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31 New Zealand Literature and the World

Abstract: As in the title of a well-known New Zealand poem, the nation's literature can be thought of as 'a small room with large windows' (Curnow 2017 [1962], 137–139). Katherine Mansfield's early writing brings late nineteenth-century British aestheticism together with the materials offered by the colonial frontier; in her mature writing, she would draw from the imaginative resources that the colony offered, to bring a particular angle to modernism. Her model would prove decisive, as New Zealand writers would find themselves moving between the local and different understandings of the 'world' – and often while contesting Mansfield's legacies. For cultural nationalists from the 1930s to 1960s, the literature reflected a distinctive identity in the making (albeit connecting with other nationalisms and culturalist theories then circulating). The emergence of a more playful, distinctly 'American' register from the 1970s indicates a changing understanding of New Zealand's literature's distinctiveness. Finally, Māori and Pasifika writing shows New Zealand literature to be part of a 'sea of islands', connected to practices of migration, translation, and incorporation.

Key Terms: New Zealand, Pākehā, Māori, Pacific, Oceania, modernism, settler writing, colonialism, bush, nationalism

1 The Bush

Bushes are worrying places for Katherine Mansfield. In one of her earliest published fictions, the narrator finds herself wandering the "smooth swept paths" (2012 [1907], 85) of the Wellington Botanical Gardens. At first, she moves away from the enclosure, passing "a little gully, filled with tree ferns, and lit with pale virgin lamps of arum lilies" (2012 [1907], 85). Leaving the path, and climbing up a track, she finds the world disappearing before her. Where once were manicured gardens is now "bush, silent and splendid" (2012 [1907], 85). In this strange, disquieting place, the narrator confronts another side of colonial life:

> Shall I, looking intently, see vague forms lurking in the shadow staring at me malevolently, wildly, the thief of their birthright? Shall I, down the hillside, through the bush, ever in shadow, see a great company moving towards me, their faces averted, wreathed with green garlands, passing, passing, following the little stream in silence until it is sucked into the wide sea [...] [.]
> (Mansfield 2012 [1907], 85)

It takes no special effort to recognize just what these vague forms might be, what (or rather, *whom*) the narrator is seeing, and why they may accuse her of being the 'thief of

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their birthright'. This intense narrative, composed by a writer only eighteen years old, powerfully registers the history and imaginative conditions of settler colonialism. In a moment in which settlement was being affirmed in a process of forgetting and acclimatization – ideological, biological, and physical – Mansfield's narrator finds bush haunting her until the end. The sketch finishes with the narrator leaving the gardens, but aware that behind her "the bush lies, hidden in the shadow" (2012 [1907], 85).

The thinking of "In the Botanical Gardens" (2012 [1907]), about what lies underneath colonial settlement, never quite left Mansfield. In one of her best-known works, "The Garden Party" (2014 [1921]), flora again disturbs the lives of genteel settlers in Wellington. The story opens with a description of the gardener, who has been working since the morning to prepare the grounds for the guests. Mowing and sweeping the lawns, and preparing the roses, he transforms the house and grounds into an upper middle-class botanical garden. Mansfield emphasizes the relationship between roses and class: "As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing" (2014, 401). 'They' are the gardeners – or, perhaps, the class of gardeners able to be described as 'they' – who this narrator feels confident she can describe. Here, in Mansfield's mature fiction, her handling of narrative voice has developed considerably, leading to a more controlled and indeed ambivalent work. Despite the blithe confidence of the upper middle-class narrator, flowers menace the story as it progresses. The florist brings "canna lilles, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems" (2014, 404). Flowers then return at the end, when Mrs Sheridan dispatches a basketful to the family of a dead workman – in the presence of the corpse, Laura's world of "garden parties and baskets and lace frocks" is inconsequential (2014, 413).

Native trees in "The Garden Party" further connect the story with Mansfield's early fiction. When the workmen come, Laura discusses the placement of the marquee. "Against those trees", the man says. Laura serves as a focalizer:

> Against the karakas. Then the karaka trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?
> They must. (Mansfield 2014, 403)

Note the similarities between this passage ('a kind of silent splendour') and the terms Mansfield had used over a decade earlier to describe the bush in her short narrative (where the bush is 'silent and splendid'). Here native flora again refuses the work of settlement that is being done in the nearby enclosures, registering a powerful, yet repressed, dimension of experience.

If Mansfield finds disturbing power in flowers and native plants, her personal writings demonstrate just how strongly connected this power is with the colonial world that was forming around her, and in which she was implicated. In her journals

from her November–December 1907 camping trip to Te Urewera in the central North Island, for example, Mansfield is divided between attempts to account, in the terms of the picturesque, for the environment she sees through her train window, and attempts to represent that environment's strangeness and potential horror. She writes:

> I watch the long succession of brown paddocks – beautiful with here, a think spreading of buttercups – there a sweetness of arum lilies – And there are valleys – lit with the swaying light of broom blossom – in the distance – grey whares [...]. (Mansfield 2015, 88)

This quickly gives over, though, to an intense night-time space, in which the hills come to life:

> Everywhere on the hills – great masses of charred logs – looking for all the world like strange fantastic beasts a yawning crocodile, a headless horse – a gigantic gosling – a watchdog – to be smiled at and scorned in the daylight – but a veritable nightmare in the darkness – and now & again the silver tree trunks – like a skeleton army, invade the hills – [...]. (Mansfield 2015, 88)

It is not difficult to determine what has caused this shift in tone. Charred logs mark the wholesale devastation of the natural environment that preceded pastoral farming in New Zealand, and they prompt comparisons – crocodile, headless horse, gigantic gosling, skeleton armies – that speak of the overwhelming dimensions of what she is seeing. It is little surprise that she sees siege and occupation: she is observing their direct legacies, played out on the hillsides of colonial New Zealand. Sure enough, she soon has "visions of long dead Maoris – of forgotten battles and vanished feuds" (2015, 89) – seemingly the same visions that motivate "In the Botanical Gardens", which she wrote shortly after returning to Wellington.

These three passages from throughout Mansfield's career – early journals and short sketches, and her late fiction – show that she was formed by numerous intersecting intellectual and political lines of influence. If she is now thought to be one of the paradigmatic early European literary modernists, one of the 'Blooms Berries', there is little doubt that she was also drawing from the imaginative resources afforded by settler colonialism in New Zealand, and her own somewhat more idiosyncratic practices of reading. In a sense, this should be no surprise – thinking between provincial or foreign biographical materials and metropolitan literary culture is not exactly unusual for modernism. As John Newton points out in a discussion of Mansfield, "exile and deracination formed the matrix that gave birth to Anglophone modernism" (2017, 42) – James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Samuel Beckett, Jean Rhys, and others. What Mansfield brought to modernism, as many others did too, was a particular angle on the global economic and cultural system known as empire.

The legacies of Mansfield's writing have been contested since her death in both New Zealand and in the reception of modernism more generally. On the one hand, New Zealand literary nationalists in the mid-twentieth century tended to overlook and ignore her work. Writers such as Frank Sargeson refused to take Mansfield's interiority seriously – refusing, too, a predominant strategy of modernism – as these 1930s–

1950s prose writers developed their own conception of the nation, largely masculine in nature. On the other hand, in the study of European modernism, as Saikat Majumdar suggests, "[c]ritical, biographical, and editorial interventions have [...] tended to emphasize Mansfield's relationship with and place within metropolitan European culture and have diminished the sense of personal importance that her colonial home had for her" (2015, 77). That is, Mansfield has been turned into the wanderer she thought herself to be, despite the significance of New Zealand and what it afforded her in much of her finest work. It would be better, as Majumdar finds, to examine the "play of desire, distaste, longing, and disillusionment that shaped [Mansfield's] back-and-forth movement between New Zealand and Europe" (2015, 78), as in these relationships lies the imaginative energy of much of her fiction. The later reception of Mansfield, after the literary nationalists, only shows how significant the world in Mansfield's New Zealand and Mansfield's New Zealand in the world can be. And it is telling that her legacies are felt throughout this chapter: nearly all the writers I discuss – including a Māori writer in New York, a Pākehā novelist in France, and a Pākehā poet in Wellington – engage with Mansfield's distinctive imaginative materials and myths.

In what follows this chapter surveys how New Zealand writers have interacted with, and defined themselves in relation to global literary networks throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rather than simply checking off the apparent 'turns' to different parts of the globe or literatures that might have taken place in this literary tradition, or listing a familiar canon of works, its thinking is directed by powerful texts and *oeuvres*. It focuses on three moments in particular: literary nationalism; the thawing of the hard frost in the 1970s and 1980s; and the development of a distinctive canon of Māori and Pasifika writing in English. It shows that if the locus of literary influence has shifted from different metropolitan centres to a more connected, 'globalized', sense of international literary fiction, including pan-indigenous fictions, it has done so through a series of distinctive interventions which look back to the New Zealand tradition.

2 'Shadow of Departure': Literary Nationalism

The first issue of *The Phoenix* in 1931, produced by undergraduates at the University of Auckland, opens with an editorial by James Bertram, "The Cause of It All":

> [T]he *Phoenix* is founded upon enthusiasm for an idea, and upon very little else. It is an attempt to make that idea real, to give it significant expression. And the idea itself is protean. It might be variously described – in descending order of grandiloquence – as the integration of national consciousness, the focussing of contemporary opinion upon local needs, the creation of cultural antennae, the communication of definite standards of taste, the "redeeming of the times".
> (Bertram 1932, n.pag.)

This undergraduate manifesto, surprisingly enough, does indeed mark a transition in New Zealand literature away from colonial writing and towards what became the nationalist tradition. Taking ideas already alive in the culture, this new and ambitious group of writers, at least in their own account, sought to turn these ideas toward national self-understanding – integrating (their term) a 'national consciousness'.

On the face of it, promising to create an intensive national literature, which reports from the country's imaginative interior, should have little to do with European literary modernism, a movement known for its cosmopolitanism. Yet look a little closer and modernism's marks are throughout the magazine. The striking cover image of a phoenix is inspired by Art Deco. There are frequent mentions of precursor modernist magazines: a note on the verso of the contents page states that the "device on the title page is adapted from a signet ring given by D. H. Lawrence to [John] Middleton Murry at Christmas, 1923 when the latter was engaged in establishing the New Adelphi" (Bertram 1932, n.pag.). Bertram's description of the magazine – that it is seeking to revalue taste – is itself a distinctively modernist gesture. In the place of the soft there will be the hard; rather than the loose and vague there will be the definite and precise. Several paragraphs into his editorial Bertram cites Middleton Murry and T.S. Eliot in defence of the 'new asceticism'. For a nationalist magazine, as Rachel Barrowman writes, there was in fact "nothing particularly 'New Zealand' about the content of *Phoenix*" (1991, 2). Instead, its contributors drew inspiration from both "the young leftish poets, [W. H.] Auden, [Stephen] Spender, [Louis] MacNeice, and [Cecil] Day Lewis" as well as the likes of "D. H. Lawrence and John Middleton Murry" (1991, 2). The result was writing that often imagined New Zealand through a poetics not of affirmation but rather of failure and dissolution. John Newton, for example, finds that the "angst-ridden turmoil of modernism" – "formalist", "urbane", "mandarin", and "child of the City" – was put into dialogue with a mode that on the Australian and American models was "localist, populist and representational" (2017, 29).

Paradoxical as this generation of writers may have been, there were some in New Zealand – Allen Curnow most obviously – who were able to turn this modernist nationalism into an almost "coherent cultural programme" for nationalist writing and art (Newton 2017, 30). In Curnow's forty-two page introduction to his 1945 Caxton Press anthology, *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923–45*, he describes recent poets in New Zealand as "returning so often to the theme of land and people, the particular theme of this land and this people", such that they may make "a home for the imagination" (1945, 18). If these observations are decidedly nationalist, the terms in which he makes them are indebted to modernism. These writers were avoiding the pitfalls of Georgian verse, he writes, the tendency to write poems which are "trivial", "fanciful", "simply bad" (1945, 16), sentimental, insincere, divorced from the living of life, and so on. In this handling, the nation will instead be invented by a practice of modernist close reading – "[t]he good poem is something we may in time come to recognise New Zealand by, not something in which we need expect to recognise obvious traces of the New Zealand we know" – and the poet will act as "a prophet to his people" (1945, 22).

One result of the modernism of nationalism in New Zealand was the emergence of a Pākehā 'anti-myth' of settlement, as Curnow put it (2017, 376). If the 'myth' is heroic colonial narratives about settlement, in which plucky settlers conquered the largely empty, inimical land, the 'anti-myth' is decidedly unheroic – but without clear positive content. One of the best-known of Curnow's early poems, "The Unhistoric Story" (1943), insistently emphasizes what has not happened, and the strangeness of what has arisen instead: "And whatever these islands may be/Under or over the sea,/ It is something different, something/Nobody counted on" (2017, 58). There is a disenchanted negativity to these poems, an insistent "Not I", in the words of another of his best-known poems from the period, "The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch" (2017, 99). I will return to Māori responses to the Pākehā anti-myth of settlement later in this article, in section four, in what amounts to a broad re-evaluation of the appropriateness of deploying European modernist poetics of disavowal to describe colonial history and contemporary experience.

Modernist nationalism in New Zealand allows contemporary scholars to re-examine the cosmopolitanism of literary modernism more generally. Jed Esty traces what he calls the "literary prehistory" to the "anthropological turn" in Britain in the twentieth century – the process by which the knowledges and practices developed in the colonies were translated at the "end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture" (2004, 2). One of the implications of the work of Esty and others is that the much-celebrated transnationality and border-crossing associated with literary modernism, might overlook European modernism's more parochial nationalisms, both in later decades and perhaps too in the pre-war period. The New Zealand example certainly suggests as much. What appears to be incoherent, an odd local example in the face of overwhelming global evidence, might be thought of instead as one variant among many in the range of possibilities that exist between modernist literary poetics and the nation. But then again, it should not be a surprise that these possibilities are as heterodox as high literary modernism itself. Modernism's adherents were invested in everything from Irish national histories to American literary traditions to parochial culturalisms to pan-Europeanism, and much else besides.

It is Curnow's modernist education that gives his poems from the 1940s what Patrick Evans describes as an at once a "vatic, almost grandiose" mood and a sense of being "strangely deflated" (2007, 130). "Landfall in Unknown Seas" opens: "Simply by sailing in a new direction/You could enlarge the world" (2017, 95). In this poem, the world's people "gave seas to history/And islands to new hazardous tomorrows" (2017, 96). Yet elsewhere in Curnow's work, history happens in other places – in "Spring, 1942," for example, the speaker does not expect symbols to emerge on his bus trip into central Christchurch, because, after all, it is a bus trip to central Christchurch. Some significance does emerge despite all, though – the image of a city deserted and destroyed – only for the poem to pull away again, ending with an image of the persona mourning at the harbour front for "what slips away there" (2017, 92). In Curnow's writing from this period modernist disenchantment and nationalist

affirmation seem to produce each other. When Curnow edited the second line of "The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch", from "Figures in no waste land" to "Broods over no great waste; a private swamp", he not only quietly removed the reference to T.S. Eliot, but also diminished the significance of what this skeleton watches over (Newton 2017, 181). There can be no greatness in New Zealand, it seems, not even a greatness of waste. The nation is being made, certainly, but it is made through its diminution.

Alongside the 1920s European modernists, there is another figure whose shadow arguably hangs just as long over New Zealand letters from the 1930s onwards – the Cambridge critic F.R. Leavis. Again, exploring the role of Leavis in a nationalism that is not of the British Isles seems a paradoxical exercise, and even more so given Leavis's association with the concept of the 'organic community' – a group settled in place, before the dissociation of thought and feeling under modernity. Yet some of New Zealand's most influential critics from the cultural nationalist period, such as E.H. McCormick, drew extensively on Leavis's literary criticism and sociological ambitions. McCormick was the author of *Letters and Art in New Zealand* (1940), one of the New Zealand 'Centennial Surveys', which were commissioned by the first Labour government to celebrate the one-hundred-year anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Leavis's assumptions are throughout the work: McCormick searches for how the local literature might connect with the development of a national spirit. As Christopher Hilliard notes, Leavis himself advised McCormick to leave behind what he had been writing at Cambridge on Tudor writing, and instead to develop the master's thesis he had written in Wellington on New Zealand literature. The sociological tenor of the work that resulted, which puts texts that fall short in a literary sense to use for "some explanatory and thus constructive purpose" (2012, 244), is a consequence of the way that McCormick deployed a Leavisian grammar in his account of local writing. There may be bad writing in New Zealand, the logic goes, but it is bad writing that tells us something about the nature of New Zealandness itself.

It is little surprise, then, that the writer who McCormick celebrates most in his 1940 survey is Frank Sargeson. This is not because Sargeson is a bad writer, far from it, but rather because it was Sargeson who sought to bring what he thought of as distinctive national speech and attitude into fiction. McCormick concludes that Sargeson's characters – "Kens, Toms, and Neds" – have "in their outlook something that is deeply rooted in this country" (1940, 181). By locating a New Zealand voice, McCormick continues, Sargeson has become 'the exponent of a local tradition that has hitherto been inarticulate'. It is with all of this in mind that McCormick calls Sargeson 'traditional' – this is pure Leavis, channelling the Cambridge critic's insistence that an artist of true significance will emerge from a unified culture (1940, 82). By adopting a Leavisian view of literary value, McCormick effectively describes Sargeson and Mansfield as though they are similar writers – albeit that Mansfield, unlike Sargeson, did not finally achieve the new literature, and is more limited for having failed to do so.

McCormick's reading of Sargeson shows how a broadly Leavisian cultural politics, conception of history, and understanding of literary value, came to be predominant in mid-century Pākehā prose fiction. Writing that sought the vernacular – writing which might reassociate sensibility – was promoted ahead of that which might represent disunification itself. This is a divide in Leavis's own work, of course: he celebrates D.H. Lawrence over James Joyce, declaring that where Lawrence seeks the "vital whole", *Ulysses* is a "pointer to disintegration" (1960, 25). One consequence of McCormick's and others' use of Leavis was a masculinization of the literary tradition. Images of hard, male working-class life, written in a laconic realist mode, tended to be promoted over feminine sentimentality and ornamentation – and this became the picture of the nation. In this long-running journal, *Landfall* (1947–), the ideological home in the postwar period is the provincial town, its representative men are farmers, gardeners, labourers, and soldiers. Most importantly, though, this search for a distinctive local voice suggests something deeply rooted in the ideology of cultural nationalism, namely a desire to make a place for Pākehā settlement in New Zealand, to make theirs an identity as authentically local as that of Māori. Harry Scott's later article in *Landfall*, "From Emigrant to Native", sums this up in its title. Where Curnow's anti-myth leaves room to address the fallenness of settler colonialism, of how there might be a "stain of blood that writes an island story", mid-century vernacular prose writing was often less ambivalent (2017, 98).

None of this is to say that the best prose fiction from this period, such as Sargeson's, unfailingly lends its support to the culture theory of mid-century criticism. Indeed, some of Sargeson's early fiction is made considerably more intriguing for the way that it handles gay desire – desire which unsettles the pursuit of unities in literary reception, including the unity of a nation with its masculine literary voice. Simon During's reading of "The Hole that Jack Dug" demonstrates how the story's "fair dinkum naif narrator" (1983, 79) gives voice to numerous sexual innuendos in his seeming attraction to Jack. Bringing the story out of the closet contests what During thinks of as the way the work wishes to read itself, that is, as primarily operating at an ideological level in regards to the nation. Instead, we have a much less decided text, in which the circulation of desire makes it harder to rationalize the cultural claims being made. In this reading, we can no longer be innocent, as During suggests, about an "amazing sentence" in the story – "Just about any man, I should say, would find it awfully trying to be a woman married to Jack" (1983, 81). Sargeson's seemingly 'fair dinkum' narrators, as in "That Summer", belie a sophisticated literary sensibility that draws on nationalist literary thought, but ranges well beyond it. If only, as John Newton writes, Sargeson had been able to see this himself, the trajectory of mid-century prose fiction may have been rather different (2017, 298).

Even while the literary nationalists drew from international literary culture to build a nation for themselves, though, there were in New Zealand discontents who were unwilling to cede either their vision of the state or indeed of literary value. One of these is Janet Frame, who lived in an army hut in Frank Sargeson's garden during

the composition of her first novel, *Owls Do Cry* (1957). Pitched between the sentiments of the literary nationalists on the one hand, and an imagination interested in the disturbing affordances of literary experience on the other, the novel shows Frame's ambivalent handling of the legacies of cultural nationalist thought. The rather heavy-handed epilogue demonstrates this ambivalence most of all: she mounts a social critique of suburbia, very much in Sargeson's terms, by representing unruly elements of life breaking through a domestic scene. Beneath good society, she seems to suggest, are repressions waiting to burst through. Here the cultural nationalist project announces its strength, but also quietly registers its end.

Frame would later explicitly re-evaluate the cultural nationalist legacy. In her 1980s autobiographies she looks back to the 1950s and the beginning of her writing career. Here, the line of critique is specifically through gender. She describes how Curnow's 1945 anthology, along with Sargeson's from the same year (*Speaking for Ourselves*), came to be "primer[s] of New Zealand literature" (1989, 234). She continues: "I accepted every judgment without question: if a poem or story was said to be the 'best', then I believed it to be so" (1989, 234). The sense that there might be an "authority" that confirms the rightness or wrongness of a poem or story recalls the chapters immediately preceding, in which various male authorities have been seeking to confirm her apparent madness. When she meets Charles Brasch, she repeats Sargeson's views back to him; Brasch decides that he agrees. Yet it is also in this moment that Frame's resistance emerges. "I told Mr Brasch that my mother had worked for old Mrs Beauchamp, Katherine Mansfield's grandmother, and for 'old Mr Fels', his own grandfather" (1989, 236). Brasch responds by talking about New Zealand literature, but not about Mansfield. He cannot hear what Frame is saying, or how she may be positioning herself, as a seeming downstairs "domestic" in the house of New Zealand literature, with Mansfield, not Sargeson, upstairs. It is Mansfield after all who gives Frame an education about the bourgeois feminine world – she reads works such as "Her First Ball" as part of "the literature of first dances" (a literature in which Brasch ultimately has no interest) (1989, 233). What we see in Frame is the tailing off of the ideological conditions that the nationalists helped to produce, via distinctive receptions of British and Irish modernism, and which would otherwise sustain them for some time yet. She came to think of their culture criticism and tastes – and perhaps their poetics too – as limitations to realizing herself in writing and in life.

3 'Allen Curnow Meets Judge Dredd': The Americans

What happens to New Zealand literature after the decline of literary nationalism from the 1960s onwards? Where did authors look to reinvigorate their writing? Janet Frame is a useful figure to think with here. Her career shows her receiving, and then increasingly contesting, cultural nationalist concepts about literary value and the nation.

She left New Zealand following the composition of *Owls Do Cry*, living and writing in Britain for a productive period (1956–1963). This "British" period of Frame's writing contrasts her later publications in the 1970s, which are set wholly or partially in the United States: *Daughter Buffalo* (1972) in New York, and *Living in the Maniototo* (1979) in Baltimore and California. The reason for this shift is partly biographical, as Frame from the later 1960s maintained and developed relationships with artists, writers, and friends in the United States, and was in residence a number of times at Yaddo and MacDowell artists colonies.

Yet Frame's shift away from a New Zealand and Britain nexus to a New Zealand and United States one is also true of her poetics. She has always fitted awkwardly into broader literary historical narratives – none more so than the apparent international rise of 'postmodernism'. But there is no doubt a distinct shift in sensibility that took place in her later career, one that receives more of the United States than it does of Britain. Her 1970s and 1980s work is less subject to the pathos of her earlier writing, instead allowing a comic exuberance to emerge – as much an indication of the transitions in her literary thinking as anything else. *Living in the Maniototo*, for example, is interrupted by mystifying events – the plague of 'Blue Fury', a cleaning product, kills off one of the characters, while the novel is structured around a novelist failing to write another novel, one about a family named Watercress and a writer named Margaret Rose Hurndell (a thinly veiled Katherine Mansfield). This is metafiction at its most outrageous, and indeed, *funny*. The same is true of *Daughter Buffalo*, a novel which seems to transform Frank Sargeson into an elderly, gay, and dishevelled writer living in New York. In this period Frame left behind the concerns endorsed by nationalists in the 1950s – suburban vacuity; the limitations society enforce on those who see differently – and developed interests and practices which, while still idiosyncratic, fit more clearly with the kinds of writing deployed by John Barth and other American metafictionalists from the later 1960s and 1970s.

Frame's friendship from 1969 with William Theophilus Brown, with whom she explored possibilities in contemporary visual art, was particularly significant for the development of her later work. The collages reproduced in the recent volume of letters, *Jay to Bee* (2016), show her using visual art to think about the limits of identity, as well as to explore the comic side of her creative practice. Taking snippets of speech and images from the culture of the day was important for many writers in this period – including John Ashbery, who himself experimented with collage – even if in Frame's later writing this would be in the service of her idiosyncratic theory of composition. She quotes from Auden's letter to Byron to describe the significance of her collages: "Every exciting letter has enclosures/and so shall this [...] I'm going to be very up-to-date indeed./It is a collage that you're going to read" (Harold 2016, 201). Being up-to-date meant being part of a creative art scene based in the United States, and finding new avenues for expression.

The period in which Frame was exchanging letters with Brown, the late 1960s and early 1970s, ultimately marked a reorientation of postwar Pākehā writing in New

Zealand – but if anything, this was truer for poetry than it was for prose. Alan Riach notes that there was a shift in poetics through the 1960s, "triggered by the publication of the anthology edited by Donald Allen, *The New American Poetry* (1960), which drew on a range of work by poets form the Beat, Black Mountain, New York, and San Francisco groups" (2016, 218). The short-lived but influential periodical, *Freed* (1969–72), became an early home for this new way of writing in New Zealand, publishing the work of Alan Brunton and Murray Edmond. Another significant marker is the course in American literature that filmmaker and academic Roger Horrocks taught at the University of Auckland in the late 1960s, which "introduced racy new work to bright, mischievous, restless students" (2016, 19). The result was an innovation in poetic form, as the period after cultural nationalism would come to prefer open verse forms instead of regular rhyme, metre, and stanzas, and tone. The previous earnestness of state verse too would be left behind in favour of more playful attitudes. This transition was also part of a change in direction in the conception of poetic purpose and value. While the question of what might be distinctive about New Zealand and New Zealanders remained part of the larger imaginative matrix, the overall trajectory was away from what Curnow, who re-emerged as a major force in the 1970s, called "questions which present themselves as public and answerable", and "towards the questions which are always private and unanswerable" (2017, 377).

Curnow's new writing would be much looser, recognizably opened up by encounters with both postwar American poetry (as represented in Allen's anthology) and the "Young New Zealand Poets" (Manhire, Edmond, Jan Kemp, Ian Wedde, and others). Yet there are hints of his later trajectory in poems from as far back as 1949–1950, a period in which he travelled to both the United States and the United Kingdom ("sailing in a new direction" to "enlarge the world", 2017, 95). "Elegy on My Father", written in the wake of his father's death, tender a move away from the sense of marginality of his earlier work. Here the "sound of the Pacific and the hills he tramped singing" do not diminish his father's life and significance, but rather unite it with the poet's "Paddington autumn" (2017, 120). Once the nationalist theme had more assuredly gone into decline, what would emerge in its place would be more personal, often ambivalent, encounters with memory and landscape. Hence the later poems of private reminiscence such as "A Balanced Bait in Handy Pellet Form" and "The Unclosed Door". These poems may be interested in the bloodshed and violence at the heart of the nation, closing a loop with his earliest work, but most of all they are personal memories of a Canterbury childhood, ones that are much harder to rationalize into national myth (or indeed "anti-myth", 2017, 376).

John Newton suggests that one of the consequences of Curnow's relative silence between 1957 and 1972 is that his "second career" took place alongside not the generation of writers immediately younger (such as Frame), but rather with the cohort of writers that formed around *Freed* and *Islands* (2016, 5). Perhaps the most enduring of this new generation is Bill Manhire, whose first collection, *The Elaboration* (1972), was published in Curnow's comeback year. Manhire, like Curnow, will remain

interested throughout his career in the "local" in some sense. But the local in his treatment speaks of a different formation as a poet. In his 1991 lecture, "Dirty Silence", Manhire describes the value he finds in poetry which does not seek pure expression, but rather in the demotic speech of the many different voices of the nation – this is poetry as a "monologue which has room for conversations" (1991, 156). As Harry Ricketts and Mark Williams argue, Manhire's interests are ultimately less with "the global movements of poetic form replicated at a national level," and instead more with "the particulars of phrase and tone, the evasions of voice that speak and conceal the self, echoes of prior voices in contemporary ones, the unstable concentrations of influence and observation that make a poem" (2016, 237). Hence it is not place which "produce[s] the 'New Zealand' inflections of [Manhire's] poetry", as with the cultural nationalist poets, but rather the ever vibrant languages of the nation that does so – and Manhire is unmistakably a New Zealand poet (2016, 237).

The tradition Manhire draws from is not quite the modernist canon according to C.K. Stead – W.B. Yeats, Pound, Eliot – but instead one more tolerant of accident, playfulness, domestic scenes – Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams – and elaborated through postwar American writing. In an interview, Manhire noted his reading at the beginning of his career of both Robert Creeley and Charles Olson (there was "range of voice that had amazed me in the sixties", Sharp and Manhire 1992, 32). Most of all, he valued the "American poets" who "somehow use words to make the world a little more mysterious" (Sharp and Manhire 1992, 17). This comes through powerfully in his poetry. For example, in "Milky Way Bar" (1991) – the title referring to both a kind of chocolate treat and the galaxy – he writes, "my whole pleasure is in the inconspicuous/I love the unimportant thing" (2014, 68). Moving between the candy sweetness of a chocolate bar and the humbling enormity of the heavens, he characteristically oscillates between levels of significance, finding the world transformed in the process. Perhaps this is the world cast anew, but perhaps too it is just a milky way bar. Nicholas Wright, describing another Manhire poem, "Water, A Stopping Place", suggests that there is in Manhire a distinct "romantic-anti-romantic" strategy (2016, 123). The pleasures that emerge from his writing are more in the way of intensities, wonder, inauguration, and appreciation, than they are in recognition, description, accounting.

It is against this background that Manhire develops his distinctive images of the nation. The poem "Phar Lap", one of his best-known 'state' poems, is not subject to the same plangencies of the cultural nationalists, but nor is it as locked within the severities even of Curnow's later work. Instead, the pieces of this 'unlikely starter', dispersed across the world, become an exciting meeting point of national mythologies, languages, and histories (2014, 85). Or in "Zoetropes", the nation is the search for a reassuring capital letter "Z" in a book or newspaper – writing from London, the persona finds not the unspoken "New Zealand", but instead finds "Zero" and "nil", "the quiet starting point/of any scale of measure" (2014, 63). If the search for the words is faintly comic, though, the image in the penultimate stanza, of the land as "smoke

at anchor, drifting above/Antarctica's white flower", is not (2014, 63). Here the comic shades into deeper forms of seriousness, as Manhire looks from elsewhere to see the nation in its historical context, all the while discovering a transitory beauty anew.

4 *Te Ao Hou*: Māori and Pasifika Writing

The second section of this chapter suggested that 1930s–50s literary nationalism in New Zealand draws on international resources, specifically European literary modernism and other literary nationalisms. What is otherwise defined as a particularist tradition, in this light, becomes part of a wider story of the development and direction of mid-century writing. The rapid emergence of Māori and Pasifika English language literary traditions after the Second World War similarly drew upon, and contributed to, the global development of indigenous literatures – as well as conditions specific to New Zealand. The results are distinctive and powerful traditions, ones that have energized the literary culture as much as cultural nationalism had several decades earlier.

It should be no surprise that Māori and Pasifika writing has been resolutely engaged with both regional and international literatures. As Epeli Hau'ofa has suggested, Oceania is best thought of not as "islands in the sea" but rather as a "sea of islands", and its indigenous inhabitants as "ocean peoples" (1993, 7). The Pacific Ocean connects trading routes, families of languages, and cultural practices, in what is ultimately an integrated system of trade and cultural exchange. Māori and Pacific literatures in New Zealand emerge out of these practices and traditions – they are international because Pacific identities are. This 'oceanic' sensibility is clear in both foundational theoretical and creative pieces from the post-1960 period. Albert Wendt – a critic, novelist, and poet who had lived between Samoa and New Zealand – wrote in a 1976 article: "I belong to Oceania – or, at least, I am rooted in a fertile portion of it – and it nourishes my spirit, helps to define me, and feeds my imagination" (1976, 49). Wendt's vision is a broad and inclusive one, encompassing "a scatter of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies, and myths" (1976, 49); the new writing that he and others were bringing into being, he says, is "a South Pacific literature" (1976, 59). It is significant here that Wendt draws on shared, but distinct, mythologies of migration to describe this new literature and identity. All writers of the Pacific are "in search of that heaven, that Hawaiki, where our hearts will find meaning": the ocean is as much a physical space for migration as it is an imaginative condition, and it is one shared by Māori and Pasifika alike (1976, 49). This comes through in his fiction too. The Samoa-Auckland nexus is central, for example, to Wendt's first novel, *Sons for the Return Home* (1973), as the protagonist Sione finds himself displaced between two nations and cultures.

The 1970s saw the emergence of a broader-based Māori prose tradition in English. In particular, Witi Ihimaera's first three books, *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972), *Tangi*

(1973), and *Whanau* (1974) mark a moment of transition. From this point, writers such as Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme, and Ihimaera himself would develop their careers, gain international recognition, and become representative of New Zealand writing more generally. No longer could New Zealand writing be a monocultural endeavour of settler self-understanding. This moment of emergence has a longer history, though. The 'Kōmako' project, a bibliography of Māori writing (primarily in English), features sources written by Māori back to the nineteenth century. *Landfall* published the early work of Māori writers Hone Tūwhare (1959) and Rowley Habib (1961); Ihimaera published early versions of chapters from *Tangi* in *Landfall* in 1970. Most significant of all, though, was *Te Ao Hou* [The New World], the magazine published by the Maori Purposes Fund Board of the Department of Maori Affairs from 1952 to 1975. Collecting a range of Māori voices, young and old, across the country – it was introduced by its first editor as a 'marae on paper' – the journal gave institutional support to a developing written Māori literary culture (cf. Somerville 2016, 182). The magazine also connected Māori with other indigenous peoples, featuring articles about trips abroad – such as to visit Australian Aboriginal figures – and trips from other indigenous peoples to New Zealand to connect with Māori.

Indeed, it was during the *Te Ao Hou* era, and almost a decade before Ihimaera and Patricia Grace's first books, that Hone Tūwhare published *No Ordinary Sun* (1964), his first volume of poetry. From this vantage, Tūwhare's earliest writing endures in a way that works such as *Pounamu Pounamu* do not. There are some more explicitly politicized poems. In "O Africa", for example, colonization is a psychological condition, one which must be transvalued: "let revulsion rise", he writes, against "bloody acts/[...] so that innocence/and the child shall reign/so that we may dream/good dreams again" (2011, 74). This connects with international decolonizing movements in southern Africa, as Tūwhare advocates overcoming psychic harms through seizing the means of mental production. Yet at his most powerful Tūwhare tends to temper his political thinking with accounts of what might not be translatable into politics, or what might exceed it in some way. In "Sea Call", the speaker goes to the beach and is transformed in an imagined encounter with the water: "There let the waves lave/pleasuring the body's senses: [...] and the paua's stout kiss/shall drain a rock's heart/to the sandbar's booming" (2011, 68). This is a far cry from the likes of James K. Baxter's "Poem in the Matukituki Valley" (1949), in which the persona encounters a remote, inimical, frozen, and enormous alpine valley. Instead, Tūwhare's landscapes are smaller, sensual, and personal – and untroubled by worries about tenure. It would take some time, but Pākehā poets such as Baxter and Curnow would eventually find in the 1970s poetic registers that dispensed with their nation-making project – and find within themselves something more like Tūwhare's warmer, more generous-minded poetry on display here.

In the 1980s Māori writing in English became more fully 'globalized'. I use this term deliberately: it was not that Māori writing was not already connected with anti-colonial literatures globally, or with new writing from the Pacific – it clearly had

been – but rather that around this time there emerged a newly globalized community of *reception* for indigenous literature. The international success of Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1983) demonstrates this more than any other single work. While the novel sold well in New Zealand, it was winning the Pegasus Prize for Maori Literature which put it on its path toward international recognition (and a Booker). The Pegasus Prize was funded by ExxonMobil and awarded in different nations for each round; it aimed, in James English's assessment, to "promote international, and especially North American, awareness of local literary cultures that have been marginalized by linguistic and/or economic circumstances" (2005, 314). In short: the Pegasus book award sought to translate the subnational to the global, and in 1985 it was New Zealand's turn.

When translated into this global frame, *The Bone People* becomes rather a different novel from the one that its first publishers at Spiral imagined it to be. Now, it appears to be an indigenizing of the magical realist tradition. As Ben Holgate writes in his account of the novel's success, "magical realism" was at this time "an international publishing phenomenon rather than a literary style restricted to Latin America" – Isabel Allende, J.L. Borges, and Gabriel García Marquez, most notably (2017, 299). Hence the elements of the novel which rely on Māori spiritual beliefs came to appeal to this new international audience which might have little familiarity with these traditions. The mute child, the powerful and riddling kaumatua, the rebuilding of Kerewin's home in the form of spirals (imitating the 'sweep of galaxies and the signing curve of the universe') – these are the stock and trade of a broadly resacralized spirit world (2001, 537). In this sense, thinking in a world literary frame focuses us less on how Hulme braids Māori beliefs into the novel, but rather on how these elements connect with transitions in the world literary marketplace, that in turn allowed the book to be valued internationally.

Yet the terms in which Hulme's work were celebrated depart notably from her sense of herself in history and culture. In an essay she wrote for a 1981 collection, on literatures from across the world, she describes herself as a "mongrel":

> A sizeable number of New Zealanders have both Maori and European ancestry, and a large proportion of these "mongrels" are familiar with both cultures. I am a mongrel myself. When the frightened seek to erect a fence between two peoples, we are on both sides of it. Such fence-making tries to separate yourself from...yourself. (Hulme 1981, 294)

Hulme here refuses to be what literary cultures at home and abroad wish to make her, namely a 'Māori' writer firmly on one side of the bicultural framework, an indigenous writer who is just one thing. Her term, "mongrel," is well-pitched. In the place of biological notions of racial purity, she suggests that she is an embodied, fleshy product of historical encounter, and its attendant, possibly uncontained, sexual desires. Throughout the article she describes the whakapapa of writers as both Pākehā and Māori – "Keri Hulme", she says at the end of the article, is "Ngai Tahu, Scots and English" (1981, 305). These thoughts suggest that she is an especially poor target for

the infamous criticism C.K. Stead levelled at her in 1985. He said that *the bone people* is "a novel by a Pakeha which has won an award intended for a Maori" (1985, 104). He concluded that she is Pākehā, among other reasons, because she only acquired Te Reo Māori later in life and apparently lacked sufficient Māori ancestry: "of Keri Hulme's eight great-grandparents one only was Maori" (1985, 103). Hulme's much less restrictive understanding of identity makes a mockery of Stead's limited notions, as she develops instead a richly generous account from colonial histories, embodied life, and multiple sets of identifications. Hers is a more inclusive, less spiteful, and distinctively plural sense of whakapapa.

In a 2017 address, Tina Makereti – author of three books, including *Where the Rēhoku Bone Sings* (2014) – develops the metaphor of the wharenui (meeting house) for "*The Literature of Aotearoa*" (2017). One of the inspirations for this is Patricia Grace's *Pōtiki* (1986). Makereti quotes from Grace's work (itself another monument in the Māori literary tradition in English):

> We could not afford books so we made our own. In this way we were able to find ourselves in books. It is rare for us to find ourselves in books, but in our own books we were able to find and define our lives.
>
> But our main book was the wharenui, which is itself a story, a history, a gallery, a study, a design structure and a taonga. (Grace 1987, 104; qtd. in Makereti 2017, n.pag.)

As Makereti develops it, the idea of the wharenui as a book indigenizes the New Zealand literary tradition. This wharenui would "welcome and absorb and connect all the literatures and writers and readers of Aotearoa". The "method" would be "whakapapa": "ancestors who connect and represent different literatures are chosen carefully", such that Hone Tūwhare and Apirana Ngata face "Katherine Mansfield, Frank Sargeson, Janet Frame"; invited into the whare too would be Pacific writers Epeli Hau'ofa, Alistair Campbell, and as many as are able to be remembered (2017, n.pag.). The thrust of Makereti's lecture is to critique the ongoing underrepresentation of Māori in contemporary publishing and accounts of New Zealand literature in curricula. She suggests that the whare at this moment is more "like a flashy, modern, architecturally designed statement, the kind you see in our wealthiest suburbs" (2017, n.pag.). Her hope is for a literature which might be inclusive and syncretic, which might be organized according to Māori principles as opposed to Pākehā ones. Nearly one hundred years on from Mansfield's scene of encounter, Makereti is imagining a new future for New Zealand literature. Now it is not a young Katherine Mansfield looking out at Māori figures looming in the bushes, but rather a shared literary tradition that incorporates many histories of migration and encounter, local and international, in the distinctively Māori way. In this "kaupapa whare", as Makereti calls it, there is an "extraordinary mix of language and narrative and metaphor that could only take root in this one place on Earth" (2017, n.pag.). This whare is both a model and a challenge.

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