage and 'home-making'.

In his introduction to this work, Derek Challis has characterised Hyde's departure from the society she depicts in her autobiography not as a rejection of New Zealand, nor as a desire for reconnection with cultural or ancestral origins, but as something that has transmuted in form to become a necessary rite of passage for local

See Sandbrook, \textit{Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work}, pp 245ff, for a discussion of Hyde's long, elusively aphoristic series of prose-poems, \textit{The Book of Nadath}, and its relationship to \textit{TGF}. Sandbrook argues that the repetition of the godwit trope in \textit{The Book of Nadath} supports his view that it is a metaphor for self-discovery. In "The Far Flyers", the godwits speak to the false prophet Nadath, offering to act as envoys of knowledge between hemispheres and peoples. Part of Nadath's message to the people of Siberia is a paradox characteristic of classical oracular pronouncements: he advocates both journeys and rootedness - saying "Tell them there is a green sea past the white wastes, and the spirit shall set out: there comes a time when the prison melts"; yet also "it is good to grow deep: her minerals are not known in the earth, nor the colour of flowers found out, unless the roots search well." See Leggott (ed.), \textit{The Book of Nadath} (1937), pp 38-39.  
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{AHitW}, p. 10.
recognition. In contrast to Stephen Fender’s study of first generation emigrants to the USA, for Hyde in the 1930s, and Challis in the 1980s, back-migration is not an admission of failure, but a triumphant return:

She hoped, as have so many other New Zealanders, that the journey would bring recognition, and also that she would be able to return at the end of the great adventure [...] 150

This reading receives its clearest evidence not in Hyde’s fiction, but in a piece of her journalism from 1937, a year prior to The Godwits Fly. “To England in the Galley” recounts at least ten examples of the author who has gone abroad, permanently or otherwise, and highlights only gain from expatriation. Aesthetic merit, publishing and public appreciation of the work get a back seat - Hyde’s argument is based on biography alone, and travel equals success. (She writes of Geoffrey de Montalk, for example, “He hasn’t had so much success with the publishers as the others, but perhaps had more fun” and she says that he is “still going reasonable [sic] strong in England.” 151) Hyde both transcribes and reinforces an example for the New Zealand writer - one where the adventure of travel, not the oeuvre, makes the artistic reputation.

This article reinforces issues of local reception raised in Chapter 23 of The Godwits Fly. Despite the perception of the disabling gap between heavily Anglicised literature and life in the colonial context, the New Zealand writer is still compelled to travel overseas because of the public’s view of art. Although The Godwits Fly expressed anxieties about the necessity for the overseas pilgrimage, the journey away can still be made in hope - away from the known confinements of home, towards the possibilities of positive change. 152

150 AHITW, p. xviii.
151 DG, p. 333.
152 Kirpal argues in The Third World Novel of Expatriation that readings of positive change are “not properly accounted for in the post-colonial vocabulary of dislocation”. (p. 3.)
Yet even after her expatriation, home haunts Hyde’s consciousness. This is clear from her long poem sequence *Houses by the Sea*.\(^{153}\) My discussion of this phase of Hyde’s work, again, because of space restrictions, has to be confined to this sequence and to her poem “Katherine Mansfield”. Hyde’s poetic oeuvre is both uneven and characteristically diverse, even in this period, often cited as the modernisation of her poetic style. I discuss two works, therefore, which are representative of Hyde’s talents - and honourable failures - as a poet. My decision to limit this section also reflects my feeling that fiction allowed Hyde greater and more successful experimentation. Her technical skills are heightened when she dramatises relationships and the social spaces between distinctive characters; “Houses by the Sea”, in fact, is successful partly because the sequence allows her to do just this.

Whereas Hyde’s trajectory differs from Mansfield’s (modernist) discovery and appreciation of home though its loss, travel and expatriation do involve a re-examination of her subject.\(^{154}\) *Houses by the Sea* is divided into three major sections - “The Beaches”, “The Houses” and “The People”. Within each are further divisions; there are seven discrete poems in “The Beaches”, eight in “The Houses”, and five in “The People” - a structure which gives a sense of expansion then receding towards final closure. Although Hyde repudiated what she felt was the esoteric intellectualism of modernists such as Pound, the non-narrative sequence of “recurrent imagery and themes, lexical echoes and varied tones” can be seen as “a modernist speciality.”\(^{155}\) (c.f. Pound’s *Cantos* (1917-1970), or Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922)) The series has a loose organisation, in which the changing metres, rhyme schemes, differing stanzaic

\(^{153}\) Rawlinson and Wevers tell us that Hyde repeatedly revised the sequence overseas: see Rawlinson (ed.), *Houses By the Sea*, by Robin Hyde, and SP.


arrangements and lengths of individual poems, convey capaciousness, diversity, and a multiplicity of angles taken by the unifying speaking voice. (This partially recalls Hyde’s shifting narrative technique in *The Godwits Fly*, which created a democratic perspective, the separate voices acknowledging competing views of the same incidents.) The detail markedly contrasts with Hyde’s earlier treatment of a colonial childhood in her 1935 poem, “Home”; now she immerses us in the specifics of family life.

*Houses by the Sea* begins overseas - “Not here our sands, those salt-and-pepper sands / Mounding us to the chins”. After the first two words, the perspective offered by travel or expatriation is in fact an imaginative return home. Allusions to memory, the absent or dead, in moments addressed to an elusively identified “you” in Parts I and II suggest that geographical displacement prompts the expatriate’s more urgent reflection upon the divisions between past and present.

The first poem in “The Beaches” section focuses on sensuous childhood pleasures, picked out in the movement of light and the feel of sand on sunburnt skin, while the children are at play with their father: home and New Zealand immediately signify familial relationships. (The family which, in “Home”, was obliquely present - if present at all - in the half-line “Here I was comforted”.) Thus Hyde’s poetry sequence may suggest similar patterns to those of women’s fiction, as described by Parkin-Gounelas, where growth and socialisation are not the process of “shaking off the conflicts of infancy” (as in the masculine Bildungsroman), but have meant a “return [...] to fundamental childhood concerns.”

Yet poetic form offers a particular freedom that the novel does not, as the persona can speak as if disembodied from a defining social context. Hyde can deal with the concerns of childhood without the novel’s historical depiction of women’s progress as “circular, from one domestic sphere to another.”

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158 *ibid.*, p. 19.
Unburdened by the generic demands of realist fiction, which require narrative resolution, and hence the repositioning of the woman within a credible social role, Hyde can avoid both this sense of circularity and the sacrifices recounted in her fictional treatment of women characters. (i.e. Wednesday’s suicide, and the fact that Eliza’s independence, partially achieved through journalism, is only secured through the deaths of her first love and first child.)

Seven of the poem’s 22 lines are preoccupied with an imaginative identification with the father:

We liked being quiet then. To move or call
Crumpled the work of hands, his big red hands:
(It was he, our father, piled the mounds for us);
He sat and read, dreamed there against the wall,
Thinking perhaps how rocks are not quite lands,
Housing old barnacles and octopus;
How the wet gold soups back, strains into the
seas. 159

[I, lines 1-7]

The freedom of beach play, and the depiction of the father as a dreamer, give roots for the creative eye that trace the detail, while the trailing syntax, extending over seven lines (contrary to the poem’s habitually shorter series of enjambments) intensifies the sense of moving deeply into memory and imagination, conveyed in part by the poem’s particularised nouns. Yet one striking feature of the quoted passage is its dependence on a “verbal” style - to the point where Hyde turns a noun into a verb - “soups”. Helen Vendler characterises the “lyric atmosphere” of a verbal (as opposed to an adjectival, nominal or adverbial) style as one which says “I have found […] an action in which I can believe […] which I can render sacramental.” 160 This helps to deepen our sense of Hyde’s engagement with and commitment to the father’s tenderness in these lines, 161 across the sequence as a whole, the verbal style registers as a concern for what happened, what

159 All poems in this section are quoted from SP.
160 Vendler, The Breaking of Style, p. 68.
161 My interpretation differs, therefore, from Stuart Murray’s reading of the father figure as solely “distant and non-comprehending.” (Never a Soul at Home, p. 191.)
was done: Hyde explores poetry as narrative. Later the occasional dropping of grammatical specifiers (e.g. a / the) suggest the alternating halts and fluency of memory, while moments of repetition within the poem echo a child’s fascinated re-play of basic sound elements in language. ("Not here our sands, those salt-and-pepper sands", "old tar-bubble November [...] blue-bubbling air” and “hands, his big red hands”.

Similarly, Hyde’s irregular metre plays with a series of strong, successive monosyllables: “big red hands”, “not quite lands”, “wet gold soups back”. 162 Where a regular use of end-rhymes could have conveyed the sing-song of children’s games, Hyde instead chooses a more loosely organised scheme, which allows moments of the child’s voice to infiltrate the adult’s recollection, a technique which reinforces the thematic concern for the ongoing exchange between past and present.

The affection for the past shown in the detail and imagination of the poem actually conveys a sense of the persona’s vulnerability in the here and now. Translation to the defamiliarising and, in fact, dismembering experience of a new context, renders the speaker child-like - so that the return to family relationships (a re-membering) expresses a yearning for security not felt in the immediate environment:

Here it’s so different. Flesh looks hurt, asprawl
These crayfish people; legs like fungoid trees
Lopped off.

[I, lines 19-21]

The extreme imagery is emphasised by the prosody: the assonance and successive single stresses in the truncated line “Lopped off” offer a phonic imitation of the brutal action. The depersonalising of the word “flesh” is carried further in the metamorphosis - or even mutation - of people into violently damaged animal and vegetable forms: this suggests the memory of victims of the Sino-Japanese war Hyde witnessed as reporter, yet the

162 In this poem Hyde’s metre ranges from 2 to 6 strong stresses per line, where internal caesura, punctuation and hyphenated words, rather than a strict metronomical pattern, control the pace.
relationship to the beach would say that the image is simply - and bathetically - of sunburn. These alternative readings point to characteristic difficulties in Hyde's poetry; often the connotative level is heightened, yet not sufficiently delved into or contextualised, so that potentially inappropriate secondary readings occasionally hover as possibilities.

These lines provide a figurative expression of the alienation the speaker experiences in the "here" of the poem, projected onto others as disgust, yet the suggestion of empathy in "Looks hurt" foreshadows Hyde's later poems, in which she moves beyond any potential persecutions of difference and foreignness which the extremes of this imagery convey.

Part II of "The Beaches" repeats the retreat into the past where the child was nurtured and nourished, while Part III complicates those childhood memories; as in Mansfield's fictional recreations of New Zealand, recording the family past must include recording its divisions and exclusions:

Later you hear him again: 'Sorry, old girl.'
The lamp goes up, her face looks wringing wet
[...]
They love you, but their thoughts tide back so deep:
Both are so very certain you'll forget.

[III, from lines 11-18]

The entire sequence thus becomes a reaction to, as well as an embracing of, family. Although the tripartite sequence begins with reconnection to the father, there are extensive explorations of the mother's role also, echoing the portraits of mothers with a strong work ethic and accompanying sense of propriety from *The Godwits Fly* and *A Home in this World*. (The poem "Journey From New Zealand" also depicts ambivalent, anxious, even grieving moments which bear echoes of the primal separation between
mother and child.) In "The People", the use of colloquial sayings succinctly captures the mother's 'everyday' sacrifices:

[...] She took knocks
Square on the mouth, and wouldn't hit you back:
I never saw my mother dressed in black
But grief came [...] and she never let it go.

[II, from lines 15-18]

The divisions between mother and father are returned to frequently, alongside these, Hyde explores notions of the child's developing sexuality, embryonic interest in creative issues, and as in her novels, the psychologically shaping force of landscape. A sense of the child's consolidation of identity is achieved in the final section of "The People", which recreates a picture of the intense childhood imagination (which also featured in Part V of "The Beaches") as it recalls the escapes made to a fictional "Faraway": "the deserted house [...] becomes the child’s symbol of romance." Moving from the vividly pictorial to the abstractly literary, with newly coined compound words, an anthropomorphised landscape, transferred epithets, and an instance of end rhyme which helps to underline closure, this section displays the creative gift which offered a refuge from the riven world of home - yet ironically for the adult speaker, who is "far away" during the sequence, there is a sense that such escape only occurs in the imagination:

Now, in this place, I remember Faraway;
Past hilltops, one last pine-wedge, black, not green;
Three miles of houses chicken-snug between
And through the pines, one house [...] 

This was my Far, my point of vision, the single Enchanter's lodestone, drawing up my heart [...] I played alone, till hills quaffed down the sun:
Then, hand torn free, three miles through breathless city

While the poem envisages the child's ability to escape the burdens of family and create a separate identity, it ends with the "breathless", and so partly joyous, return home in the considerably shorter final line: a deft mimesis of the child's sudden abandonment of play. The presence of home actually enables the exhilarations of childhood fantasy - which the language indicates was highly influenced by magical and 'chivalric' literature ("lodestone" and "quaffed"); home offers a level of stability which the child can re-enter, even if the parental relationship is fractured with complexities. In its emphasis on return, this is a highly significant ending to the entire sequence. The emphasis becomes characteristic of Hyde's poetry after her expatriation.

"Journey from New Zealand" repeats the geographical movement of Houses by the Sea, as Hyde begins with a depiction of the current context abroad; the poem's progress is that of a journey through, not away from, her homeland. Several of Hyde's subsequent poems enumerate similarities between China and New Zealand, while "What is it Makes the Stranger" expresses a strong, hopeful, but within the bounds of the poem, ultimately frustrated desire, for identification with the foreign. "Thirsty Land" and "Prayer for a Young Country" finally turn to images of New Zealand beaches and the Pacific as the location for hope and renewal.165

In the light of these implicit arguments for return, we might expect that Hyde's poem "Katherine Mansfield" (1939) would speak of a clarified sense of artistic affiliation - or disaffiliation: that it would offer some particularised portrait of the meaning, for her, of the woman writer abroad.

165 Gillian Boddy's account of Hyde's life in Robinson and Wattie (eds.), The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature argues that a similar sense of hope infuses Hyde's political vision of New Zealand once she is in England; see p. 253.
Hyde’s direct prose treatment of Mansfield’s expatriation in her 1938 article, “Singers of Loneliness”, does give precise grounds of identification between Mansfield and the Hyde of A Home in this World, whose sense of being pinioned between two eras, in terms of women’s societal role, was expressed as being “caught between the hinges of a slowly opening door”. In the article, Hyde affirms the need for Mansfield’s departure from a country she calls “a sham England”, and she portrays Mansfield as “eaten up by loneliness”:

[...] the heavy, conventional, well-to-do household around her, a fortress of the conservatism which so falsifies us, filled her with such exasperation against doors that she wouldn’t look out windows.

Recalling Hyde’s dismissal of a definition of home as “four walls and a roof on top”, and her criticism of the “tradition of respectability, which was very strong in my household and had me cut off from all real family love the moment I infringed it”, this passage specifically cites Mansfield’s escape from domestication and conservatism as grounds for artistic empathy. Hyde’s elegiac poem more clearly elevates Mansfield as a national role model; yet its deliberation over this conveys less personal correspondence. Hyde’s “Katherine Mansfield” sacralises her predecessor, and the language is swamped in abstractions. This suggests a solemn overconsciousness of literary precedent, which is supported in Hyde’s borrowing and altering of Walter de la Mare’s “To K.M.” (Where de la Mare addresses Mansfield’s riderless horse - “Why tarries Darkness’s bird?” [line 42]) Hyde’s poem begins “Our little Darkness”.)

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166 AHITW, p. 28.
167 DG, pp 354-55.
170 From the collection The Fleeting and Other Poems (1933); see The Collected Poems of Walter de La Mare.
Allen Curnow has singled out Hyde's poem for criticism for other reasons, saying that

in verse [Hyde's] worst enemy was the passionate crush on poetry with which she began. Her writing was near hysteria, more often than not, and she was incurably exhibitionistic: any moment we are likely to get the awful archness of her lines "Katherine Mansfield."  

The most striking thing in reading Curnow's comment now is that its pejorativeness is gender-specific. "Crush" tends to go with "schoolgirl"; "arch" is "usually of women and children", meaning "slyly saucy and pleasantly mischievous". "Hysteria" has historically had derogatively gendered meanings (in 1933 the OED tells us "Women being much more liable than men to this disorder, it was originally thought to be due to a disturbance of the uterus and its functions", although the 1993 SOED has room to tell us that this definition is obsolete). "Exhibitionism", as well as "a tendency towards extravagant display", suggests "indecent exposure, especially as a sexual perversion." Yet while "Katherine Mansfield" is about and by a woman, and so about a literary 'mother', there is nothing in the poem that directly acknowledges femininity or sexuality, neither as a theme, nor as an aspect of voice. One of the connotations of "exhibitionistic", does, however, point us to what is problematic about the poem. This is not a personal elegy, but a public utterance for a public figure; the grand manner abstractions become particularly convoluted when they attempt to characterise the nation, not the eponymous writer.

171 Curnow (ed.) The Penguin Anthology of New Zealand Verse, p. 58. See also Simpson (ed.), Look Back Harder, for similar comments from Curnow. Bertram repeats (uncredited) Curnow's accusation of Hyde, citing "exhibitionism" and "sentimentality" in this particular poem. (Bertram, The Flight of the Phoenix, pp 19, 26.)

The poem depicts Mansfield's expatriation as creative and personal release:

"[...] their wise hands gave you / Freedom and song, where we had proffered dust."[lines 3-4] "Dust" returns us to all the adolescent Mansfield's arguments that New Zealand deadens the creative sense; Hyde strengthens this metaphor by incorporating it into the subsequent physical depiction of the colony, where landscape physically and metaphorically obscures and disables vision:

Dust is a thing of road and sheepfolds, rising
Where men and sheep are driven on to gate;
A wavering smoke, too faint and blown for
  signals,
Mica-bright staring crystals, love and hate,
A blindness in the eyes, a pain for feet.

Dust is the unthrown wrestler at our gate.
[lines 5-10]

The dramatically isolated line 10, a stanza in itself, over-stretches the link between metaphorical and literal language: a dramatic reversion following Hyde's depictions of a lush and fertile New Zealand in "Houses by the Sea", "Fragments from Two Countries" and "Thirsty Land". Yet the negotiations that go on in the poem between various antithetical images are complex. Mansfield is a "seagull conjured into swan" [line 12] - the seagull recalls the revitalising ocean imagery in Hyde's other poems of this period, and so contradicts the physically arid, emotionally parching land of the first stanza. As Mansfield's transformation is from gull to swan, rawness and coarseness are metamorphosed into classical grace and nobility: the age old distinction between colony and metropolitan centre recur. Yet Mansfield is "dust-taken" in death [line 14]; at Fontainebleau, there is none of the grace and refinement which her Europeanisation is meant to signify: "rank flower and weed, / Idlers and gossips, shapes of strife and heat /
[...] find your marble cool to lean upon." [lines 17-19] Mansfield's Shakespearean
epitaph is also subtextually transformed: weed [nettle] and flower are both “rank”; in Hyde’s reading, Mansfield has not found “safety” in her European life. 173

The older writer becomes synonymous with her grave: the marble of the headstone is also the marble of her art - crafted and, importantly, enduring: further sign of Hyde’s belief in Mansfield’s canonisation. Yet while Mansfield is gull, swan, dust-taken, yet enmarbled (the oppositions between which conceivably signify the expatriate’s divided identity), the poem’s penultimate, three line stanza creates another opposition.

New Zealand is no longer arid:

Deep underneath the seas is swung a bell
Of travelling note: oh, very far away,
Clear as you dreamed, gleam tiny bush and bay.

[lines 20-21]

Hyde closes this enriching of the barren landscape with another one-line stanza “And after marble, dust fulfils a need.” A Georgian tutelage is still evident in such symbols; dust’s actualisation in the farming description in the first stanza, has reverted to the overburdened metaphorical again. There may be the idea, here, that death fulfils a need: but dust is also a symbol of ‘reality’: after Mansfield’s initial seeking of European arts, she turns back to the New Zealand past in her own work - and rewrites ‘dust’ as bush and bay. The fulfilment of the final line is both Mansfield’s and Hyde’s: as the dust becomes reconstituted by Mansfield into the fertile soil for her art, it is also what Hyde can come to work with: the replanted “dust fulfils [Hyde’s] need.”

Thus while the poem explicitly condones Mansfield’s departure, and her apparent rejection of her home, structurally and thematically it effects a return to New Zealand, which is in keeping with Hyde’s other works on expatriation. Its closure again coheres with Hyde’s earlier literary-nationalist concerns. The confusing borrow and swap of connotative meanings throughout the poem’s development, however, finally

173 Bertram argues that “this is really about Hyde, for it was she - not her predecessor - who could better trust the strangers.” He is referring to Hyde’s acceptance by Chinese journalists at Central News. (Bertram, *The Flight of the Phoenix*, p. 26.) See p. 202 of this thesis.
seems to speak out more resonantly about the conflicts felt over the expatriate theme. This sense of internal divisions in the poem is suggestive of both the structure and the theme of Hyde’s prose war record, *Dragon Rampant* (1939).

**Reliving Events:**

*Dragon Rampant* (1939)

In the first chapter of Hyde’s account of her experiences as a journalist in China during the Sino-Japanese war, the sense of compulsion or obligation articulated in the foreword to *The Godwits Fly* recurs:

> I am leaving New Zealand. In spite of all the reiterated congratulations, I don’t want to go [...] I had spent a good many imaginary years in England. But I felt tired now, and shy, and wanted to be left alone to write worse or better verses. However, in an outburst of confidence I said, “I’m going to England,” and, when I had told everybody, realized quite clearly that I was still in love with New Zealand.¹⁷⁴

Despite the belated feeling of compulsion that being “in love” with New Zealand also suggests, and the implied conflict between the instincts to stay and to go, there is a subtextual impression that where departure signals success (“all the reiterated congratulations”), remaining would mean, concomitantly, failure. The pilgrimage is not just one initiated for self-discovery, but is also a cultural test of ability and deserving.

Hyde’s memoir overall is an eclectic documentation of her time in Hong Kong and China, and the aspects of history, custom and culture revealed in each location. She records everything from the pink wool tied in young girls’ hair for luck in Hong Kong, to the newspaper industry, the fire risk, the treatment of rat plague in the 1920s, tiger balm, business exports, child labour, glass blowers, rickshaw drivers, and market scenes, with

¹⁷⁴ *DR*, p. 17.
a revolving kaleidoscope of snapshot images. Hyde also incorporates her own frank opinions in this scene painting: such as her belief that the concept of mass production is as enslaving for the Chinese as centuries of illiteracy. Yet this confidence is gradually, and tragically, undermined.

As she moves on from item to item, the text itself reads a little like travelling - its catch-all style suggesting the disconnected, fragmentary onward journey. The spirit of Hyde’s initial sense of displacement in China is good-humoured and quietly self-mocking. The ‘you’ she uses in this extract implicates the reader (although this aspect is less important than in sections of A Home in this World, where it seeks to break down the moral separation of unmarried mother and reader), it also creates a sense of distanced self-observation, as she watches herself try to adjust to the changed environment:

[...] Chinese life goes on, indifferent [...] You are the foreigner. [But] no matter how wild your first few days in this strangeness of language and custom make you, it is quite impossible to dislike the cross, wet fairies [little girls], the infant Mussolinsis, the sadly smiling Luise Rainers, and the old men who pat their hands over their empty bellies, groaning “No chow!”

Hyde focuses on the sensation of her own lack of assimilation, and is comfortable with this state, as it was impossible for her to be in her social outsiderhood as a ‘fallen woman’ in A Home in this World. Unlike the battered and bruised imagery of the opening of “Houses by the Sea”, she avoids projecting her sense of alienation onto

175 For Hyde’s comment on Auden’s and Isherwood’s Journey to a War (1939), see her letter to Alan Irvine, 18 April 1938, NZ MSS 758 B, Auckland Public Libraries, p. 13. Sandbrook says that her technique is also an attempt “to convey an immediate human response to a human predicament.” (Robin Hyde: a Writer at Work, p. 339.)
176 “You are drinking cold drugs and eating cold poison ... Yes: I started in a weary, half-broken body, job hunting three weeks after childbirth, racked with anxiety and exile, horribly overworked, horribly overtired, ever since.” (AHITW, p. 99.)
177 DR, pp 37-38.
others. Thus the journey through China becomes the process of unlearning her own prejudices, including the tendency to exoticise and romanticise other cultures.  

While the short period of six weeks which Hyde took for the composition of *Dragon Rampant* might suggest that minimal crafting and arrangement has gone into the work (and the book is a dense and difficult read), there is internal evidence that Hyde was deliberately questioning whether or not the tools of 'artifice' would enable her to be true to the rawness of her experience. There are several authorial acknowledgements within the text of the jumbled nature of her account: Linda Hardy interprets this style as Hyde's attempt to "dissolve her own voice, as if to let this other world speak through her, within the limits of her fragmentary and partial 'hearing' of it."  

Yet the confusions in the text also arise from the horrific accumulation of tragedies, crises and shocks Hyde has undergone during the war. The style implicitly asks whether, if she lists each instance of horror, she can give each one its full due and weight, and obviate the potential reductions and homogenisations of a catalogue.  

Alongside the difficulties of acting as any form of journalistic correspondent during war, Hyde still has to deal with the restrictions specifically placed upon her as a woman who wants to go to the front. The professional freedoms which she has earned as a journalist enable her to travel in a way which would have been more difficult for Mansfield - yet questions of gender difference are still crucial. Boddy and Matthews record in *Disputed Ground* that the general manager of the *New Zealand Mirror* had asked Hyde for her articles to be "more snappy and sensational" saying

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178 ibid., p. 38.  
179 ibid., p. xvii.  
180 We might also relate this to Stuart Murray's comments on *NTYC* - of which he says "No other prose text of the decade includes so much of the period's fundamental instability." (Murray, *Never a Soul at Home*, p. 196.)  
181 The poem "Written at Hsuchowfu" with its recurrent refrain, "Next time, let me be born with no breasts", told through the voice of a Chinese girl, speaks of the restrictions on women during war time - and so, while also bearing resemblance to two Waley translations - "Woman" and "The Ballad of Mulan", suggests Hyde's own experience of struggling to get recognition as a war correspondent, and to gain permission to go to the front. See SP.
For instance, in order to get a passport from Chinese commanders, etc., you are sure to have made use of your feminine wiles, and if you have not, you can still say that you did do so.\textsuperscript{182}

This amounts to sexist censorship of Hyde’s work; additionally, when she applies for a journalist’s pass to the front, although it seems likely that a Chinese journalist, Mr Hsiao, at Central News, will grant her one so that she can accompany other members of the press, a fellow New Zealand journalist says, “But can’t you see you’d be an encumbrance to them?” Hyde simply decides to go on her own, refusing to wait to travel with “a Chinese lady [who would] go at a slower speed.”\textsuperscript{183} Hyde’s work, therefore, incorporates resistance to women’s social alienation, opposing the self-abnegation of a contemporary like Jean Rhys (1894-1979), whose fiction elaborates the Mansfieldean theme of an expatriate woman’s marginalisation in large (European) metropoli because of age and gender, and whose subject is “women exploited and exploiting their sexuality”.\textsuperscript{184}

In Chapter IV, “Interview with a Ghost”, Hyde’s experiments with genre and style become more dramatically externalised. The chapter title refers to herself as a white foreigner (c.f. the use of “ghost” in a much later Chinese American text, The Woman Warrior (1976) by Maxine Hong Kingston, where it implies white invisibility) but it also articulates the ways in which reporting war events have reduced Hyde. Her question and answer format shows up the very process of trying to superimpose sense and order, and becomes a satire of the journalist’s role, as the disjunctions between this formal layout and the chaos and brutality of the content become increasingly obvious.

\textsuperscript{182} DG, p. 83
\textsuperscript{183} DR, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{184} See Rhys’s Good Morning, Midnight (1930) and Voyage in the Dark (1934), the heroines of which are constantly seen as sexually available when they frequent cafés and bars or travel by foot through the streets of Paris or London on their own. Melly and Wyndham (eds.), Jean Rhys, Letters 1931-1966, carries a back-cover blurb which gives the apt summary of Rhys’s subject above.
The oddly lyrical notes which she incorporates into her text, after her accounts of atrocities, deliberately augment the sense of the bewildering succession of disparate events: "Bats on the air, soft and fluttering, solid dark in liquid half-dark. Down the skies, lightning flickering. If that had come a few hours ago, real lightning, real wrath. Too late Jehovah."\(^{185}\)

The difficult transitions from subject to subject, crucially, also come from Hyde's efforts to achieve fair reporting. During her attempts to move between cities, Hyde is physically and sexually assaulted by Japanese soldiers - yet in her prose, she still strives to find reasons for their treatment of her, the difficulties in which attempt are clear from an extended series of reiterated, revolving "buts".\(^{186}\)

When Hyde fails to find a form of logic or explanation which could "be intelligible to both sides", she avoids the imposition of her own moralising, giving precedence to the complexities of cultural difference.\(^{187}\) In the following quotation, the divisions of self implied in her pen-name, with its positive affiliation to literary England, its hopeful prediction of travelling into the imaginary territory of another culture, now become massively intensified, an explicit metaphor for the dislocation of expatriation, which has been agonisingly exacerbated by war. The trope of inner division is not one of plural possibilities of identity, nor the productive questioning of single truth, as it was for Hyde's character Wednesday, when she echoed Mansfield's *Journal*. Wednesday's perception of the split between a "surface self" and a "second self", the "double face",\(^{188}\) becomes an image of violent, disabling damage. After her experiences of assault, temporary blinding, and her contraction of the tropical disease, sprue,\(^{189}\) Hyde writes

\(^{185}\) *ibid.*, p. 252.
\(^{186}\) *ibid.*, p. 306.
\(^{187}\) *ibid.*
\(^{188}\) *WC*, p. 273.
\(^{189}\) Also given the name psilosis: characterised by sore throat, raw tongue and digestive disturbances. The etymological root is unpleasantly descriptive: psil- comes from the Greek to strip bare (SOED). Hyde describes it as "a kind of anaemia". See letter extracts, Rawlinson (ed.), *Houses by the Sea*, p. 28.
The trouble is, I'm [...] thinking over and reliving events instead of using any knowledge of them. In a way, I do try: but that 'I' which is capable of sustained effort is like a person in a railway smash, pinned under the still bleeding, still moving body of another self.\(^{190}\)

It becomes difficult not to read Hyde's brutalised image of the self, mutilated and destroyed, as her final commentary on her experiences abroad. The officially recorded cause of her death, which quickly followed her arrival in England, is suicide.\(^{191}\)

As Boddy notes, there were multiple factors in Hyde's past which could have influenced her actions (and her previous suicide attempts), but Hyde's death overseas inevitably affects our understanding of her experiences as an expatriate. Letters from her short time in England reinforce this reading: Hyde writes that "England to me is eternally foreign and China was eternally not".\(^{192}\) and that in England

> the sleeping in one's coat for warmth and not having enough pennies to light a gas fire (or effect a suicide) all among landlords and chimney pots of a most terrifying blackness are far harder than China, where we all did a bit of a starve, but there was some fraternity about it.\(^{193}\)

The metaphor of brotherhood is telling: it was after all, the Chinese journalist at Central News who acknowledged her wish to act as a war reporter - her wish to continue her fictional and journalistic arguments against women's contemporary marginalisation.\(^{194}\) Being the stranger, the one who does things differently, did offer freedom, as Hyde pushed herself beyond her own society's (as well as Japanese culture's) caging of her within their understanding of "woman" as a category and type.

\(^{190}\) ibid., p. 11.
\(^{191}\) DG, p. 77.
\(^{192}\) Letter to Alan Irvine, 18 April 1939, NZ MSS 758 B, Auckland Public Libraries, p.3
\(^{193}\) ibid., p. 9.
\(^{194}\) DR, p. 206. See articles reprinted in DG, particularly pp 177-205.
In Fleur Adcock's reading of Hyde's biographical details, Hyde's expatriation rejects her country and past. Yet a major proportion of Hyde's work, which structurally and thematically embodies the desire to return, counters such an interpretation. The most pertinent act of rejection in Hyde's story is not her rejection of New Zealand, but the kind of dismissal implicit in the words of her compatriot, who labels her an "encumbrance" as she tries to push the scope of her writing into the international arena of the Sino-Japanese war.\(^{195}\)

Hyde's brief mention of Katherine Mansfield in *Dragon Rampant*, this time in an image of the tragic flight, inevitably acquires a retrospective accuracy for a reading of her own life and art.\(^{196}\)

\[
\text{[at] stately Wuchan University [...] the black-gowned Professor of Literature (dusty acacia petals clinging like moths to his dusty gown) told me of the translation of Katherine Mansfield's work by a young Chinese airman, who died in a crash even sooner than dark Katherine crashed and died. Icarus for Icarus!}^{197}\]
CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMAGINED NATION:

JANET FRAME, EXPATRIATION AND BACK-MIGRATION
CONTENTS

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List of Abbreviations Used in Footnotes

(See bibliography for edition details)

AAAMT: Janet Frame, An Angel at My Table (Autobiography Volume II).
ASOS: Janet Frame, A State of Siege.
DB: Janet Frame, Daughter Buffalo.
FITW: Janet Frame, Faces in the Water.
IC: Janet Frame, Intensive Care.
LITM: Janet Frame, Living in the Maniototo.
MMATSOTS: Janet Frame, Mona Minim and the Smell of the Sun.
ODC: Janet Frame, Owls Do Cry.
OED: The Oxford English Dictionary.
SGFTB: Janet Frame, Scented Gardens for the Blind.
TC: Janet Frame, The Carpathians.
TEOTA: Janet Frame, The Edge of the Alphabet.
TL: Janet Frame, The Lagoon and Other Stories.
TPM: Janet Frame, The Pocket Mirror.
TRAOS: Janet Frame, The Reservoir and Other Stories.
TTI: Janet Frame, To the Is-Land (Autobiography Volume I).
YANETHH: Janet Frame, You Are Now Entering the Human Heart.
YFITAR: Janet Frame, Yellow Flowers in the Antipodean Room. (N.B.: This is the title of the American edition of Frame's The Rainbirds.)

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An Elsewhere Race:

Frame on the Expatriate Theme

Janet Frame (1924 -), began her publishing career in the 1950s with short stories (The Lagoon (1951)) and the novel Owls Do Cry (1957). Her six year period of expatriation began in 1957: of all the women in this study, she is the only author to have made a permanent return to New Zealand. Frame back-migrated in 1963, the year of Fleur Adcock’s emigration. These opposing trajectories offer a useful parallel to the divergences in Frame’s and Adcock’s roughly contemporary literary treatment of expatriation. On one level, Frame apparently inherits Mansfield’s early critique of the culture as provincial and restrictive: the autobiographical description of her departure from “conformist” New Zealand indicts local institutions and systems more forcefully than does the work of any other author here discussed.\(^2\) Her journey is explicitly told as that of an escape from socially ascribed identity (her mistaken diagnosis as schizophrenic).

I planned my next ‘move’ which [...] was for me to ‘travel overseas’ to ‘broaden my experience’, a convenient way [...] of saying that I was ‘better out of New Zealand before someone decided I should be in a mental hospital’.\(^3\)

This seemingly assents to the tenor of Adcock’s damning adjectival triad from her poem “Instead of an Interview”, which dismisses the country as “ingrained, ingrown, incestuous”\(^4\). Unlike Adcock and the young Mansfield, Frame states in The Envoy From Mirror City (Autobiography Volume 3), that her own reasons for departure “had not been literary or artistic”.\(^5\) Nevertheless, the narrative of her expatriation incorporates

\(^1\) “The human race is an elsewhere race”: said by Dinny Wheatstone in TC, p. 51.
\(^2\) AAAMT, p. 183.
\(^3\) ibid.
\(^4\) From Adcock, The Inner Harbour (1979), See my discussion, pp 337-341.
\(^5\) AAAMT, p. 165.
elements of discovery and achieving artistic confidence; this initially reads as a reversion to modernist paradigms questioned by Mansfield's work. Reversion both in a literary historical sense, and in the context of Frame's own fiction: over the course of seven preceding novels, what she calls the "dream called Overseas" is, with varying degrees of concentration, discredited. Yet in the autobiography, the expatriate experience is also cast as one which enables her eventual return to her birthplace; the closure partially resembles the paradigm outlined by Hyde.

Frame's career to date spans from 1951 to 1988; throughout the number of social and political changes within New Zealand and internationally over this period, she has continued to explore the expatriate theme. This is despite her declaration in 1964 of the topic's obsolescence: "It is now a tired, overworked theme in our own literature." Her own persistently renewed 'working-over' of the subject testifies instead to the theme's continued metaphorical value, and to the longevity of expatriation's problematic status in New Zealand culture. In another article of 1982, she writes punningly, and with characteristically extended metaphors:

The argument about exile comes home to us in New Zealand where writers have a passion for journeys, and where the critics are forever counting the supposed cost of the decision to be a lemon tree with easily damaged or starved roots, or a fig tree, stay-at-home, interfering with the sewers and the supply of water from the reservoir; or, with their seedy fruit, irritating the falsely-toothed mouths of the local citizens [...]'

Frame's comment about the local critical industry is wittily, knowingly deflective. In fact, frequently her own work has been built around an economy of valuing - or devaluing - the compulsions of the overseas journey. She has re-examined the

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6 TEOTA, p. 46.
7 Frame, "This Desirable Property", The New Zealand Listener, 3 July 1964, p. 12.
8 Frame, "Departures and Returns", Amirthanayagam (ed.), Writers in East-West Encounters, p. 93.
expatriate theme in an attempt, first, to reiterate the argument of the earlier *Listener*
article - to explore the false attractions (costs) of expatriation. Yet over the course of an
extensive career, her revisitation of the topic also shows a sea-change; conceding to the
rich and strange, and moving beyond accounts of the overseas journey as delusion and
suffering.⁹

**On the Edge of the Alphabet**

Frame’s first exploration of expatriation as a major theme is an exemplar of her
treatment of the issue until the late 1970s (hence it provides the initial focus of my
discussion). *The Edge of the Alphabet* (1962), concentrates on expatriation in order to
offer wider criticism of twentieth-century materialism, neo-imperialism and western
spiritual vacuity. The most obvious canonised precedent to Frame’s metaphysical
emphasis and occasionally fabular mode is the work of D.H. Lawrence.¹⁰ In “The Man
Who Loved Islands” (from *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories* (1928)) and
“Things” (from *The Lovely Lady* (1932)), the desire for life in a new land - be it a
fictional island or continental Europe - is Lawrence’s allegory for self-delusion and
spiritual blindness. Definitions of nationality are the central characters’ projections of
inner desires and failings. Lawrence’s earlier novel *Kangaroo* (1923) offers both a
social-realist and a metaphysical exploration of migration. Richard Lovat’s expatriation
to Australia leads to lengthy dissertations on the nature of New World democracy and

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⁹ Pride argues that “Critics who [regard] the body of texts as a continuum united by the unique
vision of the author tend to focus on thematic unities. This [elides] the differences between the
texts [...] foreclosing on the possibility of reading different formulations of colonial and
postcolonial identity in different texts.” (*A Home in This World*, n. 127, p. 213.) This
argument allows her to examine one Frame novel in depth. Yet Frame’s treatment of a single
theme undergoes changing formulations: studying one theme doesn’t necessitate
‘homogenising’ the oeuvre.

¹⁰ Frame doesn’t mention Lawrence directly in her autobiography, although a stylistic feature
of the trilogy is to give lists of influential authors’ names (including the modernists), which
then trail off with ellipses, inferring that there are dozens more that there is no room to
mention.
fluidity versus Old World tradition and structure. These meditations, grounded in political realities, are tersely undercut by sudden authorial pronouncements:

Poor Richard Lovat wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia. There was no actual need for him to struggle with Australia; he must have done it in the hedonistic sense, to please himself.\footnote{Steele (ed.), Kangaroo by D.H. Lawrence, p. 28.}

In broad terms, the two strands offered by Lawrence’s Kangaroo separate, in New Zealand literature, into Frame’s work, and the social-realist novels of Dan Davin (and later, Keith Ovenden’s O.E.)\footnote{Ovenden’s title refers to the colloquial abbreviation for “overseas experience”.}. Davin’s work gnaws away at the contentious bone of ‘what is it makes the New Zealander’: at notions of public identity. In Frame’s work, questions of identity are far more interiorised,\footnote{The distinction is necessarily crude: a more extended discussion of genres and techniques is needed. E.g. Davin’s novel The Sullen Bell (1956), which is set in London post World War Two, examines the expatriate condition from a number of perspectives, through a large cast of characters. Yet the characters share the obsession, returning to expatriation as an explanation for their inner condition again and again, centering debates about success and failure around expatriation and back-migration. The overall impression gained is of the characters’ conviction that national identity could be defined, were it sufficiently analysed.} accompanying this is her more intensified focus on the deceptions and seductions of language.

Frame’s preoccupation with the interior life links to her active attempt, in The Edge of the Alphabet, to diminish the cultural kudos given to expatriation up to the mid-1950s. This novel is usually taken as the final part of the Withers family trilogy, although it most clearly grows out of Owls Do Cry.\footnote{The second element in this triad, FTTW, is usually included because its main character is hospitalised in psychiatric institutions, as is Daphne Withers in ODC. In my reading, it stands separately: its narrative style deliberately moves away from the potential “Opheliana” (FTTW, p. 122) or “Ophelia Syndrome”, (TEFMC, p. 105) of Daphne’s intensely poetic language in ODC; it more starkly criticises contemporary psychiatric institutions.} The Edge of the Alphabet follows the fortunes of two main characters arriving in London. Typically Frameian, plot is subordinate to psychological exploration and descriptive prose, with the narrative...
moving fluidly and often non-chronologically from one character’s internal monologue to another’s.\(^{15}\)

The prose of Frame’s novels differs greatly from that of her first short story collection, where the lucidity of a predominantly child’s-eye view recalls the lyrical colloquialism of a Southern American literary line.\(^{16}\) This deceptive simplicity condenses in the novels to become more syntactically difficult and layered.\(^{17}\) However, the style is never as contorted, turgid, nor as full of overpacked subclauses as, say, the Faulkner of *A Fable* (1954) (which Frame has reviewed);\(^{18}\) if there are negative value-judgements to be brought to bear on Frame’s prose, these are to do with the potential repetitiveness of abject thematic material. Yet even this caveat testifies to the persuasiveness of Frame’s vision. To read her work cumulatively can mean to become overwhelmed by its depressive elements: its elaboration of a post-modern aesthetic of ‘pointlessness’. Yet there are ways to survive this vision, and on Frame’s own terms.\(^{19}\)

Representing the first real alteration in the local literary scene’s social-realism since Hyde’s *Wednesday’s Children*,\(^{20}\) Frame’s impressionistic novels proliferate with Woolfian constructions.\(^{21}\) She deploys the lulling, lengthened rhythms of multiple-claused sentences, where connotation is intensified, and metaphors unfurl from within

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\(^{15}\) Susan Ash on Frame’s technique: “The moments of subjective time take up more space in the narrative with greater emphasis upon symbolic experience and the perception of images [...] atemporality occurs in the narrative in the form of poetic voices which are not grounded in any specific event or time in the narrative.” *Narrating a Female (Subjectivity)*, p. 29.

\(^{16}\) Although Frame’s autobiography doesn’t mention her, one analogue for Frame’s short story prose is Carson McCullers’s *The Member of the Wedding* (1946). Several stories suggest the voice of a much younger Frankie Adams, experiencing loss earlier, with the diction regionalised to New Zealand.

\(^{17}\) Synaesthesia is a particularly striking attribute in Frame’s novels; for one example, see *SGFTB*, p. 22. The title also indicates Frame’s fascinations for this quality.

\(^{18}\) *AAAMT*, p. 111.

\(^{19}\) See my concluding paragraphs on *TEOTA* and *TC*.

\(^{20}\) See Lawrence Jones’s entry, “The Novel”, Sturm (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, p. 168. Frame mentions a review of Hyde’s *Wednesday’s Children* and the comment that it was “fantasy without ballast”. “Did fantasy need ballast? [...] I had known people for whom fantasy was its own ballast.” (*AAAMT*, p. 135.)

\(^{21}\) References to Woolf recur in *AAAMT*; see pp 33, 45, 88, 95, 139. See also Frame’s “This Desirable Property”, *The New Zealand Listener*, 3 July 1964, p. 12.
metaphors. This recalls the Victorian aspects of Woolf’s style: a Dickensian relish for episodic, local intensities, contracted from the complexities of plot to those of syntactic detail. Woolf also provides crucial precedents thematically and structurally, offering material which Frame glosses with a darker, less forgiving emphasis.

The Edge of the Alphabet plays knowingly with literary precedent. One of the protagonists, Toby Withers (the epileptic brother from Owls Do Cry, who confused wealth with the inner spiritual rewards of imagination), is Frame’s parody of the expatriate colonial - and modernist - artist. Toby is a sadly failed Mansfield or Hyde.

Similarly knowing is the reflexive note at the start. This note points to Thora Pattern as both character and author, and all the remaining figures in the novel as characters in her manuscript (who become afraid that they may have only an imaginary existence.) Such fictional (and Hydean) trickeries amplify over the course of Frame’s career. There are the recurrent features of characters erased, assumed identities undermined, either by the closure, or by the re-reading of a prefatory note: narrators are declared deceptive, fraudulent, “Impostors”, in Dinny Wheatstone’s words, from The Carpathians.

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22 For Woolf’s Victorian stylistic inheritance, see Beer, The Common Ground, pp 97-105. For Dickens’s “Jacobean episodic intensification”, see Harvey, Dickens and the Twentieth Century, p. 150.

23 The introduction of a cast of characters in Frame’s TAM recalls the ‘chorus’ of monologues in Woolf’s The Waves. In Frame’s SGFTB (1964), Vera Glace’s reduced, guttural utterances (“Ug-g-Ug. Ohhh Ohh g. Ugg”), debase the hoped for “Eden [...] of articulate speech”. The renewed “language of humanity” has come “Out of ancient rock and marshland; out of ice and stone”. (pp 252, 216, and 252 respectively.) This pessimistically rewrites Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway - where a beggar woman’s song (“ee um fah um so foo // swee too eem oo”) is “the voice of no age or sex, the voice of ancient spring [...] Through all ages - when the pavement was grass, when it was swamp [...] the battered woman [...] stood singing of love.” (Mrs Dalloway, pp 72-73.) Frame’s ASOS is even more ambivalent towards the consolations Woolf found in a sense of geological time: “It was an old fantasy, this re-possession of the land by exiled plants, insects and animals. It was a convenient way, Malfred knew, of getting rid of the human race without committing genocide.”(p. 42.)

24 Judith Dell Fanny notes the pun of Thora’s name as controlling goddess of artistic shaping. See Fanny, I Have What I Gave, p. 39.

25 Jeanne Delbaere describes the complexities of categorising Frame’s style: “If Janet Frame remains so difficult to place on the contemporary literary scene it is because she puts all the experimental resources of post-modernism at the service of a modernist search for reconciliation.” (Delbaere ed.), The Ring of Fire, p. 10.)
Frame derives her literary inheritance from multiple sources. Thora parallels Eliot's all-seeing Tiresias of *The Waste Land*: the text is her vision; it is her "journey of discovery through the lives of three people - Toby, Zoe and Pat." Thora's vision ultimately subsumes the separate voices of those characters which it encompasses: offered as the truly cleansed perception, it contrasts with Toby's partial insight, Pat's frightened conformity, and the early delusions of Zoe. As a necessary focusing of my discussion on the expatriate theme, my analysis is limited to the stories of Zoe and Toby. Pat, who travels to New Zealand to find a wife, but leaves disappointed in his goal, exhibits a bullying conservatism which means he is unable to undergo an equivalently self-questioning journey: this, in effect, reinforces Frame's overall diminution of expatriation.

Thora's voice intersperses the narrative of the other three characters' lives as gnomic and aphoristic utterance, frequently in a form of free verse, viscous with metaphor. This style questions the prosaic, the journalistic, the chronological and rational, seeking to extend the boundaries of meaning. (Interpolations of riddling prose-poetry recur across Frame's oeuvre, along with acrostics, exaggerated, alternative, or nonsense (or new-sense) spellings.) The title announces this preoccupation with the mechanics of language: the first internal reference to "the edge of the alphabet" appears in one of Thora's speeches, and with it, an indication of the nucleus of her vision.

Now I, Thora Pattern (who live at the edge of the alphabet where words like plants either grow

26 *TEOTA*, p. 13.
27 Gina Mercer alternatively reads Thora's ventriloquism and her self-interrogation as signs of her lack of authority and confidence - thus as a means through which Frame investigates the role of author. ("The Edge of the Alphabet, Journey: Destination Death", *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada* 5, Spring 1991, p. 51.) Although she doesn't mention him, Mercer's ideas are clearly related to Barthes's arguments regarding the death of the author. Taken alongside the prefatory note announcing Thora's death, I find Thora's abject vision in her passages of direct address to the reader powerfully overriding of the other characters: forcefully asserted as the novel's 'vision'.

28 See *SGFTB*, *ASOS*, *TRAOS*, *MMATSOTS*, *IC*, *DB*, and *LITM* (c.f. the passages spoken by the "Hypotenuse"). Rearrangements of letters, "special spelling" to "make the words show up for what they really are, the cruel deceivers", as Molly Gilbraith says in *IC* (p. 243), also occur in Frame's poetry (e.g. "Instructions for Bombing With Napalm", *TPM*.)
poisonous and tall and hollow about the rusted knives and empty drums of meaning, or, like people exposed to deathly weather, shed their fleshy confusion and show luminous, knitted with force and permanence), now I walk day and night among the leavings of people, places and moments.  

The edge of the alphabet is (at least) double: new meanings are forged there, and the old become obsolete. Frame’s metaphor is immensely flexible: allowing us to bend it to refer to historical perceptions of New Zealand’s geographical location, and hence its literature: to the position of Thora as a woman writer, who in the 1950s works from the social periphery: and to her marginalised characters - Toby, ostracised for his epilepsy, Pat, a working-class Irishman, and Zoe, a single woman, like Thora. Attempting to articulate the inarticulable, the boundaries of human consciousness, it also fits Kristeva’s later definition of the post-modern as

that literature which writes itself with the more or less conscious intention of expanding the signifiable and thus human realm. With this in mind, I should call this practice of writing an ‘experience of limits’, to use George Bataille’s formulation: limits of language as communicative system, limits of the subjective and naturally the sexual identity, limits of sociality.

While the title allows all these attachments of new metaphors, the imagery associated with the first use of the phrase equates life (the growing plants of language) with falsity, decay and corruption, while death (the shedding of flesh) is synonymous with illumination and endurance. Thora’s meditations continue to focus on time and death; the novel demands awareness of mortality as the single authentic vision. Every subsidiary theme is checked by this austerely religious (yet godless) concern; the

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29 TEOTA, p. 13.
31 C.f. Frame’s “Some Thoughts on Bereavement”: ‘[...] God is only a / desperately personified mood / of man in his need.’ [lines 64-65] (TPM.)
characters' quests for identity can only be successful if they incorporate a similarly existential consciousness. Death overdetermines all, and as Daphne recognises in *Owls Do Cry*, the search must be within. Thus when Toby Withers decides to go overseas, his first error is to borrow other people's dreams, to mistake the social myth surrounding expatriation and its status as a cultural rite of passage for the genuine means of personal fulfilment. His dream mirrors, follows, copies: it is the post-modern replica, not the authentic personal struggle. It excludes any recognition of the changed political relationship between ex-colony and empire: Toby is a 'throw-back', submissively colonial, longing for an original Home. In addition, although in the '50s and '60s it was generally perceived that those in the Performing Arts "still had to go overseas for training, work and recognition", Toby's travels spurn the literary nationalism ascendant since the 1930s. In Rod Edmond's words, Toby's "narrative is to dispel [...] a myth of origin and return."

The first mention of Toby's potential departure comes through a memory of his recently deceased mother. The imagery evokes mother as motherland, primary source of family history: her utter absorption in family folklore makes it seem as current and everyday as her domestic presence. A continuous stream of metaphor halts abruptly at a reference to her death; Frame manipulates the syntactic level of linguistics to embody theme.

- If you go overseas, Toby, visit the places where your ancestors lived. I have their chin and their nose, registered parcel of history delivered to the womb's door.

You pegged your ancestors on the line between the work-socks and the blankets and they bubbled

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32 "If I travel a hundred miles to find treasure, I will find treasure. If I travel a hundred miles to find nothing, even if I bring money with me, to lay it down in exchange, I will find nothing." (ODC, pp 145-156.)


34 Edmond, "In Search of the Lost Tribe", Lee (ed.), *Other Britain, Other British*, p. 164.
with cleanness and kicked in the breeze and were
slapped in the face by the oak leaves that got up
one morning to wash their face in death.  

Toby's journey is formulated as "an act of communion with his late mother", yet
when he first mentions his projected departure, it is interpreted not as an act of family
loyalty, but as eccentric, disloyal, undertaking risk.  

Acutely alert to blunt, vernacular,
family bickering (in which she also sees comedy) Frame writes:

His father told him, - You're mad to go overseas.
What do you expect to find there? How will you
keep yourself? What would your mother say?
- I'm going overseas, Dad, because I've a mind
to. I'll be an old man soon and I've never seen
the world. I'll write a book, too.

Frame deliberately carries the idea that travel brings the crowning of the artist to its
ludicrous extreme: Toby thinks expatriation itself will make him a writer. His intentions
to write a novel called *The Lost Tribe* are based on his one successful school essay,
which was also entitled "The Lost Tribe", and which focused on New Zealand history.

Thus Frame also mocks the paradigm that departure from home enables the colonial
artist to see home more clearly, and so to seize upon it as his or her subject matter.

Toby's father thinks his son's plans are absurd for other reasons:

- My passage is booked.
- Where to?
- England.
- But what about when you return? You'll have to
start from scratch. And why do you want to go to
England? What's wrong with your own
country?

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36 Evans, *Janet Frame*, p. 88. In *ODC*, Amy Withers predicted “much travel for many years”
for Toby (*ODC* p. 84): and he dreamed “Some day I will get out of this and go up north
perhaps or somewhere to a new place and set up business and be comfortable and rich and
loved; but it’s too late.” (ibid., pp 67-68.)
37 *TEOTA*, p. 18.
38 Ten years later, Frame's mentor Frank Sargeson reiterates the paradigm in his memoir *Once
Is Enough* (1973): "Like many of my fellow country-men I had to visit Europe to discover I was
truly a New Zealander, I felt myself weighed down by so much civilisation.” (p. 110.)
39 *TEOTA*, p. 18.
While Bob Withers sees his son’s wishes in terms of potential losses (financial, communal), Toby’s Aunt Norma vacillates between the view of expatriation as a means of ascent up the social ladder, and the view that it is the dereliction of family duty:

And what was Aunt Norma saying?
- I know it is something to have someone who’s going overseas. Not everyone can go overseas
[...]
- I’m going to London all right.
- But why? you of all people! [...] what about settling down, earning a living? And your father isn’t getting any younger.  
[...]
- You’ve done too much for him, Bob. And then they go away and leave you. Overseas! Just imagine! Overseas!  

Alongside the awe Aunt Norma expresses, the repetition of “Overseas” allows Frame’s signature demonstration of the way clichés, and the deeper conformity these imply, persistently pursue her characters. The novel concedes the devaluation or debasement of archetypes and grand narratives (a characteristic both of modernism and post-modernism): yet in a passage such as the description of Toby’s shorter inter-island journey, before his departure for Europe, there is a conflicting yearning for transcendence in the authorial voice. Using loose, long periodic sentences and cumulative metaphors, Frame allows a glimpse of the marvellous and new which the notion of journey still presages:

The rain moved through the sky in shapes determined by the wind, now a grey broom sweeping, a ribbed and feathered wing flying, a scarf enveloping the light, preserving dimness and secrecy. The sea heaved and the headlands loomed out of sleep like an extra dream or nightmare, confused in the minds of the ferry

40 ibid., p. 29.
41 ibid., p. 35.
passengers with other private seas and voyagings
and thus arousing even in daylight and waking,
the deepest longings that have exiled in the sleep
of night. 42

Frame denies the passengers an epiphanic surpassing of reality upon their
arrival; “here again, as usual, as always, as the Shipping Company would inform anyone
if he cared to examine his headache, here was the North Island, seat of government,
population (in souls) one and a half million. There was no new land made visible, no
discovered world.” 43

Yet this desire for a new world fuels Toby’s departure for Britain - he sees the
journey as potential metamorphosis, equivalent to life’s most dramatic beginnings and
endings: one “as serious and fraught with peril as birth or death.” 44

As his ship pulls out, Toby internally says farewell to his dead mother; his
troubled internal dialogues with her persist, and although his pilgrimage was initiated as
a form of filial-maternal connection, the divided and haunted nature of these imagined
discussions infuses his departure from the homeland with the pain of final separation
between mother and child. (This grief differentiates Frame’s novel from the masculine
modernist expatriate narrative, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, where all the
agony is the mother’s, and the son’s entry into selfhood entails unequivocal rejection of
her.) 45

42 ibid., p. 25. Frame’s use of the serial comma here, and her decision not to repeat “now”
between each change of metaphor, stylistically mimics the rapidity and fluidity of the rain’s
shape-changing.
43 ibid.
44 ibid., p. 39.
45 Dan Davin’s Roads From Home (1949) offers a meditation on several Joycean themes in the
New Zealand context. The novel also externalises a son’s love for his mother, and offers a
sympathetic reading of the mother’s fears which lead to her restrictiveness. (See also Jones,
Barbed Wire and Mirrors, p. 95.) Although Davin is more empathetic towards his women
characters than Joyce is, he still divides men and women between adventure and home
respectively. The only female ‘adventurer’ is Elsie, whose rebellion against domestic roles is
through sexual infidelity and potential flight from home with her lover - who cruelly points out
that eventually she will only want to form another, similarly stifling home with him. Both
characters are censured by the closure: killed in a car crash.
Toby’s frantic stream of consciousness parallels Frame’s description of the journey as incurring all perils of life and death: the life and death drives of love and hate combine in his thoughts to form an intense, condensed mixture of accusation and need, suggesting a post-Freudian (specifically Kleinian) model of the child’s projection and introjection of the good and bad mother.46

Now you old witch my mother to sneak across the frontier to break the barrier to throw steel hammers upon the deck, to promise to cradle my head in your lap while we flee (you and I) [...] You witch-octopus whom I loved, who in the dark distressful ocean manoeuvred for me with your bright tentacles of comfort (Are you all right, Toby?)47

Yet Frame distances the reader from the complexity of Toby’s fears and hopes, by jump-cutting to humourously banal dialogue between his relatives, or by offering Thora Pattern’s critical analysis. Thora disallows the journey as a means of access into self-knowledge:

Now there is in Toby’s land (and in my own, Thora Pattern writing here on a Saturday [...] there is an affliction of dream called Overseas, a suffering of sleep endured by the prophetic, the bored, the retired, and the living who will not admit that it is easier and cheaper to die, die once and forever and travel as dust.48

The “affliction of dream called Overseas” in Thora’s view is a general cultural myth: a fantasy through which we divert ourselves from contemplating the genuine enormities of mortality. Frame’s concerns, although expressed metaphysically, are also products of her socio-historical (i.e. post-colonial) moment. An autobiographical essay

46 Frame’s knowledge of Freud is confirmed by her list of university-based reading given in Chapter 3 (“The Student”) of AAAMT; she lists Freud, Frazer, Eliot, Coleridge and Shelley.
47 TEO TA, p. 45
48 TEO TA, p. 46.
of 1965, which highlights American antecedents to New Zealand’s culture, is relevant on this point: Frame recalls a Canadian pen-friend who sends her a book of verse

full of evocative references to prairies, trappers, snow; spruce, tamarack, quaking muskeg beds

[...] my chosen world - North America - was complete. Much has been written of the English background to the life of a New Zealander, little has been said of the North American influence.49

As Rod Edmond has shown, The Edge of the Alphabet is set in a period when New Zealand’s political relations had shifted more towards alliances with the USA and other Pacific nations.50 Crucially, the year of the novel’s publication was the year of the Cuban missile crisis; the idea of a nation existing on the cultural margins becomes untenable in the face of the nuclear threat and potential world destruction. (Ovenden’s O.E. makes this point more than twenty years later, exploring French nuclear presence in the South Pacific.) Frame’s novel emphatically argues the dissolution of Mansfield’s and Hyde’s youthful ‘colonial-England hunger’.

The novel reiterates the potential equations between the expatriate’s or migrant’s journey and death. Death infuses several of Frame’s tropes: yet this particular alliance is reinforced by all her novels until Living in the Maniototo (1979), with the exception of her children’s book.

On deck the passengers were still roaming, staring at the receding land with the kind of voracity with which people stare at the face of the dying, in the hope of finding and keeping to themselves alone, if they can, the last explosive

50 ANZUS was first signed 1 September 1951, making the USA New Zealand’s military protector; SEATO was signed in 1954. Trade with Japan increased over the ‘60s and ‘70s. Local protests over the Vietnam war indicated an increasingly independent local stance on world politics. See Barry Gustafson, “The National Governments and Social Change”, Sinclair (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand, pp 280-281; and Roberts, The Shorter Illustrated History of the World, p. 576. Rod Edmond gives a superbly succinct summary of the post-colonial context for Frame’s novel; Frame’s work is post World War Two, post Britain’s attempt to reseize the Suez Canal, and post New Zealand’s involvement in ANZUS and SEATO. “In Search of the Lost Tribe”, Lee (ed.), Other Britain, Other British.
discovery […] will they find it, prying like crows
like telescopes into the light-year tapping of
death?  

There was no land in sight, only in the distance a
dark comma of wave perpetuating the sentence -
death sentence - of the ocean.

The controlling irony and mordant punning of descriptive passages such as these
are deliberately discordant next to Toby’s hope for overseas success (encapsulated, for
him, by the pipe-band’s “Speed bonny boat, like a bird on the wing […]”); as are those
sections of the narrative which focus on Zoe, one of Toby’s fellow passengers. Zoe and
Toby meet during a dance on board ship, for which all guests wear costumes; Toby
plays Orpheus, and Zoe plays Minnie Mouse. Her part deliberately subverts any sense of
the appropriateness of Toby as the artist-god undergoing descent into Hell; the Disney
role is also deliberately incongruous for Zoe’s depressive character.

Zoe, who has already made the inverse ocean journey to Toby – from England to
New Zealand – is now en route back to Britain. Her travels have revealed the error in
expecting a material home elsewhere to fulfil what the novel advocates should be an
inwards-turned quest. Frame’s Romantic inheritance is carried by the Wordsworthian
“voyaging over strange seas”; the altered quotation reinforces Zoe’s recognition that her
physical sea-voyage (“over”) was no corollary for immersion in (“through”) the seas of
Thought.

A year in the Antipodes, eleven thousand miles
there and back in search of what most people find
in the next room or, closer, in the lining of their
skin. My feet are not bleeding and bandaged, I do
not suffer after long wandering in deserts […] all

51 TEOTA, p. 52.
52 ibid., p. 64.
53 Evans notes that Toby’s story becomes a bastardised version of the mystery-religion cycle of
descent, dismemberment, and triumphant healing. Evans, Janet Frame, p. 98.
54 Wordsworth’s phrase refers to the statue of Newton at Trinity College, Cambridge: “with his
prism and silent face, / The marble index of a mind forever / Voyaging through strange seas of
Thought, alone.” Book II [lines 61-63], The Prelude (1850 version, in De Selincourt (ed.), The
Poetical Works of Wordsworth).
this voyaging over strange seas to find what I shall never possess.55

Zoe’s comments recall ancient correlations of physical suffering and spiritual pilgrimage - specifically Christ in the desert, testing yet retaining his faith. What Zoe will never possess is an equivalent belief in a single, unifying deity; a lack which soon becomes linked to the loss of belief in a single, unified self. Zoe tells Toby that “I’ve had some unusual experiences on board this ship. My whole outlook on life has changed”56. What triggered this was her first kiss: anonymous, rushed, involuntary, it was stolen by a sailor as she recuperated in the ship’s sick-bay. Zoe describes it as “A swift dirty deed. Comfort. Self-pity. Horror.”57 In a compressed reference to Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* (1915), Frame mocks ideas of the sexual rite of passage being the ecstatic moment of entry into adulthood for a woman. (Woolf, too, questions the equation between a girl’s sexual initiation and fulfilment.)58 Zoe instead feels robbed of identity - once kissed, she joins all who have experienced the same “first”, becoming part of the faceless crowd. The kiss is the kiss of death.

[...] she laughed out loud to think [...] that she had always believed that people were separate [...] that people lived and died in shapes and identities [...] with names which they clutched like empty suitcases, on their journey to nowhere. - Well it is a mistake, Zoe said smiling, - I am interested now [...] in the terrible hoover at the top of the stairs, and the way my identity has been sucked in with the others so that [...] I am merely wound now with the others in an accumulation of dust.59

55 *TEOTA*, p. 77.
56 ibid., p. 71.
57 ibid., p. 86.
58 In Woolf’s novel, Rachel Vinrace experiences her first kiss - also on board ship - at the age of 24; she is in effect assaulted by the married Richard Dalloway. Her “strange exultation” is followed by horrific dreams of “barbarian men” who “snuffle at her door”. (Sage (ed.) *The Voyage Out*, pp 81-82.)
59 ibid., pp 86-87.
The suitcase metaphor recalls another rootless urbanite: the chilly Raoul Duquette from Mansfield’s “Je ne Parle pas Français”: “I don’t believe in the human soul. I never have. I believe people are like portmanteaux - packed with certain things, started going, thrown about,
Alongside such bleak entry into knowledge, however, there is a lament for the lost liberal humanist values inherent in Romanticism. While both post-modern and comic in its premise, another passage simultaneously eulogises and elegises the past, when personal spiritual journeys were perceived to be possible. (The phrase “his own private country” extends that past in two directions beyond the initial mention of the Romantics; Frame echoes Mansfield echoing Shakespeare.)

In these seas the Ancient Mariner has no hope of pursuing his voyage of doom. When he is sighted [...] ‘all all alone’, the Mutua steams to rescue him, he is taken aboard, put in the ship’s hospital [...] taken into custody as a prohibited immigrant [...] if you voyage into the path of the Ancient Mariner, even though he may be dying of thirst and burned black by the sun, do not take him aboard, let him reach his own private country [...] Let him tell his story!

Following this illustration of the spiritual paucity of the modern age, Toby’s arrival in England is suitably anti-climactic. He expects an England of medieval and Romantic reverdie - the pastoral literature of spring re-greening - but embarks from myth to the polluted shores of reality, which reveal Britain’s experience of two World Wars, and progressive urbanisation and industrialisation since the Victorian era. Frame’s narrative joins a literary line of colonial disillusionment with England which tossed away, dumped down, lost and found, half emptied suddenly [...]”The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield, p.60.

The themes of Frame’s second novel, FITW, support liberal humanist values. As Istina Mavet, the main character of the earlier novel, is repeatedly subjected to the terror of EST, the psychiatric profession works like a totalitarian regime, and Istina’s loss of memory with each treatment becomes akin to a psychological death. FITW, unlike TEOTA, suggests the fundamental value and integrity of the individual human life.

TEOTA, p. 99.

I have borrowed reverdie from Roberts, How Poetry Works.
runs from Mansfield to authors as diverse as Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing, and George Lamming.  

Toby, indignant, disowned the landscape. - It’s not my England [...]  
Deadly. The scaffold stations. The cheated faces. [...] The sky crowding down close like grey pastry [...] fouled by great black squawking birds with ragged wings [...] Cry warning, a racking shudder [...] time to think, to draw out the meaning like necessary matter from an unclean wound.  
No ‘when daffodils begin to peer.’ It is a primrose memory that has rotted in the darkness.  

Extending from corrupted nursery rhyme to quotation from The Winter’s Tale, the allusiveness increases the degree of thwarted expectation, of innocence abused abroad, as the ‘naive’ version of England has been supported by widely divergent sources. Despite the associations of contamination, claustrophobia, poverty, disease, and frigidity in this picture (with which Part Two ends), Toby reasserts his hopes in Part Three. His response to the internal disciplining voice of his father (“- Be your age, his father said”) confirms ideas of expatriation as a rite of maturity and artistic identity. Yet this is the bumbling anti-hero Toby. His very acceptance of these ideas is the subject of Frame’s parody: “[...] this was London and no one was going to order him about and treat him like a child; he was in London, he was going to write his Lost Tribe; he would show them.”  

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63 Alison Light’s work argues that a similar version of England was invented in the work of the English male modernists - for whom “Abroad was culture, romance and sensuality; home was philistine, prosaic and frigid.” (Forever England, p. 7.) This suggests colonial writers en route to England travelled towards the male modernist version of ‘Abroad’, but arrived in its version of ‘home’. For accounts of various writers on this theme, see also Hayward, “Tradition, Innovation, and the Representation of England in VS Naipaul’s The Enigma of Arrival”, Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Volume XXXII No. 2, 1997, pp 52-58.  
64 TEOTA, p. 134.  
65 ibid., p. 141.
Poor Toby does not “show them”. He finds work as a commissionaire in a cinema, develops blue-tinged skin, and a swelling on one arm, as if his body physically manifests the “affliction of dream of Overseas”, and his new home’s decay. Toby’s ill and debilitated body sharpens the satire on the literary precedents of Mansfield and Hyde: pointing to an anxiety about each author as corpus and corpse, and about whether, as an expatriate artist, the body of work can be achieved without the suffering and death of the artist. (A theme revisited in Frame’s short story, “Burial in Sand”, where expatriation deadens artistic vision for the young painter, Colin.66)

As Toby’s only passionate creative urge is to write a letter home to his deceased mother, it would seem that he has lost that intense vision experienced at the start of the novel, which suggested his capacity for powerful inner transformation:

He felt so strange, as if he were an entire forest, with the Lost Tribe inhabiting him as if his head were a secret gully somewhere up-country, just below the snow-line, before the clumps of tussock and snow-grass begin to shine in the wind and sun.67

Contrasting with this rootedness in, and identification with, his native landscape, is Toby’s visit to London’s Great Railway Property Sale. The sight of the range of lost possessions at the sale has him “appalled to think that perhaps when people made a journey and parts of them were lost, the Railway Company was there to seize the stray pieces”.68 His comment foreshadows the lack of integration with which he ends his own travels; he feels “saturated with a sense of poverty and loneliness. Someone had robbed

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66 TRAOS (1962). Maurice Shadbolt’s autobiography One of Ben’s (1993) also picks up on this theme. (Shadbolt expatriated temporarily, beginning in the same year as Frame.) He illustrates his thesis with an anecdote about a compatriot called Howard with embittered, thwarted ambitions to write - a “cultural chameleon” who “counterfeits” the English - he eventually “succumbed to a mixture of whisky and barbiturates on a winter evening. Literature has so much to answer for. Literary ambition even more.” (p. 254.)
68 ibid., p. 145.
him. Everything belonged to him [...] The lost property is in symbolic reciprocity with Toby's feelings of deprivation and isolation as a low-waged employee in a new country; it conveys his material impoverishment and his lack of self-possession. These objects signalling unknown ownership also signal his failure to come into his own, despite the dreams of crowning and apotheosis he felt were articulated by the pipe band at his harbour farewell. The enormity of the loss brings on an epileptic fit:

His hand was shaking, the movement gradually extending up his arm [...] his head turned slowly as if to address something or someone directly behind him [...] After a while the shaking ceased and his questing head became still. [...] He most needed his mother now. He always needed his mother when he woke from a fit; he needed her warmth and softness and her sour work-smell, like potato-peelings.  

Bereft Toby's utter powerlessness and subjection is painfully clear in that one phrase, "his questing head became still", where Frame unequivocally reduces the trope of journey, with all its potential associations of growth, betterment and discovery, to the picture of Toby locked in his body: victim of terrible mortality. Just as these physical manifestations suggest spiritual malaise, finally Toby-as-Orpheus has lost all song. In the absence of family and community, "long[ing] for someone to talk to", the urge to write (even letters) dissipates. Toby lives at one edge of the alphabet; his inability to express himself indicates his lack of access to forms of power (traditionally, writing as male potency).

Only the day before, he had bought an exercise book from Woolworths and a new HB pencil with a perfect point, and had sat down early to write his book. The Lost Tribe, he had written, in slow careful writing. Then he had stopped, seized by fear. Perhaps that was his book, just that, three words, nothing else [...]?

69 ibid.
70 ibid.
71 TEOTA, p. 149.
Toby’s experiences contradict High Modernist conceptions of the metropolis as locus of creative liberation and fulfilment for provincial immigrant writers, for whom language is the new community. Toby is no Stephen Dedalus. Adrift in the city, living in a bedsit without electricity, he experiences not a jubilant linguistic apphoreoa, but aporia, aphasia, the loss of creative impetus. His search for community brings the novel back to focus on Zoe, through whom Frame complicates our reading of Toby: for as the novel develops the idea of the expatriate artist disabled and alienated by the fragmentations of the metropolis, it offers Zoe as a means of comparison.

The Ugly Duckling who became a swan was not really the loneliest among ducklings. The loneliest was the true duckling who felt himself to be a stranger in his own family. His story has not been written in the fairy-tale. Few suspected his condition - for after all he was living with his own species in his native square of farmyard. Wasn’t he, wasn’t she, Zoe?

Zoe is an esoteric or inner exile; and unlike Toby, who finally recognises his need for familiar community and that his identity is closely bound to his native landscape, Zoe remains permanently exiled. The value of community and social relationships is ambivalently dramatised by the novel: an ambivalence which negates Vincent O’Sullivan’s reading of Frame:

The reason why Frame’s fictions are not novels in any conventional sense is that social relationships in fact mean very little to her. There are simply

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72 For this description of modernism, See Williams, “The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism”, Brooker (ed.), Modernism/Postmodernism, pp 91-92.
73 Rod Edmond’s article “The Lost Tribe”, Lee (ed.), Other Britain, Other British, mentions another New Zealand woman’s novel from the 1950s which deals with an expatriate theme. The treatment of extreme cultural dislocation in Marilyn Duckworth’s A Gap in the Spectrum (1959) moves towards science fiction: Diana, ostensibly from New Zealand, recovers memories of another world (“Micald”). As Diana asserts herself within a restrictive relationship, the novel becomes one of feminist self-determination: the initial cultural dislocation a metaphor for a young woman’s sense of general displacement within Western society. There is an analogue to Zoe’s and Thora’s outsiderhood, although Frame’s work is not programmatically feminist. Patrick Evans compares the titles of TEOTA and A Gap in the Spectrum: “both titles imply language that is beyond [...] convention and custom.” (Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature, p. 265.)
74 TEOTA, p. 153.
us, who know, whose metaphoric gift is to name
the sublime terror of mutes and the exploited, and
them, which is everybody else who does not.
This is what one might call the economy of the
gifted victim.  

Toby is one example of a character who actually combines “us” and “them”: usually deluded, he is also sporadically capable of poetic meditation; while Zoe is a character through whom Frame investigates the artist’s relationship to society, an investigation recurrent in her collected work. Frame’s preoccupation with the neo-imperialism behind the development of nuclear technology, and with the residual presence of fascistic thought in modern western society, also counteracts the suggestion that her novels are not concerned with social relationships.

_The Edge of the Alphabet_ indicates how early on in Frame’s career her discussion of social issues begins. Despite the representation of Zoe’s as the most desolate (in O’Sullivan’s descriptive economy, the privileged, visionary) version of exile, Toby’s need for society is depicted intensively, and so with a degree of empathy:

He was lonely and incomplete, like a house with one wall torn away. He used people, strangers or friends, to keep out the draught [...] he needed people - people or stones or woven rushes and flax. Addresses on paper are too flimsy a contact with people. Words are worse, especially if one lives at the edge of the alphabet, yet words may sometimes act like invisible ink [...] But it is people, their shape, their presence, that are bulwark, bung-hole, asbestos wall.

A dilemma between the (artist’s) need for independent integrity and the need for social relationships is dramatised in the circular movement of the prose: from the need

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76 See _FITW, TEOTA, SGFTB, TAM, ASOS, IC, DB, LITM, TC._

77 _TEOTA_, p. 169.
for people, to the need for things, to words as treacherous, to words as revelation, back
to the need for society again. Yet as Toby’s original vision of the Lost Tribe indicates,
community is also crucial to art. In support of this, Zoe’s final creation will offer another
version of his momentary insight.

The story of Zoe’s achievement of creative expression is only picked up and
followed through in the last fifth of the novel - yet its significance is heightened through
its parallels to Thora’s commentary. Zoe describes the motivation behind her initial
voyage to New Zealand: having fallen in love with a fellow teacher, only to find out he
was already married, she reveals

[I] adopted the conventional line of action - I went
for a journey abroad. The usual fictional escape.
If I had been a man and had brought disgrace on
my family I would have emigrated. Or if I had
been a promising elder son I should have gone
quite naturally to service in India.
I fell in love and went abroad to the place which
has been in fashion lately - New Zealand.78

In the light of this explanation, the ship-board kiss which robbed Zoe of her
identity, and initiated her desperate need to create in order to regain some sense of self:
(“I must make something, quickly, recapture a shape, pin, hook, net the milling ocean -
but oh my god!”) is both the debasement of her romantic dreams, and her release from
their conventions.79 When Zoe goes on an outing with the artist Peter Heron,80 the

78 ibid., pp 179-180.
79 ibid., p. 87. Ash sees the kiss as an entry into, not a release from, the world of dreams: “The
moment marks Zoe’s recognition of her desire for some form of authentic human
communication, but the desire is founded in her acceptance of a symbolic dream world.”
Narrating a Female (Subjectivity, pp 54-55. This is not the whole picture. Through Zoe,
Frame criticises the anaesthetising effect of dream - where dream amounts to conventional
aspirations like “O.E.” and mythologised images of feminine sexuality.
80 Frame may well be making a wry reference here to the abstract English artist Patrick Heron
(1920-1999), who was painting in Cornwall in the 1950s. The concerns in his painting
parallel some of Frame’s literary concerns. At the Tate Gallery in London, Heron’s work
“Azalea Garden May 1956” carries the following quotation from Heron in the biographical
note alongside its display: “The well known crisis which confronted many painters of my
generation ... moving from overt-figuration, however abstract, to overt non-figuration, overtook
me at about this time.” (Gallery exhibition note, 30 March 1999). Heron’s doing away with
visual realism could be aligned to Frame’s impressionism and loosening of plot strictures.
prostitute Zara, Lawrence (Zara’s housemate and sometimes sexual partner), and a
young sailor whom Zara ‘procures’ for Lawrence, Zoe finds herself “in a fury of
making.”

Shaping the silver paper from a cigarette packet

[...] first her movement was absent-minded, then
she began to concentrate [...] It was absurd [...] but it was silver trees and people with hats like
silver planets, like priests, lost in the forest [...] it
is the loneliest shape I have ever seen, that little
dent, this twist at the top of the dead silver
branch, the eyes in the silver faces of the dead
people, the layers of snow on their faces, their
clothes bunched, hiding the loneliness of their
body.

Zoe’s vision is multifaceted. It is the peopled forest, recalling Toby’s Lost
Tribe; it recreates community and the divine within it - yet is also a visual elegy, a
representation of death. It unifies her audience, and tentatively suggests the value of art
to society as a medium of witness, through which spectator, audience or reader may also
perceive the authentic. Despite Zoe’s “it is the loneliest shape I have ever seen”,

Everyone admired the shape [...] How strange
that it had so affected the others, had evoked in
them feelings which they could only consider and
explore by sitting there [...] staring at the silver
sculpture.

Yet in its embodiment of genuine vision (mortality) as defined within Thora
Pattern’s cosmology, it presents Zoe with the crisis of what action there is left for her to
commit:

Patrick Heron, of course, had far more artistic success than Frame’s Peter Heron: who, the
novel’s opening note tells us, has become a hire purchase salesman.

81 The characters who gather around Zoe recall the marginalised urbanites of expatriate Jean
Rhys’s novels, such as Voyage in the Dark (1934) or Good Morning Midnight (1939)- novels
peopled by those down on their luck, tersely categorised by job or nationality (gigolo, sailor,
prostitute, Turk ...).


83 ibid., p. 203. Ash also interprets Zoe’s creation as an affirmation of art’s social role: “Zoe’s
final act before her death is to give the shape to Zara, an act of generosity which shows her new
sense of community.” (Narrating a Female Subjectivity), p. 56.)
The creation of my life - oh my God! - a silver paper shape fashioned from the remains of an empty cigarette packet! Surely now it is time for my death? [...] Have not I, Zoe Bryce, arrived at the time of my death? Has it not risen with ‘deliberate rightness’?*84

The final phrase quotes Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus (Patrick Evans has suggested that “Rilke’s poetry might be seen as the alembic in which [Frame’s] entire art is formed”*85). Yet for Rilke, the actuality of death conferred the possibility of living beauty: for Zoe, creation of a beautiful artefact confers the possibility of death.86 She actually rejects the artistic project described elsewhere by Rilke as an

*Affirmation of life AND death [...] To admit one without the other is [...] a limitation that in the end excludes all infinity [...] we must try to achieve the fullest consciousness of our existence, which is at home in the two unseparated realms, inexhaustibly nourished by both.87

Zoe commits suicide, leaving no note; her silver paper creation has rendered language inadequate. Thora Pattern condones Zoe’s actions: “Tonight I devise my own simple time for dying / [...] Tonight I devise my time. I make a little kite / to follow the tides of death in the sky.”88

Before the close of the novel, however (and as if imitating Toby’s procrastination over his particular project), Thora returns to Toby’s narrative. En route to some Pleasure Gardens, Toby undergoes a surreal realisation. Travelling on a bus, he sees “mirrors [arrive], sidling and circling.”89 These mirrors are hallucinatory, as is the

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*TEOTA, p. 204.
*Evans, Janet Frame, p. 33.
*Zoe’s creation is the inverse of the living tree in Rilke’s first Sonnet to Orpheus, of which the first verse runs: “There rose a tree. O pure transcendency! / O Orpheus singing! O tall tree in the ear! / And all was silent. Yet even in the silence / new beginning, beckoning, change went on.” Frame’s image explicitly turns this process of change into death.
*Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, translated by M.D. Herter Norton, pp 132-133. These comments date from 13 November 1925; the italics and capitalisation are Rilke’s.
*TEOTA, p. 208.
*ibid., p. 215.
old man who directs Toby to a Fun Fair when Toby dismounts from the bus: “There was
no old man. The mirrors persisted. They surrounded Toby and he stared into them and
walked up and down inside their circle.”

What Toby sees in these mirrors are elements of his past, recalling Rilke’s
description of mirrors as “interstices of time / filled as it were with nothing but sieve
holes.” Time flows in and out of Toby’s vision. His body reflects his native
landscape: “his hair like tussock overgrown [...] the smile on his lips wound a creek
through his face.” The development of this image subsequently suggests a glimpse of
Thora’s authentic: “his cheeks swung from their hooks, dripping with blood.” He
searches for himself, but is confronted with images of all his acquaintances from New
Zealand and London, and “there was his mother, staking her claim. [...] The next
morning [...] Toby went to the Shipping Company and arranged for his return to New
Zealand.” Toby has found his past inescapable: it defines and decides for him; he
never fulfils the ambitions of his quest. (Reluctant to punish this half-insightful, half-
deluded character too harshly, Frame gives him a tenderly humorous consolation-prize:
an elderly aunt (i.e. surrogate mother) shelters Toby in her pride of his status as ”my
nephew, who’s been Overseas”. His journey wins him some recognition after all.)

However, the novel closes with Thora’s sombre vision. She answers her
rhetorical question, “Is it true that self-discovery ends in death?” with “So it is the end
of self-discovery. I have arrived at the dead.” The final image that she leaves us with

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90 ibid., p. 216. In “The Lost Tribe”, Rod Edmond tries to give the above passage some clarity
by locating these mirrors at the Fun Fair: but the first reference to the mirrors well precedes the
(imagined) elderly man’s mention of the fair; and Toby in fact never attends what is also, no
doubt, a non-existent fairground. See Lee (ed.), Other Britain, Other British.
91 Second Part, Sonnet 3 [lines 3-4], Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, translated by M.D. Herter
Norton.
92 TEOTA, p. 218.
93 I feel the humour here lightens the critical view that says Toby’s life with his aunt is
“another kind of death”. (Kim Worthington, entry on TEOTA, Robinson and Wattie (eds.),
The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p. 159.)
94 TEOTA, p. 222.
95 ibid., p. 223.
is traceable to Katherine Mansfield’s final complete short story, “The Canary” (1922),
whose narrator describes the exquisite singing of a caged bird, confiding in the closing paragraph:

[...]

It is hard to say what it is. I don’t mean the sorrow that we all know, like illness and poverty and death. No, it is something different. It is there, deep down, deep down, part of one, like one’s breathing [...]. Isn’t it extraordinary that under his sweet, joyful little singing it was just this - sadness? - Ah, what is it? - that I heard. ⁹⁶

Echoing this, Thora depicts humans as captives

like those yellow birds which are kept apart from their kind [...] like the yellow birds have we not our pleasures? We look long in mirrors. We have tiny ladders to climb up and down, little wheels to set our feet and our heart racing nowhere; toys to play with.

Should we not be happy? ⁹⁷

If we return to the note at the start of Frame’s novel, with its announcement of Thora’s death, the overall answer to her question is a negation of that final rhetorical question. (In “Should we not be happy?” the inverted construction also draws attention to the negative.) Thora’s words affirm the essential isolation of the individual which Mansfield’s story evokes, and condone Zoe’s suicide as the only perceptive choice. ⁹⁸

What way out of a similar paralysis for the reader, in the face of such a catalogue of despair? The Cold War context is relevant: persistent references to radiation and atomic bombs place Frame’s novel as protest: the edge of the alphabet

⁹⁷ *TEOTA*, p. 224.
⁹⁸ This is the antithesis of Janet Wilson’s comment that in *TEOTA* “the traveller is granted a redemptive vision.” See “Post-modernism or Post-colonialism? Fictive Strategies in Living in the Maniototo and The Carpathians”, *Journal of New Zealand Literature* No. 11, 1993, p. 116.
implies the imminent annihilation of humanity. The novel is also an exercise in a particular genre: it joins a tradition of the threnodic as aesthetic - exemplified by writers from Dickinson to Rhys and Plath. Thus Frame's work is an example of what Kristeva describes as "a phobic who succeeds in metaphorising in order to keep from being frightened to death; instead he comes to life again in signs." In this light, the novel itself provides a means for the reader's survival of its negativity. In its evidence of Frame's ability to play, to still attune her ear to the ludicrous comedy of banal colloquialism, and, in addition, the wonder of Thora's connotative language (metaphors and similes acting as small pockets of celebration of the physical world) suggest just this self-revival. Frame adopts the absurdist resolution to the existentialist dilemma: writing in the face of the void. Her continued creative productivity points to the antithesis of Zoe's and Thora's decisions: to that insight expressed by Mansfield in a letter of 1919: "Hanging in our little cages on the awful wall over the gulf of eternity we must sing - sing."

Beyond the Edge of the Alphabet

Over the course of her career, the links between expatriation and self-annihilation in Frame's work loosen. This loosening, however, is gradual. In Scented

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99 Frame's protestations predate NZ's ban on nuclear ship visits (and i.e. its declaration of political independence from the USA and France) by 33 years. For Frame on nuclear war, see Mercer, Janet Frame: Subversive Fictions, several references.

100 Frame's novel could be read as a meditation upon Dickinson's poem which opens "Bereaved of all, I went abroad, / No less bereaved to be / Upon a new peninsula, - / The grave preceded me". (Poem No. 886, Franklin (ed.) The Poems of Emily Dickinson Volume II, p. 824.)


102 O'Sullivan and Scott (eds.), The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield Volume III, p. 35. As this edition wasn't published until 1993, it is unlikely that Frame would have read this particular letter of Mansfield's in the year of the composition of TEOTA.
Gardens for the Blind (1964), there is an oblique corollary between expatriation and the loss of self-expression: although the loss is transferred from the departed character to one who stays at home. Edward Glace’s residence in the UK is associated with his daughter Erlene’s speechlessness: the family believes she will regain the powers of articulacy if he returns. Although Frame implicitly grants Edward’s expatriation such destructive capacities (inviting an analysis of paternal absence as absence of symbolic law, disabling the child’s entry into language), she also equates the separation of expatriation with all temporary absence, which again undermines “the dream of overseas”.

If he ever returned to his family how would he survive the necessary ritual of identification which must be performed even after every short absence as human beings away for five minutes, five or a million years approach one another [...].

While Frame can excoriatingly and reductively anthropologise human practice, her novella, “Snowman, Snowman” (from the collection of the same name (1963)) softens towards the desire for travel. In the voice of snowfall, migration is expressed as a fundamental condition of being: an (involuntary) expression of dissatisfaction with our own imperfections. The following lines suggest that the life drive is a state of constant desire for an ideal elsewhere: the rhythms, the simple clarity and colouration of the list (its aesthetic vision) evoking authorial empathy for such projections:

we do not defeat the sea, for we are driven back to the sky, or we stay, and become what we have tried to conquer, remembering nothing except our new flowing in and out, in and out, sighing for one place, drawn to another, wild with promises to white birds and bright red fish and beaches abandoned then longed for.

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103 SGFTB, p. 38. Frame omits the question mark.
104 YANETHH, p. 31. (A later imprint of Frame’s short fiction.)
The Adaptable Man (1965) begins with further acknowledgement of this desire’s centrality in the intellectual, social and topographical history of humanity: “The thought that he is not a migratory bird might make a man mad [...] Mass movements, migrations in time have been made by man pursuing or fleeing from an idea.”

Concomitantly, the novel indicts xenophobia and provincialism in closed communities (amplifying a caution sketched through the Waimaru townsfolk and Pat in The Edge of the Alphabet.) The little village of Burgelstatham, England, is the intended home of Italian farmworker, migrant and former World War Two concentration camp victim, Botti Julio (perhaps an aural pun on Botticello, although no other reference to the artist occurs). He qualifies for repatriation under state law, but Burgelstatham’s model golden-boy, 21-year-old Alwyn Maude, murders Julio within moments of his arrival (later saying with cool detachment, “Dead exiles, dead expatriates, are always an embarrassment.”) Alwyn is the “truly adaptable man” who, through his crime, has “identified] himself more fully with an age in which genocide is the basis of survival”. Frame intends Botti Julio’s fate to haunt our reading: arguing that murder cannot eliminate difference or what seems alien to one culture. Frame infers that the wider project of fascism which Alwyn’s actions demonstrate will never succeed: the human mind inherently contains all possibilities and opposites. Like Freud’s notion of the psychically repressed or suppressed, the influence of the socially oppressed returns:

You might think now that his story has been stamped out, eradicated; you might think that the world would seal itself against Botti Julio [...] but it’s no use. There’s no escape, the gash is there, the foreign invasion of people you never knew or whose language you could never speak; you’ll have to lie in bed tossing and turning, obsessed

105 T4M, p. 3.
106 ibid., p. 53.
107 ibid., p. 136.
with night, snow, mountains, avalanches, a surging river, the four crios [...].

In the outlandish comic scene which ends the novel, the suppressed indeed returns with a vengeance. Three of the main characters are killed, and one paralysed, by a falling Italian chandelier. Yet the abrupt closure is not the complete reassertion of justice over corruption as might be found in genres it recalls (the fable or detective story); the criminal Alwyn is not ‘eradicated’. Botti Julio does not find what he seeks, but in this novel the expatriate’s demise is blamed on the host culture: given a more thoroughgoing basis in social relationships and the dangers of nationalism.

Another exploration of migration and social relations occurs in *A State of Siege* (1967), which examines a woman artist’s journey away from her hometown, to a small New Zealand coastal (Wednesday’s?) island. Remembering colleagues who had travelled to London and then returned to share their experiences, art-teacher Malfred finds that “the miraculous change that should have overcome the travellers had been absent” and that one “returned apparently unextended, as if she had travelled in her own encircling tube of being which is, after all, the way that no one can avoid travelling.” Thus Malfred’s pilgrimage is to be to “the room two inches behind the eyes”, where she seeks a “New View”; “She was not sure that on Karemoana she would be inspired to paint; she wanted, first of all, to observe, to clean a dusty way of looking.”

Malfred’s decision to live alone, severing ties with family, colleagues and friends in order to achieve her new “creed [...] side by side with new seeing” is treated harshly: her isolation from all society and all communal values becomes pathological. During

106 ibid., pp. 15-16.
107 ASOS, pp 92 and 93 respectively.
108 ibid., p. 15.
a night of storm in her new house, which has no phone, Malfred is pursued and haunted
by the sound of ceaseless knocking. The novel follows her attempts to resist the
harassment, as she sinks in and out of dreams, thoughts, and memories. Malfred has
worked all her adult life, supporting an invalid mother - yet once she is released from the
role of caregiver, she is not "free [...] free at last." The pursuit she suffers has various
interpretations. The knocking could be the storm outside, a malevolent prowler (an
archetypal threat levelled at solitary women), the sound of Malfred's inner distress, or
someone pleading for "Help Help" (this message, echoing Malfred's refrain, is written on
a piece of newspaper wrapped around a stone, which is thrown through her window at
the climax of her fear). What all readings share is that Malfred's journey, and her
attempt to detach herself from all social relations, bring on her death.

Ruth Brown writes that "the hope that cultural enrichment is to be found
overseas is brusquely undermined by a few brief references;" the merciless closure
further diminishes the status of "O.E.". A journey within one country becomes
equivalent in fear and strangeness to travel overseas.

Deflating another popular conception, The Rainbirds (1968) offers a broadside
against the trope of Old World rejuvenation in the ex-colonies. In this novel, one of
"New Zealand's narrowly selected immigrants" emigrates to Dunedin - and the link
between expatriation and death is made the novel's central sardonic joke.

112 ASOS, p. 44.
113 Several passages suggest that Malfred's final demise is cardiac arrest: e.g. "She lay without
moving, her heart thudding against her breast, hitting and hurting, as if it were a shape of cast
iron. Pain came in with her suddenly-drawn breath, and stayed, moving down her left arm,
extending itself like an iron rod."

114 Brown, "A State of Siege: The Sociable Frame", Journal of New Zealand Literature No. 11
1993, p. 51.
115 As Bert says in TAM: "[...] thinking can put anyone in as much peril as journeying on foot
through wild lonely places." (p. 37.)
Illustrated History of New Zealand, p. 268. Gustafson also points out that despite increases in
Greek, Yugoslav, other European, Asian, Maori, and Pacific Island numbers over 1949-1972,
the majority of NZ's population remained British in origin.
Godfrey Rainbird has devoted his entire life - work and leisure - to the travel industry. In New Zealand he becomes a booking clerk at the Tourist Bureau in Dunedin, and a member of the Fellowship Society: “a travel club with vague ideas of universal goodwill [...]” Godfrey soon experiences “the most hazardous journey of all”: he is hit by a car, “pronounced dead” (the deceptions of language are pivotal to his experience), but thirty-six hours later, he revives in the hospital mortuary from a death-like coma. He feels he has made a “new migration”.

Frame is in jesting, punning mode when Godfrey returns to work after reviving from his coma. His employer thinks “Who wants their annual holiday booked by a corpse?” and Godfrey has to become a temporary liftman over Easter - a parody of his (and Christ’s) descent and resurrection. Relentlessly stigmatised by a society that prefers not to confront death, Godfrey also finds family life rapidly deteriorating. The only permanent work he secures is wiring electrical goods from home, his children are taken into care, and Beatrice turns to drink.

Frame’s ending arrives in rapid waves of irony: on the day when Godfrey wakes for the first time in years feeling filled “with the eagerness, alertness and excitement of a child”, he discovers that Beatrice has committed suicide. These and other bald inversions in the closure might seem blatantly arranged authorial coups (they have none of the Woolfian delicacies of her syntactical style), however, Godfrey’s revelation is in keeping with the general sobriety of Frame’s credo in prior work. His knowledge of

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117 *YPTAR*, p. 16.
118 ibid., p. 56.
119 ibid., p. 138. Gina Mercer discusses numerous parallels between Godfrey, Christ, and the two biblical Lazaruses in *Janet Frame: Subversive Fictions*.
120 Published in the year following Lloyd Geering’s charge of doctrinal error for expressing doubt about Christ’s resurrection, Frame’s satire of the frightened local community may seem to align her with fundamentalist Presbyterians, who argued the truth of Christ’s resurrection. (Geering was the principal of Knox Theological College, University of Otago, Dunedin). Yet it’s also possible to see Godfrey as a Lloyd Geering character: the radical who alters a society’s way of seeing.
121 *YPTAR*, pp 245-246.
death has “drawn him in deep”; he’d been as far in’ as any man can go [...] for finally there is no Out or In; all is one territory, Out is merely the place where man is afraid to go [...] but it is there, in him.” This chimes with Frame’s insistence that “Overseas” (there) has been falsely set up as culturally superior to “home” (here). Frame’s dismantling of binary oppositions has obvious potential for deconstructionist readings, yet *The Rainbirds* is also the clearest example of her preoccupation with a much older expression of similar terms - the introductory rubric to the Burial of the Dead, in the Book of Common Prayer: “In the midst of life we are in death.”

In her work for children, *Mona Minim and the Smell of the Sun* (1969), Frame’s religious emphasis shifts. Crucially, this is also the transitional text in her treatment of expatriation. An allegory of growth, change, and the getting of wisdom, it focuses on a young ant’s first journey - her adjustment to an adoptive colony - then her repatriation to the home-nest. Mona’s first swarm day brings the lesson that loss and death accompany adulthood - yet when she returns home, she is “acclaimed as a heroine who had survived more than ninety-nine days in the perilous World beyond the Nest.” Encouraging child readers to undertake their own journeys, this redemptive closure offers knowledge and maturity as the rewards for risking adventure. As Frame privileges the clarity of the child’s-eye view in her earliest stories and novels, the “morning-thinking” of this work would seem to have a particular value and impact in an assessment of her development of what we might call the *Reiseroman* - or the journey narrative.

Two further novels appear before Frame allows similar perceptions to enter her adult work. In the disturbing, science-fiction influenced *Intensive Care* (1970), Frame

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122 ibid., p. 199.
123 Godfrey also argues the permeability of national boundaries “News and ideas come in [...] we can’t stop them; they’re clinging and feeding in people’s minds; they can’t be so easily be searched for and brushed off and killed as desirable imports.” (ibid., p. 201.)
124 See Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, for commentary on Frame’s Christadelphian background.
125 *MMATSOTS*, p. 121.
126 The phrase “morning-thinking” is used by Mona (ibid., p. 145.)
imagines the importation of a fascist, eugenicist regime to New Zealand. In this work, Tom Livingstone’s desire for London’s anonymity becomes not an indictment of claustrophobic provincialism, but a mark of his guilt (what it is about his treatment of his daughters that he can not speak of to fellow townspeople). In Daughter Buffalo (1972), the New Zealander, Tumlung, visits America and joins the young doctor Talbot in an analysis of the culture as a “country of death”, because of its obsession with nuclear technology, over-sanitation, and commodification. Yet when the novel closes, the salience of the expatriate motif - outsider as insightful observer - is doubtful; Tumlung, an elderly man in a residential care home, might “never [have] left [his] native land, ‘except in imagination’”.

The infiltration of capitalism, violence and racism into all levels of interaction in the USA is also condemned in Living in the Maniototo (1979). Yet the relocation of the expatriate theme to Baltimore and Berkeley coincides with the inception of “morning-thinking” within Frame’s adult work.

Living in the Maniototo is criss-crossed with the peregrinations of its narrator, Mavis / Alice / Violet, whose many names offer an overt questioning of authorial - and all - identity. (Mavis is used hereafter for brevity.) The central ‘plot’ of the novel (the scare-quotations marks are apposite) concerns Mavis’s attempts to write a novel while house-minding.

When Mavis describes her work as novelist, we witness the first metamorphosis in Frame’s adult version of the Reiseroman. Mavis’s writing makes her an “Instant traveller, like the dead, among the dead and the living; an eavesdropper, a nothingness, a

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128 DB, p. 21.
129 ibid., p. 209.
130 The novel was published five years before New Zealand’s experience of the eroding of the welfare state over 1984-1987, under finance minister Roger Douglas.
shadow, a replica of the imagined, twice removed from the real." While these metaphors clearly signal the novel’s preoccupations with the elusiveness of the authentic for the post-modern consciousness (as Simon During has said, the novel clearly operates in the Baudrillardian culture of the simulacrum), the metaphor of writer as instant traveller is crucial. It resurfaces in the section entitled "Attending and Avoiding in the Maniototo": the Maniototo is the plain where the (fictional) writer, Peter Hallestead, lived and never left. Typically of the deflecting, deferring manner which is the novel’s strongest stylistic mark, this section is concerned with neither Hallestead nor the plain: it is written by Mavis while she is in Taranaki - about her time in Baltimore, USA. Mavis explains this tendency to shuttle between places in memory:

Baltimore became for me, not only a city where I had a friend but the city of a poet watched over as Blenheim was [...] by an angel of the imagination [...] perhaps this explains why I turn from the richness of my life here, in Taranaki, from the colour of the landscape, the green grass and the bush, the bright blue sky, these golden flowers and berries burning in the autumn garden, to write of Blenheim and its twin Berkeley, and of Baltimore [...] 

The “angel of the imagination” (the phrase recalls Rilke, Stevens, and foreshadows Frame’s autobiography) draws Mavis away from the scene before her. Frame’s vivid, deliberately meandering prose evokes the elusiveness of central truth. Yet as it re-enacts Mavis’s wandering thoughts, stylistically and contextually, it also aligns imagination and journey.

Frame’s renovation of the journey trope is accompanied by a regeneration of vision which overcomes the morbidity inherent to a work like *The Edge of the Alphabet*.

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131 *LITM*, p. 29.
133 ibid., p. 31.
Following a passage of dense, philosophical meditation upon living as both debt and giving, Mavis confides: "I now see attention as presence, being present, as the payment for the dark debt of absence or death."\(^{134}\) A second passage discusses the difficulties in "attending to the manifold." Ripe with paradox and oxymoron, ranging from the sensuousness of specific nature imagery, to circular, esoteric abstractions, the vision recalls Eastern philosophies:

There are some who live forever in the manifold; it hangs in their lives like a wild bee’s nest full of the honey of assorted flowers, unexplored and untasted, yet attended, turned to, in an act of avoidance […] others, on an individual path within the manifold finally escape from it, turning to themselves as original creators, thus intensifying their avoidance […]\(^{135}\)

The examples continue to proliferate; half-echoing Maniototo, manifold becomes an alternative, differently nuanced term for Universe,\(^{136}\) for simultaneous meanings beyond our immediate observation.

As would be expected in a novel with a sense of manifold truth as its chief intellectual premise, it embraces multiple concerns, which breed multiplied interpretative strategies. Yet in my own severe act of critical attending and avoiding, my focus remains trained upon Frame’s references to expatriation.

Initially, it appears that at the centre of Mavis’s intended novel - for which she travels the world, in order to find the ideal writing environment - lies the life of another writer: the expatriate Margaret Rose Humdell. Yet, in typically Frameian deflection (re-enacting her “avoidance” hypothesis), the focus becomes not Humdell, but the lives of an entire family, the Watercresses, devoted to biographising the writer. They too have

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\(^{134}\)ibid., p. 45.

\(^{135}\)ibid., p. 118.

\(^{136}\)Manifold itself has multiple meanings - from the Kantian to the mechanical reproduction of written copies. See Gina Mercer Janet Frame - Subversive Fictions for a full discussion.
expatriated to live near Menton, location of France’s Mansfield memorial.\(^{137}\) Such
tongue-in-cheek references to Mansfield (the play on “dell” and “field” seems relevant;
as does “Humdell’s echo of Mansfield’s “the Burnells”) send up the literary critical
industry, with its little cogs like this thesis, yet demonstrate Frame’s own absorption of
post-modernist fascinations. We might read, here, a metafictional quip about Frame’s
own legendary elusiveness and self-effacement as an interviewee. Yet the elusiveness of
Margaret Rose Humdell as the proposed-central research subject is also a fictional
demonstration of post-structural and post-modern understandings of the ‘I’ as divided,
mercurial, comprised of multiple subject positions, subjected to multiple discourses - and
so impossible to locate in a single, unifying consciousness. The former Cartesian notion
of self has given way to a notion of identity as a set of “psychical formations which are
provisional, shifting, partial.”\(^{138}\)

Frame’s fictional games demonstrate the inadequacy of conventional
apprehensions of reality; in another reflexive flip, Mavis’s novel is ‘taken over’ by four
unexpected - expatriate - house guests. The medley of set pieces from these uprooted
travellers intensifies the sense of restless shifting; they are atoms scattered by modern
history: by World War Two, New Zealand’s economic depressions, and the 1956
Hungarian uprising.

As in a later work more often cited by international criticism, Calvino’s *If On A
Winter’s Night A Traveller* (trans. 1981), the planned, ideal fiction never gets written.
Perfection is endlessly held over: Frame’s novel is a Derridean’s dream. The closest we
get to either the Watercresses or Margaret Rose Humdell’s life and work is an elegiac
description of Humdell’s memorial room and garden.

\(^{137}\) See also Linda Hardy, “The Ghost of Katherine Mansfield”, *Landfall* 172, Vol. 34 No. 4,
December 1989, pp 425-426; also Roger Robinson’s entry on Mansfield as cultural icon,
\(^{138}\) Prentice, “The Interplay of Place and Placelessness in the Subject of Post-colonial Fiction”,
Yet while Humdell is elusive, Mavis does write her novel, as she recounts her
(ultimately also fictional) house guests’ monologues. Thus expatriation is no longer
equated with the death of self-expression: for what the émigrée writer Mavis has turned
to is not specifically America, but - as in the autobiography which follows - the
multifaceted, interior, imaginative life.

**A Spell of Going: the Autobiography**

The marked stylistic differences between Frame’s fiction and her autobiography
have been frequently discussed: her work moves from the impressionistic, where
fractured narrative perspectives and unconventional chronology attempt to render the
movements of her characters’ minds, to the apparently linear clarity of the narrative of
her life. “The autobiography performs the narratorial functions associated with
conventional realism, summarizing, explaining, and offering authorial judgement.”
Yet this change does not result from naive ideas about the “truth” of autobiography:
Frame denies “the existence of a ‘pure’ autobiography”, saying that “for each moment
[there is] a separate story accumulating to a million stories, all different and with some
memories forever staying beneath the surface.”

Frame’s provision of “authorial judgement” has a politicised function. The
autobiography acts as a form of palimpsest over the past, seeking to erase and correct
bio-critical readings of her life which equate her fictional vision with mad, Romantic
genius; it also writes over the autobiography she submitted to her psychology lecturer as
a young student, which, in its account of a failed suicide attempt, was used as evidence

139 “A Spell of Going”: one of the definitions of journey in *SOED*.
Zealand Literature* No. 11, 1993, p. 29.
141 *TTI*, p. 235. See also Brown, “The Unravelling of the Mad Myth”, *Aspects of
of her mental instability. In Susan Stanford Friedman’s words on the autobiographical
genre itself, “alienation from the historically imposed image of the self is what motivates
the writing”.

Gina Mercer has described the autobiography’s linear structure as “warm and
comforting [...] un-troubling”. While the structure of the first two volumes differs
from the refractions of Frame’s fiction, the prose is still textured and ‘troublingly’
allusive. A case in point is a passage from the second volume:

I wanted an imagination that would inhabit a
world of fact, descend like a shining light upon
the ordinary life of Eden Street [...] I wanted the
light to shine upon the pigeons of Glen Street, the
plum trees in our garden, the two japonica bushes
(one red, one yellow), our plantations and gully,
our summer house, our lives, and our home, the
world of Oamaru, the kingdom by the sea. I
refused to accept that if I were to fulfil my secret
ambition to be a poet, I should spend my
imaginative life among the nightingales instead of
among the wax-eyes and fantails.

The quotation embedded here is sinister: “kingdom by the sea” comes from
Poe’s “Annabel Lee”, a poem with necrophiliac overtones, which is spoken by an older
male - and so paternal - figure to a young girl. Frame’s allusiveness and her desire
for an imbrication of life and literature, complicate Mercer’s reading, which privileges
the inventiveness of Frame’s novels above her autobiography, arguing the greater

\[\text{\textsuperscript{142}} AAAMT, p. 64.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{143}} “Women’s Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice”, Benstock (ed.), The Private
Self, pp 40-41.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{144}} “The autobiographies are her least troubling works, but what I enjoy about Frame’s fiction
is its troublesome, troubling and trouble-making capacities.” (Mercer, “‘A Simple Everyday
Glass’: The Autobiographies of Janet Frame”, Journal of New Zealand Literature No. 11 1993,
p. 44.)\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{145}} See also Jones, for a discussion of the reflexive, symbolic, and metaphoric qualities of
Frame’s autobiographical style, Barbed Wire and Mirrors, pp 240-241.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{146}} AAAMT, pp 180-181.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{147}} Another work Frame recurrently refers to when she cites literature which seemed to speak
about her grief for her sister Myrtle is Browning’s “Evelyn Hope”. This too evokes a sinister
relationship between an older man and a young girl.\]
deconstructive challenging of prescribed patterns in the fiction. My counterargument would be that alongside the subtler technique in the trilogy, which still allows for deflections of 'truth', Frame’s fictional structures can occasionally seem blatant. The subtlety is particularly notable in the third volume, where the closing mirror imagery 'reflects' Frame’s fictional use of the conceit, suggesting that the autobiography is not exclusively linear, but involved in an intertextual, reflexive phantasmagoria - participating in distortions and illusions. Frame bounces meaning from fiction to autobiography (and to poetry - note the title of Frame’s single collection) much as light rebounds from mirror to mirror.

The autobiography’s narrative of life as layered, cumulative story consolidates changes witnessed in Living in the Maniototo; the journey now parallels themes of growth and self-definition. Frame’s journey from New Zealand in Volume II is told as an escape from a society which has labelled her schizophrenic, and from an extended family which at times has operated as a microcosm of institutional efforts to shape her into an acceptable persona.

I must again sacrifice a wealth of material, due to severe space restrictions; my discussion of the autobiography is limited to Volume III, which begins with Frame’s departure for England.

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148 I feel Mercer’s attacks on male critics are falsely drawn along lines of gender, particularly in her comments on Peter Simpson’s work. She accuses him of using “negative and distrusting qualifiers”, when Simpson’s language (e.g. “ostensibly”) simply concedes Frame’s artful shaping in the autobiography. Mercer effectively repeats Simpson’s caution against claiming that autobiography is truth, saying “it would be ridiculous to expect a ‘simple truth’ from Janet Frame”, and “[Frame] is intent on appearing to create as little trouble as possible.” (my italics.) Her language is no more “negative and distrusting” than Simpson’s. (Mercer, “A Simple Everyday Glass’: The Autobiographies of Janet Frame”, Journal of New Zealand Literature No. 11, 1993, pp 43-44.)

149 Hansson has argued that each of Frame’s novels “contains a symbolic mirror structure”, i.e. they are designed to make readers see society’s deceptions clearly. (The Unstable Manifold, p. 102.)

150 See following commentary, pp 255-256, 261. Frame’s exhortation in AAAMT for the reader to see FITW for an account of her description of her experiences in psychiatric institutions is another case in point.
One of the most striking stylistic features of the third volume is Frame's consistent highlighting of her presence as narrator, commenting, analysing, and hence pre-empting the interpretative voice of criticism. (Where this occurred in the earlier volumes, it featured as distinctly contained commentaries on the writing craft.)

In this volume, Frame also constantly celebrates grand narratives that, conversely, post-modern literature (including her fiction) marks as lost. Although the loss is mourned in the fiction, in the autobiography, archetypes (be they literary, mythological or psychological paradigms) are shown to have value as a source which can give the interior life meaning. They are a source from which the individual can derive a self, in potential opposition to otherwise restrictive social shaping (such as the demands to adapt to gender roles, to conform to standards of propriety or 'sanity', or to take on an acceptable profession: Frame implicitly or explicitly recounts her resistance to all of these).

Where, for example, in Hyde's sequence of poems written post-expatriation, the persona moves from her present foreign context back to an ambivalent lyrical journey through New Zealand, in Frame's work we are shown both the initial response (euphoria, loss), and her mediating awareness of the response as a necessary (and so archetypal) process of adjustment. The personal response is a typical response; yet recognising the bonds of convention releases the individual from a too-cowed submission to these. Thus at Curaçao, Frame finds herself "aware of the 'other country' comparison" and she realises that "here I was, travelling overseas to 'broaden my experience' and already
undergoing the change forced on every new traveller and accomplished by examining not the place of arrival but the place of departure." 151

This examination of the homeland from a foreign context could imply a split vision; yet even as the issue of division is apparently reinforced by the lack of confidence Frame feels alongside her fellow passengers, her prose neatly deflects it. She diagnoses the effects of inner disunion in a fellow cabinmate - and so makes use of its literary potency, even as, with one artfully placed adverb, she points to its inadequacy as a description for her own experience. Frame’s very curtness in her use of the word “briefly” is stylistically confident, evoking developing themes of artistic assurance, and the eventual irrelevance, to her, of expatriation as exile.

Perhaps the Australian woman with her photographs and her tales of travel was not as confident as she appeared for the more she talked, the more I began to compare her with a character who has been set in motion and is unable to stop, for she had been to and fro, to and fro [...] Sometimes she appeared to feel that [...] it was too late to turn back, there was now no ‘back’ to turn to. I wondered, briefly, what if I became like her, a doomed traveller with no feeling of home? 152

Once she arrives in London, Frame’s discussion of her isolation immediately reflects modernist literary tropes of the liberating metropolis. The autobiography acts as the ‘verso’ of Toby Withers’ experiences in The Edge of the Alphabet: where Toby’s isolation is painful, Frame’s solitude releases fulfilment, despite her gloomy initial impressions. (The present and present continuous tenses articulate the pivotal, regenerating effect of arrival:)

Waterloo Station. I am standing with my two suitcases, my green haversack containing my

This, which could be called one of the archetypes of expatriate literature, is expressed in metaphysical terms by another expatriate: “In order to possess what you do not possess / You must go by the way of dispossession.” (Eliot, “East Coker”, III [lines 140-141], The Four Quatrets (1944).)
152 ibid., p. 14.
typewriter, and I’m holding fast to my
Traveller’s Joy handbag [...] I watch as the other
passengers are swept away by welcoming groups
of friends and relatives. It’s raining and grey and
the black taxis are like hearses. [...] Overtaken by
the joy of having arrived at last, I herd my
luggage closer to me as I climb the steps to the
front door and press the bell.¹³³

As in her arrival at Glenham as a child (narrated in To the Is-Land,
Autobiography Volume I), Frame’s arrival in London is a fund of the found: shaped -
and even legitimised - by the archetype of discovery:

Standing with my luggage on the grimy London
steps I felt fleetingly at the back of my mind the
perennial drama of the Arrival and its place in
myth and fiction, and I again experienced the
thrilling sense of being myself excavated as
reality, the ore of the polished fiction. The
journey, the arrival, the surprises and problems of
arrival.¹³⁴

Once she has settled, Frame’s view of the relationship between London and
fiction reveals stark differences between that of the younger Mansfield and Frame’s
contemporary, Adcock. Frame mentions Mansfield directly only twice in her
autobiography: once when she registers her surprise when a fellow school-pupil was
praised for her work on Mansfield, when “none of our English studies even supposed
that a New Zealand writer or New Zealand existed”.¹⁵⁵ On the second occasion, in light-
hearted, debunking manner, and in a separation of her work from any sense of following
Mansfield as literary ‘monolith’, Frame writes, “even her title, ‘Her First Ball’, had been
given a crude interpretation by my sisters and me.”¹⁵⁶ These fleeting references suggest
that Frame’s narrative of expatriation will also stand apart from Mansfield’s precedent.

¹³³ ibid., p. 17.
¹³⁴ ibid., p. 19.
¹⁵⁵ TII, p. 230.
¹⁵⁶ AAAMT, p. 120. See also McCracken, “Janet Frame: It’s Time for France”, The New
In her enumeration of the natural elements at the end of the following passage, Frame instead shows her inheritance from Hyde’s generation of literary nationalists in the 1930s:

Looking down at London I could sense the accumulation of artistic weavings, and feel that there could be a time when the carpet became a web or shroud and other times a warm blanket or shawl: the prospect for burial by entrapment or warmth was close. How different it appeared to be in New Zealand where the place names and the landscape, the trees, the sea and the sky still echoed with their first voice while the earliest works of art uttered their response, in a primary dialogue with the gods.  

Frame does not externalise the protective, nurturing connotations in her image of the blanket or shawl: the divisions between the contraction or burial of self in literary London, versus the expansion into the natural forms, open spaces and speech of her native literature, soon echo in her discussion of how her nationality is perceived abroad: impositions of national identity become constricting (although there are times when Frame can not resist such generalisations herself.)

Yet three decades after Mansfield’s 1919 “Geraniums” passage in her Notebooks, Frame still discovers a comparable erasure of background and valued experience in Britain. She writes of “feeling inadequate in my New Zealandness [...] a national lie [...] left a colonial New Zealand overseas without any real identity.” Frame tries to circumvent the difficulties in articulating the psychological impact of this loss, by adopting a false literary persona as a West Indian migrant writer. The implication is that despite her European origins, Frame’s dislocation parallels the West Indians’ experience of contact between two more strongly differentiated cultures. In addition, the innovations which she finds in West Indian migrant literature (with their

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157 *TEFMC*, p. 28.
158 *ibid.*
“morning vision of London and the United Kingdom”) offer a version of the city for which she feels more empathy than the residual historical forms.\textsuperscript{159}

When Frame submits poems to \textit{London Magazine} with a cover letter claiming West Indian background, the autobiography reveals a collision of needs: between the need to express outsiderhood, the apparent need to identify as a member of some wider collective identity (a nation, or migrant population), and a simultaneous wish to cast off another indefinable, yet restrictive, ‘colonial’ identity - to be independent from pressures to conform to type. The latter recurs, when she meets the deeply conservative Irishman, Patrick Reilly, whose attitudes threaten to consume the most crucial aspect of her (still nascent) self-possession. He disapproves of her ambitions to be a writer, and when she plans a stay in Ibiza, tells her that when she returns, she “could be a shorthand typist”.\textsuperscript{160} While his character suggests the inadequacy of national stereotypes and instead the ‘internationalism’ of conformist attitudes, Frame expresses her reaction as a sense of pursuit from her national past: “It seemed to me as if Patrick Reilly had sprouted from a handful of New Zealand earth that had found its way in my green haversack and spilled into the garden at Cedars Road.”\textsuperscript{161}

In the light of her reluctant and unhappy concessions to a personality like Reilly, her journey to Ibiza becomes another act of liberation from a repetition of that “polishing process” undergone once before with her family.\textsuperscript{162} Consequently, in Ibiza, the absence of all demands to belong, to conform, to meet cultural and social expectations, produces quite the antithesis of the painfully dislocating experience of expatriation seen in Mansfield’s and Hyde's work. Able to cast off her previous roles as “schizophrenic”, as someone who comes from a land “more English than England”,\textsuperscript{163} as supposedly culture-

\textsuperscript{159} ibid. She repeats “morning vision” from \textit{MMATSOTS}.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{TEFMC}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{161} ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{AAAMT}, p. 187.
\textsuperscript{163} \textit{TEFMC}, p. 28.
less colonial, and as 'West Indian poet', she migrates away from passivity and subjection:

I was aware not of the noise and traffic of Barcelona but of this background of overflowing quiet that enveloped me with a feeling of being at home, in place at last, like a piece of human furniture that has been reshifted and rearranged, never before exactly right, in all corners of the world. I did not know yet whether this was the common experience of travellers, in response to foreignness, difference, an abrupt removal of all tethering and bonds to a native land.¹⁶⁴

Soon Frame describes the origins of the title and central metaphor of this volume. The phrase as it is used in the final paragraph of the whole work will indicate the world of fiction; inextricable from this signified is its representation of her self-acceptance. In Chapter Seven, “Calle Ignacio Riquer”, the genesis of this metaphor is intimately related to her first experience of complete bondlessness - free from national identity - in Barcelona:

everything glisten[ed] with marvel. For me, that marvel was the light, the sky, the colour of the olive trees and of the buildings thumbed and worn like old stone pages, with none of the restlessness of New Zealand buildings, none of the sensed fear of sudden extinction by earthquake or volcano [...] crowning the marvel was the receptiveness of the tideless ocean admitting to its depths the entire world standing on its shores, creating a mirror city that I looked upon each day.¹⁶⁵

The language imbues each landscape with qualities that reflect her current state of relationship to each: the geological restlessness of New Zealand becomes highlighted as she relegates her own restlessness to the past; the adjectives “thumbed and worn” suggest her own intimacy and familiarity with the appearance of the local buildings, even

¹⁶⁴ibid., p. 51.
¹⁶⁵ibid., p. 56.
as she experiences the wonder and awe of the location’s “marvel”; while the sea in Ibiza
is accepting, “admitting […] the entire world”: reflecting, in fact, her own receptivity to
the new.

After recommencing her writing, Frame tries to walk around the harbour “to
where the real city lay that I knew only as the city in the sea, but I felt as if I were trying
to walk around a mirror, and I knew that whatever the outward phenomenon of light,
city, and sea, the real mirror city lay within as the city of imagination.”166 This passage
consciously and ironically reconstitutes a description in An Angel at My Table, where
Frame says of two early poems “I deliberately chose imagery known to be
‘schizophrenic’ - glass, mirrors, reflections”.167 Her pursuit of mirrors recalls Toby’s
encounter with the internal, hallucinatory reflections in The Edge of the Alphabet (and
the closing image of The Adaptable Man.168) In the earlier novel, the scene issued
Toby’s disturbing moment of realisation that the external world consisted of nothing but
projections from within.169 The encounter, recalling him to aspects of his past, triggered
his return to New Zealand, his persona bearing no marks of that journey which he
expected to reforge him in the smithy of his ancestors’ race. Frame confronts what Toby
can not: the terror of self-forging and self-reliance - and she shows the ability to accept
that beauty may only exist in our active, creative reconstitution of the external world.

166 ibid., p. 66.
167 AAAMT, p. 131.
168 Vic Baldry, paralysed by the falling chandelier, watches the outside world reflected in a
large mirror in his room: “there was a star-shaped crack on the right […] everyone who walked
in the road […] had turns occupying the break in the mirror; spattered, splintered, starred with
opaque glass […] But imposing our own weather, our own limits of reach and touch, our own
star-shaped irreparable flaw, don’t we all live in mirrors, for ever?” (TAM, pp. 256-257.) Note
this is also the character who has obsessively dreamed of Australia after a vacation there - he
lives “in a state of cultural bigamy” (ibid., p.23). The quip again implies that the desire for
overseas travel is a form of deferring (‘avoiding’, as LITM would have it) deeper (self)
perception. Vic has failed to reflect inwardly; his punishment is to live through an extrinsic
reflection.
169 For other comments on mirror imagery, see also Ferrier, The Janet Frame Reader, pp 220-
221; Hansson notes the mirror’s doubleness and i.e. its similarity to language for Frame: they
both function as “illumination and deception.” (Hansson, The Unstable Manifold, p. 78.)
Frame documents just this acceptance when she returns to London after Ibiza, and achieves a reversal of her former psychiatric diagnosis. In a sinuous passage, she describes a sequence of conflicting emotions, in which her confirmed freedom from the need to seek out psychiatric help leaves her with the “desolation of having no-one to ‘tell my story to’”. This deserves brief comparison to a work by one of Frame’s male contemporaries. In his autobiography, *One of Ben’s* (1993), Maurice Shadbolt, more explicitly than Frame, indicates the importance of historical continuity and the location of the self within a community identity. He recalls his dread upon leaving for Europe, as if the individual only exists in the eyes of a shared social group:

> Five minutes out of Auckland I had the powerful fear that I might never be back. Precedents were inauspicious. In New Zealand expatriation was still expected of writers and painters who flew away. Most disappeared forever. London - and sometimes Oxford and Cambridge - swallowed them down. Mine was the first generation of which this was untrue, but I was not to know it. I was not to know that there were others who had no intention of losing themselves in the world.\(^\text{171}\)

Likewise, the epiphany which he cites as his reason for back-migration, centres on a regained sense of national identity. Shadbolt sees headstones in a Polish grave marked with the New Zealand fern leaf: “Who were these young men from familiar places? [...] dust of my tribe, clay of my clan.”\(^\text{172}\) This has parallels to Davin, Sargeson and Ovenden; a preoccupation with the individual’s participation in a public, national identity remains a consistent masculine focus on the dilemmas of expatriation. (Social conditions to which we could relate this are men’s earlier access, historically, to public office and the professions, and perhaps even to the predominantly male population at the founding of the European settlement.)

\(^{170}\) *TEFMC*, p. 124.

\(^{171}\) Shadbolt, *One of Ben’s*, p. 209.

\(^{172}\) Ibid., p. 293.
In the context of losing the right to tell her story to sympathetic listeners, Frame considers back-migration: eliding homeland and consolation for the first time since her departure. Without mentioning emotional bonds to specific people, and returning not to fellow compatriots, as would be implicit in Shadbolt’s treatment of the return, but to those natural forms and open spaces she associated with the national literature, Frame writes

I did not yearn for a special place in New Zealand. I yearned, painfully, for sight of a straggly cabbage tree in a front garden, anyone’s front garden, and for sight and touch of a hillside covered with golden tussock.

Sitting in the bus, I felt as if I were a child again with memories that I had never identified and that I could only think were part of the vision of ‘the light that never was on sea or land’, the kind of world spoken of in the Book of Revelations, and in Thomas Traherne’s Centuries of Meditation where ‘eternity was manifest in the light of day’ and ‘the city seemed to stand in Eden or to be built in heaven.’

The Wordsworth quotation from “Elegiac Stanzas [...] on Peele Castle” redoubles the sense of insight lost and yearned for; Frame’s passage suggests timeless longing for a home and sense of security, transcending personal childhood experience.

Yet for the reader of To The Is-Land, there is an echo here of the self-possession Frame experienced as a child in Glenham, looking on at the native landscape.

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173 TEFMC, p.124.
174 Thanks to Peter Swaab for sourcing this quotation. The intertextuality is deepened by the fact that Wordsworth’s poem contains another image of a building reflected in the sea: “All the while / Thy form was sleeping on a glassy sea [...]” [lines 3-4]. Thomas Traherne’s poem “Shadows in the Water” (pub. 1903.), is a further literary source for Frame’s regeneration of the mirrored-world metaphor. (Note also the similarity to the title of Frame’s novel, FITW.) To quote from Traherne’s poem: “In unexperienced infancy / Many a sweet mistake doth lie [...] Thus did I by the water’s brink / Another world beneath me think [...] / Twas strange [...] / We other worlds should see / Yet not admitted be [...] / I plainly saw by these / A new Antipodes.” [From lines 1-38]; see Hollander and Kermode (eds.), The Oxford Anthology of English Literature, pp 1201-1203.
175 “I discovered a place, my place. Exploring by myself, I found a secret place among old, fallen trees by a tiny creek [...] I was overcome by a delicious feeling of discovery, gratitude, possession. I knew that this place was entirely mine; mine the moss, the creek [...]” (TTT, p. 258.
The wish to share her story, and the possibility that a child with unplaced memories would turn to family for their verification, are Frame's only subsequent admissions of a need for the communal. Significantly, Frame turns away from the immediate need to "tell her story" to someone. What the passage finally moves towards is her seizing of the present for its particular value:

My feeling of isolation began to recede then as I reminded myself that London, of all places in the world, was full of poets [...] They may not have known it but they were company for me, their very breath kept me warm and dispelled my grief.176

Yet when she hears of her father's death, Frame realises that she had "perhaps already made up [her] mind" to return;177 on the subject of this decision, Frame offers a balance of views (in both of which European and New Zealand creativity are organisied, and the layers of the dead appear) yet she still chooses back-migration.178 The movements of her argument recur in her discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of expatriation, in which she initially appears to act as a ventriloquist for Romantic ideas of all writers as exiles. Yet she swiftly undercuts this notion of artists as exceptional, to articulate a grand metaphysical theme (which further locates Frame in a post-colonial context; she echoes the Caribbean expatriate George Lamming, who wrote in 1960 that "To be an exile is to be alive"179).

Conrad, Nabokov ... and what about James Joyce ... and Samuel Beckett ...? All writers - all beings - are exiles as a matter of course. The certainty about living is that it is a succession of expulsions of whatever carries the life force ... All writers are exiles wherever they live and their

25.) This sense of belonging is resonant in the unquoted remainder of the Traherne meditation: "The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine [...] all the World was mine [...]" ("Third Meditation from the Third Century", Dobell (ed.), Centuries of Meditation by Thomas Traherne, p. 153.)

176 TEFC, pp 124-125.
177 Ibid., p. 165.
178 Ibid., pp 165-166.
Frame proffers all grounds for staying in Britain, and for leaving - yet ultimately her argument is for the individual choice and vision. What matters is how the experience is transmuted into literature. In the turns and diversions of Frame’s exploration of the pros and cons of departure, it would seem that she is carefully avoiding any statement of patriotic allegiance (which conceivably relates to Frame’s novelised arguments against xenophobia, provincialism and fascism).

I knew, finally, that leaving one’s native land forever can be a strength or a weakness or both, depending on the artist, to be used to add to the store of material processed in Mirror City [...] from whatever land, the truth is always painful to extract and express whether it be the truth of fact or fiction.

For several pages the issue of her father’s death has been subordinate to literary questions. When Frame turns to the emotions preceding her departure, even a metaphor which draws upon familial relationships continues to deflect these as a factor in her return: “I said goodbye to London where living had been for me like living within a huge family with London our house [...] The seasons in the city of millions became my relations as they had been in the countryside of New Zealand.” It is only when she has finally embarked and begun to sail that her focus returns to her father’s death. Her farewell to London becomes linked to her farewell to him; the poignancy of Frame’s departure is partly undermined by her memory of the “pulp-soaked, racist” Sexton Blake.

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180 TEFMC, p. 166. Frame also revisits her article “This Desirable Property”; “at the moment of birth every human being is an exile - or at the moment of consciousness of the first thought.” New Zealand Listener, 3 July 1964, p. 12.
181 TEFMC, p. 166.
182 ibid., pp 167-168.
183 ibid., p. 170.
detective stories her father loved. Her picture offers an alternative London, not solely the locus of the literary elite:

[...] it was not even Dickens or Lamb or Samuel Pepys, it was Sexton Blake and Tinker, his faithful servant, who farewelled me from London while I, in my turn, was waving goodbye for the last time to my father, he too perhaps sheltering in fiction [...]184

As in the departure from New Zealand narrated in An Angel at My Table, when Frame undergoes the reverse journey, she is again leaving aspects of the family past behind. In the imagined dialogue which acts as the closure to this volume, her choice of residence is clearly articulated as a loyalty to her art; to no nation save the imagi-nation. As such it is a rejection both of nationalism and an outdated colonial deference to “overseas”. Frame’s catalogue of “temporal cities” recalls - and relocates - Eliot’s catalogue in The Waste Land, but in her offering of “Mirror City” as the source of art and self, she suggests her arrival at an atemporal, eternal city: Yeats’s Byzantium from “Sailing to Byzantium”, or the transcendent “Civitas Dei” which Stephen Spender cites as missing from Eliot’s poem.185

‘[...] what is that city shining across the valley? [...] It’s Mirror City. You know it’s time to pack this collection of years for your journey to Mirror City.’

I stare more closely at the city in my mind. And why, it is Mirror City, it’s not Dunedin or London or Ibiza or Auckland or any of the other cities I have known. It is Mirror City before my own eyes. And the Envoy waits.186

The autobiography turns our gaze from an image of ‘Frame’, back to the world of fiction.

184 ibid., pp 171-172.
185 Spender, Eliot, p. 119.
186 TEFMC, p. 191.
Although in that fiction, she mocked the view of expatriation as a means of calling the self into full existence, her life story reads as the combined satisfaction of both Mansfield’s and Hyde’s creative ambitions: their wished-for artistic recognition overseas, and Hyde’s desired back-migration. If the journey from home accompanies a truthful self-analysis, or a journey within, the return home is possible. Although this treatment of expatriation seems to link Frame to modernist paradigms, in her privileging of the inner life we can also see the inheritance of post-modernism as the era when “to an extent new in history, the individual human self has been made constitutive of reality.”

This focus on interiority pervades Frame’s most recent novel.

The Distance Has Gone:

***The Carpathians (1988)***

*The Carpathians (1988)* again has an expatriated central character. Mattina Brecon is an American in New Zealand: a restless, wealthy woman who becomes obsessed with “the power of distance”, and whose expatriation is described as an intellectual experiment, as she seeks out the local legend of the Memory Flower, from which the fictional town Puamahara takes its name.

Mattina’s search for essence and authenticity coincides with the discovery of a phenomenon called the Gravity Star: the scientific paradox of “a galaxy that appears to be both relatively close and seven billion light years away.” The collapse of the dichotomy of near and far is also the lesson with which Mattina leaves New Zealand at the end of the novel.

This collapse is one expression of the philosophical perceptions which drive Frame’s creative sense; the elision of opposites also speaks of her earlier fictional stress.

\[^{187}\] Bradbury and Ruland, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, p. 424.

\[^{188}\] *TC*, p. 19.

\[^{189}\] ibid., prefatory note.
on the expatriate theme - her wish, in effect, to write previous literary-historical
interpretations out of existence. In *The Carpathians*, New Zealand culture has caught up
with her angle on “the dream of Overseas”. The effects of post-colonialist thought are
evidenced in the words of Hene Hanuere, a woman who invites the New Yorker onto a
Maori marae:

There was a time, you see, when this country and
both Maori and Pakeha and others were nothing
because we were so far away - far away from the
rulers, the seat of Empire; but now we’re
ourselves, and we can’t be ignored or made
nothing and no-one, because the distance has
gone.

Mattina Brecon herself represents the breaching of New Zealand’s geographical
isolation by increased jet travel, by communications technology, and the influx of
American culture. Yet the influence is two-way; Mattina (like Hyde’s Bellister) leaves
New Zealand with her world view altered.

Mattina’s textual centrality is variously perplexed by several metafictional
moments, although the ideas that we journey through with her are nowhere near as abject
as those of the self-annihilating Thora of *The Edge of the Alphabet*. One instance of this
is that the novel unequivocally celebrates the role of expatriate artists. Their
“inescapable longing for an ancestral homeland” is not degraded as another human
delusion deferring the knowledge of death: here Frame concedes that there are other,
tangible levels of loss which give rise to valid perceptions. Mattina attributes New
York’s vitality to its foundation on immigrant cultures: thinking of

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190 The novel is also set in a context when Maori communities and tribal authorities have
resisted 1960s assimilationist and integrationist politics. See Gustafson, “The National
Governments and Social Change 1949-1972”, Sinclair (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of
New Zealand*, p. 289.
191 TC, p. 84. Frame’s inclusion of the Hanuere family suggests literary influence from Maori
authors such as Grace, Ihimaera, and Hulme, whose depictions of Maori spirituality and sense
of community from the 1970s onwards question Pakeha values.
[Those New Yorkers who began their life with loss and a great grief and later [...] created a castle from their foundation of grief [...]

Mattina felt deeply the debt owed by New York City to its artists, once strangers from distant lands, who created a new dimension for the city [...] the density given it by the artists lay unbroken in the imagination.

Mattina subsequently witnesses the residents of Kowhai Street undergo an extreme form of the loss and disempowerment implicit in the immigrants' early grief.

The foundering of opposites is rendered in the novel in violently symbolic, science-fictional form, when the residents of one street have their powers of speech destroyed by a rain of light from the Gravity Star. Smeared in a substance which is at once like typography, animal and human dung, and precious gemstones, they emit "horrifying human cries", "like the first cries of those who had never known or spoken words but whose urgency to communicate becomes a mixture of isolated syllables, vowels, consonants."

Mattina experiences genuine horror at this breakdown of categories and divisions of meaning, but her escape from the street's fate, and survival of similar psychic collapse, appears to be rooted in her belief that new meanings can and will be formed out of this chaos. The novel is nihilistic in that it questions the real existence of all current categories; yet it offers Mattina's regenerative interiority as a route towards new definitions. In a world where historical understandings of consciousness are threatened, Mattina recreates truth: learning the value of collective memory, and art as

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192 ibid., p. 104.
194 Mattina's reaction suggests a link to a Victorian horror of the confusion of near and far: see Gillian Beer's commentary on Victorian Fairy Painting - e.g. Richard Dadd's "The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke" - where the juxtaposition of differing scales is allied to the grotesque, the fantastic, the monstrous. C.f. Beer's lecture "Alice's Body", 18 February 1998, from her series Alice in Space.
its embodiment. *The Carpathians* suggests that the creative onus is on all individuals, in the post-modern context, to build "homemade worlds of human design." Mattina moves towards this notion of the self as art: "Her visit to the orchards and the place of the Memory Flower gave her the unique sense not of allying herself with creation, but of being herself a creation united with the source of the Memory Flower."

Art, arising from pain and loss, is a form of memory that offers a means to self-redemption. This is an interpretation which still holds true, even in the face of the shuttling ironies of the prefatory note and the finale, which assert that Mattina's journey to Puamahara has been entirely fictionalised by her son. (And thus that the manuscript within the manuscript - the account of Mattina's adventures by Dinny Wheatstone - is also his fictionalisation.) Operating as textual "Gravity Stars", Frame's endings persistently seek to destabilise and question our interpretations of events and identity. However, her assertion that John Henry Brecon has invented Mattina is less dislocating than might be expected. His views ratify hers. John Henry reveals that his mother and father died when he was seven, yet adds, "What exists [...] is the memory of events known and imagined, and the use of words to continue the memory through the centuries, despite or with the Gravity Star."

Frame's autobiography, as a reconstruction of the self, may have highlighted memory's redemptive possibilities. The change in Frame's treatment of expatriation also carries something of this reconciliation; it has metamorphosed from evoking strict

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195 *Bradbury and Ruland, From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, p. 372.
196 *TC*, p. 114.
197 See note 25; see also Kim Worthington's entry on Frame, Robinson and Wattie (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, p. 188.
198 *ibid.*, p. 196.
199 Memory as resurrection appears, fleetingly, in "Snowman Snowman"; here, however, the concept is voiced as a question (but not punctuated with a question-mark): "are knowing and being known the two triumphs which the dead carry with them to their graves, the dead who drop like parachutists to the darkness of memory and survive there because they have been buckled and strapped to the white imperishable strength of having known and been known [...]" (*YANETHH*, p. 89.) The powers of memory are also strong in Frame's poetry: "The Clock Tower" suggests how the present can alter what memory retrieves; "The Place" suggests memory is being: "I do not remember these things / - they remember me." (*TPM*, [lines 9-10])
associations between expatriation, death and the deadening of artistic vision, to offering it as representation of the best possibilities of human desire and imagination.
CHAPTER FIVE

NOT MY KIND OF COUNTRY:

FLEUR ADCOCK AND EXPATRIATION
CONTENTS

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List of Abbreviations Used in Footnotes

(See bibliography for edition details)


SOED: *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.

SP: Fleur Adcock, *Selected Poems*.

Introduction

Fleur Adcock (1934 - ) is best known to British anthologists and reviewers for her tartly humorous and disaffected treatment of relationships between the sexes. Yet her wide-ranging work deals just as frequently with issues of the relationship between self and place. Indeed, she has written that the question of her national identity has "influenced, infected, and to some extent distorted the course of [her] adult life." The troubling 'distortions' of expatriation inform her poetry from 1963 to 1991.

A poet will clearly have a very different sense of literary tradition to the novelist or the author of short stories; yet despite the divergent structural demands of poetry and fiction, the thematic preoccupations of Adcock's work share continuities with other authors here discussed. I hope in this chapter to make such thematic links articulate and useful. (While the diverse oeuvre of Robin Hyde alone could argue a case for cross-generical literary influence, within the bounds of this study, Hyde's poetry certainly admits room for further discussion of poetic concerns.) Again, my analysis will be exclusively of those of Adcock's poems which touch on the expatriate theme.

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Born in New Zealand, Adcock was taken to England as a child, where she lived for eight years before she and her family returned to New Zealand. She describes this repatriation as the most significant break:

I did not choose to be born in New Zealand; nor to be taken abroad at an early age and imprinted with an indelible affection for England; nor to be torn

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1 See also my entries on Adcock in Robinson and Wattie (eds.), The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature and in Sage (ed.), The Cambridge Guide to Women Writing in English.
tearfully away from there at thirteen ("like Juliet from Romeo", as I once said) and required to become a New Zealander. I did, quite definitely, choose to leave New Zealand when I was at last free to make a choice, and England has been my home ever since.3

That New Zealand stands as the site of being rendered unhappily passive, and England as the locus of agency and self-determination, is a division which resurfaces with varying degrees of intensity (and with various turns) throughout Adcock's work. The poet who has suggestively characterised the beginning of a line of female expatriate writers inimical to their culture of birth ("Eventually, like Katherine Mansfield and Robin Hyde, I found New Zealand stifling") shares their criticisms of the puritanical in New Zealand society.4 Yet in the persistence of her arguments, she diverges from her predecessors, and from her contemporary Janet Frame.

For Adcock, the personal losses which might be felt in expatriation to England are potentially recompensed by symbolic ancestral reconnection; this is clearly the antithesis to Frame's debunking of the myth of historical origins. Nor, despite the opposition of passivity and self-determination in her autobiographical discussion, does she make expatriation an explicit literary trope for movement from girlhood to adulthood, as did 'Alien’, Mansfield and Hyde. In an essay which discusses her sense of being an expatriate and an outsider, she states that “the question of my nationality has always seemed at least as significant as the question of my gender”5, then in potential contradiction asks, “Now I wonder: has being a woman contributed to this [sense of outsiderhood]? Are women natural outsiders?”6 The questions are telling: Adcock is not entirely persuaded by her own proposition. This

3 ibid.
5 ibid.
6 ibid.
suggests suspicion of the resonances of that word “natural”, and its simplifications of social
influence, its reductions of issues of consciousness and identity, to such broadly sketched
agenda. This also points to salient stylistic differences between Adcock’s essays and her
poetry. The latter allows lines to blur, for the serious doubts and complications implicit in
the quoted question, in fact, to resonate more powerfully and productively. One basic
indication of how Adcock’s poetry allows dissolutions of boundaries is that she frequently
uses a gender-neutral first person in poems which discuss expatriation; the lyric voice is one
with whom male or female reader can identify. In such poems, the most recurrent concerns
are not for femininity as exile; instead they focus on expatriation as artistic self-betterment,
and as an experience which induces the dreamlike nature of competing psychological realities
- past and present.

My discussion of these concerns will move chronologically from collection to
collection, but I focus on individual poems which best illustrate the sustaining tension in
Adcock’s work.

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7 For Adcock’s discussion of the potential ghettoisation of women’s poetry “in the ‘Women’s’
section of the bookshop”, see Adcock (ed.), The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Women’s Poetry,
pp 1-2.
8 See Siew Keng, Some Women Poets from the Sixties, PhD Thesis, for a letter quoting Adcock’s
discomfort with the confessional voice in her poems from the 1960s (p. 21.) See also Adcock, “The
Way it Happens”, McCully (ed.), The Poet’s Voice and Craft; Adcock discusses her struggles with
the first person narrator, moving from seeing it as deeply confessional to seeing it as “a useful
device” (pp 154-155.)
9 Adcock’s designation of a matrilineal literary connection offers another angle on the issue of
gender; it suggests female identity not as exile, but as part of a specific, major, and parallel
tradition.
**Waking or Dreaming:**

*The Eye of the Hurricane* (1964) and *Tigers* (1967)

Adcock’s first collection, *The Eye of the Hurricane* (1964), its title suggesting calm vision within confusion, was launched in New Zealand in the context of a critical background in which Curnow’s introduction to *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* (1960) (the “first really comprehensive anthology of my country’s verse”) was the most clearly heard polemical voice. Curnow writes that the process of selection was

> the piecing together of a record of adventure, or series of adventures, in search of reality of which New Zealand has been the scene [...] Reality must be local and special at the point where we pick up traces [...] Whatever is true vision belongs, here, uniquely to the islands of New Zealand. The best of our verse is marked or moulded everywhere by peculiar pressures - pressures arising from the isolation of the country, its physical character and its history.\(^1\)

Adcock’s first collection incorporates several poems which explore classical references and story-telling traditions (folk mythology, fairy-tales), as a means of channelling commentary on familial and sexual relationships, negotiating the intimate, turbulent spaces between people. Many individual titles refer out to a European literary and linguistic heritage;\(^1\) a gesture which in 1963 Curnow argued often had devolved into “the attempt to substitute a literary universe for the real one, because of a self-centred disgust

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\(^{10}\) Curnow (ed.), *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, p. 17

with the limits imposed by accidents of birth or history." Adcock becomes one of a group of poets with whom James K Baxter credits a shift away from Cumow’s prescriptions: in 1967, Baxter criticises Cumow’s “surely too aggressively negative” introduction, which implies “an intense spiritual isolation and unease which […] has since fallen into the background”. For Baxter, Adcock is one of a number of writers who “deal […] with the New Zealand situation as a variant of the [Western] condition”.

“Invocation for Gregory”, the collection’s first poem, usefully illustrates how Adcock’s early style and concerns earned Baxter’s latter comment. In its use of invocation, this poem shows an Audenesque tenor which remains strong in Adcock’s work (although the poem lacks the sense of socio-historical menace and primal panic which permeates Auden’s invocations.)

Following the separation of parent and child, Adcock’s poem is a prayer to the elements pleading for the child’s protection “Now that I, with voice nor hand / Cannot touch him with my care” [lines 9-10]. In the poem’s exercise of controlled prosody (using the simple rhyme scheme abab, predominantly trochaic metre, and a three octet structure) it is a traditional means of bearing private grief into the public sphere. The strict delineations of form and classical metaphors also show Adcock’s abiding aesthetic preference. Although she by no means always writes in strict metre and rhyme, Adcock has largely dismissed the

13 Baxter, Aspects of Poetry in New Zealand, p. 32. Hyde, of course, had argued thirty years earlier against notions of New Zealand’s spiritual isolation.
14 James Bertram calls the poem “an honourable failure”, yet doesn’t say how it fails. (Review of Eye of the Hurricane, Landfall 72, Vol. 18 No. 4, December 1964, p. 372.) See, for example, Part III of “In Memory of W.B. Yeats”; Part V of “Five Songs” and “O What is that Sound.” Auden makes extensive and flexible use of invocation; as a rhetorical device it can also be loving and lyrical (see “Legend” and “Look, Stranger,”); yet it can also implicate the reader in the guilt implied as he invokes darker, concealed political forces. (E.g., “Consider”, or for a fusion of these aspects, sections of “Twelve Songs”, and “Lullaby”.) (Mendelson (ed.), Collected Poems by W.H. Auden.)
15 From TEOTH. (N.B.: Unless otherwise stated, all poems are taken from SP.)
experimentalism of a poetic line which, to summarise loosely, began with Pound, Cummings, Williams, and which the Objectivists continued. It is a line of linguistic and typographical innovation which in New Zealand poetry from 1970 onwards has been at its most vibrant, self-aware and accessible in the work of Bill Manhire, whose poetry unites avant-grade aspects with both lyricism and narrative interest. Yet poetry which attempts visual, as well as aural, mimesis is usually "not [Adcock's] kind of country." As she has said in a neatly pre-emptive essay, which relegates modernism and its inheritors to the past:

I have no ambition to be 'experimental' in the old-fashioned sense. For me the poem on the page [...] must [...] be capable of being read aloud in the human voice. Fancy shapes and patterns don't interest me unless they can be communicated, to however subtle a degree, in speech.\(^\text{17}\)

As well as offering a nascent indication of stylistic features, "Invocation to Gregory" foreshadows preoccupations with the relationship between self and topos. The landscape of this poem is non-specific (i.e. not in the least 'Cumowesque'), but is used to locate the mother's fear for her child's safety.\(^\text{18}\) What is potentially harsh here (wind, trees, water) will be transformed into a personal argument with the New Zealand landscape in a later collection, and into a recurrent preoccupation with other more particularised locations throughout her oeuvre.

Immediately in this first invocation, there is a duality which also becomes a hallmark of Adcock's later work. The collection begins and ends with poems addressed to children, which testify to deep love, but also expose contradictions within the parental role. As "Invocation to Gregory" swears to the strength of the experience of parenthood, it

\(^{16}\) See line 9 of Adcock's "Unexpected Visit".


\(^{18}\) The poem doesn't internally cite motherhood; conceivably it could be spoken by a father.
simultaneously asserts the speaker's irreconcilable separateness from the child, and the struggle for self-definition which must take place outside domestic exigencies. The poem prefigures journeys, restlessness, and, in separation from family, already suggests disruption to, and redefinition of, home.¹⁹

Let the northward stream of air
Flowing over plain and mountain
Weave around his chafing fear
Unseen its passive cool affection,
While I burn in silence here.

Let the impulses that start,
Born to die without their end,
The halted gestures of my heart,-
Words, caresses, movements, - blend
And be directed to his mind.
[...] What I would find
Give to my son: be his rest.

The distance between Gregory and the speaker is underlined by the implication that as she abandons him to the land, he will become of the land: as the wind endows the child with its own cool passivity, the mother burns "in silence here". The final statement, which uses enjambement to add dramatic interruption, operates in two ways. On one level the mother would sacrifice her own contentment, her own "rest", to ensure her child's safety and happiness. On another, it directly confesses and confronts her own dissatisfaction. Definition of herself must somehow involve separation from child and home; hence her agonised rhetorical delegation of the role of nurturer to the elements. This tension between

¹⁹When asked in an interview if she felt that a woman leaving home and family in the 1960s still then had a different impact than it did for men, because of traditional associations between women and domesticity, Adcock answers "Oh yes, yes it does, and I felt much more guilty about leaving home than [Mansfield or Joyce could] because I left a child behind, with the other half of his family, and that was a wound that could never heal." Interview between Fleur Adcock and the author, transcript p. 21.
rest and restlessness is an opposition inherent to the title (and eponymous poem) of the whole collection - any peace achieved is equivocal, reflecting a temporary state.

"The Lover" and "Returning" are two further poems from *The Eye of the Hurricane* which explore the relationship between landscape and self; "The Lover" examines the process of adaptation, "Returning," the more successful poem, treats journeying as a state of being.20 In "Returning" Adcock examines the process of recovering a disintegrating memory, through the account of a climber returning to a former haunt. The descriptions of landscape are an extended metaphor for the consecutive joining of one detail to another as a complete event or locality is recalled.

This, then, was the path.
Mind’s lacunae close; he holds restored
The full text. And wonders, after all,
Why he returned […]
[lines 9-12]

When the physical details of this place have been revitalised through the return to and analysis of the whole, "[…] The crux remains obscure: / Why so preserved? Why sought?" [lines 15-16] The importance of the place or event after all does not lie in the verification of physical minutiae, but in what memory has built around and from these. The final image, of the climber watching the sky cloud over and clear in turns, implies a submission to both the vivid exterior reality of the present, and the hazier outlines of mental framing around the past. As with the fluctuations in the sky, the place is the same, yet not as it was. The one sky constantly alternates between two states, and the "real" sky is both -

20 In "The Lover" the physicality of the metaphors which describe a man’s passionate communion with nature become fetishistic, so in the context of the poem’s discussion of social alienation, inappropriately comic: "he would stroke wind-grained wood / Learn and cherish a stone’s contours […] / And closet with a rock his loving blood." [lines 20-24]
just as the "real" place is physical flora, fauna, geology - and the cloudier, less easily
documented emotions there associated.

His design
He yields to the lucent day, and cannot care
Further. So, laced in long grass,
He lies and sees the sky cloud and clear,
Breath or brightness grace the high glass,
By turns filmed and free the live air.

[Lines 17-21]

The majority of Adcock’s poems continue to rely on this phrasal syntax: i.e. the
largest part of the work in her sentences is performed by nouns and adjectives. This
cumulative style lends itself particularly to the formal contextual closures she favours. As
Helen Vendler argues, dominant use of particular parts of poetic speech implies a specific
form of linguistic persuasion. A poem written in adjectives expresses a “yearn[ing] to
categorize” phenomenon; a poem written in nouns “is a hymn to the ravishments of
remembered sensation, a call to praise the portents of memory.” For a poet who becomes
increasingly concerned with the relationship between past and present selves as inflected by
place, this stylistic (grammatical) emphasis is thematically apposite.

As the adjectival elaboration, richly textured metaphor, fascination for formal
control and equally textured aural qualities in “Returning” might suggest, Adcock’s early
literary influences are manifold. Her work learns from the Romantics (Wordsworth and
Coleridge), and the particular romanticism of Robert Graves, to whom her poems about
relations between the sexes can be linked. Graves advocates poetry’s fusion of the poet’s
“own domestic life” and “the ancient power of [...] lust” - a marriage which occurs

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22 Graves, from *The White Goddess*, p. 20, and *Poetic Craft and Principle*, p. 94. In an interview
Adcock has also cited her attraction to what she calls “the anti-romantic elements in his diction [...] phrases [...] that *distanced* the persona in the poem slightly from what was going on.” (Interview
between Fleur Adcock and the author, transcript p. 1.)
particularly in Adcock's treatment of sexual disappointments, frustrations, injuries and ecstacies in works like "Wooing the Muse" (dedicated to Graves), "A Thought for the Sphinx", "Wife to Husband", "Incident" (all from The Eye of the Hurricane), or later, "The Batterer" (from Time Zones (1991)) - to give a much reduced list. Adcock's later developments in register can be traced to the self-implicating irony of classical models such as Horace, or to Auden's "dryness, irony, easy vernacular diction and self deflation in verse", his conjoining of formal control and colloquial tone. The apparent straightforwardness of Auden's syntax and diction becomes dominant in Adcock's work; yet her subject matter generally differs from his often densely allegorical political and historical meditations (which is not to say that Adcock avoids politics: she has written increasingly on ecological issues.) The humour in Adcock's work often mediates the gloom of Auden's style, which arises from his perpetual sense of impending historical apocalypse. Thus her understatement and emotional reserve are also traceable to poets as diverse as Ursula Bethell, Elizabeth Bishop and Philip Larkin. Her development of a subsequently more declarative mode (versus the knottier syntax of "Returning"), consistently praised for its wryness, coolness, and occasional astringency, has been seen as a characteristic which aligns her with typical aspects of a Movement aesthetic.

25 See also my entry on Bethell in Sage (ed.), The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English.
typical to English poets of the Movement - “the social protection of a wry style” - is particularly apt for Adcock, for whom the position of social outsider provides the predominant aesthetic conceit.  

The best early illustration of this developing style is “Unexpected Visit”; thus it is the poem from this collection that I will discuss at greatest length. Written in quatrains with the second and fourth lines rhyming, its vital energies come from a synthesis of the experience of dislocation between self and environment with the stylistic elements of “a poetry characteristically empiricist, wry, discursive-argumentative, emotionally restrained, much given to aphorism [...] desiring to establish a level-toned and civilised conversation”.  

Contrary to Adcock’s later interview description of dreams as a positive access into the lost past, as happy relocation, the dreamlike shift in landscape in this poem is surreal and disturbing. The poem, full of understated ironies, begins “I have nothing to say about this garden”; the semantic simplicity attempts to defuse the perturbation of sudden arrival in an unfamiliar context; the persona’s “tense composure under the stress of disorientation” is maintained in an effort to manage that very confusion. The persona reverts to factual statement in an attempt to anchor the experience; the tonal economy is the consummate execution of a Coleridgean “making a quiet image of disquiet”.  

Schmidt, Reading Modern Poetry, p. 52.  
Corcoran, English Poetry Since 1940, p. 82.  
Speaking of the anguish of leaving England as a child, Adcock says “I had dreams of going back for many years and in this dream I’d walk up this hill and see the village where we’d lived [...]” (Ricketts (ed.), Talking About Ourselves, p. 130.)  
The clarity of diction which dominates in Adcock’s work from this point also derives from The Group and workshop poetry; poetry read out loud. See also Adcock’s interview with Lauris Edmond, Landfall 143, Vol. 36 No. 3, September 1982, p. 325.  
Coleridge, “The Keepsake” (1802), line 24; see Keach (ed.), Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems. The line describes wind blown flowers reflected in a barely moving river pool; i.e. controlled medium, turbulent subject.
The visit of the title is to one of Adcock’s many “alien landscapes”, a formal garden, which the speaker walks into through “a usual door”. The sense of unreality is all the more disconcerting as it arises from an initially normal premise. The line breaks enact the movement from tension, a form of not knowing, towards a highly temporary resolution:

I do not want to be here, I can’t explain
What happened. I merely opened a usual door
And found this. The rain
Has just stopped, and the gravel paths are trickling
With water. Stone lions, on each side,
Gleam like wet seals, and the green birds
Are stiff with dripping pride.

[lines 2-8]

The poem turns classically ordered grounds into a disordering environment, suggesting that the individual can as easily be alienated by aspects of their own inherited culture as by the exotic.

Not my kind of country. The gracious vistas,
The rose-gardens and terraces, are all wrong -
As comfortless as the weather. But here I am.

[lines 9-11]

This note of resignation suggests that the persona’s passivity is equivalent to that of the dream-state; yet it also hints that an iron inner control is exercised to counteract the disturbing pulse of the outer world, as the mind attempts to create a private space, for this soon becomes a world where the speaker can not orientate herself in the most basic empirical sense: “[...] I cannot read / The sundial [...] there is no / Horizon behind the trees, no sun as clock / Or compass.” [from lines 13-18]. Stannard’s comment that “the very dynamic of the

33 “alien landscape” comes from “The Lover”, _TEOTH_.

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work lies in the fact that nothing happens” understates the atmosphere of tension; the poem
dramatises the nature of suspense. The persona waits for a storm, literally and figuratively:

[... better, perhaps, among the rakes and flowerpots
And sacks of bulbs than under this pallid sky:
Having chosen nothing else, I can at least
Choose to be warm and dry.

[from lines 24-28]

The speaker’s position as outsider is clear from the hybrid images she earlier created in lines 6-8 from the sight of statues and birds; the lions almost transmogrify to seals under her gaze, as she views this world in the terms of another, forming correspondences between opposites. This occurs also in the paradoxical conflation of “stiff” and “dripping” [line 8]; such oxymorons illustrate a consciousness negotiating between two ways of seeing. The taut composure also implies a state of movement between two forms, comedy and fear; an absurdist quality which is reinforced when, faced with a setting devoid of personal relevance, the persona proffers the only sane or affirmative action possible: acceptance. “Whatever happens may happen anywhere” - the line clearly nods to Larkin. Adcock’s fascination for the dislocations between self and environment, the unpredictable land between the conscious and subconscious mind, produces the best poem in her first volume, and continues in her second collection, which also marks her English debut.

Tigers (1967) contains twelve new poems out of a total of twenty six; by far the most striking change in the structure of Adcock’s first overseas publication is the removal of the work derived from myth and fable.

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34 The wry resignation of this line echoes his poem “I Remember, I Remember” (1954); Larkin writes “‘Oh well, / I suppose it’s not the place’s fault’, I said. // ‘Nothing, like something, happens anywhere.’” [lines 34-36]. See Thwaite (ed.) Collected Poems by Philip Larkin. Stannard also draws this link in his dissertation; again I disagree with his emphasis. He reads Larkin’s poem as “a celebration of non-event, or ordinariness”. Fleur Adcock in Context: From Movement to Martians:, p. 8. I read it instead as jaded, sour, and sceptical: an anti-celebration, in fact.
The first new piece in the collection, “Miss Hamilton”, is a character study recalling Auden’s “Miss Gee” or Larkin’s “Mr Bleaney”, in which we witness the life of a solitary outsider, and Adcock’s conjunction of social alienation and divided consciousness. The character portrait genre is atypical of Adcock’s work: what could be called “tonal” explorations of a split mentality, or the imbrication or real and unreal, are more common, as for example in “Hauntings”, “Carpe Diem”, “Incident” and “I Ride on My High Bicycle”.

The latter is particularly successful, as it mimics a series of rapid dislocations from place to place, emotion to emotion, and creates a sense of disconnection between emotion and situation - between a heightened sense of urgency and illogical time constraints on preparations for a beach swim.

The poem illustrates (as dreams do in their literal way, which the conscious mind finds surreal), the fusion of opposites which can exist within memory (or perhaps personality), but impossible in any other physical reality. So we get the dizzying physical transference from an industrial centre to a seaside resort, as if they were somehow one and the same place:

I ride on my high bicycle
Into a sooty Victorian city
[...]
And emerge into unexpected sunshine
[...]
There below lies Caroline Bay,
Its red roofs and dazzling water.
[lines 1-14]

Following these transitions, the final entry of a leopard, padding across snow, is depicted as unsurprising; the syntax moves fluidly, the metres sustained (although the mainly trochaic stresses of the last line help to offer rhythmic closure). As in another poem from this collection, “Composition for Words and Paint”, with its sudden reference to the opal-bearing

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35 Poems specifically dealing with the nature of dreams proliferate throughout Adcock’s collections.
birds, the greatest strain to the muscles of reality lies elsewhere: in harbouring the laws of diverse environments within one consciousness. ("I have been there - to all the beaches / (waking or dreaming) and all the cities." [lines 27-28]) It is this particular association between a 'disarray' of reality and changes in physical location which is relevant for Adcock's treatment of expatriation and the interrogation of identity (as it has been for several authors in this study). We can read the poem as a transcription of dreams, or as a metaphor for the undermining of perspective caused by geographical displacement: Adcock's fusion of the two is close enough for Gregerson to argue that "Geography [...] can be regarded synechdochically - the physical displacements [are] analogous for other, more complex psychological displacements." 36

In another autobiographical essay, "Rural Blitz - A Wartime Childhood", Adcock retells her past in the light of her constant changes of residence, and relates these relocations as the defining experiences in her character:

I learned to live with [...] the combination of crushed humility and confident arrogance that comes from not quite belonging. It is no bad thing to be an outsider, if one wants to see places and events clearly enough to write about them. At any rate an outsider seemed to be what, after so much practice at it, I had become. 37

Adcock's poems speak of a far more unsettling distortion of boundaries between subjective and objective worlds than the stark metaphorical oppositions of this essay imply. Where it seems that Adcock feels the function of prose is to externalise and explicate, her best poetry avoids the reductive and didactic; it is capable of "being in


A poet contemporary to Adcock, Peter Bland (at one point an English emigrant to New Zealand) also expresses this phenomenon. He writes that he sees "['reality' as something [...] in a constant state of flux [...] I always saw the real as surreal because reality as I'd once known it (back in England) was denied to me." (Bland, "Beginnings", Islands 30, Vol. 8 No. 3, October 1980, p. 233.)

uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts."\(^{38}\) At its most effective, the poetry's distanced and ironic tone, which she develops increasingly, suggests an inconclusiveness which concedes that its subject matter remains open for redefinition; this is distinctly unlike the tone of the quoted essay. We might, therefore, speculate that the poetry’s gathering irony is both deflective and defensive: deflective as an acknowledgement that the terms are porous and unfixed, defensive as an attempt to control the impending sense of self-dissolution which overtakes identity as it undergoes precisely this questioning and fluctuation.

**Awkward Landscapes:**

*High Tide in the Garden* (1971)

An attempt to draw clear lines around identity can be seen in Adcock’s early project of rejecting the New Zealand context. Once physically outside New Zealand, she evokes her response to precisely the conditions within it which Curnow pronounced fostered poets of a distinct *national* character. Until the collection *High Tide in the Garden* (1971), she said, in 1985:

> I certainly never located my poems anywhere, not that I was particularly interested in doing that. I thought poetry ought to be universal and ought to be something you’d also be able to read two thousand years hence as I was reading poets from two thousand years ago.\(^{39}\)

Yet it is in the form of a powerful reaction against the local that Adcock first overtly calls on the details of her native country’s landscape. Although she has aligned this view with Mansfield’s and Hyde’s biographical trajectories, her dismissal is in marked contrast to their mature *work*, where they both became concerned to re-image New Zealand regeneratively. Adcock also said, in 1989:

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\(^{39}\) Ricketts (ed.), *Talking About Ourselves*, p. 129.
I don't think I was influenced by [New Zealand poets]; I was too busy being influenced by what was more important to me, things that struck me with more dramatic force [...] In my teens it was Blake [...] Milton, Donne, Eliot. 40

However, her initial poetic treatment of her relationship to New Zealand has a close thematic relationship to local writers she omits in this acknowledgement of influence - i.e. those poets central to the 1930s, such as Curnow and Fairburn. For while Curnow’s critical opinion stresses that the truly New Zealand poet must “learn, one way or another, to name those “nameless native hills”, that loom across their inward or outward vision”, his own early art expresses a deeply ambivalent relationship to his native landscape. 41 The “peculiar pressures” of the “isolation of the country” register as personally felt (if formally restrained) distress in his work: 42 “The spirit of exile, wrote the historian / Is strong in the people still [...]” and

[...] what great gloom
Stands in a land of settlers
With never a soul at home. 43

A similarly bleak sense of homelessness is what Adcock’s initially heated “Ngauranga Gorge Hill” chills to. It begins with sensuous (and sensual) imagery of envelopment or enclosure: “The bee in the foxglove, the mouth on the nipple, / the hand between the thighs” [lines 1-2]. Yet this is a sensuality which the speaker denies is attributable to location; the enclosure becomes subtly transformed into suggestions of the city’s claustrophobic hold on the speaker.

42 ibid., p. 17.
The poem’s “Forgive me”, which stands alone as a separate line dramatically aligned to the right margin, immediately succeeds the sensual expression, suggesting sexual guilt: but the line breaks work a teasing suspense which is resolved by the apology for “these procreative images”. The reflexiveness of this apology arguably indicates that Adcock is deliberately engaging with descriptions which were standard literary fare, and which as a consequence became clichés in the national consciousness. Later in the poem, these images become virtually all that is lush or fertile about the town:

Nothing on the way but rock and gorse, gravel - pits, and foxgloves; and a tunnel hacked deep, somewhere, into a cliff.  
[lines 10-13]

To the reader familiar with Mansfield, that “nothing” resonates with echoes of the gently satirised character, Beryl Fairfield, from “Prelude” (1917); yet here “nothing” is spoken in the speaker’s older, wiser voice, dismissive of a contrived adolescent crush on the landscape and the standardised language she used to describe it: “[...] Ah, my burgeoning / new country, I said (being fourteen).” The adult voice, correcting the adolescent’s naïveté, describes the bicycle ride down the hill:

[...] No time then to stare self-consciously at New Zealand vegetation, at the awkward landscape.  
[lines 20-23]

She now presents the “awkward landscape” in terms of its lack; it too has something of the undeveloped and adolescent. Yet there is a subtext to the “Nothing” of this terrain. It is the nothing of a place set against Adcock’s childhood memories of “bluebells, English woods with squirrels in them and English seasons - Christmas in winter with carol singing in the dark.”

detail, and selects instead minutiae which are the products of imperialism: gorse, foxgloves - plants introduced by the first European settlers, and, as forcibly transplanted English forms, those with which the unsettled, Anglicised voice of the poem can identify. There is nothing, apart from the Maori place name of the title, which for a non-New Zealand reader would not be immediately recognisable. For Adcock, however, this is not 'literary imperialism'; she has stated that her English childhood is "one of the basic things that I don't think New Zealand critics take on board sufficiently when they are talking about my having sold out and transferred my allegiances." Adcock's project is not Mansfield's: who wanted "for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World". Instead, Adcock seeks to exorcise a past intimated as painful, by creating a sterile image of its backdrop.

The poem constantly reiterates an opposition between the procreative (and so by implication, creative) self and the unformed, arid context. The adult denial of a personal connection to the landscape implies also the speaker's will for severance from New Zealand forms: she is to look elsewhere for creative fertility.

A suppressing and oppressive claustrophobia is evoked in "For ten years / that city possessed me": and although over the matter of her children's births there she says "I have no / quarrel", the image of "little pink mouths tucked / like foxglove-bells over my nipples" shivers between associations of delicacy, intimacy, and danger. The poison digitalis enters a moment of appetite and nurturing: as the sequence of imagery develops from the foxglove's association with Wellington, the city's poison contaminates the most tender of relations. Consequently, the closure is dismissive, abandoning vivid imagery for bald statement: "But I think it was a barren place." [line 31]

"Stewart Island", from the same 1971 collection, extends the dissatisfaction with context from a focus on the city to natural geographical characteristics. A hotel

45 ibid., p. 42. See also Ricketts (ed.), Talking About Ourselves, p. 130.
46 Scott (ed.), The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks II, p. 32.
manager’s wife is asked “how she could bear to / live there”[lines 3-4], the woman gives the island’s beauty as a reason, an attribute which the speaker encapsulates in a reluctant nomination of natural forms which predominantly generalises: “a fine bay, / all hills and atmosphere; white / sand, and bush down to the sea’s edge[...]” [lines 4-5]. This erasure of specifics (homogenised “bush”, not an enumeration of native trees) effectively refuses a sharper clarity of memory, it is the rearticulated turning away of the final lines: “I had already / decided to leave the country.” [lines 17-18] The poem enacts ambivalence. Its lyrical aspects allow us to see how the context could be perceived as beautiful, yet it refuses a more intimate examination of the area. The content (although not the style) offers an echo of Coleridge’s “Dejection: an Ode” (1802): “I see them all so excellently fair, / I see, not feel how beautiful they are!” “I may not hope from outward forms to win / The passion and the life whose fountains are within.”[lines 37-38; 45-46] 47 The natural beauty does not elicit Adcock’s euphoric response; there is again an implicit relationship between the rejection of place and a perceived absence of meaningful material for her art.

The island is subsequently seen through the lens of the decision to leave, the hostility felt in the environment serving her project of rejection:

As for me, I walked on the beach; it was too cold to swim. My seven-year-old collected shells and was bitten by sandflies; my four-year-old paddled, until a mad seagull jetted down to jab its claws and beak into his head.

[lines 10-17]

In its own way, this anti-idyll has the barrenness of “Ngauranga Gorge Hill”; here the environment destructively feeds off its inhabitants. There is also a bracketed aside in which the hotel manager’s wife performs her own rejection of this setting.

47 Keach (ed.), Samuel Taylor Coleridge: the Complete Poems.
Adcock has described “Maori / fishermen with Scottish names” [lines 7-8] in her catalogue, as if the men are one aspect of the scenery - objects of the tourist’s gaze as much as the fine bay. She adds tersely, and deliberately reductively, that the hotel manager’s wife “ran off with one that autumn”[line 9]. Structurally this foreshadows the speaker’s departure. The fugitive wife’s previous estimate of the natural beauty therefore parallels the falsely toned language of the adolescent self in “Ngauranga Gorge Hill”; the estrangement in the woman’s relationship, and her departure, corroborate the speaker’s estrangement from the New Zealand context.

“On a Son Returned to New Zealand” affirms the association between procreativity and creativity etched in “Ngauranga Gorge Hill”, as the speaker calls her son “my first invention”. With the opening and final lines, “He is my green branch growing in a far plantation” and “He is my bright seabird on a rocky beach”, the son (the good gull, this time) figures as the contrasting colour or life against a harsh background - although in her imagining, the son has also become of the land (recalling “Invocation to Gregory”). The other system of opposites in the poem is between interiors (Athens, London) and exteriors (New Zealand). This is drawn particularly between the detailed domestic interior in London, and the father’s house in New Zealand. The London interior, although it has quietly altered for the son’s departure, suggests the successful establishing of a home, the speaker settled into her environment. Adcock’s treatment of the line-break in the following shows one of her occasional failures; the break after “the” is self-conscious, yet does not add to stress or meaning; it sets up anticipation which the

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48 It is reasonable to imagine that the couple have left the island. As Neville Peat describes in Chapter Two, “The Settled Parts”, Stewart Island - the Last Refuge: “When Stewart Islanders say they are “going to town” they mean a trip to Invercargill [i.e. the South Island]. When they speak of “the other side” they have the land across the strait, the South Island, in mind. These are the expressions of people who perceive their community to be not only small but also tangibly removed from mainstream New Zealand society [...] The population - like that of many a native bird species - is just holding its own. For years it has hovered around the 400 mark.” (p. 30). It is difficult to imagine escaping a marriage and a community this size without travelling across the strait.
measured tones of the subsequent syntax (and the ordinariness of the following object) undercut. Where Adcock can flexibly exploit the emphasis, and the banality or disappointed suspense of end-rhyme, she at times omits use of the free-verse line-break as an equally articulate unit of tension, suspense and momentary silence.49

Then I was back in London in the tarnished summer, remembering, as I folded his bed up, and sent the television set away […]

[lines 13-16]

These lines are placed against the image of the son’s New Zealand home, where the house is set against the larger landscape in a manner which suggests a life balanced, precarious, or struggling against the elements:

He was already in his father’s house, on the cliff-top, where the winter storms roll across from Kapiti Island, and the flax bends before the wind. He could go no further.

[lines 18-22]

Alongside the pain of absence, the sentence “He could go no further” suggests more than geographical distance (and indeed, Wellington is not the farthest physical point from London). Its role as an emotional crux is reinforced by the correspondence of line and sentence end, and by the abruptness of the half-line sentence compared to the preceding enjambed lines. For a poet who has declared the technician’s pleasures in correct grammar and logical syntax, the choice of “further” instead of “farther” is salient. It is not just a statement about the extremes of physical distance which lie between mother and son; the figurative aspects of “further” are evoked, to carry the

49 She has written in fact, “Unfortunately I have nothing to say about the line break […] it would be false to pretend that my line-breaks are decreed by anything but instinct.” (Fleur Adcock, “The Way it Happens”, McCully (ed.), The Poet’s Voice and Craft, p. 151.)
sense that the son could not be in a situation more removed from where the speaker feels her emotional centre to be.\textsuperscript{50}

In his review of *High Tide in the Garden*, C.K. Stead comments that this poem, “merging the image of the loved son with that of the landscape he inhabits, finds release for nostalgia without committing the poet to it totally.”\textsuperscript{51} If nostalgia is defined as the melancholia caused by prolonged absence from one’s country or home, the poem could conceivably be nostalgic for ‘home’ as the relationship between mother and child. Yet a yearning for the native country is decidedly absent. Although the speaker’s London summer is “tarnished”, both by time and the son’s departure, she grieves for the possibility of a shared present and future with the child, not for the context in which he lives. There is no nostalgic wish for her return. The language depicting the New Zealand landscape is less overtly qualified, when juxtaposed to an adjective like “tarnished”; yet “the winter storms roll” and “rocky beach” hardly evoke the “sickness” the etymology of nostalgia implies. Any inferred melancholia is felt for her son; the pain is exacerbated precisely because he belongs, in the deepest sense, to the land she rejects.

New Zealand is attributed in this trio of poems with a certain series of negative values; leaving it behind, and the subsequent choice of home, potentially represent the seeking of positive opposites. These could be paired as follows:

- awkward $\rightarrow$ at ease
- new country $\rightarrow$ history
- possessed me $\rightarrow$ self-possession
- barren $\rightarrow$ fertile
- unformed $\rightarrow$ finished
- hostile $\rightarrow$ hospitable

\textsuperscript{50} For a thematic reading see also Siew Keng, *Some Women Poets of the Sixties*, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{51} Stead, review of *HTITG, Landfall* 100, Vol. 25 No. 4, December 1971, p. 460.
The two poems which immediately follow the New Zealand trio in *High Tide in the Garden* deal with something of this alternative context. “Saturday” depicts warm domesticity, the senses jubilant:

I am sitting on the step
  drinking coffee and
  smoking, listening to jazz.
The smoke separates
two scents: fresh paint in the house
behind me; in front,
buddleia.

[...]

I am painting the front door
with such thick juicy
paint I could almost eat it.

[lines 1-17]

This shows a relish for the present moment from which, in the New Zealand trio, the body retracts (c.f. “Stewart Island”: “it was too cold to swim.”). In the preceding poems, touch and sight are the sole descriptive senses, here, although there is not quite genuine synaesthesia, the senses interpret phenomena which are usually communicated through their complements. (The paint described above; and potentially in the closing scene quoted below.)

Contrary to the New Zealand scenes, nature in both “Saturday” and “Trees” is various and abundant; the trees overflow property boundaries, comically linking people, not rendering them isolate. This celebration has been characterised as “an almost ‘Georgian’ sympathy for England”\(^{52}\) a focus on the local also seen as typical of the Movement.\(^{53}\) Although at this stage of her career, Adcock only overtly specifies

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location when she relegates New Zealand to the past, we can read these poems as implicit declarations of artistic allegiance to the English, not the New Zealand, scene.

In “Saturday” the trees are crammed with bees and butterflies; cats wander on and off stage; the street seems filled with children. The poem is densely populated against New Zealand’s sparseness - and the visual aspect intensifies, as if moving from New Zealand is a transition from monochrome to Technicolour (“sea-green”, “tangerine”, white clover”, “Greek blue, with a vapour trail / chalked right across it.”). This strong pictorial element, which frames the domestic minutiae, heightens into a consciously whimsical burst at the end - as if all the concentrated sensory experiences have built to an ecstatic moment in the imagination:

I am floating in the sky.
Below me the house
crouches among its trees like
a cat in long grass.
I want to stroke its roof-ridge
but I think I can
already hear it purring.

[lines 51-57]

Unlike the pieces set in New Zealand, this articulates a correspondence between place and creative thought: the Chagall-like dream scene being the closing chord formed of each note played upon the physical senses. As well as a symbolic expression of the cross-fertilisation of place and perceptions, this is an effective structural closure, as it definitively breaks from the preceding realism.54

“Trees”, a poem whose long, trunk-like single stanza is bound together by an average of four stresses per line and irregular end, slant, and off-the-stress rhyme, repeats the plurality of “Saturday”. It begins with a catalogue: “Elm, laburnum, hawthorn, oak” - which is specific against “Stewart Island’s “bush” - and throughout the

54 Siew Keng writes “In contrast to this sense of self-fulfilling existence in England, her past life in New Zealand appears empty, if not unhappy.” (Some Women Poets of the Sixties, p. 96.)
poem, the list slowly expands. Contrary to the scenery in “Ngauranga Gorge Hill”, here
the scene is of leafy riot; the speaker attempts to reduce the garden’s crop:

[...] everywhere,
soaring over the garden shed,
camouflaged by roses, or snaking
up through the grass like vertical worms,
grows every size of sycamore.
Last year we attacked them [...] 

No use, they continue to grow.

[lines 26-36]

Corresponding to the proliferation of trees, the syntax trails profusely on as the
voice revels in the names: so much so that here thematic closure is effected by simply
completing the catalogue:

Trees I can tolerate; they are why
I chose this house - for the apple tree,
elder, buddleia, lilac, may;
and outside my bedroom window, higher
every week, its leaves unfurling
pink at the twig-tips (composite
in form) the tallest sycamore.

[lines 48-54]

The first statement begs the question, what is it that she can not tolerate?

Nothing in this particular poem answers that question, yet our reading of the New
Zealand based work can save the statement from either meaninglessness or a cheap play
for irony. The spoilt tone seems deliberate: it offers a sly self-reference in recognition
that the tone of the New Zealand poems might well be cited as intolerant. Here the
speaker adjusts to and embraces the encroachment of place over personal boundaries,
unlike the New Zealand texts, where the division between speaker and place is typified in

55 Michael Hulse, however, singles out this poem as a failure when read independently. “[...]
all of it is dull [...] Adcock has made no attempt to make anything of her material.” “Fleur
the adolescent’s awkward stare: where the speaker looks on, across a gap between inner and outer, reconfirmed by that unsettled gaze.

An Almost Local Accent:  

The Scenic Route (1974)

The title of The Scenic Route (1974), reiterates the role of onlooker, yet it also carries a greater weight. It variously refers to the leisurely and aesthetic, which intersect with questions of witness and responsibility, suggesting the effort to construct meaningful connections between viewer and view. The title deliberately externalises the travel motif, and so the classic metaphor for exploration of identity. Several of the poems document movement over an English and Northern Irish landscape, areas valued as the locus of history. The collection begins Adcock’s project of reconstructing the story of personal ancestry.

The integral part family history plays in Adcock’s poetic self-definition is clear enough from individual poems; yet it is emphatically reinforced by the role selected poems from The Scenic Route play in a text written by Adcock’s mother, Irene Adcock. Butter in a Lordly Dish (1979) is a loosely structured personal memoir, throughout which Fleur Adcock’s poems are interspersed; embedded typographically in the family context, they are like the photographs interrupting the text - as if they are not in fact interpolations, but parallel texts which help to form a single narrative.

Butter in a Lordly Dish is informative about certain moments where present and past meet in the poems. In “The Bullaun”, sightseeing in Northern Ireland involves the immediate confrontation of precisely that political conflict which Irene Adcock reveals drove past generations of her family to emigrate to New Zealand: Irene writes of her

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56 From “Moa Point”, The Scenic Route.
grandmother’s migration that her family “wanted leave to worship in peace without the pull and tug of Catholic and Protestant hostility”.

“The Bullaun” (unlike an earlier, derivatively Audensque poem, “Remarks on Sernyl”), deals with a specific historico-political problem, and the microcosms of individual lives affected by it. The poem mourns a culture which although warring over religion, has lost not just its superstitions, but also any sense of the mystical. The sectarian violence eradicates any notion of the Bullaun’s supernatural power. (“Drink water from the hollow in the stone ...” / This was it, then - the cure for madness” [lines 1-2])

Although the speaker bears pained witness to contemporary politics, there is a dual aspect to her reconnection to ancestral roots. As the poem “Please Identify Yourself” makes more overt, although the journey to Northern Ireland is an effort to recoup an Irish past, it leads to a significant act of denial. The speaker is not an entirely passive observer of the damage; the poem reports and judges - yet it also disclaims that the conflict is in any more intimate way her own. She wishes for the Bullaun’s curative powers

[...] Not for my own salvation;
hardly at all for me: for sick Belfast,
for the gunmen and the slogan-writers,
for the crazy girl I met in the station,
for Kevin and Declan, who would soon mistrust
all camera-carrying strangers [...] 

[Lines 32-37]

57 Adcock, *Butter in a Lordly Dish*, p. 17
58 Adcock, *TEOTH* (1964) and *Tigers* (1967).
59 Adcock’s Irish-heritage poems were collected two years after Heaney’s *Wintering Out* (1972), the collection in which his role most clearly turns from ‘nature poet’ to that of a poet seeking adequate symbols for discussions of involvement and guilt in the Irish situation. Yet “The Bullaun” and “Please Identify Yourself” appeared in magazines in the same year as his collection. Adcock has cited “an instance when Seamus Heaney was influenced by me. Apparently Seamus was very taken with the word “bullaun”, which is a part of their culture he hadn’t thought much about before, and used it in a poem. (I don’t know which.)” Letter to the author, 25 May 1996.
Although these lines grieve for Northern Ireland's predicament, the poem expresses suspicion of liberalism's sense of complicity in past guilt: it disavows any personal inheritance of the nationally claimed stone:

[...] But of course
the thing's already theirs: a monument,
a functionless, archaic, pitted stone
and a few mouthfuls of black rainwater.
[lines 37-40]

"[T]he thing's already theirs", and the previous "hardly at all for me": these phrases remove her from enmeshment in the daily negotiations of survival. Duplicating the iteration of distance between self and place in the New Zealand set poems, Adcock again is led to the experience of outsider. A sense of achieved wholeness is impossible against the background of persistent political schisms; some part of Adcock's identity is always deflected 'elsewhere'.

"Please Identify Yourself" brings Irish and New Zealand national identity into direct play. In a situation where nationality can be interpreted as political alliance, Adcock's poem evades the title's demand and hence interrogates its meaning. The title's officialese is pushed up against the equivocation of her first line, which presents two statements, then retracts or qualifies twice: "British, more or less; Anglican of a kind." This points up the ways in which the title (implying passport offices, border controls, militia) avoids the complicated issues of what components do constitute identity. Yet the claim of New Zealand nationality commits its own avoidances.

The speaker's failure to declare herself British to the "friendly Ulsterbus driver" [line 3] (British being what she "more or less" feels herself to be), is "a cowardly retrogression" [line 5]. Her "No I'm from New Zealand" [line 6] attempts political neutrality, so paradoxically is a political self-defence. The use of the term "retrogression" also has implications for questions of the psychology of emigration or
expatriation. Defined as “the action or fact of going back in respect of development or condition; return to a less advanced state or stage”, the ability to confidently assert her Britishness represents progress, advancement. British identity therefore becomes an achievement, a success; her former New Zealand identity an immaturity, a failing. The poem illustrates the absorption of imperialist attitudes, where the former colony is subjugated to Europe, and metropolitan and regional are designated opposites in the scale of progress.

The poem is in free form, each line break occurring at the end of a sentence or grammatically comfortable point, until “I go to Moneymore / anonymously […]” [lines 11-12] where the extra white space creates emphatic pause on the final word’s subtext.

In the poem, the greater political import and immediacy of the situation in Belfast presents a second challenge: “In Belfast, though, where sides have to be taken, / I stop compromising […]”[lines 26-27]. Her note-scribbling in church is where she demonstrates the taking of sides: opposing the extremism of Paisley, who represents the faith of her ancestors. “I scrawl incredulous notes under my hymnbook / and burn with Catholicism.” (The verb in the latter line is either peculiarly insensitive to Catholic history, or an ugly pun.)

The second verse offers an ironic pastiche lifted from sports and music, which criticises the simple extremism of Paisley’s biblical and military jargon, whose sole purpose is to incite vengeful reactions in the congregation, not thought and debate.

The man himself is cheerleader in the pulpit for crusader choruses: we’re laved in blood, marshalled in ranks. I chant the nursery tunes and mentally cross myself. You can’t stir me with evangelistic hymns, Dr Paisley: I know them. Nor with your computer-planned sermon - Babylon, Revelations, whispers of popery, slams at the IRA, more blood.

[lines 18-25]
There is no argument in Paisley’s formulaic sermon - it uses terms unquestioningly: constructing a language of violent retribution which mirrors the very tactics of the IRA it condemns. Yet the poem itself extensively uses cliché, summary and judgement (of Paisley, arrived at outside the dramatic narrative of the poem), and deadened rhythms. By the latter, I mean that the metre does not alter as a mimesis of felt passion or revelation, nor is there juxtaposition of what is deemed Paisley's false rhetoric alongside Adcock’s own language, neither do we hear the nursery rhymes undone by Adcock’s more persuasive rhythms. The poem falls into the crude generalisations with which it accuses the minister; these generalisations are indicative of the distance Adcock is able to maintain from the Irish troubles: as, too, is the easy note of resolution. Her ancestors are still “my dears”; the poem’s final word is not fully earned as a closure to the dramatisation of strained loyalty, towards which the structure apparently impels the reader:

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to my tough Presbyterian ancestors,  
Brooks and Hamilton, lying in the graves  
I couldn’t find at Moneymore and Cookstown  
among so many unlabelled bones, I say:  
I embrace you also, my dears.  
[lines 38-42]
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For all its faults, the poem usefully indicates Adcock’s deepening exploration of her family history. Ancestral poems succeed it in this collection and The Inner Harbour (1974), and in her most recent work, Looking Back (1998), monologues from genealogical relatives and explorations of how historical moments have impacted upon their lives, become the strongest motivating concern.\(^{60}\) Looking Back thus also retraces

\(^{60}\) This description might initially recall the expatriate American Ann Stevenson’s fictionalised trans-generational poem sequence, Correspondences (1974); yet this work focuses more consciously on an investigation of women’s changing social roles. It is also designed as a complete work in itself, where Adcock’s poems are conceived as discrete units.
Adcock’s *poetic* roots, returning to a conceit crucial to her construction of artistic identity.

The ancestral poems from the earlier collections specifically focus on the role of expatriation in the family story; for this reason, which restrictions on space enforce, my discussion of these confines itself to the prehistory of *Looking Back*: and, in fact, to the later “Settlers”. This offers the most skilled exposition of themes which “Richey” and “The Voyage Out” from *The Scenic Route* touch upon obliquely. Emigration becomes the disruption of the family history: a disruption which in itself provides the impetus to reforge the family narrative - and poetic - line.

Yet there are intervening poems between Adcock’s first examination of Irish heritage, and the longer poem “Settlers”. And it is as if one poem in particular needs to be written before “Settlers” can be achieved.

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When Adcock’s poetic exploration of the historical shaping of self begins, the argument with New Zealand persists. She returns to it in “Moa Point” and “Acris Hiems”: two poems in which she disavows what could be cited non-familial New Zealand ground. In “Acris Hiems”, for example, in which the speaker icily (yet also evasively, in terms of author-reader relations) negates some unspecified relationship, the picture of New Zealand is washed out: “That pale city / I escaped from ten years ago” [lines 1-2]. This poem offers a particular example of where Adcock’s composure and irony actually alienate the reader. We are expected to empathise, but are excluded from the precise circumstances which inspired the bitterness: an exclusion which is underlined when “you” and “Friend” could implicitly draw in the reader as direct recipient, only for this double-reading to become quickly inadequate:
A letter from that pale city
I escaped from years ago
and no good news.
I carry it with me
devising comfortable answers
(the sickness, shall I say?
is not peculiarly yours),
as I walk along Beech Drive,
Church Vale, Ringwood Avenue

[lines 1-9]

Friend, I will say in my letter -
since you call me friend still,
whatever I have been - forgive me.

[lines 15-18]

It is in a succinct, nine-line poem in which New Zealand, too, represents family
history, that we first witness Adcock change from disavowal to incipient acceptance of
the native country’s role in shaping identity. In an essay, Adcock calls the poem “a kind
of threnody for several of my great-aunts and uncles who had died in New Zealand while
I was on the other side of the world.” The title, “Over the Edge”, encompasses both
the edge of the world and the edge of life, playing on the ancient archetypal fear of
travellers - that to voyage to the other side of the world risks death. Corporeal
disintegration and diffusion in the poem become an image of intimacy, as the speaker
immerses herself in the river, both the symbolic and physical body of her ancestral past.

The graphic acknowledgement of physical decay is Adcock’s trademark self-
corrective irony; it openly declares the fancifulness of the conceit of spiritual baptism:

All my dead people
seeping through the riverbank where they are buried
colouring the stream pale brown
are why I swim in the river

[Lines 1-4]

Stages of self knowledge are represented in the contrasts between surface and
immersion; where the speaker walked “barefoot on the gravel / seeing only the flicker of

minnows / possessing nothing but balance" [lines 7-9], the now undermined "balance" is specifically an absence of involvement in family identity. As the speaker has gone "over the edge" to the other side of the world, so she has tipped over into her search for details of her background. "[P]ossessing nothing but balance" in turn tilts over into self-possession: her identity clarifies as she submerges herself in (and so absorbs) the family context: "feeling now rather closer to them / than when the water was clear" [lines 5-6] - or, when she had the clarity of an outright rejection of the New Zealand past. Yet that "rather" is not just the relaxed, colloquial voice; it is an instance of Adcock's muted, retroflexive irony. It quibbles, it modifies; these moments proliferate in her poems, and forewarn us that the theme will be revisited. Resolution has not been reached. It is in this slipperiness of tone, as often as explicit revision of similar themes, that we can most clearly see the grounds for Gregerson's argument that "Adcock's personal and poetic identity seem repeatedly in question and her attempts to define it through meditating on her family background and places associated with it only increase this feeling" (a trait which he links to modernist recognitions of discontinuity, and post-Freudian notions of the divided self: but which has an older inheritance in nineteenth-century fictions of the Doppelgänger. \(^2\)

**To and Fro:**

*The Inner Harbour (1979)*

*The Inner Harbour* (1979) includes nine poems which do revisit the roles of New Zealand and England as contexts for self-definition. Two poems from the earlier section foreshadow the collection's finale. "Foreigner" and "The River" both discuss a sense of otherness within the speaker's English experience; it would appear that once

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Adcock’s work has encompassed the partial acceptance of her New Zealand roots, it is also able to admit more overtly to the phase of acclimatisation in England.

Although the character study “Miss Hamilton in London” prefigured hostility from the English context, “Foreigner” is the first instance of Adcock’s use of the first person when exploring this theme, and so is the first time she is openly willing to risk conflation of poet and speaker. Harassing forces characterise the landscape in “Foreigner”; the speaker is alien in England, yet unlike the voice in the New Zealand poems, she envisages not flight, but a form of internalised metamorphosis. This is not the same wish for self-dissolution we see in Hyde; the self-elected burial would involve a pupation - again the knowingly fanciful image suggests eventual rebirth, or transubstantiation into new form:

I shall lie sound-proofed in the mud,
a huge caddis-fly larva,
a face floating upon Egyptian unguents
in a runnel at the bottom of England.

[lines 11-14]

The caddis fly lives in water, and makes itself a cylindrical cocoon with small stones and hollow stems; it offers an image of a self-constructed world, resisting the incursions of an external environment. The vocabulary shows a sophisticated ‘at-home’ in the language, a specialist knowledge; in relation to the title and content, this touches on serious questions of the residual relationship between empire and colony within the migrant’s experience. Having English as one’s mother tongue does not predetermine acceptance and belonging within the originating nation of that language. It suggests the subjugation of the individual born elsewhere: the perception that non-native born English

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63 An early reviewer argued that “Miss Hamilton in London” was latently autobiographical. (Beyers, “Cautious Vision”, Lindop and Schmidt (eds.), British Poetry Since 1960: A Critical Survey, pp 76-77.) This could be supported by the later poem, “Please Identify Yourself”, in which Hamilton appears as an ancestral name.
speakers raised in an Anglicised culture are still foreign, with all the prejudiced associations this word can carry.64

The interweaving of aural elements heightens the fact that the speaker registers alienation through voice: she submits to the bullying “voices of these several winds”[line 7]. This aurality could be described by the poem’s own phrase, “a flowing fringe of tones”[line 8]. Consonants and vowels repeat, not in strict rhyme, but multivalent echoes resonate within the line, as well as from line end to end. Alliteration, assonance and half-rhyme work hypnotic effect as the impressively multiple connections hiss, hum and whirr like the winds; these connections are so numerous that only full quotation of the poem could illustrate them adequately.

“Foreigner” has a thematic connection to the discussion of language and voice in another poem from the “To and Fro” sequence, in which accent again signals foreignness (and potentially class). The two stanza poem “Immigrant” opens “November ’63: eight months in London”, and the final stanza runs:

I clench cold fists in my Marks and Spencer’s jacket
and secretly test my accent once again:
St James’s Park; St James’s Park; St James’s Park.
[lines 6-8]

The past life slips though the voice - the speaker “secretly” tests her accent, the attempt at concealment also being the attempt to adapt. The repetition of the park’s name stresses the effort to relocate the self - as in the much earlier “Unexpected Visit”, the

64 Adcock explores the hostile treatment of non-English speaking foreign migrants in “Bethan and Bethany”, from the New Poems section of her SP. Violence simmers just under the surface: “Justice holds her scales in balance […] / Guess […] / which belongs here and which doesn’t […] / The yobs in the street hoot like all yobs, / hawk and whistle and use no language.” [from lines 10-24]
language embodies a concerted effort to name experience and place, to learn and so control a new reality.

Thus the title of the collection’s closing sequence, “To and Fro”, is more than apt; it is the defining dynamic in Adcock’s oeuvre. Her perspective on the role of national identity in forming the self becomes a ceaseless exchange of negative and positive values: her work develops a more complicated, equivocal depiction than the outright rejection of New Zealand and embracing of England witnessed in her earlier poetry.

“Settlers”, accordingly, although ostensibly about those who put down roots, is itself a restless poem. It addresses the theme of migration as loss, inscribing this as part of the family experience, as it follows through one woman’s life and all the phases of adaptation - including that of peaceful acceptance of the new country. Yet this phase is not the stage within which the poem finally lodges.

In “Settlers”, Adcock makes a significant break with her most common stanzaic poetic arrangement: experimenting more with visual aspects of lineation, incorporating blocks of white space within every line, omitting all full stops. Helen Vendler’s command that we pay particularly close attention when a poet breaks with a former or usual style is expressed in terms particularly resonant for Adcock’s theme:

> When a poet puts off an old style […] he or she perpetrates an act of violence, so to speak, on the self. […] The fears and regrets attending the act of permanent stylistic change can be understood by analogy with divorce, expatriation, and other such painful spiritual and imaginative departures.65

While Adcock’s syntax remains largely straightforward, the drama of the stylistic change should not be underestimated: it tells us how far the topic (expatriation) represents a sense of inner division, and yet how Adcock’s poetic voice also persistently

resurges from this fissure. Even though, in Adcock’s case, the stylistic change is not irrevocable, the break underlines the very sense of drama that expatriation as a (recurrent) theme has for her. (This was foreshadowed in a phrase from “Richey”, where emigration causes a visual disruption in the poem. “Emigrated in ’74” forms the shortest line, and becomes a spatial focus in the text, the structural interruption suggesting a break from a clear narrative and historical line.)

The spaces which interrupt several lines in “Settlers” represent vocal pauses and the struggle for articulacy: not, it seems to me, the lighter, more relaxed “airiness” Pamela Tomlinson describes. Adcock’s manipulation of these hiatuses also evoke time lapses, and even the distance between hemispheres, which in turn double as gaps in the family story, and so the fragmented nature of memory and history. In varying her usual style, Adcock allows greater room for ambiguity in this poem, encapsulating the elusiveness of the historical record.

In the lines “Let it shift a little / settle into its own place, “shift” implies that memory forms like drifting sands or the glass shards in a kaleidoscope; both memory (and the past) are the result of accident, chance selection, and reshaping each time the past is reconsidered. Even the elements which are selected can be undefined or indistinct: “Bamboo was in it somewhere / or another tall reed”; the gaps breed gaps as later generations interpret and attempt to correct the older generation’s recollections.

“Mountains” in the elderly relative’s memory may be metaphorical, a private correlative for the emotional experience of a place of origin:

When we lived on the mountain
she said But it was not
a mountain nor they placed so high
[lines 7-9]

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The line breaks here emphasise difficulty and hesitancy; they implicitly ask, what is dream, what is memory, what is an expression of mythic import?

The poem goes on to chart adeptly the progression of the relative’s life and the painful process of her gradual adjustment to her new existence -

vehicles luggage bits of paper
all their people fallen away
shrunken into framed wedding groups
One knows at the time it can’t be happening

[lines 16-19]

- aligning her adjustment to the slow imposition of European forms over New Zealand territory. The narrative incorporates births of grandchildren, and following “even the trip back to England at last”, the woman achieves peace:

Then calmer still and closer in
suburbs retraction into a city

[lines 39-40]

This suggests that re-visiting England somehow allows an end to the immigrant’s hardships, regrets, and to comparisons of past and present; it settles an argument.

“Retraction” extends this idea - the debate over what was left behind in England versus the New Zealand life has ceased. Yet after this recantation, the poem becomes increasingly fragmented. It unsettles that moment of calm withdrawal as the grandmother ages, and fantasy and fact jumble. The syntax loses its straightforward logic, comments emerging from the white space like the sudden sparking of random memory. The grandmother’s feelings of threat, disturbance, and confusion decentre her story from the phase of stability:

rain cold now on the southerly harbour
wondering she must have been why
alone in the house or whether alone
her son in Europe but someone
a man she thought in the locked room
where their things were stored her things

[lines 45-50]
The fragmentation is a measure of the intensity felt in the combined effects that emigration, specific personal bereavements, and the loss that accompanies all ageing, have on the preservation of family history. Yet the inclusion of the son’s expatriation in the most syntactically troubled section is crucial. There is a subtly sketched sense that expatriation in the recent generation (like the son’s, or, we might speculate, Adcock’s own), repeats or contributes to that disruption and confusion. The poem offers a covert recognition of the self’s complicity in division.

Adcock moves the poem even further away from the grandmother’s re-centering as she illustrates how provisional her outline has been, and as she turns back to problematic events in the private history:

Not simple no Much neglected and much here omitted Footnotes Alice and her children gone ahead the black sheep brother the money the whole slow long knotted tangle [lines 55-59]

In effect, the debate and unease are prolonged (which the lack of full stops also signifies.) Adcock reasserts the tenuous clarity she can achieve in a history divided by the caesurae of emigration and failing memory: in this poem, in fact, one becomes the other.

As Adcock’s exploration of identity includes her willingness to retrace the New Zealand connection, in “Going Back”, the country itself becomes a record of change, a measure of the distance between herself and her past. “Instead of an Interview” essentially pivots on this sense of exclusion; yet it initially refuses the nostalgia described in “Going Back”. Instead it inscribes, at the close of the second verse, a fierce anti-nostalgia. The city of Wellington, the country, and the younger self who inhabited them, are all implicated in her incantatory, chastising, asyndetonic triad - “ingrained,
ingrown, incestuous” - the rhythm of which batters against the languid response, to (we assume) certain questions about what there is to appreciate within New Zealand.\(^67\)

All three terms pose criticisms of the inward-looking parochial. The country is conservative, resistant to change (ingrained); it is worked in deeply, rooted, not seeking air or light (ingrown); finally it is condemned in terms of sexual corruption (incestuous). Adcock’s autobiography can provide grounds for one interpretation of the latter. Passages which describe both an unhappy, violent, short-lived second marriage, and clandestine extra-marital affairs, condemn the hypocrisy of concealment, the social masks adopted to deny these events. Her aesthetic shaping and restraint in the early poems rejecting New Zealand becomes highly apparent when read alongside the prose memoir; this contrasts the view that “Fleur Adcock’s narratives aren’t secret. They’re so [...] self-disclosing that one could probably construct a short biography just by reading the Selected Poems.”\(^68\) (This view is also negated by the poetry’s qualities of ambiguity.) The aggressive male sexuality recounted in her depiction of her second marriage (specifically cited as a factor in her departure) is very carefully not included in the poems published while this ex-husband was still alive.\(^69\)

Yet in both autobiography and poetry, when Adcock repudiates New Zealand on grounds of conservatism and sexual hypocrisy,\(^70\) she also repeats a familiar local literary theme. Mansfield and Hyde criticised New Zealand for its moral (and sexual) conservatism; a strand which continued in local literature until the 1960s, when Frame’s

\(^{67}\) Asyndeton omits grammatical connections and combines a sameness of prefix; it is a particularly Miltonic trait. See Alistair Fowler’s edition of *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, p. 18.


\(^{69}\) Adcock mentions the “occasional black eyes, bruises and chipped teeth” Barry Crump “had [...] caused”; she signs a separation agreement “as a first step towards extricating myself from what could no longer be called a marriage [...] Once again I was running away [...] Thirteen years were to pass before I could bear to set foot in New Zealand again.” (Entry by Fleur Adcock, Andrews (ed.), *Contemporary Authors: Autobiography Series* Vol. 23, pp 10-11.)

\(^{70}\) In an interview with the author, Adcock also comments that in 1958, “just to be divorced was so scandalous”, and also that “People can’t imagine, looking back, the scandal there was, having a child out of wedlock [...] it was all hypocritical.” (Author’s transcript, pp 29-30.)
novels began to question this picture. Frame's *The Edge of the Alphabet* (1962) and *The Adaptable Man* (1965) internationalise conservatism and parochialism, and although Malfred Signal, in *A State of Siege* (1966), lambasts New Zealand with another alliterative adjectival triad (the country is “provincial, prejudiced and puritanical”), Frame’s plot structure interrogates this condemnation.  

Adcock's poem, therefore, initially returns us to criticisms of New Zealand which an author like Frame sought to revise a decade earlier; the decade of Adcock’s departure from New Zealand. Yet the poem twists and turns. Adcock’s terms of estrangement momentarily recede from the third verse, which continues the first verse’s catalogue of attractions:

bookshops; galleries; gardens; fish in the sea; lemons and passionfruit growing free as the bush. Then the bush itself; and the wild grand south; and wooden houses in occasional special towns.  

[lines 14-17]

Although the internal movement is from rejection to acceptance, implying an element of self-identification with the elements described, the poem continues its rerouting. This is far from Hyde’s poetic and fictional view of back-migration as redemption and closure; Adcock goes on to say “And not a town or a city I could live in. / Home, as I explained to a weeping niece, / home is London; and England, Ireland, Europe.” [lines 18-20]

There is a gentle play in these lines between the capitalised Home and the lower case home - not as stark a reference to the ancestral longing for Empire as its placement in the middle of a sentence would be, yet as the stressed opening word of a new line, the word carries an eloquent force: the complications of which Adcock acknowledges in “the

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71 For a full discussion of the latter, see Brown, “*A State of Siege: The Sociable Frame*”, *The Journal of New Zealand Literature* No. 11, 1993, pp 49-59.
over-resonant word”. Altogether, it appears four times in the fourth verse: the echo amplified through its meaning for “the weeping niece”. Reconfirmed expatriation (defying the prodigal pattern) is read by the family as rejection.

Once in England again, Adcock sends a telegram saying “Safely home”, then writes “Arrived safely’ would have been clear enough, / neutral, kinder.” [lines 25-28] Where stating her New Zealand identity in “Please Identify Yourself” was a claim for political neutrality, here declaring England her emotional home is personally volatile. “[K]inder” intensifies the overtones of familial rejection in her continued expatriation: she is less kind: turning away from kin and origin. So it is perceived by others as an unnatural act; which in turn disturbs the speaker: “another loaded word / creeps up now to interrogate me.” [lines 28-29] She examines her own argument as if it is flawed, and finally asks, “By going back to look, after thirteen years, / have I made myself for the first time an exile?” [lines 30-31] “Going back to look” is itself provocative: it reasserts her stance as family outsider, as tourist, and even voyeur; yet her family’s grief casts her out further. She asks whether, by clearly stating her choice of home, she has confirmed her difference, and erected barriers.

Yet saying the word is “loaded” is also reflexive: recognising that it is both an archetype and a contentious topic, and potentially too extreme for her own situation. One of the possible answers is ‘no, you are not an exile’: the poem lacks the sense that the speaker is deeply bereft. The psychological cycle may be acceptance, rejection, and regret, but the question is deliberately left open: Adcock’s irony, both evasive and defensive, resurfaces.

For the word “exile” is indeed loaded: true to Adcock’s abiding sense of shifting perspectives, its possible meanings (banishment and even release) are not mutually exclusive, at least across poems. She arrives in England in a state of exility, stripped of

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72 Interestingly, the word play on home and exile in this poem align her with the Curnow of “House and Land.”
her New Zealand culture, down to the “thinness, slenderness, meagreness” (SOED) of
“a suitcase full of stones - / of shells and pebbles, pottery, pieces of bark”. [lines 21-22]
Yet in another poem, “Londoner”, which focuses on this return to England, exile
becomes exilition, exhilaration, the “leaping up or forth” (SOED) of freedom, where the
speaker’s voice (self expression) is literally released:

[... ] It’s cold, it’s foggy,
the traffic’s as abominable as ever,
and there across the Thames is County Hall,
that uninspired stone body, floodlit.
It makes me laugh. In fact, it makes me sing.
[lines 12-16]

A number of poems from both The Scenic Route (1974) and The Inner Harbour
(1979) which take up the first collection’s title more literally than those with either
Ireland or New Zealand as settings, deal with travel and tourism in a manner which
suggests certain limits to Adcock’s treatment of the relationship between self and place.
The poems (e.g. “Train from the Hook of Holland”, “Flying Back”, “Naxal”, “Bodnath”,
“External Service”, “Our Trip to the Federation”, “In the Terai”) , variously take the
reader over Europe and Asia; the Asian poems in particular give the overriding
impression that they are uninvolved snapshots. Only rarely is there an examination of
relationships; only rarely does the poet engage deeply with what is witnessed. 73 The
detached tone is typified by “Our Trip to the Federation”, which begins “We went to

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73 For negative readings of Adcock’s detached style, see Kevin Cunningham’s review of Tigers
in Landfall 84, Vol. 21 No. 4, December 1967; “My complaint is that Miss Adcock just
doesn’t seem to have anything to say. Few of the poems do much more than state contrasts or
compare attitudes [...]” (p. 395.) (This is answered in the following issue by a letter from
Charles Brasch, cast as a poem: “Nothing to say, critic / says [...] Well, please keep on saying it
[...] What need you say [...] / Except to present, to set them/before us, among us, called / Into
being, into our being?” (Landfall 85, Vol. 22 No. 1, March 1968, p. 113.) See also Michael
Hoffman’s review of The Incident Book, where the reserve is read as “bland”; “There is little
space between the poem and the words that go to make it up [...] It is Realpoetik, one on one,
not the allusive kind where seven words will crowd onto one thing, and one word mean seven
also Hulse, “Fleur Adcock: A Poet With Bite”, Quadrant Vol. 28 No. 2, January-February
negative and positive views.
Malaya for one afternoon”, a country it describes as “[...] rubber plantations mostly /
and villages like all Asian villages / brown with dust and wood, bright with marketing”
[lines 4-6]. The speaker asks “Does it sound like a geography lesson or a dream?” [line
19]. The poem is insouciant; the supposedly self-aware irony of the question in line 19
becomes a failure to commit to the chosen subject. The Asian poems collectively
suggest that the self is least destabilised when cultural difference is most marked. It is
not the experience of coming up against direct contrasts or alternative ways of seeing
which makes Adcock reassess identity, but the demands of adapting over the long term to
place.

A Nameless Fever:

*Below Loughrigg* (1979), *New Poems from Selected Poems* (1983),


In the pamphlet *Below Loughrigg* (1979), Adcock offers a denser examination
of these demands; she tests various Romantic attitudes, and reasserts her childhood
attachment to England during a writer’s residency in Cumbria. Yet again, the depth of
attachment is displaced slightly in two poems. Surfacing like thermal activity, “Three
Rainbows in One Morning” and “Letter to Alistair Campbell” register feelings about a
life psychologically divided, permanently unsettled, disrupting the otherwise even surface
of a collection devoted specifically to strengthening the response to an English locale
famous for the sense of place which fostered Romantic poetry. In the latter, the speaker
sees a likeness between the two formerly opposed countries, and is even able to love
England *because* of that likeness:

74 In an interview Adcock herself has described these poems as undigested; see McGill,
You’d love this place: it’s your Central Otago
in English dress - the bony land’s just the same
[...]

Symmetry
pleases me, correspondences and chimes
are not just ornament [...]

[lines 5-7 and 33-35]

As this return of the New Zealand past indicates, no single work of Adcock’s
can be taken to represent final arrival in her exploration of the relationship between self
and location. Yet we might still expect that the poem to exemplify her responses most
fully would be that in which - like Hyde’s “Katherine Mansfield” - she directly addresses
the writer whom she has cited as a biographical predecessor. These expectations are also
raised as several of her early poems echo the adolescent Mansfield who condemned New
Zealand and chose England as the more conducive to art. “Villa Isola Bella” (1983), in
which the speaker recounts a visit to the Mansfield memorial in France, does epitomise
her treatment of the theme - in that it is yet another transition of perspective.

As Adcock has included Hyde in her matrilineal literary heritage, we might also
anticipate that Adcock’s poem dedicated to Mansfield would offer elegiac homage. Yet
the stance is far more disaffected than Hyde’s: which in part measures the literary
historical distance from Hyde’s phase of late Romanticism, and the arrival at a post-
modern aesthetic (even though the structure repeats one of the oldest formal traditions in
English literature: the rhyming couplet.) Unlike Hyde’s elegy, the entire poem is a
distancing, a standing back: in this, again, it is quintessentially Adcock.

The poem expresses an implicit wish for an empathetic union: what it offers
instead is the failure of experience to meet expectations. The final note is not plangent, it
is one of consciously deployed bathos. We might read this drama of a thwarted desire
for a communion with Mansfield as something that still affirms the possibility of
connection - a yearning for what could have been, or a mourning for its absence - with
Mansfield as some kind of transcendent spirit. Yet Adcock does not turn the non-fulfilment of communion into an opportunity for lament. Neither does she, in the manner of Wordsworth’s “Prelude”, reconstitute the disappointment into a celebration of imagination’s pre-emptive powers. So additionally, there is no Mansfieldean “glimpse”. The whole poem is about something that did not happen. The poem opens:

Your villa, Katherine, but not your room, and not much of your garden. Goods trains boom all night, a dozen meters from the bed where tinier tremors hurtle through my head.

[lines 1-4]

The rhyming couplets offer an ironic counterpoint, with odd line-breaks creating consciously forced arrival at the rhyme (the best example: “I grope [...] / across the gravel to the outside loo / whose light won’t wake my sleeping sister. You / ” [from lines 6-10] ) This evokes the awkward and ultimately anti-climactic struggle towards lyrical revelation or completion.

The whole experience at the villa is triggered by the fact that the property preserved in Mansfield’s name is no longer in its original form. It has become a post-modern replica, or pastiche. The deflated “not much of your garden” in the second line flags the tone to which the poem will return, following the description of the “shadowy date-palm”[line 7] which the speaker moves past in the dark. This palm is a ghost of Mansfield’s aloe tree, from “Prelude”; the “fans of steel” and “each rustling frond a blade”[line 8] recall the aloe’s “long, sharp thorns” and its “cruel leaves”. This is the aloe associated with Linda Burnell: its hostile appearance and impenetrable surfaces a correlative for her wish to spurn her husband, Stanley. Yet Adcock leaves the reference to Mansfield’s “aloe” as one made in passing, turning away from the opportunity to


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Yet the rhyme scheme and down-beat closure seek to wash over the “atavistic fears” felt in the 20th line, where Mansfield’s suffering is the primary cause of anxiety.

I drag at Silk Cut filters, duty-free,
then gargle sensibly with Oraldene
and spit pink froth. Not blood: it doesn’t mean,
like your spat scarlet, that I’ll soon be dead - merely that pharmacists are fond of red.
I’m hardly sick at all. There’s just this fuzz
that blurs and syncopates the singing buzz
of crickets, frogs and traffic in my ears:
a nameless fever, atavistic fears.

[lines 12-20]

Mansfield’s work closely linked tuberculosis to the alienation of the transient in Europe, perpetually moving from place to place, seeking an environment that would offer renewed health. Adcock’s poem works to defuse any sense of real discomfort, or psychic haunting from this past, and to dismantle the connections between female artist, homelessness, and unrelieved agony. Linda Hardy reminds us that “a tubercular condition is a conventional synonym for poetic energy”, yet the poem works against any equation between Adcock’s and Mansfield’s creative sources. The phrase “must have left a trace” [line 30] is not finally confirmed by the poem. It does not allow us to feel the incursions or destabilisations of genuine fear - the wry asides, such as “to open what was not in fact your door”[line 35], ground and distract us from these.

76 ibid., p. 422.
The epigraph which Adcock chooses, and which is inscribed outside the memorial room ("You will find Isola Bella in pokerwork on my heart"), comes from a letter in which Mansfield equates her love of the villa to her love of her hometown. But Adcock, who has reviewed Mansfield’s *The Aloe with Prelude*, and used the *Collected Letters* as basis for a libretto, omits this equation. Mansfield wrote: "This little place is and always will be for me the one and only place, I feel. My heart beats for it like it beats for Karori."77 The second sentence complicates and contradicts the first, as it brings up the home left behind (Karori) as a forceful emotional presence. Adcock leaves out this attachment to a New Zealand past: a past which in her own work, has represented the stifling of creative sense. Roger Robinson has argued that in New Zealand literature, "[i]f an icon at all, Mansfield stands for elusiveness, instability, fragmentation, incompleteness and absence."78 In Adcock’s version of the icon, it is the wish for a particular rootedness which is troubling: i.e. the part of Mansfield that wishes for “absence” from England - not from New Zealand. The Mansfield who, in France, Italy, Switzerland and England, feels homeless and ill in body and spirit, is she whom Adcock must exorcise. The metaphors of illness here tellingly link to Adcock’s opening words from her autobiography: “The question of national identity has influenced, infected, and to some extent distorted the course of my adult life.”80 Mansfield’s fiction and letters signal the perpetual deferring of secure identity to an ever-changing

77 In Adcock’s review of Vincent O’Sullivan’s parallel-text edition of Mansfield’s *The Aloe with Prelude*, she quotes from the *Journal* and the *Collected Letters*, notably the passage which runs “Oh I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap for one moment into the eyes of the Old World.” *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 April 1983, p. 325. For Adcock’s libretto *Out of This Nettle, Danger* (1983), see Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand. Adcock also compares Mansfield’s letters and poetry in an interview with the author, saying both contain a lot of “cutesy stuff, whereas she was a serious writer of fiction.” (Author’s transcript, p. 7.)

78 To J.M. Murry [12 Nov. 1920], O’Sullivan and Scott (eds.), *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield* Volume IV, p. 106. Adcock’s dating of the quotation in her epigraph differs by two days.

79 Robinson, entry on Mansfield as a cultural icon, Robinson and Wattie (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, p. 342.

elsewhere, Adcock’s “Villa Isola Bella” (paradoxically - or fittingly, given her poetic persona?) works as an antidote, trying to get the affliction of Mansfield out of her system.

When Adcock writes about her own itinerant English childhood in *The Incident Book* (1986), the poems seek to fix the divided, destabilised self: she does not characterise this transience as unhappy alienation. The “Schools” section speaks of the various experiences of being 'the new girl', yet these poems are less intricately braided and enquiring than, for example, “Moa Point” (1979). Apart from one verse in “Earlswood” and “Outwood”, the majority of these pieces are contented statements of first impressions, as in the closing lines that follow:

I'd enjoyed Milly Molly Mandy
it had something to do with apricots, I thought,
or marigolds; or some warm orange glow.
(“Scalford Again” [lines 9-11])

Moments of potential conflict are carefully contained:

An older girl was struck one day
by our, to us, quite ordinary noses;
made an anthropological deduction:
“Have all the other people in New Zealand
got silly little noses too?”
I couldn’t remember. Firmly I said “Yes.”
(“Scalford School” [lines 13-18])

As light diversions, these poems illustrate the way in which abiding issues are present in the most ordinary of encounters. The transitions from school to school, locale to locale, do not become reminiscent of a brutal, transformative separation, as smaller relocations do in Mansfield’s work: their overall place in Adcock’s œuvre is a continuation of her project of mapping out belonging and self-acceptance within
England. This project develops further in *The Incident Book*, where Adcock’s England has fully expanded from the portrait of the place which baldly answers to New Zealand’s lack, to a place with which she can engage on social and political issues. In poems such as “Gentlemen’s Hairdresser”, “Post Office” and “Witnesses”, she writes about the internal exile of others, a process which forcefully suggests her own immersion in the English social context.

Yet in *Time Zones* (1991), the drama of emigration continues to fascinate: Mansfield’s affliction indeed comes to haunt in displaced form. The poem “Mrs Fraser’s Frenzy” explores the exile’s dread of “looking back for the last time”. In “House Martins”, also in *Time Zones*, the regret which accompanies this backwards glance is posited as an effect of age: it is the nature of our inevitable biological and chronological separation from our past selves. Regret has little to do with the essence of the irretrievable experience; nostalgia becomes the effect of any loss, even when it incorporates the insignificant moment. “Mrs Fraser’s Frenzy” confronts a more violent version of such severance between past and present selves - where emigration brings on that violence. The poem, which uses the same historical material as Patrick White’s novel *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), and Sydney Nolan’s paintings (1947-64), is a narrative of European emigration to Australia ending in shipwreck and Eliza Fraser’s capture by an Aboriginal tribe. The original account developed into a myth often considered a defining moment for Australian national identity. Contemporary reports of the event centred on definitions of brutal savagery, barbarism, and fear of the debasement of white European culture; in Adcock’s poem, Eliza Fraser suffers a radical loss of culture and identity following torture and enslavement by the Aboriginal

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82 See Kay Schaffer’s “Colonizing Gender in Colonial Australia: The Eliza Fraser Story”, in Blunt and Rose (eds.), *Writing Women and Space*. See also Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction 1875-1914*.
tribe. Eliza is someone who becomes marginalised after leaving her own centre of perceived truth and reality - and who can never return.

As in "Settlers", one of Adcock’s most marked experiments in form occurs when fusing historical imagination with the theme of expatriation; the psychological drama of the journey is again manifested structurally. For Adcock’s work up to this date, “Mrs Fraser’s Frenzy” is unique in its attempts to inhabit the voice of - not just the subject experiencing ostracism - but also of ‘the other’, i.e. the agent who alienates. In this case, the alienating voice also comes from an ethnic and racial group which has been subjected to appalling abuse as a result of the colonial encounter. (This attempt to ventriloquise for an other who is at once marginalised and ostracising is the most significant change. In several previous poems and libretti, Adcock has already taken on the voices of various fictional and historical characters.)

Although it is (redundantly, and so ironically) subtitled “Songs for Music” (which may also be a reference to the Aboriginal mapping of Australia through song traditions), the poem opens in a manner which is neither lyrical nor flowing; it is abrupt and minimalist, as Mrs Fraser articulates her situation as factually as possible.

Eliza’s repetition of her name is a sign of her resistance to the changes enforced upon her - it has the grounding intention of the alienated speaker’s language in “Unexpected Visit” and “Immigrant”. The staccato quatrains of Eliza’s opening monologue are starkly visually contrasted by the longer verse lines of the single stanza-

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83 There has been one previous poem in Adcock’s career which has treated femininity and a type of fictional exile conjointly - yet the form here is more conventionally Adcock. Exile is not explicitly dealt with in relation to national identity or expatriation. “The Ex-Queen Among the Astronomers” from The Scenic Route (1974) provides an allegory for a transitional phase in (middle and upper class ) women’s social roles. No longer defined by marriage alone, the ex-queen represents a generation for whom other options of self-realisation have been suggested but not yet realised. (“[…] she, exile, expelled, ex-queen, / swishes among the men of science […] / She plucks this one or that among / the astronomers […] / She brings the distant briefly close / above his dreamy abstract stare.” [from lines 17-32]

84 For libretti, see Out of this Nettle, Danger (1983), The King of the Other Country (1984) (both in Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand), and Hotspur (1986).
block of the Aboriginal group narrative. Yet her incantation of her name and past is
echoed in the simple repetitions of the Aboriginals’ chant of “ghost”, “she-ghost”,
“white-ghost”, “white ghosts”, “white she-ghost”; the stress patterns and logical syntax
of both sections give a greater sense of shared music than the visual layout implies.

The poem externalises the processes of relearning a culture in the Aboriginals’
treatment of Eliza Fraser:

She was covered with woven skins, but we
stripped her;
she had hairs on her body, but we plucked them
out;
we tried to make her look like a person.
[...]
We have put her among the children until she
learns.

[lines 13-14 & 28 of Section 2]

Eliza returns to the state of a child, the still-forming persona: as she has already
been stripped of family and home society, so the tribespeople strip away her clothes and
hair. Eliza’s reiterated “My language is English” is juxtaposed to the Aboriginals’ “She
talked in a babble like the babble of birds”; in a transposition of nineteenth-century white
European equations of the bestial and other races, the absence of tribal knowledge is
understood as the absence of personhood. (Whether or not this is a culturally sensitive
or accurate attempt to hear “the subaltern speak” is open to discussion. 

Time Zones
does not note or acknowledge Aboriginal sources, and yet arguably the attempt to
imaginatively identify with the Aboriginal voice, and to give an Aboriginal version, is
better than no attempt at all. In addition, the lack of citation of sources does not
necessarily mean that none have been consulted.)

As Eliza’s status and sense of meaning are destroyed, the experience of loss
becomes her sole definition. When she is returned to European urban culture, her

85 See Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Grossberg and Nelson (eds.), Marxism and the
Interpretation of Culture, pp 271-308.
reversed need, in Sections 3 and 5 of the poem, is to reiterate her loss, not her name.

Eliza Fraser represents the most extreme version of the expatriate consciousness in Adcock’s work, where (as in the anecdotal accounts from Lady Godley) division becomes break-down. The frenzy or dementia of the title is the state of living outside the paradigms of the culture within which the individual physically resides: Australian-European culture rejects Eliza’s need to repeat her history. “I am a poor widow” and “you are a liar Mrs Fraser” answer each other like choral refrains in Section 3 (deliberately further detracting from the subtitle). This rejection compounds her loss, as, Ancient Mariner-like, the retelling of the crisis is all that defines her:

I am not greedy. I am not mad.
I have a husband. I am cared for.
But I wake in the night, howling, naked,
alone and starving. All that I had

I lost once - all the silken stuff
of civilisation: clothes, possessions,
decency, liberty, my name;

[...] There can never be
enough of anything in the world,
money or goods, to keep me warm
and fed and clothed and safe and free.

[Section 5, lines 9-20]

The threat Adcock explores here is of the continued looking back of trauma; the psychic locking at one point in a personal history.86

Reassessments of the past permeate Adcock’s entire oeuvre, yet the obsessive, fixed looking back of Eliza’s traumatic personal memory is transformed in Adcock’s most recent collection, Looking Back (1997) into the ‘healthy’ retrospection of the

86 Stannard’s reading of these lines as an indication that Eliza’s “only way of forming a recovery is an intense search for material re-possession” misunderstands the significance of Adcock’s reiterated “never”. His comment that in these lines Adcock “steal[s] upon us unannounced with a larger socio-historical commentary where we perhaps least expect it” shows his failure to recognise “the larger socio-historical” moment the entire Fraser account has come to represent in Australian nationhood. Stannard, Fleur Adcock in Context: From Movement to Martians, p. 66.
genealogist: understanding the self as the repository of broader family and historical memory, a conglomeration of influences. It is another conscious attempt to ground the self within a Northern hemisphere inheritance: Adcock describes her genealogical research as "My particular need to establish British credentials." 87

It is tempting to ground my argument in a similar way, and to say that the effort to map out belonging in England has been the most consistently returned to theme in Adcock's New Zealand-England dialogue. Yet alongside this runs Adcock's continual need to return to the New Zealand past and argue with it, rejecting and accepting in turns: she replaces the Romantic poet's exhilaration-dejection cycles with those of denial and reconciliation. The perpetually modifying irony, which she offers in her tonal distillations of the state of dislocation, gives a sense of cycles within cycles. Dizzying transitions of perspective finally seem a more germane summary of her work. There are (diluted) similarities to the disorienting, peripatetic satirical eye of a much earlier forebear to use travel as a metaphor for the elusiveness of a consistent self: Jonathan Swift. A more obvious precursor, of course, in the immediate context of twentieth-century women's literature, is Katherine Mansfield, who meditates upon the elusiveness and intangibility of identity against the background of a carriage journey. In light of Adcock's poem of separation from Mansfield, this may well be deliciously ironic; yet this is something Adcock herself would surely savour, as it concords with her favoured register. It is an appropriate note on which to end. Representing both her best accomplishments, and the more problematic, less successful moments in the poet-reader relationship in her work, irony itself connotes division. Recognising subcurrents of conflicting meanings beneath the apparently accessible terms of a statement, it says one thing, while meaning another. It is a metaphor, even, for speaking in one place, but of another.

CONCLUSION
A considerable literary-historical leap must be undertaken when moving from the letters and fiction of nineteenth-century women, to the post-modern fiction and poetry of Janet Frame and Fleur Adcock. Yet there are similarities in the work from these eras. The women settlers, and the late Victorian author 'Alien', all describe the overseas journey as engendering mortal risk, yet offering expectations of self-betterment: these concerns are reworked by Mansfield and Hyde, and carried through, with varying emphases, to Frame and Adcock.

Mansfield and Hyde both initially link expatriation with the prospect of women’s social, artistic (and implicitly sexual) liberation; like the late Victorian author 'Alien', the overseas journey suggests the hopeful symbolic entry into full identity. In the work of both Mansfield and Hyde, however, this desire is attenuated by still prevalent constrictions on women’s roles (and, for Mansfield, by society’s additional othering of foreigner and invalid.) In their work, if the “angel in the house” undertakes a Daedalean flight, she is, to some degree, considered fallen in the eyes of wider society. For Hyde, the flight may even be - in a classic double bind - in direct response to this perception. For both writers, the woman who leaves home, or who refuses to be home, still experiences indictment at the hands of a latently Victorian morality.

As women achieve at least some of the professional and social freedoms which they were denied in the nineteenth century, and in Mansfield’s and Hyde’s generations, the literary focus on expatriation as an expression of desire for greater sexual and social liberation becomes less explicit. Although Adcock’s portrayal of Mansfield and Hyde in her autobiographical essay conforms to aspects of modernist, masculine paradigms of expatriate artistic success, which are inaccurate for her predecessors, it clearly suggests the need for strengthening a female literary line of biographical and literary precursors. Yet Adcock’s oeuvre involves both attachment to and separation from literary mothers:
her poem "Villa Isola Bella" implies a demarcation between the position of contemporary
women writers, and the restrictive conditions of Mansfield's era and personal situation.
Frame's literary references to Mansfield and Hyde also indicate this demarcation. Thus
if the masculine, modernist paradigm is inappropriate for Mansfield and Hyde, their non-
mainstream, female modernist/modern variation of this - unhappy social alienation
exacerbated by gender, artistic success and sexual freedom won at grave personal cost -
is not any more appropriate for the late twentieth-century writers.

In Fleur Adcock's and Janet Frame's work - in part because of Mansfield's and
Hyde's successful examples - the question of whether or not a woman can be an artist
lacks the urgency it has in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Frame and
Adcock treat the psychological dramas in the work of the earlier generations either
ironically, mockingly, dismissively, or as obsolete - a sign both of post-modern literary
knowingness, and of the wish to separate their work from the spectre of earlier expatriate
women artists' demise.

Yet if not in their fiction and poetry, then in their autobiographical works, both
Frame and Adcock show the continued usefulness of expatriation as an expression of
shaking off social labels and convention. Frame's work describes escape from
institutionalisation and a reputation as 'mad genius', after she is unable to continue
teaching (still one of the few professions open to women at that time); Adcock's
autobiography in turn describes escape from "a very morally disapproving society",1
and from an unhappy, brutal marriage.

The brief comparisons I have drawn, particularly in Chapter IV, to the work of
New Zealand men who write about expatriation (and who, both contemporary to, and
after, the debunking, deconstructive work of Frame, continue to show a thematic interest
in membership of a national, public identity), point to further comparative studies which

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1 Interview between Fleur Adcock and the author, transcript p. 28.
could be undertaken on my theme. Hyde’s Starkie novels, John Mulgan’s *Report on Experience*, Dan Davin’s novels, and Kai Jensen’s study *Whole Men*, to name just a handful of works, remind us that participation in two major world wars has shaped dramatically the experience of expatriation and back-migration for New Zealand men. Hyde’s and Adcock’s life and work do indeed register the effects of these two wars, but in non-combatant contexts. Direct combat is immediately grounded in issues of nationality: men are organised by national battalions, and their role is to participate in the violent policing and reorganisation of national boundaries. While fiction and poetry always do more than solely document historical conditions, such issues offer one possible source for the male writers’ continued preoccupation with definitions of nationality.

Additional parallels and contrasts could be drawn between the work of the authors I have discussed, and that of self-identified gay and lesbian writers. Correspondences between gay writing and the works here examined are intriguingly suggested in Hugh Stevens’s review of *Best Mates: Gay Writing in Aotearoa New Zealand* (1997), edited by Peter Wells and Rex Pilgrim. Stevens writes that “It’s noticeable that ‘New Zealand’ gay writing often takes place abroad: for many gay men queerness goes with exile [...] one feature of New Zealand gay culture is the movement to the erotic city overseas [...]”

As Stevens’ comment implies, although there have been various gains in social autonomy and recognition for (white, heterosexual) women over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and although there have been the literary innovations of post-modernism, and developments in post-colonial thought, the expatriate theme has

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by no means been rendered, as Frame once claimed, “tired and overworked” in New Zealand (or any other) literature.  

In fact, in recent work by two expatriate New Zealand women, Kirsty Gunn and Emily Perkins, expatriation does recur, as a vehicle for expressing forms of moral crisis - or even vacuity - towards the end of the largely secular twentieth century.

Perkins’s novel, *Leave Before You Go* (1998), has been described by Ian Richards as a work that has “given a new twist” to “a century of New Zealand writing about ‘here’ versus ‘overseas’”, because “travel, a central theme in the novel, is pointless.” This is not as new as Richards asserts; Perkins follows several works by Frame which argue a similar case: one already latent in Hyde’s germinative interrogation of the theme.

In Perkins’s novel, the Londoner Daniel agrees to a drug-trafficking mission which takes him from England to New Zealand via Thailand. While Daniel feels that “He’d be opening the map and stepping into the charted dream of fantasy land, Erehwon [sic], the un-real”, his own fantasies are in fact destitute, enfeebled: once he receives his drug payment, his first response is one of pure hedonism - the money will bring him access to bars, girls, smokes, restaurants, casinos, perhaps more travel. This character is not on a journey of self-discovery, self-betterment, or artistic ambition, as Timothy Cardew, or even Toby Withers were: nor is he on one of cultural exchange or moral liberation. He is after “Escape plus money.” One argument might be that he is driven to his decision by poverty: that the novel is about the drug trade’s exploitation of an urban underclass. Yet Perkins has deliberately not created a character who has no other possible way out. When Daniel catalogues his reasons for leaving, financial concerns

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1 Frame, “This Desirable Property”, *The New Zealand Listener*, 3 July 1964, p. 12.
3 Perkins, *Leave Before You Go*, p. xi. Samuel Butler’s “Erewhon” was not a perfect inversion of “nowhere”.
4 ibid.
are placed on precisely the same level as being fed up with his friends and the local bars.

He accepts the drug-courier assignment because

He hated things here just now [...] He was sick of
the weather and of having no job. His friends, the
pubs, the threat of court action over his unpaid
poll tax. The way nothing ever, ever seemed to
change.\^{}

As the novel progresses, and we find out more about Daniel’s past, it becomes
clear that the undermining of identity he feels in an international transit lounge is not a
crisis brought on by a recognition of the risks he is undertaking, nor by contemplating a
separation from a valued past (or past self). A lack of conviction is the condition of his
entire existence: even his anti-racism and his enrolment in art school were suggested to
him by a former girlfriend - when she dumps him, his interest in art school rapidly
dissipates, and it would even be feasible, given the bounds of his two-dimensional
personality, to say that his anti-racism is an accessory taken on at his girlfriend’s behest;
it is not described as a centrally held ethical stance.\^{}

In the curt passage giving Daniel’s thoughts in the transit lounge en route to
New Zealand, Perkins’s sparse language, staccato sentences, and the deliberate absence
of question marks to indicate the interrogative, all suggest the passionless, the aimless,
the shiftless. This is not the self-examination of someone plunging hidden psychological
or philosophical depths, but of a tired, half-hearted narcissism:

He wonders if he knows himself. What kind of
person he might be. Everything seems
mysterious, like something achieved with smoke
and mirrors. He doesn’t know if he’s the rabbit
or the hat. The sword or the girl. He feels
dizzy.\^{}

\^{} ibid., p. x.
\^{} ibid., p. 107.
\^{} ibid., p. 15.
These thoughts, experienced against the background of transglobal travel, are
hardly the unseating, liberating discovery of multiple possibilities; instead the passage
evokes the confused, amoral anchorlessness that continues to characterise his behaviour.

The relative ease with which all Perkins' characters travel is a signifier
throughout the novel of varying degrees of inner directionlessness. The title indicates a
permanent state of a lack of centre: usherette Kate feels her attitude has been one of
'leaving a place before she has gone' throughout her young adult life. She visits
Indonesia, imagining she would "return a different person", but after visiting beaches
and temples, and "thinking" about converting to Hinduism, she "returned with no greater
idea about who she was or what she wanted to do." (There is, however, an understated
joke, and a lightly parodic redemption for the - at least likeable - Kate at the close of the
novel. She finally hits on a polytech course that interests her: navigation, guiding by the
stars: the study of finding your way ('where you’re at?') across the world.)

Yet for the compulsively lying and casually exploitative (if sometimes
vulnerable) Daniel, easy transglobal travel becomes both sign and enactment of moral
fecklessness, an expression of the essentially decentered post-modern identity, when the
individual has neither the courage, integrity, nor the humanitarian empathy (of Frame's
Mattina Brecon, for example) to recreate a self or a set of personal ethics. 13

In Kirsty Gunn's short story "Visitor", expatriation is also a sign of moral
rootlessness. This story first appeared in Border Lines - Stories of Exile and Home
(1993), edited by Kate Pullinger; an altered version appears in Gunn’s collection of short
stories This Place You Return to Is Home (1999). 14 Gunn’s stories - and indeed her

12 ibid., p. 27.
13 Were Daniel the only vacuous character in the novel, a heckler could read this portrayal not
only as an indictment of modern masculinity, but as an example of the author’s ‘reverse’
sexism. Yet Perkins’s cast of minor characters offers several female versions of Daniel’s
slightly grubby vacancy.
14 The major difference is that in the first published version, Gunn uses recurrent imagery of
the aunt’s constantly bare feet and their animal-like movements - “callouses were eyes and
first two works, the novella *Rain* (1994) and the novel *The Keepsake* (1997) - are full of depictions of home as a site of neglect, constriction, and underhand cruelty; frequently there is the figure of an oppressive or remiss maternal figure, whose addictions, psychosexual disturbances, inferred complicity in another adult’s abuse, or indifference are visited on the children to such a degree that they trigger the child’s repetitions of severe self-abasement: or even, as implicitly in *Rain*, one child’s death. Whereas in the later *The Keepsake*, the daughter does eventually break from a cycle of sado-masochistic sexual imprisonment, in “Visitor”, even the child who survives into adulthood, managing to leave not just the childhood home, but also the mother-(substitute) country, has a highly dubious and circumscribed escape.

In this story, the maternal figure is played by an aunt who has raised the main character, a young woman who, when her aunt falls ill, revisits New Zealand following her expatriation to London. There she has worked as a waitress for three years: the employer-employee relationship is cast in ominously incestuous terms. “Thinks he’s Daddy, thinks we love him and honour and obey.” These resonate all the more following the initial, deliberately (and characteristically - c.f. *The Keepsake*) repellent descriptions of the aunt’s house:

The dark house smelled of stomachs [...] always it was the smell of offal cooking [...] Their shiny sides gleamed from the plate,[...] soft pink for lips and tongues [...] Same closed-in house, same shameful smell.¹⁶

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¹⁵Gunn, *This Place You Return to is Home*, p. 81.
¹⁶ibid., p. 79.
It soon becomes evident that revisiting New Zealand involves the reliving of painful memories, and a return to a beleaguered childhood which had involved vaguely sexual and abusive overtones in the relationship with the aunt:

[...] things you see - a car window glinting in the sunlight, the fall of a piece of sky - remind you. Then you’re plucking out an old woman’s eyebrows, tweezing her chin. You’re doing what you’re told. Or you’re standing up on a chair to fasten her bra before you yourself have got dressed for school. [But] none of these memories have to hold, you don’t have to keep them banging in your head [...] 17

During the visit there is no physical repetition of the demands once made on the niece, although the aunt is still verbally cruel. Yet the narrator’s life in London remains caught up in transactions which repeat her previous subjugation. Her job has progressed from waterboy, to waitress, to hostess, a role she “play[s]”, and which extends to going home with regular male customers. The inference is that on some level, this becomes a form of prostitution, a life which she wants to leave: “I think about having my own boyfriend instead of letting my body get more messy with sex. Or maybe just stopping it. Maybe moving out and buying my own place.”18

The story closes without the narrator having reached any new crisis or confrontation with the aunt during her visit; it reiterates the narrator’s current circumstances:

I’m a waitress in a bar.
I am the one who greets, the one who smiles at the customers as she takes their dark coats.
I wear expensive accessories, underthings.
I am that woman.19

17 ibid., p. 86.
18 ibid., p. 87.
19 ibid., p. 92.
This single repetition lacks the cumulative poetic force of the cyclically reiterated imagery in Gunn's *Rain* 20 (which could be read as the novella genre's response to Hone Tuwhare's bewitchingly economical poem, "Rain"). As a description of a life and a self, the closure to "Visitor" is depressingly debased: materialistic, banal, defining identity through function and possession. As the character's desire to leave her job is not repeated, this closure suggests her continued ensnarement in constricting conditions. Gunn gives no sense that the narrator's life in London is genuine financial and sexual liberation; she undoes the character's earlier hopes that expatriation to London would be release from the past, self-realisation, and arrival in the freed, erotic city. ("Now it was my turn for seed. I'd stayed virgin so long, staying in that house, that country, I'd waited out my time." 21) As in Frame's fiction, the untravelled innocent's ideas of what the metropolis can offer ("I felt I was beginning a life, that I could be anybody") 22 are delusions. Expatriation, undertaken as a means of escaping from oppression and (sexual) immorality, only involves living out the damages of the past in another form, in another setting.

While I have said that there is a persistence of thematic material to be found when voyaging between the nineteenth and twentieth-century works discussed, in fact this last point highlights the starkest difference between the two periods. Increasingly over the course of the twentieth-century work (Perkins's and Gunn's included), the expatriate or exilic theme has grown to signify the merging of here and there, departure and arrival, home and away. This may be read as an effect of post-colonial thought - the politicisation and theorisation of the old binary opposition of imperial centre and colonial margins - and of the post-modern decentering of the subject: a phenomenon which Frame

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21 Gunn, *This Place You Return to is Home*, p. 90.
22 *ibid.*, p. 85.
so succinctly expressed in the phrase influenced by the Book of Genesis and George Lamming: "all beings are exiles as a matter of course".23

Yet as Frame’s own return to the journey motif clearly recognised, regardless of her Listener article of 1962, the voyages of discovery, exile, escape and, accordingly, expatriation, will persist in creative literature: as long as individuals leave home and as long as societies maintain the politicised, dualistic categories of outsider and insider, be these based on definitions of gender, sexuality, class, sanity, ethnicity, religion, race, culture, nationality, education, generation, disability or ideological allegiance. Thus the expatriate or exilic theme is inherently an exploration of ethics and morality: in essence, it investigates the ways people are still divided - or choose to divide themselves - into the economy Vincent O’Sullivan has described succinctly as “us” and “them”.24 The motif will return with the regular insistence of Hyde’s godwits; thus critics must also persist in their own “migrations in time” made by “pursuing an idea.”25

23 Frame, The Envoy from Mirror City, p. 166.
24 O’Sullivan, “Exiles of the Mind - the Fictions of Janet Frame”, Bennett (ed.) A Sense of Exile, p. 31. As mentioned briefly in my introduction, the effects of capitalism on global economics, and the effects of communications and transport technology, have also helped to induce this sense of the merging of here and there.
25 Frame, “Snowman, Snowman”, in You are Now Entering the Human Heart, p. 31.
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