

# Nationalism, Modernism, and New Zealand

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This article emerges out of a reading of John Newton's history of New Zealand's literary nationalist period, *Hard Frost* (2017). Specifically, I address Newton's understanding of the modernism of this period of writing, asking how it may help us to think back into prevailing accounts of literary modernism more generally. At the outset, it is worth noting that for Newton the formal and ideological allegiances of New Zealand's nationalist period are primarily a consequence of the historical moment in which that writing emerged. The creative output of Curnow, Sargeson et al. followed 'the gaping chasm of World War One' and the ascendancy of Anglo-Irish literary modernism. In Newton's understanding, these writers' decades-long project to attune literary modernism to nationalism 'almost defies logic,' both formally and ideologically:

How was the angst-ridden turmoil of modernism to be reconciled with nationalist self-invention? Modernism, after all, was not just international and cosmopolitan, but urbane, mandarin, and formalist. Literary nationalism, by contrast (on the models of America and Australia [...]), was localist, populist, and representational. Equating identity with physical locality, nationalism favoured the pastoral, and authenticated itself from Nature; although modernism sometimes showed primitivist leanings, it was the child of the City, and of a typically deracinated realm of culture. [...] How could a settler literary identity possibly be constructed under the aegis of modernism?<sup>1</sup>

Newton responds to these questions throughout his book by showing how writers of this period, Curnow in particular, put their energy into developing what he calls a 'coherent cultural programme' – however counterintuitive that programme may have been.<sup>2</sup> In fact, what we see in Newton's history is that the attempt to bring these apparently unlikely materials together helped to generate the distinctive effects of interwar nationalist writing.

*Hard Frost* marks a shift in the reception of New Zealand literary history. By tracing the nationalist writers' subtle movements in voice and form, Newton's work seeks to understand not only what happened and why, but also what we should appreciate about a body of work that is both unloved and much-loved. The chapters on Frank Sargeson and Allen Curnow in particular break new ground: Sargeson is the gifted writer who cannot understand the reach of his own fictions; Curnow the writer who pre-emptively mourns the knowledge of being 'on the wrong side of history'.<sup>3</sup> Yet for all the power of Newton's readings – and indeed building on them – I wish to turn around the questions that he asks, to explore whether New Zealand literary nationalism might in fact be an exemplary instance of modernism's nationalism. If so, could modernism be peculiarly capable of producing what Newton calls 'literary identity' – settler and otherwise? What would our accounts of the politics of modernism make of that?

## 1. Contemporary Cosmopolimania

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<sup>1</sup> John Newton, *Hard Frost: Structures of Feeling in New Zealand Literature 1908-1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2017), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Newton, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Newton, p. 185.

‘From the 1990s onwards’, Steven Connor writes, ‘there has been intense and growing interest in the forms which modernism has taken in places less identified with metropolitan or colonial power, as well as in the overlooked kinds of localism that may seem to function within modernism.’<sup>4</sup> The effect of these interests has been a dramatic geographical expansion of ‘modernism’, along with the academic institutionalization of what is called ‘modernist studies’.<sup>5</sup> Handbooks and companions now tend to see modernism as both global and plural – the *Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (2012), for example, comprises chapters on the modernism of specific locations, as well as on form, temporality, translation, and film, among other topics. Alys Moody and Stephen Ross’s anthology, *Global Modernists on Modernism* (2020), collects into a single volume ‘statements on modernism’ from modernists across the world, bringing together the likes of Peruvian writer César Vallejo with Senegalese writer and politician Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García with Turkish poet Ahmet Haşim.<sup>6</sup>

The expansion of modernist studies has been accompanied by a series of new theoretical approaches, which focus on the orientation that ‘modernism’ adopts towards ‘modernity’ rather than on any specific literary movement. In the broadest terms, ‘modernism’ now tends to describe the practice by which artists, in confronting a modernizing world, have sought to ‘make it new.’ Susan Stanford Friedman, for example, writes in *Planetary Modernisms* (2015) that modernism is ‘not a single aesthetic period, a movement, or a style.’ Rather, ‘the creative expressivities in all media constitute the modernisms of given modernities.’ Modernism, in this view, is the ‘aesthetic domain of modernity’ – modernity which itself already multiple (modernities).<sup>7</sup> Thinking in these terms, Friedman finds modernism in seemingly the least likely of places. She reads Tang Dynasty poetry as an example of what she calls ‘Tang modernism’, even though that formation predates ‘high modernism’ – itself an increasingly contested designation – by 1300 years.<sup>8</sup>

The realignment of modernist studies has led to a reappraisal of one of the central terms in accounts of modernism: cosmopolitanism. Thinking about cosmopolitanism and its cognate terms has long been important in the reception of literary modernism (of whatever variety). Terry Eagleton in *Exiles and Émigrés* (1970), for example, focuses on what he calls the “‘social’ exiles’ who comprised modernist literary culture.”<sup>9</sup> F. R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition* (1948) argues that Joseph Conrad’s foreignness – allied of course with the genius of the English literary

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<sup>4</sup> Steven Connor, ‘Epilogue: Modernism after Postmodernism’, in *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, ed. by Vincent Sherry (Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 820–34 (p. 825).

<sup>5</sup> Some examples may help. *Regional Modernisms* (2013), edited by Neal Alexander and James Moran, collects essays on Scottish, Welsh, and Northumbrian modernisms. Studies of James Joyce, including Emer Nolan’s *James Joyce and Nationalism* (1995), have battled over Joyce’s local and international affiliations. Charles W. Pollard’s *New World Modernisms* (2004), addresses the place of T. S. Eliot in the work of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott. Peter Kalliney’s *Commonwealth of Letters* (2013) examines writers from across the world in the middle of the twentieth century, the period in which, Kalliney argues, modernism was institutionalized around the Anglophone literary sphere. Eric Bulson’s *Little Magazine, World Form* (2016) features a chapter on ‘little postcolonial magazines’, focusing on modernist and postcolonial little magazines in Africa and the West Indies.

<sup>6</sup> Bloomsbury.com, ‘Global Modernists on Modernism’, *Bloomsbury Publishing* <<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/global-modernists-on-modernism-9781474242325/>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

<sup>7</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Friedman, p. 191.

<sup>9</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés; Studies in Modern Literature* (New York, Schocken Books, 1970), p. 18.

tradition – is central to understanding the power of his works.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the interest from these earlier critics in internationalism, or at least foreignness, should be no surprise, given the writing coterie in which they were interested. As Eagleton puts it: ‘If it is agreed that the seven most significant writers of twentieth-century English literature have been a Pole, three Americans, two Irishmen and an Englishman, then it might also be agreed that the paradox is odd enough to warrant analysis.’<sup>11</sup> It is Eagleton’s ‘if’ that is now under increasing pressure. With many more writers being discussed, internationalism has become an imaginative rather than a biographical condition. Cosmopolitanism in particular has come to bear theoretical weight, both characterizing ‘transnational modernisms’ and representing the ethical, political, and formal practices associated with literary modernism. Rebecca Walkowitz, in *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (2006), deploys the term ‘critical cosmopolitanism’, by which she means ‘an aversion to heroic tones of appropriation and progress, and a suspicion of epistemological privilege, views from above or from the centre that assume a consistent distinction between who is seeing and what is seen.’<sup>12</sup> Cosmopolitanism in this treatment is hence primarily a matter of form – ‘style’. As Walkowitz puts it: she is interested in how ‘naturalness, triviality, evasion, mix-ups, treason, and vertigo’ – matters of expression – ‘generate specific projects of democratic individualism, on the one hand, and [...] antifascism or anti-imperialism, on the other’ – matters of politics.<sup>13</sup>

It is significant that contemporary approaches to modernism tend to privilege literary expression and modes of reading that are broadly negative in nature, rather than writing and critical approaches that encourage politics founded on specific solidarities. The assumption in modernist studies is generally that modernist literary texts will by their nature do rather more *breaking down* of an invidious political force than they will *building up* of its alternative. Modernist texts will individuate before they will socialize, they will be against something rather than for it. While the difference is a fine one at times, Walkowitz’s interest is ultimately more in how cosmopolitan style can ‘disrupt neutral models of purpose, evaluation, and detachment’ by ‘resisting’ them than it is in how cosmopolitan style can ‘disrupt neutral models’ by ‘transforming or amending’ these models.<sup>14</sup> Woolf’s ‘evasions of syntax, plot, and tone’ are said to ‘qualify, unsettle, and redirect enduring habits of attentiveness’ – her project is ‘challenging and often disturbing’.<sup>15</sup> Conrad’s fictions promote a ‘distrust for established reputations’, in turn producing ‘a less natural conception of Englishness’.<sup>16</sup> From the perspective of those familiar with New Zealand literary nationalism, an account such as this may seem oddly-pitched. For many nationalist writers there was often precious little breaking down going on. For others, such as nationalist poet Allen Curnow, breaking down was a necessary part of the project of building up. Newton refers to this as developing “‘New Zealandness” by *critique*’.<sup>17</sup> Alex Calder coined the phrase ‘critical nationalism’ to refer to the dual processes the likes of Newton refer, in which

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<sup>10</sup> F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (George W. Stewart, Publisher, 1950), p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Eagleton, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Walkowitz, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Walkowitz, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Walkowitz, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Walkowitz, p. 53.

<sup>17</sup> Newton, p. 157.

writers from this period expressed both disenchantment with colonialism's aftermath *and* a desire for a greater relationship with the land.<sup>18</sup>

If there has been, in modernist studies, a thoroughgoing – and at times fully theoretical – disregard to the nation, there are at least three likely explanations for this. The first is the attraction, for critics, of the broader political claims about modernism that are embedded in appeals to cosmopolitan ethics. As we have seen, cosmopolitanism is thought to help break down the invidious structures of the nation-state, a structure which on this view leads to relationships of domination and subordination. The work of Bruce Robbins is important here: in books such as *Feeling Global* (1999) and *Perpetual War* (2012), he argues for responsibilities and perspectives that include the entire planet, beyond a single species. Nationalism is the enemy for Robbins. 'The indifference, the ignorance, the lazy habits of backing one's own and of not thinking too much about the other side,' he writes, 'maintain a sort of perpetual rehearsal for future military interventions while they also legitimate and enable ongoing ones.'<sup>19</sup> In light of these thoughts, there has been a tendency to slip from cosmopolitan ethics to cosmopolitan poetics. That is, the political endeavour to value all lives equally – independent from nation or place – gives over to a view of literatures that move across the globe, or that contain a cosmopolitan orientation, as themselves likely contributing to that good. What is elided in this habit of mind is the distinction between the public good and a more descriptive account of the writing itself.

The second explanation for modernist studies's attitude toward the nation is the understanding of Anglo-Irish modernism that remains active, to greater or lesser degrees, in the expansion of modernist studies. In making this point, I am at least partly reading against the tendency I outlined above, in which critics have given theoretical support for privileging no particular modernism as originary or exemplary. Susan Stanford Freidman's project in *Planetary Modernisms*, of finding modernism in any number of times and places, is in that sense is a radical one. Yet her provocations have not been fully incorporated into modernist studies. Instead, as the annals of literary criticism can amply attest, interwar Anglo-Irish modernism has remained both the object of sustained critical attention and an important model for thinking about modernism around the globe. Woolf, Joyce, Eliot, and Pound in particular continue to be touchstones for defining postcolonial modernisms. We need look no further than *Hard Frost* for evidence of this: Newton develops comparisons throughout the book with a number of the better-known Anglo-Irish modernists. Eliot and Woolf appear frequently, for example, the latter in extended discussions about modernism and gender. This should not be thought of as a limitation in Newton's approach – at the very least, these writers were no doubt significant for literary nationalism in New Zealand, and to deny that would be to ignore the historical record. Understanding the continued significance of Anglo-Irish modernism in accounts of world modernisms might lead us to ask to what extent the values, approaches, and assumptions of high modernism are written into our critical practices.

Even this is a partial view, however. High literary modernism, after all, was anything but settled on the question of the appropriate relationship between writer and place. Modernist writers had gone in numerous directions by the late 1920s and early 1930s. Eliot declared himself

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<sup>18</sup> Alex Calder, 'Unsettling Settlement: Poetry and Nationalism in Aotearoa / New Zealand.', *REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 14 (1998), 165–81.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Robbins, *Perpetual War: Cosmopolitanism from the Viewpoint of Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 6.

‘classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion’;<sup>20</sup> D. H. Lawrence sought spiritual renewal amid rapturous embodiment; and Ezra Pound met with Mussolini. It is with these examples in mind that some critics have found a national unconscious within Anglo-Irish modernist writing, especially as the war approached. Jed Esty points out that Virginia Woolf’s first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915) is about ‘a colonial journey,’ which is expansive, while her last, *Between the Acts* (1941), is intensive, concerning a local country ritual. T. S. Eliot went from the ‘multicultural metropolis’ in *The Waste Land* (1922) to the ‘sacred national sites of “Little Gidding”’ (1942).<sup>21</sup> High modernist journeys inwards, to the heart of the nation, are not generally presented in cosmopolitan accounts of those poetics. Yet there may well have been an increasing ‘nativist and culturalist turn’ in British writing through the middle of the twentieth century, in which ‘the tropes and modes of colonial knowledge came home to roost at the end of empire.’<sup>22</sup>

What we understand by ‘modernism’ matters for how we understand the kind of modernism that was received and adapted in New Zealand. The modernism of T. S. Eliot in the early 1920s is not the modernism of T. S. Eliot in the late 1930s. The modernism of figures who were once thought to be central, such as D. H. Lawrence, is distinct from the modernism of Virginia Woolf, whose body of work is now more widely taught and read. If one were to read Lawrence’s primary mediator, F. R. Leavis, then one would presume that there is no conflict between nationalism and modernism. The historical thinking which underlies Leavis’s celebration of Lawrence, which was significant for modernist nationalism in New Zealand, draws from Lawrence and Leavis’s shared sense that the world awaits a re-establishment of ‘a community of customs, values and beliefs’ – one that might ‘form the essential unifying principle of society.’<sup>23</sup>

This project of social renewal, which was at the heart of New Zealand’s literary nationalism, suggests that there is an enduring value in describing these texts as ‘modernist’ – even if of a particular variety. It is not just that these local writers looked to the likes of T. S. Eliot for their literary styles (as opposed to the middlebrow Victorian and Georgian writing that had dominated New Zealand letters), but also that their attempts to construct a reparative national community, often through negativity, were integral to their self-conceptions. Such thoughts about the relationship between text and culture were in keeping with wider tendencies within modernist criticism. Stefan Collini notes that modernist critics were interested in undertaking a critique of ‘prevailing economism’ through ‘the right reading of, say, an early Jacobean sonnet’.<sup>24</sup> This approach drew, even if in an unconscious way, on late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century historiography. ‘The broad and forceful interpretation of history at the heart of the work of [Leavis and Eliot’s] work and their associates played a powerful part in diffusing an understanding of a contemporary cultural identity that was closely tied to an account of the national past’, Collini concludes.<sup>25</sup> Elements of Anglo-Irish modernist criticism were uniquely amenable for the formation of national identity, in other words. And if there was not a clear national past on which to draw, as for Pākehā writers in New Zealand, this could always be invented.

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<sup>20</sup> T. S. (Thomas Stearns) Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes; Essays on Style and Order* (London, Faber & Gwyer, 1928), p. ix.

<sup>21</sup> Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Esty, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of ‘Scrutiny’* (London: NLB, 1979), p. 310.

<sup>24</sup> Stefan Collini, *The Nostalgic Imagination: History in English Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Collini, p. 50.

The third explanation for the treatment of the nation in scholarship on modernism lies in the geographic expansion of modernist studies, which took place under the sign of postcolonial studies. The beginning of the period that Connor identifies as a shift within modernist studies, the 1990s, marks the moment of postcolonial studies' ascendancy. Neil Lazarus in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* bluntly describes the approach that postcolonial studies has taken toward nationalism: 'The specific assumptions and investments predominant in the field [of postcolonial studies] from its inception still predominate today [...]. Among these assumptions and investments, I would list [...] an undifferentiating disavowal of all forms of nationalism and a corresponding exaltation of migrancy, liminality, hybridity, and multiculturalism [...].'<sup>26</sup> In other words, postcolonial studies has rejected nationalism in its pursuit of figures of translation and border-crossing. For Lazarus, such a treatment of the nation is a testament to the invidious political positioning of this disciplinary formation, as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and others, mourn the lost hope of decolonization. Yet one need not entirely accept Lazarus's view of the field to recognize the force of the argument he later cites, namely that some African modernists have adopted different attitudes from European modernists toward the nation. In Simon Gikandi's words: 'while their Western counterparts sought to use the ideology of modernism to undo nationalism' – itself an overstatement – 'African artists adopted the same aesthetic ideology to imagine and will into being new nations.' He continues: 'Nationalism has become a dirty word in some circles, but for the colonised it was a redemptive project that needed an aesthetic dimension in order to fulfil its mandate.'<sup>27</sup> There may be a world of difference between the modernists that Gikandi and Newton describe, but on this point – the nation as redemptive – they would agree. To put this in broader terms: modernism both in the British Isles and elsewhere has often been nationalist. The supposedly irregular modernisms – both white settler and black nationalist – may lead us to discover the nation again in writing and art from the middle third of the twentieth-century.

## 2. Modernist Nationalism

The final section of this paper examines some of the foundational texts in New Zealand's modernist literary emergence: the four issues that comprised the magazine *Phoenix*. Published by the Literary Club of Auckland University College, 1932–33, this short-lived periodical illustrates how ideas and forms circulated across the Anglophone world in the interwar period. My interest here is primarily in how the contributors to the magazine attempted to attune high modernist criticism, poetry, and prose to a particular situation, as well as in how their instantiations founded a larger literary project of national self-understanding.

*Phoenix* has long been taken to mark the beginning of literary nationalism in New Zealand. Lawrence Jones calls it 'the first clearly visible manifestation of what was to become the new literary movement.'<sup>28</sup> The writers associated with the magazine included figures such as James Bertram, Charles Brasch, Allen Curnow, A.R.D. Fairburn, J.C. Beaglehole, R.A.K. Mason, and Ian Milner, among others. Over the course of its short life, *Phoenix* went through several

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<sup>26</sup> Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Simon Gikandi, 'The Short Century: On Modernism and Nationalism', *New Formations*, 51, 2004, 10–25 (pp. 24–25); cited in Lazarus, pp. 28–29.

<sup>28</sup> Lawrence Jones, *Picking Up the Traces: The Making of a New Zealand Literary Culture, 1932-1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2003), p. 23.

incarnations. The first two issues, edited by Bertram, were shaped by what Christopher Hilliard describes as Bertram's 'professed aestheticism', while the latter two took their cue from its new editor R.A.K Mason's socialism.<sup>29</sup>

The magazine is strikingly presented. Contemporary responses celebrated the format of the magazine, even despite errors and problems with type. A review in *Craccum* concluded: 'In printing, design, arrangement and general layout, [the *Phoenix*] is so singularly appropriate that there is no exaggeration in describing it as a work of art'.<sup>30</sup> The magazine features a yellow outside cover with 'The Phoenix' printed in an art deco inspired typeface, and a large device of a bird drawn in hard rectilinear lines. A version of that device, with the lines softened, also appears on the title page, along with the motto, 'Will the bird perish,/Shall the bird rise?' A note explains further:

*The device on the title page is adapted from a signet-ring given by D. H. Lawrence to Middleton Murry at Christmas, 1923, when the latter was engaged in establishing the New Adelphi. It was sent with this accompanying note: "To the old raven, in the act of becoming a new phoenix", and bore the motto here reproduced.*<sup>31</sup>

In its design and opening statements, the *Phoenix* draws us into the world of 1920s British writing, specifically the environment of competing literary periodicals. Many of the visual elements of the *Phoenix*, including its yellow cover, owe something to John Middleton Murry's magazine, founded in 1923, *The Adelphi*. The shadow of Murry's wife Katherine Mansfield, who had died in January 1923, hangs over the early issues of that magazine: the 'frontispiece of the first issue was a previously unpublished photograph of her, and it carried many of her works'.<sup>32</sup> D. H. Lawrence too was a central figure, especially in the early years, which further indicates the magazine's resistance to what Michael Whitworth calls 'the classicist and neo-Thomist strand of modernist criticism' of Eliot's *The Criterion*.<sup>33</sup> Murry's first editorial was entitled 'The Cause of It All,' which is also the title adopted by Bertram for his opening article in *Phoenix*. Bertram in fact refers to the *Adelphi* in the first two paragraphs of his editorial, describing the magazine as 'the most distinguished periodical of the last decade,' and suggesting that his publication is similarly founded upon an 'enthusiasm for an idea, and upon very little else.' The *Phoenix*, he continues, 'is an attempt to make that idea real, to give it significant expression'.<sup>34</sup> Given both the direct and indirect references to *Adelphi*, it is little surprise that some readers came to think of the *Phoenix* as its colonial cousin. A correspondent wrote in the second issue, 'The *Phoenix*, we hope, will not become a pale reflex of the *Adelphi*, nor the Literary Club a temple wherein the names of Middleton Murry and D. H. Lawrence are intoned with a holy reverence alike by those who have read them and those who have not'.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Christopher Hilliard, "'Rough Architects'": New Zealand Literature and Its Institutions from Phoenix to Landfall', in *A History of New Zealand Literature*, ed. by Mark Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 138–50 (p. 141).

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Hamilton, 'The Risen Bird: Phoenix Magazine, 1932-1933', *Turnbull Library Record*, 30 (1997), 37–64 (p. 42).

<sup>31</sup> *The Phoenix*, ed. by James Bertram (Auckland: Auckland University College Literary Club, 1932), 1.1, p. n.p.

<sup>32</sup> Michael H. Whitworth, 'Enemies of Cant: The Athenaeum (1919–21) and The Adelphi (1923–48)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1, 364–88 (p. 377).

<sup>33</sup> Whitworth, 1, p. 377.

<sup>34</sup> James Bertram, 'The Cause of It All', *The Phoenix*, 1932, n.p.

<sup>35</sup> D.H.M. and D.B.P., 'We Critics', *The Phoenix*, 1932, 36–40 (p. 36).

On the evidence of the *Phoenix* alone, it would be Murry's the *Adelphi*, and not Eliot's the *Criterion*, that could be considered the decisive magazine of 1920s literary modernism. If this seems unlikely, recall the wider circulation of the *Adelphi*: its first issue in 1923 sold at least 18,000 copies. While sales soon dropped to an average of 4,200 per month,<sup>36</sup> it still significantly outsold Eliot's quarterly, which struggled to maintain a circulation of 1,000.<sup>37</sup> For readers in New Zealand, the greater accessibility of Murry's magazine was likely a factor in its popularity and influence. Beyond this, the ideological positioning of the magazine also better served the cause of New Zealand literary nationalism. The messianism of Murry and Lawrence appealed to those seeking, in Bertram's words, both an 'integration of national consciousness' and a 'redeeming of the times'.<sup>38</sup> Murry wrote in his first editorial for *Adelphi* that he sought 'an assertion of a faith', namely 'that life is important, and that more life should be man's chief endeavour.'<sup>39</sup> This 'faith' appealed to the *Phoenix* writers, many of whom were invested in what Jack Bennett in that first issue calls a 'rational mysticism', a literary-theological position which seeks out 'the very real though hidden unity between art and life'.<sup>40</sup>

One of my suggestions here is that a truly global modernist studies helps us to surface seemingly buried debates taking place in 1920s Anglo-Irish modernism itself. When we read New Zealand literary nationalism into the magazine culture of that period, we reconstitute that modernism without retrospectively reconstructing canons based on today's ideas of literary value. Few now read Middleton Murry, while many now read Woolf – yet it was the theorizing of the former that was decisive for New Zealand's new literary movement through the middle of the century. 'Cosmopolitan style' on this evidence becomes merely one setting within a kaleidoscope of possible modernisms, even in the 1920s, while nation-making and nativism return front and centre. Read in this way, the disparateness of 'modernism' is brought to light again, here as a set of writers and cultural debates that cover a range of political positions taking place around the same time.

These points can be made more boldly. In the example of the *Phoenix* we confront both the difficulty of describing modernism primarily as a matter of form or politics and the related desire to show how and why the writers that we admire contribute to better political communities. That latter desire may be laudable – it is not something we should give up in our critical projects – but the consequences are such that we are less able to describe the full range of modernist poetics, politics, and legacies, which here include a complex settler nationalism. It seems hard to credit today, but the stakes of the nationalists' projects were significant in more than just a literary sense. After the war they either established or took over positions of leadership and patronage across the arts, including the state literary fund, national orchestra, and radio arts programming. 'Redeeming' the times became a matter not just of writing, but also of publishing, participating in committees, lobbying the government, and distributing funds. The publishing programme of Blackwood Paul, for example, who was on the editorial board of *Phoenix*, included influential works in Māori history and culture, such as Anthony Alpers's *Maori Myths and Tribal Legends* (1964) and Erik Schwimmer's *The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties* (1968). Charles Brasch at *Landfall* published Bill Pearson's studies of New Zealand culture, both

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<sup>36</sup> Whitworth, I, p. 379.

<sup>37</sup> Jason Harding, 'The Idea of a Literary Review: T. S. Eliot and The Criterion', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), I, 346–63 (p. 352).

<sup>38</sup> James Bertram, 'The Cause of It All', *The Phoenix*, 1932, n.p.

<sup>39</sup> John Middleton Murry, 'The Cause of It All', *Adelphi*, June 1923, 8.

<sup>40</sup> J.A.W. Bennett, 'The Necessity of Criticism', *Phoenix*, 1932, n.p.



'Fretful Sleepers' and his essays on Māori life. Brasch's editorials consistently inveighed against what he saw as the limitations of pedagogy in New Zealand, especially in the teaching of English – and his thoughts were widely circulated among the small nation's establishment. It would be a genuine expansion of modernist studies if we were to think of modernism not primarily as a winnowed canon of writers living somewhere near Bloomsbury, nor primarily as a formal registration of modernity, but rather as a global system of texts, forms, and ideas, which were creatively received and unevenly disseminated throughout the twentieth century. The stances, styles, and ideologies they adopt remain crucial to this – I am not promoting a study of influence – but instead suggesting that we maintain an understanding of modernism as a system or field. Unlikely though it may seem, attending to the specificities of this writing, along with its extent, allows us to tell a much more wide-ranging story of modernism's place in both society and literary culture.

As I have suggested, thinking in such terms would at the very least help us to understand how the ideologies of a kind of literary modernism shaped what became the arts in New Zealand, from its infrastructure to its output. More than that, the relative silence of modernist studies on nationalism means that we have failed to see the complicated, and ultimately consequential, outworking of modernist textuality in New Zealand. It seems irresistible that New Zealand's modernist settler nationalism was significant not just for literary self-understanding, but for the formation of New Zealand settler nationalism more generally. (That was the literary nationalists' aim, after all.) Might we compare Pākehā claims to holding a legitimate place on the land – which is often phrased in terms of sacrifice, unity, and organic life – with the thinking of Leavis and Lawrence?

Scholars have developed similar thoughts when it comes to decolonial nationalisms after the Second World War. Peter Kalliney, for example, documents Kamau Brathwaite and Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o's active contestations of F.R. Leavis. As Kalliney finds, it was partly through Brathwaite and Ngūgĩ's treatments of modernist criticism that they came to articulate their understandings of the cultural production of the new nations. 'Stripped of its nationalist presumptions, or inverting those presumptions in the service of postcolonial nationalism,' Kalliney writes, these writers found that 'the discipline of literary studies could be a valuable tool in articulating a postcolonial cultural agenda.'<sup>41</sup>

Let me conclude by way of *Hard Frost*. Newton argues that the *Phoenix* generation of writers, predominantly male, either ignored or otherwise rejected the example of Katherine Mansfield. While her work could have provided a model, or at least an inspiration, it did not. This was due in part to this generation's thinking about the relationship between literature, culture, and history. For them, Mansfield lacked the social embeddedness required to write about what Curnow terms the 'discovery of self in country and country in self';<sup>42</sup> or what Sargeson called her lack of a 'social tradition.'<sup>43</sup> As Newton points out, though, Anglophone high modernism 'was the language not so much of a "social tradition" as of an emergent *anti-social* tradition'.<sup>44</sup> The anti-social tradition sought the undoing of alienation in other places and times – and in Mansfield's case, this was the New Zealand of her childhood, which she sought as a 'site

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<sup>41</sup> Peter J. Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters : British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 114.

<sup>42</sup> Qtd. in Newton, p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> Frank Sargeson, *Conversation in a Train: And Other Critical Writing*, ed. by Kevin Cunningham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 32; qtd. in Newton, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> Newton, p. 42.

of repair'. For the nationalists, New Zealand 'is the site of a foundational trauma'.<sup>45</sup> There is an oddness here, one that Newton adumbrates but does not directly address: Mansfield's modernist interiority and formal experimentation is able to be recuperated for the purposes of a 'cosy, back-slapping nationalism', while Sargeson's realism and Curnow's relatively conventional early verse is in service of a critical nationalism.<sup>46</sup> Another way of putting this, surprising as it may seem, is that it was the avant-garde Mansfield who heeded Bertram's call (before it was made) for a redeeming of the times, and the conventional Curnow who re-experienced history as devastation. We might well have expected it to be the other way around, for Mansfield the arch-modernist wanderer to have done away entirely with patrician notions of home. Such observations hint toward the limitations of current thinking about the nation in modernism, however we define that latter term: we have too often assumed that those remarkable modernist writers, whose work we admire, share *our* values about the nation and its limits. Yet they need not. Rather, it is possible – and perhaps even probable – that modernism participates in the project of nationalism.<sup>47</sup> We must look again at the nation in modernism, I suggest, turning our attention to what Katherine Mansfield called in her notebook her 'undiscovered country'.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Newton, p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> Newton, p. 69.

<sup>47</sup> For a deeper discussion of Mansfield and the nation than is capable here, see Lydia Wevers, "The Sod Under My Feet": Katherine Mansfield, in *Opening the Book: New Essays on New Zealand Writing*, ed. by Mark Williams and Michele Leggott (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995), pp. 31–48.

<sup>48</sup> Katherine Mansfield, *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, ed. by Margaret Scott, 2 vols (Canterbury: Lincoln University Press, 1997), II, p. 32.