

THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY IN NEW ZEALAND

A HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY IN NEW ZEALAND PARTICULARLY LOOKING
AT SHIFTS IN THE DOMINANT TYPES OF SHORT FICTION AND
CONCENTRATING ON THE SHORT STORY AS A LOCATION OF CULTURAL
IDENTITY.

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis will be an investigation of the history of the short story in New Zealand, attempting to shift the focus away from a (implicitly hierarchical) sequence of writers who specialised in short stories to a consideration of the ascendancy of type in short fiction at certain times (for example the domination of nineteenth century short fiction by oral narratives and romance); the preoccupations of groups of writers who share a collective identity (especially Maori and women); and the recurrence of some kinds of narratives (for example Pakeha writers writing about the Maori). I propose to explore both the construction of 'reality' and 'New Zealand' in the short story, demonstrating how race, gender, and sometimes class/wealth figure in that construction, and generally suggest that the short story's dominance in New Zealand's fiction makes it both a significant medium for cultural identity, and a context for a postcolonial discourse characterized by recurring questions about origin and subjectivity.

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INTRODUCTION

The output of short story collections and anthologies in New Zealand over the last ten years seems to confirm a recent claim that New Zealanders have a 'longstanding preference for the short story'. Mark Williams claims the eminence of the short story is due both to the 'continued force of the Sargeson tradition' and to the 'smallness and homogeneity' of the reading public¹. Many commentators over the years have drawn attention to the ascendancy of the short story over the novel as a preferred form in New Zealand literary history, identifying it, as Williams implicitly does, with a favoured (right, forceful) version of reality, a version which has become a 'tradition' (the Sargeson tradition) associated with cultural identity, nationalism, and somehow reflecting its (small, homogeneous) readership. Louis Johnson, reviewing OE Middleton's collection The Stone and Other Stories in 1959, referred to

this difficult medium nevertheless one which, since Katherine Mansfield's time, has become almost a national method of expression'².

In 1977 Elizabeth Caffin, reviewing Noel Hilliard's Send Somebody Nice offered a definition of 'The New Zealand Short Story' which refines Johnson's 'national method of expression' to a characteristic (signifying) text: 'The New Zealand short story has by now acquired something of a characteristic flavour, wry, laconic, unpretentious: brief illuminations of ordinary lives'³. Caffin's loaded adjectives ('unpretentious', 'ordinary') point to a way in which 'the New Zealand Story' has come to stand for or figure a favoured self-representation in New Zealand literature; a wry, laconic and unpretentious people speaking themselves in their chosen form. The short story thus becomes the site of reflexivity, of postcolonial affective self recognition and of cultural difference settling into patterns of replication and mimicry that betray an anxiety about (un)reality. In other words it might be the acceptance of the short story as a natural medium for the representation of (natural) 'New Zealandness' that

marks it out, suggesting it is both an attempt to map a distinctive territory, self-generating and originating, and a replication of a 'reality' inevitably located elsewhere, drawing attention to the inauthenticity of New Zealand as a cultural centre, and therefore appropriately inscribed in unpretentious and brevity.

Bill Pearson observed in 1952: 'of course we are a cultural colony of Europe and always will be: the importation of our culture has always meant an accompanying unreality'⁴. If, as Foucault claims, culture is a field of struggle⁵, the choice of so many New Zealand writers to adopt the short story as a primary narrative form can argue both a resistance to the culture of the centre characterized by the dominance of the novel, and an (almost literal) inscription of marginality: short texts, mostly representationalist, engaged in 'establishing a mimetic adequacy'⁶, and written for a local periodical press which was often a discontinuous and fragile publishing forum with many journals and magazines surviving only for a short time, addressed an explicitly local readership. Prior to the 1950s most New Zealand novelists still published in Britain and for some time afterwards major novelists (Gee, Frame) published outside New Zealand. A 'longstanding preference' for the short story is perhaps something of a cultural choice, a resistance to the more usual practice of writing (novels) Home for a British readership. For a number of writers, but particularly Sargeson and the writers who succeeded him, the short story is where New Zealanders have placed themselves; away from Europe but within European hegemonic cultural discourse. Clare Hanson, commenting on Frank O'Connor's remark that the short story flourishes best in an incompletely developed culture, has suggested it 'seems to be the mode preferred by those writers who are not writing from within a fixed and stable cultural framework'. Hanson's comment suggests that short fiction is a genre peculiarly marked and characterized by cultural preference, that it is not an innocent or neutral textual choice, but that its very brevity speaks for the absence of other, larger certainties, encoding the problematic context of colonial and postcolonial literatures. If 'all post-colonial

societies realize their identity in difference rather than in essence,⁸ it is a difference which has as its precondition difference from (as Edward Said has shown in his discussion of how the Occident and the Orient both support and reflect each other)⁹ and can be figured textually as novel/short story as well as centre/margin, self/other, home/exile, male/female. So if difference from Britain is articulated in a hunger, (as the literary magazine Phoenix said in 1932), for words that give us a 'home in thought', the characteristic fictional text of these words in New Zealand has been the short story, in which the problematic questions of postcolonialism: separation, race, culture and identity, which pressurize and shape an emerging national literature are articulated in a genre which does not imply resolution and has come to stand for a language of place ('national method of expression') and character ('wry, laconic').

In writing the history of the short story in New Zealand I have attempted to highlight the problems of identity, authenticity and origin that preoccupy much short fiction and identify it as belonging, in Simon During's phrase, to the postcolonial, a 'classificatory, self-representing, problematizing category'¹⁰. In order to do this I have focussed on the short story in literary history either as an ascendancy of type (colonial romance, for example, or the postmodern story) or as texts written by a group of writers whose collective identity enact difference (Maori, women, immigrant writers), or a preoccupying narrative (Pakeha writers writing the Maori).

Because the history of the short story has tended to be the history of writers who specialize in the genre and are therefore seen as reactive upon each other, what is often ignored is the great bulk of short fiction published in magazines, newspapers and journals which provides a local context for individual writers, particularly as they begin their careers. But unless short fictions are collected or anthologized, they remain relatively unread and unremembered, and the history of the genre becomes the history of writers who distinguished themselves from the wider context, which can

obscure the relationship, for example, between the work of Katherine Mansfield and colonial short fiction in local magazines, and inevitably privileges author over genre/text. Most of the commentary on the short story in New Zealand has focussed on the identification of major writers and the fact that most of the 'major' prose writers have chosen to work in the short story, rather than something else, has not received much direct critical attention. Anthologists have traditionally been concerned to construct or at least suggest, a canon, with the principal critical project being an evaluative, historical and sociological attempt to measure the production of 'reality', which is, as Homi Bhabha argues, characteristic of the way in which, in discourses of universalist and nationalist criticism, evaluation becomes the means by which 'reality' is affirmed:

'The 'image' must be measured against the 'essential' or 'original' in order to establish its degree of representativeness, the correctness of the image. The text is not seen as productive of meaning but essentially reflective or expressive'¹¹.

Sometimes the reality reflected by the text(s) affirms a distinctive cultural/affective identity, as in Davin's introduction to New Zealand Short Stories first series, when he discerns 'a warmth and humanity which is less characteristic of older and colder cultures'; sometimes it may rely on an insistent description of locality ('local colour') as in the 19th century colonial short story, but in evaluative discussions it is the writers who are considered to have best transmitted an essential or original reality who become the means by which New Zealand Literature is constructed. In the discussion which follows, I have resisted an evaluative and canonical view of short story writers in favour of an exploratory and narrativized discussion of the changing preoccupations of short story texts, and in particular the way in which the preoccupations revealed by story types, some groups of writers and some narratives construct and reconstruct 'New Zealand' moving from anxieties about origin and identity typical of colonial short fiction to the playful

deconstruction of identity and subjectivity of the postmodern story. It is not as an affirmation of an essential reality as has been claimed for the work of Frank Sargeson, that the short story takes its place in New Zealand literature, but as the volatile medium in which 'New Zealand' is signified, the product of multiple differences reinscribed as 'home': the story of the story.

ENDNOTES

1. Mark Williams Leaving the Highway: 192
2. Johnson, Louis Review of OE Middleton The Stone and Other Stories Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune 3.10.59
3. Caffin, Elizabeth Review of Noel Hilliard Send Somebody Nice New Zealand Listener 2 April 1977: 32-33
4. Pearson, Bill Fretful Sleepers and Other Essays Auckland Heinemann Education Books 1974 P12 quoted in Michael Neill: 'Coming Home: Teaching the Post-Colonial Novel' Islands 35: 38-53
5. Foucault, Michel, This phrase occurs in a general discussion of Foucault's work and that of other postcolonial theorists from: Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin The Empire Writes Back Theory and Practice in post-colonial literatures Routledge New Accents 1989: 169
6. Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin The Empire Writes Back: 188
7. Hanson Clare, Short Stories and Short Fictions 1880 - 1980
8. Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin *ibid*: 167
9. Said, Edward Orientalism 1978 New York Pantheon
10. During, Simon Postmodernism or Postcolonialism? Landfall 155: 370
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Colonial Short Fiction

Colonial short fiction begins in New Zealand as the occasional publication of small groups and literary societies whose effort is directed largely at documenting and recording the local environment. Literary Foundlings, a collection of verse and prose edited by Canon George Cotterell (Christchurch 1864) in aid of the Christchurch Orphan Asylum, may suggest in its title a metaphor of separation from the 'Mother' country, but is mostly addressed to an audience of known tastes and interests. It contains accounts of travel ('A Day at the Hot Lakes'), and humorous anecdotes of colonial life ('A Few Specimens of Colonial Groans') which mostly represent the adventurous colonist as someone who is doing credit to his British origins, without losing touch with them; many of the contributions assert a cultural context ('Five Sonnets, Written in 1853-54', 'Life Touches from Shakespeare', 'Note on "The Tempest", Act iii, Scene I') as well as suggesting a clear sense of the sub-genres of colonial fiction ('A Real Ghost Story', 'A Sketch', 'The Good Old Days', 'Reminiscences of 1857'). There is one story however that begins to suggest a larger preoccupation of nineteenth century colonial fiction. 'A Tale I Heard in the Bush' is framed, like many colonial stories, as an oral narrative, authentic word of mouth. It is a tale of romance and money told by two men travelling through the Australian bush, who have the following conversation about one of the characters:

'Is he a gentleman?'

'Yes and no. He is as good as many a gentleman in a drawing-room; but he is not gentleman enough for the bush.'

'You're right there; it's only when the polish is off you can see the real fibre.' (Cotterell, 23)

The distinction made between gentlemanly qualities necessary to a drawing room and those for the bush becomes in subsequent fiction part of a larger distinction between colonial culture

and the culture of origin; appearances can be cultivated, it is only when the 'polish is off' that people identify themselves as showing 'real fibre'. Importantly, the mark of distinction that separates the colonial from the civilized world he has left is his lack of 'polish'; he remains a gentleman and thus affirms his British origins, but 'real' gentlemanly qualities are more clearly recognised out of the drawing room.

'I have always observed that you may completely tell the whole character of the master of a station in the back country by a single glance at the state of affairs round the house. It is all very well in ordinary life, where a man's character is over-laid by all the moral and social clothes of civilisation, and where he may be a sloven himself, and yet have things pretty tidy about him; but not so in the bush.' (Cotterell, 22)

Ultimately the distinction between 'polish' and 'fibre', 'civilisation' and 'bush', is between values and manners, and it becomes clear that the discourse of colonialism represents itself repeatedly in short fiction in distinctions which both question European social identity and reaffirm its underlying moral value. In order to register as colonial some form of separation must take place which is usually characterised as social form, or manners, while at the same time European moral and cultural hegemony is asserted. Short fiction thus typically reveals the ambiguities and anxieties inherent in the colonial condition.

Colonial stories begin as tales and yarns which represent experience as orally authenticated and basically documentary even if realism is heightened or exaggerated for comic or dramatic effect. A typical example is the work of Lady Barker. A Christmas Cake in Four Quarters (1880) contains a description of Christmas Day in New Zealand on her station in North Canterbury, which frames a story told by 'old Bob', a shepherd, about a working Christmas Day in the high country in the 'old days' of the colony. Although the point of Bob's narrative is comic, in the context of Lady Barker's recording presence (the story is addressed to her throughout 'Well, ma'am', and is an episode in her own comic and

autobiographical account of a Christmas spent in New Zealand) it takes on the character of archive; life as it is lived rather than literary experience:

'here Bob paused and took a pull at his pipe, resting his hands on his knees and gazing straight before him with regretful eyes, as the memory of his wrongs rose freshly to his mind.' (Barker, 280)

Representing Bob's narrative as 'fact' suggests a distinctive characteristic of colonial short fiction, which is a combination of 'real' tale-telling and fiction (which explicitly signalled itself as story, and perhaps most commonly as romance). Tale-telling typically adopts an oral frame. Lady Barker makes a point of stressing Bob's use of language; indeed she suggests a relative lack of use in the relish with which he employs it:

'Bob's story took a long time in the telling, for he told it very deliberately, and enjoyed a long word, or any pet expression, such as his life-buouy, so intensely that he repeated it over and over again, rolling the words in his mouth as if they were good to taste.' (Barker, 302)

Bob's enjoyment of language and his pleasure in tale-telling act to affirm the authenticity of his narrative, establishing an idiolect which typifies him (the back-country character) at the same time as his story is enjoyed by an utterly dissimilar audience, represented by Lady Barker herself. Her presence, which constantly has attention drawn to it as Bob addresses her, suggests a cultural frame within which the shepherd's story is placed, understood, verified, and affirmed as a typifying tale on (containable) difference. This stress on oral narrative as a kind of testimony to colonial experience and a way of emphasizing cultural gaps or distinctions is widespread in colonial short fiction and there are many more or less conventional versions of it. Another example is the kind of story found in Henry Lapham's We Four and the Stories We Told (Dunedin 1880).

Lapham, who with his sister Mrs Nugent Wood had published an earlier collection Waiting for the Mail in 1875, published in the Australian Journal and in local newspapers, and wrote stories firmly located in a male environment and in male experience. In the later collection, the yarns are told by four men holed up in a pub.

'We Four were Jack Conliffe, Harry Clare, Archie Black, and I. We were seated in a hotel parlour on a winter night.' (Lapham, 5)

Lapham's story-telling environment is an early version of mateship; his fictions are less about places than the behaviour of men in those places and the incomprehensible nature of women.

'It's strange the way women have; they cry when they are sorry, and they cry worse when they are glad. I can't make it out, but then there's a deal to understand about a woman.'¹ (Lapham, 18)

Lapham's stories employ familiar colonial motifs such as the lost child ('Frightened by a Baby'), trouble on the goldfields and conflict between a good man and a bad man over a woman. His documentary impulse, like that of many writers of short fiction, is accommodated by a romance structure in tales of the goldfields, where he is able to combine nostalgic recollection of the predominantly male communities of gold diggers with the opportunity for oppositional romance suggested by the absence of women on the field, while the use of oral narrative places the whole yarn within 'authentic' experience.

'When I first saw it there must have been close on 2,000 men working about, and the whole top of the hill was covered with houses just as close as they could stick, most of them of canvas and roofed with zinc, and nearly every second house was a 'shanty' or a store Everybody was making money and everybody spent itAh! those were rare old times!' (Lapham, 21)

Lily, the barmaid at the Crown Hotel in Switzers, is a 'regular plum' sought after by all the diggers, and inevitably becomes the contested prize between an upright Sergeant and the narrator's mate Jim. Although the Sergeant is clearly the better man, he meets with a fatal accident and Lily becomes Mrs Jim Smith, an event which draws a worldly response from the narrator, whose remarks about Lily accurately define female choice as being governed by financial and practical considerations as much as love, but also points to the more general function of women in romance narratives, which is to signify the meaning of choices (motive, behaviour or objective) made by men. Generally female characters in romances suggest the transactive powers of men, and the kinds of moral and cultural contexts in which they might be understood. When Lily becomes Mrs Jim Smith, she effectively whitewashes any dubious moral behaviour of Jim's that might have preceded her acquisition, as well as proving her own (female) fluid adaptability to men.

'[T]hey came back together, and Lily was Mrs Jim Smith. I wasn't much surprised. A woman can weep always for a first love when the second is young, good looking, and well-to-do. She is a good little woman, and makes Jim Smith just as loving a wife as if she had never heard of such a person as Sergeant Michael Brennan.' (Lapham, 37)

'A Member of the Force' is the longest story in We Four, and like the collection as a whole, picks up a good many of the dominant conventions of colonial short fiction which become more evident as the volume of material increases towards the end of the nineteenth century: lost children, specifically local settings (goldfields, the bush), triangulated romantic narratives, and adding an element of the unknown in conventional form, the ghost story.

In a prefatory note to We Four Lapham explains that these four stories are on 'the subject of frights in general', a classification which suggests the use of conventions

associated with ghost stories and stories of the unknown. Conventional ghost stories are common in colonial short fiction and act as a frame for colonial discourse. Cultural separation and instability and its consequences can be suggested very easily in a narrative specifically engaged with experience that is out of the ordinary, exotic, inexplicable, and takes place in the overtly unfamiliar landscapes of the Empire. We Four and the Stories We Told ends explicitly on the question of 'frights' with a ghost story. This story is said to derive from 'the Pater' for whom story telling is a 'special accomplishment' and whose art is said to encompass an exotic world of experience, 'his reminiscences sounding like pages from 'The Arabian Nights'.' (Lapham, 39) The story is about sleeping with a corpse, which so effectively 'frights' the drinkers they go home, closing the narrative. Stories of mystery and adventure told by men to each other form a central complex in colonial fiction right through to Heart of Darkness. Ghost stories, often framed as oral narrative, represent experience of otherness in its most unequivocally 'written' form: the Pater's reminiscences sound like 'pages from 'The Arabian Nights''. By presenting the alien as both a fictional reading of the unknown and as tales that are orally transmitted and thus accounts of experience, ghost stories suggest the containment of the unfamiliar within a deeply familiar cultural context; in Lapham's case the pub. The presence of the narrator, who is often in his club or, like Sherlock Holmes, his professional rooms, contextualises the story he is about to tell, so it is read as fiction, distant, legendary, and unlike the cultural context in which it occurs. Both teller and his audience are fascinated by but apart from the tale, which is thus distinctively characterized as 'other', or, to use Homi Bhaba's terms, phobia and fetish, object of fear and attraction, what is excluded from, yet also romanticized and fictionalized by, the narrative frame with its cultural affirmations.¹

Ghost and mystery stories are a regular part of the fiction published in annuals and magazines from the 1880s. The usefulness of the ghost story is clear in a literature using conventional forms of oral tale-telling to describe unfamiliar places and a wide range of experience, from daily work to fascinating adventure. Like other colonial narratives, ghost stories are about types of knowledge, but in the ghost story, the difference between knowledges is more sharply marked than the more usual distinction, based on environment and moral and social experience, between values and manners. In ghost stories the boundaries are both clearer, and more dangerous. Whereas a man without 'fibre' may simply turn out to be a cad (and often does in romances) someone who transgresses the boundary of otherness enters far more dangerous territory, and in the narrative strategies they conventionally employ, ghost stories suggest the significance of these oppositions. The colonising narrator, speaking from an environment suggestive of conventional social structures, (the club, the pub) and often smoking a pipe, is a thinker associated with empirical knowledge and rationality. The story he tells, which is, significantly, often about Maori in the 1890s and 1900s, defines itself in opposition to this context: social conventions and structures are violated, events are irrational and inexplicable, and governing impulses are emotional not ratiocinative. Sometimes these oppositions, as is perhaps more generally the case in Victorian (British) ghost stories, work to assert the inevitability of retributive justice in another dimension, Heaven affirming the moral boundaries and the social conventions based on them, in the ordinary world. A story published in the second New Zealand Illustrated Annual (1881) is typical of the many ghost stories published which simply transfer British models with little or no modification, to colonial environments; New Zealand is, after all, the 'Britain of the South'.² 'The Skeleton Hand' by M. Mosely, editor of the Illustrated Annual describes a young man who is married and also sexually involved with his wife's sister. After her death the wife returns to assure her husband there

is a world of retribution waiting, and to call him to repentance.³ Stories like this serve, as does Dickens' A Christmas Carol, to reassert the connection between convention, morality, and spiritual truth; transgressing moral or conventional boundaries will have larger consequences, in New Zealand just as much as in Britain, which makes, for the colonial reader and writer, the very important point that physical re-location does not mean relinquishing the moral and spiritual assertions on which social conventions and cultural identity rest. However much the 'polish' is eroded, the 'fibre' remains. Sometimes ghost and mystery stories affirm the norm of moral and social behaviour by setting it against events, situations or behaviour which are explicitly placed outside the reassuring territory of British value⁶ and systems, and which can be breached and overcome by British qualities of courage and conviction. In 'The Mystery of Black Grange' some young men rescue an English woman who is kept imprisoned by 'niggers' in remote country; country that is explicitly outside 'British law'. 'Look at the country, mister, British law 'ud get lost an' starved in it.'

When the boundaries set up by the ghost story include the boundary of race the consequences of transgression are more alarming, and more often become the illustration of a deterrent than a skeletal injunction to repent and be forgiven. Very often a ghost story involving Maori is a story of desire, the desire of colonial characters to assimilate or be assimilated by, the other, the colonized race, which is characterized by primitive powers, supernatural knowledge, and powerful emotion. A typical example is 'The Disappearance of Letham Crouch' which was published in the New Zealand Illustrated Magazine in 1901. In this story an over-zealous missionary who is 'mad about his priesthood' is received by Maori as a 'new tohunga'. In order to tread their pagan beliefs underfoot, Crouch lives in a tapu whare, and after a period in which his eyes become 'sunken and wild' and he develops a fanatical appearance, he vanishes, leaving the

whare in a state of destruction, to reappear as a Maori 'stripped for dancing'. The narrator's comment shows the extent to which the missionary has crossed a boundary. 'As a Maori he was as sane as possible'. Actions that would suggest madness in a European become 'sane as possible' when their perpetrator is reconstructed as Maori, setting up oppositions that associate European with civilisation and 'sanity', and Maori with savagery and a general reversal of civilised behaviour, perhaps most significantly suggested, from the point of view of the culturally defined reader, in the destruction of his own house, the tapu whare, by the version of Maori that the transgressive missionary becomes.

Letham Crouch crosses a cultural divide by becoming fanatical. He engages in a battle with superstition, to tread it underfoot, when his own rationality is under threat; he is already in the territory of otherness which is signalled by the Maori's readiness to see him as a new tohunga. Without the protection of his culture, he is assimilated - 'Letham Crouch, preacher of Christ, turned heathen'. The story is typical of nineteenth century colonial ghost stories in its attribution of mystical (diabolical) powers to the heathen and in its representation of colonial anxiety about identity.⁵ Many of the stories in A.A. Grace's Tales of a Dying Race (1901) involve similar comparisons between missionaries and tohunga, though Grace mostly treats such comparisons comically as in 'The Tohunga and the Wai Tapu' or 'The Tohunga and the Taniwha'⁶ to expose the tohunga as a wily schemer with no spiritual efficacy and the missionary as a good humoured opportunist who yet represents something larger than himself. How much larger is perhaps suggested in a story like 'A White Wahine' where the white wahine, a missionary's wife, is saved from a 'great mass of savages' the hostile Ureweras, by Pito-Iwi, a 'friendly chief', who ascribes this victory to an 'unseen power', the protection of 'gods stronger than ours' which watches over the white tohunga's wife.⁷ Grace suggests a wider possible location of cultural identity than

many colonial writers do, in that he is prepared to acknowledge the existence of Maori spirituality, and even allow it to be a form of knowledge as in 'Karepa's Taipo' where the taipo (ghost) provides accurate information (Grace, 47-53), or the tohunga can make the kumara grow and take away sickness (Grace, 126). But even the tohunga will admit that the pakeha has 'the Atua on his side' (Grace, 124) and when it eventually comes down to a test of spiritual power, it is always Christianity that wins out, and thus in some way 'contains' Maori spiritual power, as the cultural narrative frame in which the Maori as supernatural is placed 'contains' those threatening qualities which overcame Letham Crouch.

Attitudes to the Maori were closely associated with the whole problem of how to represent the distinctiveness of colonials within the conventions of the appropriating culture. In short fiction, distinctiveness is often expressed in a discourse of exteriority; when the polish is off, the fibre shows. Appearance, for example, provides the basis for comic distinctions between the colonial and the New Chum, emphasising the multiple associations of dress, place and work. In a story by G.B. Lancaster, 'God Keep Ye Merrie Gentlemen' (1901) the association of dress, place and ownership is explicit. 'Teddy had worn pinafores in Australia, wide collars in England, and dungarees from one end of New Zealand to the other'. Teddy is also 'strong in the knowledge gained as indubitable owner of a nine-by-fourteen sod whare, and a two thousand acre run many miles down the river'.⁸ Dress and work legitimate property in colonial fiction. By emphasizing visible connections between work and land, competence and identity, colonial fictions represent appropriation as assimilation, and economic and cultural domination as the legitimate consequence of hard work. Emphasising clothing, work skills, and the physical environment in which the colonial works, suggests forms of knowledge that separate him both from his place of origin, which is signalled by the New Chum, and also from simpler

acquisitive motives. At the same time cultural origins are never in doubt, as is shown when Teddy and his mates sing Christmas carols:

[H]e took up the burden with what four years of cattle and sheep work in a dusty land had left of the first tenor of Cam's in his year. "Pe-ace on earth and mer-' chip in, you fellows, if you want to keep it." The balance followed, hesitatingly, then boldly, as the long-forgotten words came back with the familiar tune. And it mattered not at all that they had learnt these words in far sundered corners of the earth. The great plains and lonely hills of New Zealand had called them together, and bound them by disappointments and struggles shared; and the silent understanding of a young land, strong in desolation, promise and sandflies, was theirs by virtue of the years they had given it."⁹

Colonial short fiction is a narrative of essential communality at the same time as it marks off a register of distinctiveness, the years of work which become an ownership 'by virtue'. Most yarns which document and describe colonial life are firmly based on the work of settling or on the characters of settlers shaped by their work, such as some of the stories in the collection by B.E. Baughan Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven (1915) whose title suggests a pastoral and even nostalgic dimension of colonial work. Identification by work and the appearance which that work causes allows a degree of flexibility about social convention in colonial yarns. Polish, or manners, doesn't matter as much as 'fibre', as many stories show. Characters quickly became stereotypes: 'the rough diamond', the 'New Chum' who needs to be tested, the girl whose 'worth' is shown by her preference for horse-riding over ball-going. Even in recent short fiction, the country person characterized by work is less likely to reveal ambiguities of behaviour than the urban dweller, and many stories of the 1900s refer more or less explicitly to the pastoral distinction made in the title of a story by Charles Owen 'Bush Innocence and Town Guile'.¹⁰

In the Preface to his Stories of New Zealand Life published in 1889, William Davidson explained that 'A love for his adopted country has induced the author to make this humble attempt to draw attention to a land which Nature has endowed so lavishly with fair gifts'. Davidson's urge to draw attention to the land is one shared by most colonial writers, though the problem of how best to go about creating a distinctive literature (or whether such a thing was desirable or possible) was frequently addressed. Although William Freeman established Zealandia in 1889 as a 'distinctively national literary magazine' and a letter from John C. Thomson to Zealandia described colonial literature as 'the formative power of true colonialism', there were others who believed that colonial writing illustrated too wide a gap between colonial life and endorsed conventions in British culture and writing, and that, by definition, colonial writing was fettered to the narrow circle of the colonies and should be rejected in favour of English literature. Too much local colour, too great a distinctiveness, as Clara Cheeseman pointed out in an article in the New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, represented the colonial in damaging ways, more particularly so if the writer was a woman.

'The saddest and most unflattering accounts of colonial life are to be found in the books written by those who ought to know it best. ...Many women invent situations which they ought to be ashamed of, and write down language which surely they would not have the hardihood to read aloud. Sometimes this is done through ignorance, or under the mistaken impression that they are making their writings forcible. And so they are in one sense - too forcible. Everyone admires strength, but we do not want to be struck with a sledgehammer.'¹¹

Anxiety about what, if anything, constitutes colonial literature indicates a real problem. To guarantee cultural distinctiveness, the term colonial must signify some separation from the originating culture. Colonial fiction signifies this separation in external and stereotypic difference, people look different and are valued differently,

but narrative structures, the kinds of stories that are told about them, increasingly suggest the difficulty of maintaining change and separation as purely exterior. Large numbers of stories are preoccupied with moral identity, especially the kinds of imposture and fraud that involve the false self-representation of an individual (who is banking on geographical distance to conceal his real social origins) in order to acquire wealth and status in a new land. A land of opportunity is also a land of opportunism, and colonial fictions are concerned to represent the inevitable discovery of fraud (almost every collection contains a story of moral slipperiness of some kind) which is at the same time an expression of worry about the opportunities and possibilities inherent in colonial society.

The ways in which predominant types of short fiction work at defining colonial identity suggest how problematic it is. In stories which deal with Maori the problem of colonial identity is focused particularly sharply, especially when such stories are not concerned simply to describe and document Maori customs, as are some early stories, thus defining the colonial subject as observer, anthropologist, historian, representative of a differently (and more) cultured world, but include the Maori in a conventional narrative structure. What kind of relationship is possible between the races? How can Maori be known and understood? How does short fiction represent Maori as objects of knowledge and attention? Mostly the narrative conventions in which Maori are placed, represent them as stereotypes, lovable caricatures or, as in the ghost story, representing some form of supernatural Other. As Bill Pearson has pointed out:

'At worst the Pakeha attitude was that he had every right to occupy the land of uncivilised heathens and the sooner they died out the better. At best, it was one of indulgence, as in two of Blanche Baughan's stories: being kind to them, showing yourself as cunning as they are, and then giving them some tobacco. Naughty, lovable children, but you could manage them if you understood them.'¹²

The stereotypes used to represent Maori in short fiction are part of the whole question of colonial identity. In writing the Maori, short fiction is also writing the colonial subject's relationship to territory, imperialism and the assertion of culture.

Stories from Alfred Grace's Maoriland Stories (1895) and Tales of a Dying Race (1901) were widely published in periodicals (The Bulletin, The Triad, The New Zealand Illustrated Magazine) before being published as collections, and indicate a sympathetic writing of the Maori in fiction, though like all forms of 'writing the Maori' appropriative in its transference of a distinctive culture into the forms and conventions of another. The title of Grace's second collection, Tales of a Dying Race, refers to a widespread colonial belief that the Maori would indeed die out: in lamenting this prospect, colonial writers granted it the status of a 'fact', and relegated Maori to the gaze of the collector, the historian, so Grace's title both frames and affirms a particular view of Maori. Grace was the son of a Taupo missionary and knew the local tribes well. One of the stories in Tales of a Dying Race, 'A White Wahine', purports to relate his mother's experience during the Maori Wars, how she and her children were saved from a large hostile war party by the heroic action of a chief friendly to pakeha. Grace's stories are written from a perspective that generally values Maori freedom from Pakeha convention and puritanism. In the story 'Pirihira' (Tales of a Dying Race 93-7) Puritanism is associated with Britain, in the person of a visiting maiden aunt, whose offensive beliefs and person are routed by the greater freedoms of behaviour commonly held by the colonial Villiers family and their Maori neighbours. It is clear from all Grace's stories that Miss Cornelia's puritanical view of religion is one that cannot be sustained in the accommodation of the Maori to Christianity.

'Miss Corney [sic] was religious. To her mirth was an offence, and laughter was a sacrilegious thing.

She had strange notions of the extreme value of food, and thought it 'too priceless a gift of God to be eaten in the dreadful prodigal "colonial" way. Also she believed in the Divine use of the rod. And the Villiers girls prayed for an earthquake, even if but a little one; they petitioned Providence to erupt the nearest volcano.' (Tales, 95)

Nevertheless as narratives the stories assert cultural superiority unequivocally, especially the superiority of Christianity, and racial stereotypes are unquestioned. As Pearson remarked:

'His attitude is a little like that of a Pakeha-Maori, who, as he calls it, 'speaks the lingo'. He takes it for granted that they are rogues, but he prefers to speak of their way of living rather than of conventional and self-righteous Pakeha life for which he had little sympathy.'¹³

In Grace's stories Maori are war loving and vengeful. Many of the narratives take place in, or as a result of, 'deadly tribal wars', and, according to the Preface to Tales of a Dying Race Grace saw this as the natural condition of the Maori and the main cause of their dispossession:

'When the white man arrived, he found the islands rent from end to end by internecine wars; but instead of seeing in him their common enemy, the Maoris welcomed the pakeha, because he could supply them with powder and shot with which to exterminate each other.' (Tales, vii)

In Grace's fictions it is frequently the white man who rescues the Maori woman from the ill-treatment or prejudice of her tribe; the Maori practise diabolical arts and are represented as animalistic and brutal. In one story a Maori woman, rejected by her Pakeha lover, exacts a long-distance revenge by giving her Maori suitor a task to prove his worthiness:

'In after time, Hira, when the thought of the faithless Giles came upon her, would lift from a box, sunk in the floor of her hut, a woman's head with long yellow hair, embalmed with all the horrors

of the Maori art, and she would chuckle over it, and hold it out at arm's length, and laugh into its poor shrunken eyes and at its poor pinched face, and then would put it back in its place, and go and suckle her new baby.' '(Maoriland Stories, 99)

Pre-Christian Maori are governed by their tohunga, and the narrative context in which they are shown emphasizes qualities at odds with European culture and often stresses the liberating function of the white male, especially the missionary, who brings faith, reasonableness and kindness where the tohunga ruled with fear, or simply by being a nuisance. The Maori reason for deserting their old religious ways for those of the Pakeha is often suggested as a love of novelty ('The Maori deeply loves a new thing')¹⁴, combined with the eventual recognition, often humorously worked out in a contest between the 'two tohungas', of their efficaciousness. The wiliness of the Pakeha is too much for the childlike roguery of the Maori, especially when right is on the Pakeha side. Grace does not actually assert Providence, but it is notable that in a number of stories ('A White Wahine', 'The Skipper of the Good Intent' for example) it is a Maori who has become a Christian or been associated with missionaries who behaves with Pakeha honourableness against his still savage brothers, who are unambiguously cruel and brutish. The white men who are closely associated with Maori are mostly paternalistic figures, representing culturally specific systems and structures: missionaries, scientists, judges (a number of stories are concerned with land disputes and feature the Native Land Court). Where white men behave badly, they are seen to be taking advantage of the natives' savagery for their own dishonourable ends and are explicitly dissociated from moral probity, which is, however, usually affirmed in the narrative by an intervention like that of Parapa, a Christian Maori (in 'The Skipper of the Good Intent'), who rescues Demorest both from the trickery of Captain Scuppers and from the vengeance of the tribe. Maori religious belief is also suggested in a number of stories which deal with a clearly supernatural environment

of monsters ('The Ngarara', 'Putangitani and the Maero'), fairies, and spirits ('The King's Ngerengere'). Christianity is the truth that replaces legend, or makes superstition into narrative, in Grace's stories, and its acceptability is imaged by the easy or at least eventual assimilation of the Maori into the white tohungas and their families. It is interesting to note though that Grace's representation of Christianity is not monolithic, and he includes Catholic priests, a Lutheran and a Mormon elder amongst his missionaries. Although Grace refers to the dispossession of the Maori his stories place less emphasis on the inequitable act performed on one race by another, and more on man's essential commonality 'before the white man had dispossessed his brown brother'¹⁵. Acts of dispossession are very often incorporated into romance narrative, which stresses the naturalness of human relations between races rather than the territorial significance of intermarriage. White men who marry Maori women become rich, as landowners or as agents, as a number of stories make clear, and their claims to territory are upheld on two fronts; the humanist one of love, and by a legal system that does not recognise Maori custom as binding. In 'The Blind Eye of the Law' Ruku abandons his wife, Tukutuku (who possesses ten thousand acres of land) and their child, because he can't resist his 'strongest passion' which is war. While he is away, Cruttenden, a surveyor, quite literally replaces Ruku as father and husband, playing with Pepeha until 'the child loved the Pakeha better than his own absent father'. (Tales, 14) When Ruku returns disfigured from the war (having fought the British side and thus 'helped to establish' the law) he appeals in court for the return of his wife only to be told that 'The law does not seem to recognise the Maori form of marriage'. (Tales, 17) Although Ruku tells the judge that the law is blind in one eye and 'with its other eye it looks at the White Man' (Tales, 18), Cruttenden is in possession not only of legality and ten thousand acres of land, but also the love of Tukutuku and her child. The dispossession of the Maori is legitimized, it seems, by the willing acquiescence of

his wife and family in the name of love, as well as his own participation in establishing a British legal system.

In many of Grace's stories white men are seen to have chosen Maori women over Pakeha. ('Told in the Puia', 'Why Castelard took to the blanket', 'Under the Greenwood Tree', 'The Skipper of the Good Intent'). This invariably brings them happiness and they are seen to live in the 'Maori way', having made a choice which separates them from their fellows. 'Under the Greenwood Tree' complicates the implication of pastoral idyll that characterises some of the other stories in its main character Felton, who has married Maori women both for love and to acquire land, on the one hand praising his simple life style (which looks dirty and neglected to the European visitor) and on the other dying of drunkenness by falling into a fire. While marrying Maori can be a choice in favour of pastoral happiness, as in 'Told in the Puia', it can also be represented as a form of degradation. But in all versions of this form of colonial choice, it is the identification with Maori through marriage that legitimates the Pakeha presence and redeems him from the implication of acquisitiveness and inhumanity towards his unsophisticated, 'savage', country (wo)man.

In other stories Grace frames a story of dispossession as a comic anecdote in which Pakeha and Maori disputes over territory (like the disputes between tohunga and missionary) become a tale of lovable roguery.

In 'Te Wiria's Potatoes' 'Villiers was on good terms with the dispossessed lords of the soil. He had a sort of romantic regard for them.' (Tales, 84) Villiers refers to the local Maori, whom he has dispossessed, as his 'pet tribe', and when they offer to dig up his crop of potatoes and then steal it from him, his protestations are met with ironic and imperturbable humour by the chief Tohitapu. In this narrative the Maori are allowed to steal on a small scale from those who

have stolen on a large scale and both Villiers and Tohitapu regard the other as their own, their protégé, their possession. This narrative emphasis thus stabilises and normalises the existing economic, social and cultural hierarchy; it is by 'permitting' a humorous theft, that Villiers establishes his moral and cultural ascendancy.

Grace frequently refers to young Maori men as 'braves' or writes about Maori ownership systems in language which suggests Arthurian romance. Stories published in the New Zealand Illustrated Magazine and other journals (The Huia, The Lone Hand, Zealandia, The Bulletin, Current Thought) use language and literary conventions which represent the Maori as exotic and primitive, but familiar enough to be assimilated into received Anglo-European and American literary traditions. There is already a vocabulary and literary modes within which Maori are seen to fit, whether it takes the form of Victorian comedy, Arthurian romance, or versions of supernatural other. Sometimes language represents the Maori as shrewd and loveable, but expressed in a childlike corruption of English. In Blanche Baughan's story 'Pipi on the Prowl', where Pipi, an old woman looking for tobacco, is to be nurtured and cared for, her tricks and practical jokes are allowed and enjoyed by a benevolent pakeha who can speak her language. The New Zealand Illustrated Magazine published considerable numbers of stories about Maori which combine a childish spoken English with a comically formalized descriptive vocabulary, emphasizing the gap between the erudition of the narrative and the simple-mindedness of its subjects, who act entirely on instinct and appetite. Alice A. Kenny's 'The Justice of the Kaianga [sic]', which is about the consequences that overtake an impulsive Maori youth who steals a tomahawk from a pakeha store, is framed as a mock-heroic comedy. The Maori chief who brings the boy to justice has 'myrmidons'; 'Nemesis' waits on him; he is apprehended from 'Honeymoon Cottage or whatever he called his little whare on the banks of that excellent though peat-stained creek where he sojourned'. But though Kenny's

narrative signals a comic reading to the subscriber of the Illustrated Magazine, it ends with the trader, Alf Taylor, rescuing the young offender from the utu of his tribe, who offer his life as he is a slave in a typical example of cultural difference, clearly signalling one culture as more civilized than the other. Alf Taylor repudiates this offer in a narrative climax characteristic of colonial short stories about Maori. By rejecting the Maori solution he emerges as the generous benefactor, saving the thief's life and demonstrating civilized humanity to savages who make inhuman distinctions between people. And Alf Taylor's reward is also typical of short fiction, which, even when critical of some Pakeha behaviour as in a number of Grace's stories, morally endorses the European colonist as light-giver, mercy-bringer and rescuer.

'Iria, the culprit, grey-faced and dazed, flinched away from Alf Taylor's knife as his bonds fell from him, and followed him out of the kaianga in silence with his small wahine at his heels. But later on, when the fear of death had passed further from him, he went to the pakeha and said to him in a touching and child-like manner, 'I am ashamed.'¹⁶

There are many stories which represent the European male as the defender of personal freedoms and liberties and representative of 'civilization' published in periodicals during the 1900s. In 'The Flight of Whara Whara and Te Ra' by Archie Campbell and Thos. Cottle¹⁷ a beautiful young Maori 'maiden' escapes an unwanted marriage with her Pakeha lover; freedom of choice is invariably associated with European culture and the Maori practice of polygamy is set against the idealism of romantic love.

Other stories represent the Maori only as bloodthirsty and savage, and often purport to be 'historical' accounts of the Maori Wars, amounting to little more than propaganda. Less simplistically, like William Baucke's Where the White Man Treads (1905) they may claim to be constructing a Maori

history from oral narrative. Baucke claims his intention is to 'enter into the inner life of the Maori', but after listening 'to stories of 'fairies and gnomes, ghouls and creatures fearful to look upon; of customs and witchcraft ...' he is confirmed in his distance from his subjects; he is the 'undeveloped savage': 'what wonder then that the undeveloped savage in me - which regardeth neither race nor colour - found here excuse to loiter on my errands.' (Baucke, 4)

The Maori as child in need of a father, as savage ready for enlightenment, as lovable rogue whose tricks are never evidence of serious hostility, as romantic hero within his own legends and as the willing female object of a white man's admiring gaze: these are the characteristic tropes of colonial short fiction. Incorporating Maori within the conventional literary genres of ghost/mystery story and romance allowed the kinds of racial problems encountered in colonial life to receive a formulaic narrative expression which encoded cultural distinctions and moral hierarchies.

The huge popularity of romantic short fiction in the periodicals of the 1890s and 1900s, while partly a consequence of Victorian taste, also indicates its peculiar suitability as a framing device for colonial discourse. Romance is perhaps the most conservative of narrative structures in that it represents desire and the fulfilment of desire as natural and normal. In the process, racial, cultural and gender differences tend to be written out, in favour of preserving essential unities, and existing systems. This is particularly so in the most common kind of colonial love story, whose nexus is the interaction of love and money. Very frequently, the motivation of those who marry for money, as in Clara Cheeseman's 'Married for his Money',¹⁸ is contrasted unfavourably with those who marry for love; the general objective of the story is educative and addressed specifically to the problems associated with wealth that are seen to flourish in a new, land-based and imperialist economy.

Cheeseman's story, set in fashionable provincial Auckland, comes straight out of the heartland of Victorian fiction; Mr Repton, whose income is 'quite inadequate to supply the wants of a fashionable family' intends to resolve his difficulties by marrying his daughter to a young man who has recently inherited a fortune, even though this involves the humiliation of seeing his daughter marry beneath her. The story satirizes the way in which possessing wealth cuts across social classes and their associated 'values'. Mr Simpelson has jilted his former sweetheart, a dressmaker, in favour of his social advancement in the Repton circle. The Reptons educate Mr Simpelson in middle class manners, toning down the discrepancy between his appearance (he wears a 'small fortune' of jewellery, including a gold watch guard like a dog chain) and the genteel environment he aspires to enter, where wealth is valued as 'polish' rather than display. Even the appearance of Simpelson's disreputable brother can be accommodated for Pds Stg 40,000, revealing, as a visiting baronet puts it, the 'hollowness and corruption of colonial society.' The 'hollowness and corruption' of colonial society derives from its transforming 'values' openly into 'value': when Mr Simpelson refuses to acknowledge his own brother the claim that he is a suitable husband for Blanche Repton is exposed as the financial deal it is, cut off from any of the moral and social obligations which lock families and individuals into certain kinds of culturally approved behaviour.

Many of Alfred Grace's stories, dealing with both Pakeha and Maori, have the acquisition of wealth as a primary motive in the narrative. Where the story involves Maori wealth is always land, and where Pakeha, it is more often financial (there are a number of men in his stories who are about to marry rich white girls as in 'Told in the Puia', or 'Why Castelard took to the blanket'). In an early story 'Jamie McTavish's Courtship', (Maoriland Stories), a Scotsman wins a daughter of the local (New Zealand) grand family by suggesting

he is a relative of Sir Angus Graeme McTavish Bart., and likely to come into an estate one day. When his family is revealed as being small tradespeople by the unexpected arrival of a brother, the engagement is cancelled and he disappears leaving his ex-fiancée to re-establish her credentials with a less apparently glamorous but more reliable suitor. The need for young people to make financially advantageous marriages is constant throughout colonial fiction, and even Katherine Mansfield's stories comment on it.¹⁹ As Grace's story reveals, the focus in colonial fiction is often on the problematic gap between what is claimed in New Zealand and its verification in Great Britain. Again the distinction might be characterised as one between values and manners or 'polish', as in Jamie McTavish's case, where his ^{speech and manners} anglicized, are being used to conceal a lack of substance and to erase the 'barbarian speech' revealed by Alec's arrival.

'Alec's talk was that of the raw, untutored Scot, and dealt largely with things of trade, and smacked of the shop and the counter - and such things were infinitely beneath the notice of James McTavish, Esquire, and, of the 'set' he moved in. In fact, Jamie introduced Alec nowhere; his manners were so untaught in the little social niceties, which were so prized by Jamie's friends; his speech was to them but little less barbarian than Welsh, or Gaelic. So Alec was kept much in the background - Jamie had become so Anglicised out of all recognition, that he had forgotten even the filial bond which usually binds Scots together, and always those of the same kin.'²⁰

The acquisition and distribution of wealth is always central to the structure of nineteenth century romance melodrama, and in colonial literatures the power of wealth and/or the desire of it is explicitly fictionalized, though in love stories involving Maori it is usually implicit rather than explicit. There are some writers who use the conventional structures of romance and melodrama to express metaphorically the materialist dimensions of cross cultural and interracial romance. Edith Lyttleton, who before she left New Zealand wrote for a number of periodicals both in New Zealand and

Australia under the names Keron Hale and G.B. Lancaster, and who also published a considerable number of novels, wrote short romantic fiction in which women were clearly associated with the land, and so desiring them was to desire, by metaphorical and economic extension, territory and wealth.

'Our Lady of the Plains' first published in the New Zealand Illustrated Magazine in 1902, features a young woman living on the Canterbury Plains, 'only woman for thirty-odd miles round' who is the focus of intense emotional interest for the stationhands, shepherds and Crandeck, a jaundiced English gentleman who is travelling in the colonies and has 'no desire whatever to lay hands on the great unturned wealth of this dumb world'. All the men lay claim to 'Our Lady', eventually including, of course, Crandeck, who desires to remove her to England and 'hedge her about with woman's gear'. But the Lady is already spiritually tied to the plain, whose presiding spirit she is, though Lancaster takes pains to christianize the Lady's emotions.

'I love the plain better than anything - except Dad, and I'll never go away from it. It's beautifuller than Revelations, because it's more than only words. And the tussock is like the sea of glass in Heaven, and when the mountains are all purple and scarlet and green they are like God's throne'.²¹

Our Lady is childlike, not just in her speech; she is only eighteen and still living under the protection of her father until he kills himself because the station can't pay, whereupon the men on the station decide Crandeck should marry her. But the Lady loves the plain 'better than I shall ever love you, Crandeck'; when they are married she is given a wreath of manuka to wear but Crandeck takes it off; 'You've nothing more to do with the plains and its belongings. You're mine now - mine; and nobody else's'. Later that evening the Lady is found dead under a flagstaff.

Lancaster writes within the literary conventions of her time and unlike Mansfield, she does not subvert them, but she is perhaps the most prolific occasional short story writer of the late nineteenth century, and all her short fictions are engaged with the preoccupying colonial relationships, man and work, man and the land, man and woman, and man and other races. As 'Our Lady of the Plains' demonstrates, Lancaster was more interested in the relationship between colonials and their colonised land than she was in satisfying the conventional romantic ending, in which Our Lady would have achieved bliss married to Crandeck and gone to England. Instead it is the mystical relationship between Our Lady and the plains, understood by the 'naturalised colonials' of the story but completely alien to Crandeck, that interests her; the wealth that Our Lady represents, the wealth of the landscape is not the material wealth of a new colony that Crandeck has no desire for, but spiritual wealth, the wealth of belonging, of being a spiritual owner, and ownership affirmed by its material absence; after all, Our Lady's father kills himself because he cannot make the station pay and meet his debts.

In another of Lancaster's stories, published in The Huia, romance as signifier of a discourse of possession is asserted in the association of the land with a Maori woman. In 'His Daily Work' narrative oppositions are established between man and woman, between desire and duty, between Maori and pakeha and between work/reason and love/soul. Strickland, a railway engineer, is helping drive a new railway line through the country. He meets and falls in love with a Maori woman, Amira, who troubles and disturbs his certainty about his occupation, about the value of work and the meaning of duty. The story expresses an opposition between the Pakeha male and the Maori female that stands for the opposition between colonizer and colonized (both people and landscape) and is also a moral opposition, between work and love and between owning and being territory. As a commentary on the

legitimizing of colonial identity through work, 'His Daily Work' is explicit. In her final insistence on the power of love Lancaster affirms essential romance conventions, but also suggests the underlying tensions in focusing on inevitable separation.

'You are my dear love," she said, with all the dignity of her race. "It is quite true. You were not for me. I knew. The hills knew. The pakeha drives through the hills and the river, and he goes away. I am the hill and the river. But we have loved - much.'²²

The great majority of romance writers were women. It seems that for women, writing love stories (or poetry) was an acceptable literary activity and to some extent the genre gendered its authors and its audience. Although G.B. Lancaster wrote romances, the majority of her short fiction was, as her pseudonym is clearly intended to suggest, written as if by a man. Almost always from a male point of view Lancaster's early New Zealand narratives are about men, engaged in masculine activity (the majority are engineers, surveyors or stockmen) and troubled by women only to the extent that a female presence introduces complication and ambiguity into male environments and male values. In fact most of her characters' occupations keep them explicitly away from 'social' environments; they are always out in the bush. In a sense Lancaster's fiction is the natural successor of William Davidson's stories of young Dunedin men or Henry Lapham's yarns, and it is connected to the narrative conventions she chose that the authors she most admired at this time were Kipling and Stevenson. In 1904 she published Sons o' Men, a collection of stories about stockmen and mateship on a back country run in the Southern Highlands. Perhaps more emphatically than anything written by a colonial man, Sons o' Men documents and praises the colonial stereotype. Tough, hardworking, truthful and upright,

Lancaster's men are framed in Biblical language which affirms the heroic nature of their work.

'For, after all, a man must serve his work faithfully; uncounting the cost. This is the lesson of the hill-country, and the Mindoorie boys had learnt it.'²³

Work, in the connected narratives of Sons o' Men, constitutes the bond and moral strength of male society. Toughness is a moral quality and mateship is the emotional expression of it; most of the men have their mates. 'For the two were mates, as men mate only in a life where there is not woman or child, and the side that craves love cleaves, kind to kind ...' (Lancaster, 21) Lancaster's fictions explicitly connect the terms work, and mate, to colonial identity, but also outline the conditions by which it is defined. Her stories take place in the country and usually in rugged bush; they always concern men living alone or with other men and not in families, though this is usually the result of some past emotional unhappiness; and the preoccupying rationale of existence is work, which alone is proof of moral identity, and which is always hard, lonely, and the context in which moral dilemmas are defined, tested and resolved. In a broader context, colonial means away from Home, which accounts for the nature and isolation of the colonial's existence and also for some of his attitudes, and the oppositions which cause them.

'A colonial is not a product of civilisation; he is a product of the soil.' (Lancaster, 154)

Being a product of the soil means that only what is connected with the soil is valued. Lancaster's stockmen are anticlerical, immoral in that they do not conform to the conventional social expectations of Home, but to their own hierarchies and standards, the standards of the stockyard, the hill country, and mateship. A recurring character in Sons O' Men called Harry Morel illustrates the difference between the

conventions of established social institutions and the social code of the stockman, who represents the frontier, the colonial who has left Home behind, even as it exists in the local township. Harry has gone to the bad over a woman, and his whistle is 'the one pure and perfect thing left him'.

'The curate down at the township called Harry a man of sin. But neither the curate nor anyone else could better Harry Morel's seat on a horse, or the turn of his whip wrist as he swung the mob, unbroken, into the yard.' (Lancaster, 12)

In the colonial man traditional loyalties and conservative values have been displaced and relocated. Lancaster's fictions, while glamourizing and stereotyping the colonial male, also participate in a mythologizing process of identification that is the foundation for colonial literature in New Zealand as it is elsewhere. As in 'Our Lady of the Plains' it is the landscape and climate of the country that marks and produces the New Zealand man, a moral environment which is also the justification of Imperialism:

"He's got the nor'-wester in his blood, all the same. You can't tame him. And there are mountains. I've heard fellows say we can knock spots out of Switzerland for scenery. I don't know anything about that, but, mind you, there's a power and a kind of stern reticence about our back-country that leaves its mark on our men. You won't find a New Zealand^{er} babbling of our feelings much. And that's not entirely his British breed. The everlasting hills that make the backbone of our islands make the backbone of our people too. And the knowledge that this is a new land, and theirs to handle and to shape, gives 'em that grasp of Imperialism -"
"It's grasp of the soil he means, really," said Lane; "only he's fond of big words." (Lancaster, 156)

Qualities of backbone are predominantly masculine in Lancaster's work. Although she represents some women as having these qualities (Our Lady has them) she focuses on men and male society. Her characters consider they speak for all men when they claim not to 'know a thing about women', and

women in Sons O' Men, as its title suggests, are on the edges of real life, the cause of disappointment or unhappiness or pleasure elsewhere, constructed by romance expectations. Man heroically subdues the environment, and is antidomestic, moral and tough, while woman, (as she is represented by female colonial writers) remains in her proper landscape of romantic love (also antidomestic, there are very few mothers or working wives amongst the women of nineteenth century short fiction) embodying the the emotional rewards of civilized leisure which promise hope and joy to those without them.

Sons O' Men can, I think be read as an establishing prototype of the tough colonial man, but with B.E. Baughan's Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven (1912) and Alice Webb's Miss Peter's Special (1926) the ascendancy of stereotype is marked, especially since it exists within an explicit context of nostalgia. In the preface to her collection, Baughan remarks:

'The reason why I want to put into book form efforts so fugitive and meagre is, that, with all their faults, they so yet seem to me honestly delineate in some degree a phase of New Zealand life that is already passing, as that, so far at least as I have been able to gather, lacks not only an abler chronicler, but any chronicler at all.'

'Pipi on the Prowl' belongs to the kind of fiction established by Grace, serving (as W.H. New has pointed out) the 'reigning public image' of the Maori as 'wily - but comic, figures of pathos and entertainment'.²⁴ It was published in the first number of Current Thought, a Christchurch monthly begun in 1908, under the title 'Pipi, a Maori character sketch', complete with photographs allegedly of Pipi and her home. The story illustrates the increasing use of the 'character' sketch for documentary purposes, rather than the plotted story, in response to the pressure to record what was felt to be passing. Baughan's stories have their origins in the idea of character as history, they work to record places and environments as they were and the people who inhabited them.

Her interest in the Maori is only marginal; 'Pipi' comes perilously close to satire and is written from a paternalistic European cultural perspective, made even more pointed in this story by the fact that Pipi, an elderly Maori woman, receives her benefactions from a young Pakeha woman. But in a story like 'Grandmother Speaks' Baughan's subject is close to that announced in the preface. Grandmother represents a 'phase of New Zealand life that is already passing', the early settlement at Akaroa, and she speaks in a language which suggests a kind of demotic memory of the past:

'there's a good word to be said for these days, as well as them days ... But for my own part, I must own as I'm glad it was in them I mostly lived.'²⁵

'An Active Family' collected by Dan Davin for the first volume of the Oxford series New Zealand Short Stories reaffirms the colonial past as a place of 'danger and excitement', of 'sore straits' and suffering undergone for the land, a piece of bush transformed into an idyllic mimicry of English country life by the unceasingly cheerful effort of "Mum", "Dad", and their children. The historical circumstances of gaining possession of the land is glanced at by way of "Mum's" recollections and given its cultural significance by the narrator's frame for her as she tells her story:

'As we drove along, Mother related reminiscences - tales of the early days when she had just come out to New Zealand, and the Maori troubles in that part of the country were at their worst. "Dad was ordered off, with all the rest of the men, the moment we landed, and all us women and children were herded together for safety," narrated this Pilgrim mother.' (Baughan, 130)

These tales of the 'Maori troubles' and terror at the hands of these ignorant savages who ate the soap while Mother hid in the flax-swamp with the babies, act as an oral frame for the legitimacy and tranquility of farm life in the present; in comparison to the dangerous and primitive past stands a

golden, and bucolic present - after dinner Bruv, Benny and Flo play Schubert with their Dad.

By the early 1900s colonial life was represented in literature as 'real' life characterised by work and a disregard for unnecessary social convention, in which the colonial could be recognized by his appearance, his speech and 'unpolished' moral qualities. The literary conventions of oral narrative and 'real' descriptive context occupied a privileged position in fiction. The 'colonial' was seen to have a history, defined through a series of distinctions between past and present, town and bush, Maori and Pakeha, Christian and savage, the uncivilised and the civilised. Such oppositions constituted a stereotyping of the forces of change. Very often the larger questions they implied are subsumed into character study; and the recognition of 'type' becomes a major pre-occupation of short fiction. Alice Webb's collection Miss Peter's Special 1926 is characteristic of this kind of short fiction, which was so subtly transformed by Sargeson in the following decade. The titles of Webb's stories - 'The Patriot', 'The Mother's Help', 'The Prophet's Wife', 'The Food Hoarder' - assert her concern to identify the typical, and as the dustjacket pointed out, their authenticity had been verified by the mere fact of local publication:

'These fourteen stories of New Zealand life have all first seen the light in Dominion newspapers, which in itself assures them to be true to life in their local colour.'

Webb's sketches are dominated by New Zealanders' experience of the First World War. At the same time they illustrate the colonial preoccupation with 'local colour', which, in the context of the Great War, is colour seen from Britain. Webb's stories claim a distinctive regionality, but define their distinctiveness by reference to events occurring elsewhere, and their implicit acknowledgement of a British readership.

In summary, the conventions of colonial short fiction work at containing the problematic questions of race, culture, selfhood and nationhood within acceptable distinctions, distinctions which represent both the presence and the experience of the colonial as normal, recognizable and knowable. It is the experience of romance and adventure represented in anecdote, narrative and character sketch: literary forms whose conventional structure limit or control unfamiliarity, by creating stereotypical recognitions of event, character, sequence and ultimately, meaning. A story by Mona Tracy, published in 1928 provides a description of Te Rauparaha which suggests that the Maori chief is a kind of text, read and understood by the writer. He is 'an old man whose nature was stamped on his tattooed face. Craft was marked; treachery, rapacity and cruelty; and gluttony ...'²⁶

Such recognitions of type, in settings emphasizing 'local colour', and framed in familiar romance and adventure narratives all served to write the colonial story in acceptable terms.

ENDNOTES

1. See Homi K. Bhabha 'The Other Question': difference, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism' in Literature, Poetics and Theory, ed. Barker, Methven 1986: 148-172
2. A commonly used phrase in this case from 'Winning and Losing' by Hermit, New Zealand Illustrated Annual, December 1881, 62
3. Mosely, M., 'The Skelton Hand' New Zealand Illustrated Annual, December 1881, 131-151
4. Vronberg, Elma, 'The Mystery of Black Grange' New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, October 1900: 17-24
5. Owen, Chas, 'The Disappearance of Letham Crouch', New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, July 1901: 777-781
6. Grace, A.A., Tales of a Dying Race, 54-63; 41-46
7. Grace, A.A., *ibid*: 222-245
8. Lancaster, G.B., 'God Keep Ye Merrie Gentlemen' New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, December 1901: 168
9. Lancaster, G.B., *ibid*: 169
10. Owen, Chas, 'Bush Innocence and Town Guile' New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, September 1900: 932
11. cheeseman, Clara, 'Colonials in Fiction' New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, Jan 1903: 275-276
12. Pearson, Bill, 'Attitudes to the Maori in some Pakeha Fiction' Fretful Sleepers and other Essays, 1974: 49
13. Pearson, Bill, *ibid*: 49
14. Grace, A.A., 'Arahuta's Baptism' Tales of a Dying Race: 1
15. Grace, A.A., Maoriland Stories: 136
16. Kenny, Alice A., 'The Justice of the Kaianga' New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, August 1905: 364
17. Campbell, A., Cottle, T., 'The Flight of Whara Whara and Te Ra' New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, Nov 1900: 102-112
18. Cheeseman, Clara, 'Married for his Money' Happy Endings, ed. Webby, E., Wevers, L., 1987: 56-67

19. see, for example, the character Viola in 'The Swing of the Pendulum' In a German Pension, 1911
20. Grace, A.A., 'Jamie McTavish's Courtship' Maoriland Stories: 179
21. Lancaster, G.B., 'His Daily Work' The Huia, December 1903: 13
22. Lancaster, G.B., 'His Daily Work' The Huia, December 1903: 13
23. Lancaster, G.B., Sons O' Men: 52
24. New, W.H., Dreams of Speech and Violence. The Art of the Short Story in Canada and New Zealand 1987: 128
25. Baughan, B.E., Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven: 33
26. Tracy, Mona, 'The Return' Art in New Zealand No.1: 45

Katherine Mansfield's Fiction: A Colonial Context for the 'New Prose'

W.H. New has remarked, in his study of the New Zealand short story that the 'problem in writing a history of New Zealand short fiction, is Katherine Mansfield':

'She not only produced a substantial body of high quality work, she also produced much of it while writing abroad in England and France, was claimed by English literary criticism, died young and became a cultural icon, and managed all of this so early in New Zealand's social history that her very existence cancels all easy generalisations about cultural and historical 'progress'.¹

The argument about where Mansfield belongs in literary history is certain to remain inconclusive. Part of her attraction, as writer and as a phenomenon, is her displacement. A self-selected exile from the country of her birth she is never really at home as a writer, and her stories trouble and disturb the conventional certainties represented in short fiction. The phenomenon of Katherine Mansfield's work could never be contained by the term 'New Zealand colonial' as is the fiction of Blanche Baughan, her near contemporary, nor can it sit comfortably under the term 'English modernist'. Mansfield has been described as:

'One of the prose writers who, along with Henry James, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy J.W. Richardson, is most responsible for calling the twentieth-century reader into being.'²

Mansfield's work shares with the work of other European writers the characteristics of modernist writing which have so deeply influenced the history of the short story as well as other genres, the development of a new kind of prose, which has been described by Fullbrook as one that:

'devalued the linear progression of plot, that was attuned to the image and the symbol, that developed mood and voice as locations of meaning, and that foregrounded

a problematic investigation into the status of the individual. In short the interests of the writers demanded the invention of a prose which called for poetic reading...'3

Mansfield herself suggests her consciousness of developing a new prose repeatedly in her writing, when she describes her sense of what she is trying to accomplish. In a review of The Mills of the Gods by Elizabeth Robins, she wrote

'Suppose we put it in the form of a riddle: 'I am neither a short story, nor a sketch, nor an impression, nor a tale. I am written in prose. I am a great deal shorter than a novel; I may be over one page long, but, on the other hand, there is not reason why I should not be thirty. I have a special quality - a something, a something which is immediately, perfectly recognisable. It belongs to me; it is of my essence. In fact I am often given away in the first sentence. I seem almost to stand or fall by it. It is to me what the first phrase of the song is to the singer. Those who know me feel: 'Yes that is it'. And they are from that moment prepared for what is to follow.'4

Although Mansfield's work has long been recognised as having major significance in the development of Modernism, she has also been seen (and saw herself) as existing between cultures, or geographical regions, so that she doesn't quite fit 'English' or England in the same way that she doesn't quite fit 'New Zealander' or New Zealand. Writing in Art in New Zealand in 1928 Alan Mulgan claimed, without elaboration, that:

'Katherine Mansfield's work bears an unmistakeable New Zealand stamp.'5

Mansfield suggested the strength of her pull back to the 'country of our childhood'6 directly and indirectly throughout her writing while recognising the permanence of her separation from it. She wrote in the Athenaeum:

'We shall never see these people again; we shall share nothing more with them. We shall never push open their garden gates and smell our way past the flower bushes to the white verandahs where they sit gossiping in the

velvet moonlight. Why should we feel then this passionate interest?'⁷

In her recognition and expression of the contrary pulls and incomplete contexts of her existence and her work, Mansfield can perhaps represent something about the colonial condition. Though her geographical journey was the inverse of a colonial New Zealander's, it is the sense of mixed environments and multiple identities which Mansfield shares with her country people, and, like the colonial writer, distance seems to have been the necessary condition of Mansfield's work. Nonetheless there are distinctive ways in which her role relates to the colonial literature she left behind (though these are not separate from her achievement as a modernist writing in a European context) and it is perhaps helpful, in a history of the New Zealand short story, to look at her firstly from the ground of New Zealand colonial writing.

The stories Mansfield wrote for Rhythm in 1912 and 1913 were in response to a request from her husband, John Middleton Murry, and, Alpers claims, written after 'taking note of the magazine's slogan, 'Before art can be human again, it must learn to be brutal'⁸. Whether written in reply to editorial directive or not, it is perhaps suggestive that these stories are the most obviously 'colonial' of her oeuvre, and have been given special categorisation as such by Ian Gordon in his collection Undiscovered Country: colonial art, perhaps, is 'brutal' art. 'The Woman at the Store', 'Millie', 'How Pearl Button was Kidnapped', 'Ole Underwood', and 'Old Tar', collected with other early work and published by Murry as Something Childish and Other Stories (1924), are all stories which signal a familiarity with the subjects and conventions of colonial literature. Mansfield had published short sketches and fictions in local publications (The Triad, The Native Companion and the Dominion newspaper) before she left New Zealand permanently in 1908; her first published pieces were either stories about children written as anecdotal or fairytale narrative or what Hanson and Gurr have called

'imitative pieces in the Symbolist manner'', prose poems and vignettes. Her early writing was published under a variety of names, mostly variations on her given name, Kathleen Beauchamp and her eventual writing name, Katherine Mansfield, but one of them, 'Julian Mark', might reflect the same objective as Edith Lyttleton's use of the pseudonym G.B. Lancaster - to be taken seriously as if you were male, where to write as a woman restricted you to certain subjects.

However it is not until the group of stories written at Murry's request that Mansfield explicitly engages with colonial narrative models. Commentators generally connect these stories with the biographical underpinning of her travels in the Ureweras in 1907. Antony Alpers remarked that 'one New Zealand notebook proved of use in 1912 when she wrote 'The Woman at the Store'¹⁰, although Ian Gordon considers that in stepping outside the 'pastoral world' of her later stories to the kind of real life that may or may not have derived from her observations while travelling in rough bush country, Mansfield

'loses touch: she can only reproduce what she overheard or read in the more sensational pages of the local newspaper. What could a girl of her background know of Millie or ole Underwood or the Woman in the Store, she with her fastidious distaste for the smell of cooking mutton chops, 'commercial travellers and second-class, NZ?'''.¹¹

Whether or not a girl of Kathleen Beauchamp's background could have known of Millie or the woman at the store is beside the point; what is striking about these stories and their subjects is how closely they fit the colonial desire for description of 'real life' and 'local colour' and how Mansfield uses in them the typical literary conventions of colonial writing (oral narrative framing, melodramatic romance plot, character sketch) as well as picking up fictional motifs typical of colonial literatures: the lost or stolen child, landscape as subject, the New Chum breaking down (in

'Millie'). These stories demonstrate a highly conscious use of convention and stereotype, complicated by a deliberately ambiguous narrative context.

'The Woman at the Store' is full of details which describe an explicit setting. The heat, the wind, the tussock grass, the pumice dust, the horses, the manuka bushes, the discomfort: these are the customary external details of colonial regional dressing. The characters too, announce their identity in dress; Jo wears a 'blue galatea shirt, corduroy trousers and riding boots', and has a spotted scarf and a wideawake. Hin is dressed in a 'Jaeger vest - a pair of blue duck trousers fastened round the waist with a plaited leather belt.' All dressing is self-representation, as Mansfield's Bertha in 'Bliss' is well aware, but in the kind of clothing, associated with work, and in the specification of material and type of garment, Mansfield places herself alongside the colonial model, the 'polish' is off.

The frame of the story suggests the conventions of romance melodrama: three travellers in a lonely landscape have as their destination a yellow-haired, blue-eyed woman with a reputation for amorousness. But Mansfield begins to subvert readers' expectations almost as soon as the convention has been suggested. Far from being an object of desire the woman is a 'figure of fun'.

'Looking at her, you felt there was nothing but sticks and wires under that pinafore - her front teeth were turned out, she had red, pulpy hands and she wore on her feet a pair of dirty Bluchers.'¹²

Not even in Blanche Baughan's 'An Active Family' (published in the same year as 'The Woman at the Store') where the women of the family work as hard as the men, does their work disfigure and mutilate them. If anything it makes Baughan's women more desirable, their faces glow with exertion. As an object of desire the nameless woman at the store exists only in fantasy,

and the 'whare' in which the woman and her child live is a place of cultural dislocation. Out-of-date English periodicals are plastered to the walls, there is a 'coloured print' of Richard Seddon, and it is a place of work, the work of the colonial woman which stands in the foreground of the more 'civilised' but distant environment implied by the wall coverings. In such a room the narrator becomes afraid, conscious of a foreign and hostile place.

'There is no twilight to our New Zealand days, but a curious half hour when everything appears grotesque - it frightens - as though the savage spirit of the country walked abroad and sneered at what it saw.' (Alpers 112)

At this point in the story the fragility of the woman's existence ("Imagine bothering about ironing - mad, of course she's mad!") as a cultural transplant, a colonizer in a savage and frightening landscape is evident to the narrator. As the narrative proceeds, the visible cultural identity of the woman at the store reveals as much substance as the flesh behind her pinafore: it is a kind of dressing concealing what she has become, a murderer, 'mad' as the country she inhabits, which, in another sense, inhabits her. The barmaid, pretty as a wax doll, has been doubly displaced, from wax doll to sticks and wires to savage, removed from the conventional narrative expectations with which she is first described, and rewritten as a line drawing by a child. She is no longer woman as heroine of romance, though she has been, knowing as she did one hundred and fifty different ways of kissing, nor is she woman in command of her territory; rather she is unwoman, characterised by the mixture of environments she inhabits. Both her clothing and her store suggest an incompletely 'civilised' exterior, an inadequate covering for the 'savage spirit of the country.'

'The Woman at the Store' invokes colonial melodrama and then subverts its narrative model. Romance is about the attainment and possession of an object of desire but Mansfield's story

represents that object as a form of dressing concealing something undesirable; the puppet-like sticks and wires of a woman shooting at a man with a rook rifle.

In the story it is only Hin and the narrator who become aware of woman as murderer behind the woman in her white calico dressing jacket and black skirt kissing feet under the table. Fictionally Mansfield positions the reader with Hin and the narrator in the store room, behind the dressing up, behind the room where Jo and the woman with yellow hair have gone for the night, so the 'sticks and wires' of romance are visible as just that. For Jo, the woman is female flesh at any rate; in the shut room, the social and fictional conventions of romance continue. Mansfield positions her narrative just at the point where the separations of colonial identity are most evident. Her double view, of the woman who is both romance object and the troubled and troubling subject of another story altogether, destabilises the conventional cultural identity of the colonial and also the gender stereotype of the woman.

The story is further complicated by Mansfield's destabilising the narrative model. The reader's initial assumption that it is three men who are riding alone through rough bush country 'places' the story within the oral narrative/adventure frame so characteristic of colonial short fiction. As it becomes clear that the narrator is a woman¹³ a great many questions are raised about her position in the narrative which are left unresolved. How to understand the woman at the store as an object of desire when it is a woman who describes her? The text becomes a site of uncertainty as the narrator is effectively placed outside the categories of cultural and gender stereotype, by which such stories are read. The story has typically been read as an illustration of the vulnerability and loneliness of life in the bush, that is a major preoccupation of nineteenth century literature (in Australia as well as New Zealand). To woman alone in the bush anything might happen, but in rewriting its narrative model

'The Woman at the Store' also acts as a commentary on the wishful self representation of colonial romance. Furthermore, the story's disordering of convention, both social and narrative, occurs within a specific cultural and regional context: the story is distinctively 'New Zealand' and 'colonial' and so what happens to the woman at the store, and by extension to the men associated with her, serves as a further definition of those terms, and one that suggests a more elusive and less comfortable way of thinking about them. What is 'colonial' New Zealand or romance centred on a woman, if it can be so easily unmasked and show itself as a savage and alien territory?

'Millie' is framed as an oral narrative and eponymous sketch, based on the colonial motif perhaps most famous in the Australian writer Henry Lawson's 'The Drover's Wife': a woman alone in the landscape threatened by an unknown male. In 'Millie' the narrative structure is inverted so that the young English johnny - on the run after murdering his employer - is threatened by Millie, the large powerful colonial woman. But the story is less about Millie or Harrison than about belonging. Harrison's speech identifies him as of a higher social class than Millie: what he has done in murdering his employer confirms his position as outsider for whom class is irrelevant, just as Millie's reaction to him confirms her as colonial, for whom Home is represented by a photograph of Mt. Cook.

'How Pearl Button was Kidnapped', a story about a child taken on a lovely expedition to a marae and to the beach by two big (Maori) women, inverts a typical colonial narrative about a child who is lost or stolen by indigenous people, a story which expresses colonial fear of appropriation by the other. 'Pearl Button' is written from Pearl's point of view, which allows a simple cultural contrast to develop; Pearl enjoys herself with the Maori women as she never has in the 'house of Boxes'. In 'Ole Underwood' the emotional pressures which

might drive a man to violence and mad obsession, are presented within the frame of the colonial character sketch.¹⁴

In all these stories Mansfield signals the conventions of colonial short fiction, positioning her narratives within the stereotypes that identify colonial culture in order to rewrite them. It is perhaps significant that each of her 'colonial' stories is of a distinctive type and not repeated, and their small number suggests the limited repertoire of colonial fiction as well as its limited usefulness as a source of models for Mansfield's talents. When she returned to New Zealand as a subject in her stories several years later, it had become the psychological emotional centre for the complex indirect multi-voiced narrative form she developed. In her famous journal entry of 1916 written after her brother's death in France the previous year Mansfield saw New Zealand as a landscape she must recollect, rediscover and renew in writing, a landscape in which she could relive the country of her early life.

'Now-now I want to write recollections of my own country. Yes, I want to write about my own country till I simply exhaust my store. Not only because it is a 'sacred debt' that I pay to my country because my brother and I were born there, but also because in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places. I am never far away from them. I long to renew them in writing.

Ah, the people - the people we loved there - of them, too, I want to write. Another, 'debt of love'. Oh, I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World. It must be mysterious, as though floating. It must take the breath. It must be 'one of those lands'... I shall tell everything, even of how the laundry basket squeaked at 75.'¹⁵

Mansfield's letters, journals, notebooks and stories have been the subject of a vast quantity of psychobiographical speculation and critical commentary which began after her death and still continues. A history of New Zealand short fiction is not the place to deal in detail with all this material, and in any case, the complexity of Mansfield's work

is such that it is continually reinvented according to critical preoccupation and this will no doubt continue fruitfully to happen. My concern here is firstly to see Mansfield from the standpoint of colonial literature, and secondly to indicate some possible readings of her work, particularly the later New Zealand stories, which suggest a subtler metaphorical bearing in her writing on the meaning of the term 'colonial' than is found in other local writing. When Mansfield declared her ambition to 'make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World', a remark identified as decisive in her development: 'from this point on, when she began to see her New Zealand background as an artistic positive ... she gained enormously as a writer'¹⁶ she defined an intention common to colonial writers. Although Mansfield meant something different in prose narrative from the simpler impulse to document that characterizes much nineteenth century short fiction, the desire to discover her country in writing, to force it into the vision of the Old World, argues a sense of New Zealand as an unwritten 'undiscovered' territory, which links her with her country men and women. Mansfield, in renewing 'all the remembered places' in her writing, also re-knew them, brought New Zealand into the context of modernist European fiction and reviewed it, culturally and textually.

It is clear that Mansfield felt herself to be a displaced person. Both in New Zealand and in England she suffered a sense of exile common, (as Andrew Gurr has shown¹⁷), to all colonial literatures. Her well-documented difficulties with social relationships, the fact that a substantial part of her adult life was spent out of England and remarks in the notebooks all bear witness to dislocation.

'And I am the little colonial walking in the London garden patch - allowed to look perhaps, but not to linger. If I lie on the grass, they positively shout at me: "Look at her, lying on our grass, pretending she lives here, pretending this is her garden, and that fall back of the house, with the windows opening and the coloured curtains lifting, is her home. She is a stranger - an alien.'

Journal 1919 ed. J.M. Murry London 1929 P106

In her fiction the sense of displacement functions in two ways: physically, in the locations of her stories and figuratively, in the recurrent motif of transit. A surprising number (close to half) of Mansfield's stories are located in New Zealand.¹⁸ Next to New Zealand continental Europe is the setting for the largest number of stories, and only a comparatively small number are set in England. As a whole, Mansfield's fiction suggests that cultural identity is a kind of baggage carried around in hotels and on trains, constantly on the move. This shifting location markedly distinguishes Mansfield's fictions from those of Virginia Woolf, with whom she is often compared. However Mansfield's location of her fictions outside England is even more specifically directed to a context of transit. In a German Pension 1911 explicitly uses the narrative point of view of a foreigner, temporarily resident in a pension, and most of the stories are based on episodic and discontinuous social encounters: overheard conversations, chance encounters, the social codes and behaviours of an itinerant community always on the point of departure: 'Next day the Baron was gone. Sic transit gloria Germani mundi,' (Alpers, 34). A large number of both the European and New Zealand stories take place on trains or boats, in foreign hotels or at stations, or on the brink of voyages, at wharves; 'Prelude', a story about shifting house, and 'At the Bay', about a holiday house, are both stories set in a condition of impermanence. Mansfield's fictions characteristically occur within the context of travel, they are the text of travelling, of change and dislocation. If colonial literature has a preoccupying context it is that it is always addressed elsewhere; somewhere else is the 'real' against which colonial literature must prove its 'realness'; it is always a discourse of transit, and of the anxiety of transitoriness.

As a writer influenced by the symbolists and one who began her writing career with symbolist pieces, Mansfield was concerned in her stories with transmitting the moment which might

signify the whole, or, as Raoul Duquette, perhaps the slyest of her narrator-frames, puts it:

'There does seem to be a moment when you realise that, quite by accident, you happen to have come on the stage at exactly the moment you were expected There I had been for all eternity, as it were, and now at last I was coming to life ...'¹⁹

For Mansfield, the context of the moment of significance is often one which structurally defines its transitoriness; a boat, a train, the eve of a voyage, a hotel abroad, a café, a taxi. There is clearly a metaphorical dimension to the transitoriness of Mansfield's settings, and it may also be associated with her practice as a writer. Like Joyce, she is concerned with 'life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination'; according to Murray she '"saw", and wrote, in flashes'²⁰, and it is the epiphanic, concentrated focus on the particular as suggestive of something beyond itself that is the most complex and typical aspect of Mansfield's short fiction. The extent to which epiphanic focus pervaded her work is suggested by its appearance both in her fictional strategies and the way in which she discusses writing in her reviews, letters and journals. Reference to the significance of moments occurs frequently in Mansfield's typical use of extended metaphor to characterise novels and novelists, and in the following description of Java Head, by Joseph Hergesheimer, it suggestively points to her childhood in Wellington as an analogy for her fictional strategies:

'Those who have spent any portion of their life in a seaport town will remember a peculiar quality of light, which is to be observed there and in no other surroundings. for when the sun is over the sea and the waves high a trembling brilliance flashes over the town, now illuminating this part, now that. In its erratic hovering behaviour it might be likened to that imp of light children love to call jack-on-the-wall; one can never tell where it may next appear. It is, and something is caught in it, dazzling fine, and then it is gone to be back again for another glittering moment - but almost before it has time to look it has flown away.'²¹

When Mansfield wrote to Dorothy Brett in 1917 about her use of form in 'Prelude', she described it in a figure of speech, which, like that used about Java Head, linked the physical environment of new Zealand (with Mansfield's stress on its newness perhaps also suggestively colonial) with her narrative objective. In response ^{to} Brett's 'What form is it?' Mansfield wrote:

'If the truth were known I have a perfect passion for the island where I was born...Well, in the early morning there I always remember feeling that this little island has dipped back into the dark blue sea during the night only to rise again at gleam of day, all living with bright spangles and glittering drops...I tried to catch that moment - with something of its sparkle and its flavour. And just as on those mornings white milky mists rise and uncover some beauty, then smother it again and then again disclose it. I tried to lift that mist from my people and let them be seen and then to hide them again...' ²²

Mansfield's use of the epiphanic moment also suggests an association between the terms colonial and modernist. Mansfield hated 'plotty' stories, like colonial ones, and did not write them, but in her fictions concentrated on a point of significance which gives meaning to the changing and unstable context in which it occurs. This might also be said to be the seldom-realized objective of colonial fiction.

In her most famous New Zealand stories, the fiction which displays Mansfield's talent at its most commanding and indescribable, ('Prelude', 'At the Bay', 'The Doll's House', 'The Garden Party') Mansfield's use of her own childhood past has been well-documented. They are stories which Mansfield saw as part of a 'novel' to be called Karori, and which in fact form two story cycles, one about the Sheridan family, and one about the Burnells. Apart from In a German Pension and her earliest pieces, only the New Zealand stories feature children other than adult children, so that with one or two exceptions ('Sun and Moon,' in which the children function symbolically as well as narratively, and 'The Young Girl') children, in Mansfield's later fictions, live in New Zealand. Obviously there is a biographical reading for this, but it

does indicate a major difference between the 'New Zealand' stories and the 'English' stories, and suggests different concerns. Single-layered families or couples (as in 'The Escape' or 'The Man Without a Temperament'), and double-layered families of adult children and parents (as in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel') give way to the multi-layered extended family of the Burnells who, correspondingly, occupy a great deal more space, (house, garden, beach house, beach) than do Mansfield's Anglo-Europeans. In their colonial location, Mansfield's stories are both more expansive and structurally more extended, so if the 'Burnell stories are about discovery and the growth of awareness'²³ it is the discovery of a more extensive and complex awareness metaphorically associated with a larger space.

The country discovered in 'At the Bay' is not the country of colonial fiction. Nothing dramatic happens, there is no plot, descriptions of native bush are kept to a minimum; yet as a story it is both culturally distinctive and distinctively modernist. Written in thirteen sections, 'At the Bay' progresses through a day spent by the Burnells at the beach; the narrative opens and closes with an unpeopled landscape, the frame through which the family and beach society are seen, and the frame of a day acts to contain the fluid projections of past and future and present that take place in the minds of the characters. Like many New Zealand colonial families, the Burnell's family past is Australian. Linda, lying under the manuka tree, feels with intense emotion the pleasure of solitude, but no sooner has the word 'alone' been articulated, than she has a recognition of time and life, passing, sweeping her away:

'Along came Life like a wind and she was seized and shaken; she had to go. Oh dear, would it always be so? Was there no escape?' (Alpers, p.453)

The image of escape that comes to Linda is her Australian childhood, and the dream of travel, 'cutting off' with her

father, as if they were 'Two boys together', enjoying the mateship of colonial itineracy, antidomestic and rootless. For what imprisons Linda, in time and in circumstance, is her gender: 'she was broken, made weak, her courage was gone, through childbearing. And what made it doubly hard to her was, she did not love her children.'

But though Linda is swept away by Life, constrained by her family, though the whole Burnell clan exists only momentarily as it is, in the narrative present, the story's structural focus on transitoriness is paradoxically as close to an affirmation of stability and permanence as is possible in Mansfield's fiction. Linda's angry thoughts about motherhood are succeeded, at the next moment, by an unexpected 'new' feeling about her baby; as time sweeps past it brings discoveries in the mind quite as much as in the actual physical world, the 'vast dangerous garden undiscovered, unexplored' that waits outside Jonathon Trout's office. The country of discovery of 'At the Bay' is both the country of 'Life' and the unexplored country of possibility that is metaphorically and imagistically associated with an expansive colonial environment, even though the characters ability to discover it is constrained by their circumstances and relegated to their fantasies. Unlike the stories of early colonial writers, where contradictions and oppositions are finally hauled together in the happy endings of romance, Mansfield's 'plotless' modernist narrative stresses that events in themselves cannot bring about resolution or meaning. The characters can only sense the real significance and opportunity afforded them by the newly created landscape which rises from the mist in the first section of 'At the Bay' in glimpses, moments which vanish as fast as they come; possibility and meaning for the colonial subjects of Mansfield's New Zealand stories, occurs in a narrative context which simultaneously emphasises its elusiveness and affirms a transient recognition of wider landscapes of hope, choice, and discovery.

In the narrative detail of 'At the Bay' precise colonial location occurs: Linda and Stanley grew up in Tasmania, Kezia's Uncle William died of sunstroke at 'the mines', Alice goes to tea with Mrs Stubbs who is like a thrilling older version of the woman at the store, and there are numerous positioning descriptive details in the references to paddocks and manuka and so on. Figuratively, 'At the Bay' represents its peaceful domestic structures as metonymic for journey, voyage, change; the road on which Alice walks to Mrs Stubbs's shop or the road bringing Harry Kember to Beryl, is insistently present, and the traveller can, like the narrator at the end of 'The Woman at the Store', 'turn a bend and the whole place disappears'. In 'At the Bay' the signifying journeys are inward, as they are for the colonist, journeys that occur as moments of concentrated focus within the discontinuities, divisions and ambiguities of individual life.

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3. Fullbrook, p.1
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7. Hanson, The Critical Writings, 100
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9. Hanson, C, and Gurr, A, Katherine Mansfield, Macmillan Commonwealth Writers Series, 1981, p.27
10. Alpers: xiv
11. Gordan, Ian, Undiscovered Country: xviii
12. Alpers: 111
13. *ibid*, p.22
14. For interesting further comment on these stories and on Mansfield's multiply determined 'colonial' identity see Bridget Orr 'Reading with the taint of the pioneer: Katherine Mansfield and settler criticism' Landfall 172, 1989: 447-461
15. Mansfield, K., Journal, January 22, 1916
16. Hanson and Gurr, 16
17. Gurr, Andrew, Writers in Exile, the Creative use of Home in Modern Literature, 1981
18. Accepting all the stories to which Gordon attributes New Zealand locations in his collection Undiscovered Country makes the number just under half. Even if some of Gordon's attributions are queried, for example 'The Fly', which seems to argue an English setting as 'the girls' have just been over to see the war

graves, by far the most common scene for Mansfield's fiction is New Zealand.

19. Alpers: 279

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Nationalism and Social Realism: The Fictions of Frank Sargeson

More than any other writer the work of Frank Sargeson signifies New Zealandness in our literature. Even though his stories can hardly be said still to reflect a familiar society, his fiction, like Henry Lawson's of Australia or Sherwood Anderson's of America, offers a reading of New Zealand. Mansfield's transformation of the short story took place in Europe and in the context of modernism; though she was considered to have 'interpreted accurately and beautifully a segment of New Zealand life and a part of the New Zealand landscape',¹ the short story as it was written in New Zealand and read in New Zealand was the fiction of a different country from hers. Mansfield's complex disguisings of self and her focus on textuality were not representative of a literature still engaged with problems of context, of readership, and of self-representation. In 1930, the 'first collection ever made of short stories by New Zealanders' opened with an apology for the lack of 'any national outlook or distinctive atmosphere', which the editor, O.N. Gillespie took to be a consequence of New Zealand's homogeneous society, ('Except for the delightful Maori race our stock is Anglo Saxon') and its environmental and cultural closeness to Home. More than half the stories included by Gillespie are by women (including Mansfield's 'The Voyage') and the majority are romances, while the stories by male writers mostly conform to oral taletelling patterns: the yarn, the adventure story, the racing story, or the comic sketch as in Arthur H. Adams's 'The Last of the Moas' (from The New Chum 1906), which enjoyed some satirical play with colonial stereotypes and legends.²

However, by the late twenties romance had outlived its usefulness as a simple narrative ground of short fiction, though it remained strong in popular fiction. Although 'local colour' with an eye on an English readership, still seemed the best means of participating in the production of the 'real' to many writers, more sophisticated attempts to locate short

fiction in a regional context, both in terms of its readership and its content, began to appear. The stories published in the New Zealand Illustrated Magazine implied a reader originally from Home if not actually living there, but by 1936 local reviewers such as Quivis in the Evening Post regarded local readership as the imperative condition of a national literature.

Some day we shall have stories of New Zealand people by New Zealand people for New Zealand people and, given the requisite art, the beginnings of a truly national literature; but so long as our best writers, however pardonable the motive of making a living, tell this tale with a telescope to one eye, bearing on the distant market in London, and the other eye half-shut to their readers here, that day will be deferred.³

In 1927 Jean Devanny's collection Old Savage and Other Stories was published in London. Devanny's stories were not included in Gillespie's anthology, even though they might seem to provide a 'distinctive (local) atmosphere', and though they are based on the romance model, being mostly stories about love. But Devanny rewrote romance as a vehicle for her political convictions. She was a communist and a feminist and the stories in Old Savage vary between more romantic and more political treatments of the relationship between men and women. Even in stories such as 'The Soul of Black Bill Hogan' and 'Tui With Added Years' whose narratives are structured on conventional romance objectives, Devanny introduces class distinction or insists on the sexuality of the woman as a motive force in her behaviour.

A cluster of Devanny's stories are written about coal mining settlements on the West Coast, which evoke a New Zealand unfamiliar to the educated middle class readers of colonial romance: an environment of pubs and mines and townships without sewerage systems in which the 'refuse piled up and rotted in the sun till the stink of it lay like a loathsome blanket upon the townships'⁴ and in which miners drink all

their hard-earned pay leaving their wives to support the children by prostitution. Devanny's fictions are based on a marxist view of social conditions, and challenge the conventions of romance by insisting that the relationship between the sexes is political: woman as the property of man, woman constrained by powerlessness to exploit her body as a commodity (which, however, she does for selfless reasons, the love of her children). Although Devanny's writing radically insists on women's right to pursue their own objectives and, in particular, exercise sexual freedom, her fictions preserve moral conventions by insisting that, within the boundaries of choice they outline, a woman's actions can be recognised as 'pure' or not. Her characters' sexual desires are governed by a scrupulous recognition of moral and emotional conflict and a belief in an ideal mate, even though they may be a response to the limits set on female behaviour, choice and opportunity for self sufficiency.

'First, I have something to say about my 'seduction' of men that you spoke of. I have given you one reason for it but there is another. In every man I met, Guy, through you or otherwise, I have looked for my potential mate, for the mate who would wake in me the response you just missed arousing, and who would at the same time appreciate me as an individual apart from my sex.'⁵

Devanny's heroines are never attracted to the 'unclean', and their potential to redeem individual men into an idealised sexual partnership is stressed in all her fiction.

'He was in love. He knew it and groaned. He groaned because of what had come to him side by side with his love. Sally's respect had done it. Side by side with his love had grown a sense of decency which must surely have lain dormant somewhere within his huge frame.'⁶

Despite her willingness to challenge social systems and moral conventions, especially those associated with marriage, and her insistence on a woman's right to oppose social and economic dependency, Devanny's fictions almost never move outside a conventional romance solution to the difficulties

her characters encounter. Re-establishing an (improved) status quo, establishing a different and more satisfactory heterosexual partnership, or in the last resort death; these are the 'plotty' resolutions Mansfield typically avoided, which affirm the central assumption of Devanny's work - that an equal sexual partnership between men and women is the desirable objective against which her characters measure themselves and which can act as the basic unit of an equitable, and morally and politically 'clean', society. It is Devanny's use of narrative as overtly political which distinguished her from the writers of the 1890s and early twentieth century, more especially as she explicitly emphasized the gender of her subject, one of the reasons no doubt for the hostile reception her writing received. She signals a crucial change in direction for short fiction, away from the squattocratic beaux champs of Mansfield's fictional locations to the plain-speaking, truth-telling, hard-drinking and hard-up rural New Zealander.

Frank Anthony's sketches, later published as Me and Gus in 1938, appeared in periodicals in the 1920s. Anthony's comic sketches of Taranaki dairy farmers not only formed a popular audience but were also highly praised by critical commentators for their 'direct and masculine' qualities. E.H. McCormick, in his survey of New Zealand literature published in 1959, attributes to Anthony a 'minor' revolution in New Zealand fiction:

'The broad masculine humour of the sketches, their unfailing gusto, and their wholesome bucolic flavour had been absent from New Zealand writing since pioneer days.'

Where Devanny used romance and melodrama as her structure for the representation of the social problems of 'real' working class people, and to question conventional romance stereotypes, Anthony's sketches of Taranaki dairy farmers are written as oral narrative, vernacular accounts of two young

men in a dominantly masculine environment, anti-domestic, afraid of women and either suspicious or conventionally romantic in their attitudes towards them, preoccupied with ambitious but uncompleted projects, practical jokes and horse-play. As a view of rural New Zealand, Anthony's sketches aim for a comic, but recognisably 'real' location. Terry Sturm has said of them:

'[W]ith their mixture of comic farming incidents and romantic misadventures, their boisterous masculine humour and racy New Zealand vernacular idiom, they offer an authentic picture of the life of ordinary New Zealanders.'⁸

Anthony's stories represent 'real' work on the farm, but work that is humorously difficult, comically mismanaged by men as little boys. Anthony explodes expectations associated with the Colonial Pastoral Dream and romance conventions by focusing on the unglamorous work, financial difficulty and naive ingenuousness of inexperienced farmers.

'I will admit that when I bought this place I was a new chum. The land agent who took me over this place laid particular stress on the beautiful flat swamps. He said drained swamps were proving to be the most fertile lands in the Dominion. 'Look at the Piako Swamp'.

A fellow had told me only the week before that he grew parsnips in the Piako one year 7ft long. So I decided to take the place. As soon as I was settled in properly, I wired in to the driest part of the swamp, intending to drain it, only there didn't happen to be any outlet for the water, unless I opened up a drain for miles. So I started stumping instead.'⁹

At the same time the sketches of Me and Gus frame the New Zealand male as inarticulate and emotionally constrained, 'authentic' in his inadequacies and limited expression of them. Anthony's implied reader is as gendered as Devanny's, and both are being educated, but Anthony's emphasis is on the satirical possibilities of a rural society. Different as

their stories are, Devanny and Anthony share an interest in creating a fictional environment that makes some claim on the reader to acknowledge the relationship between characters and institutions, experience and convention. Whether it is Devanny exposing the perfect mother of colonial society or Anthony's Mark in combat with the agent, they function as predecessors to Sargeson in this fictional shift away from local colour to the 'real' idiom and conditions of the social context, though with the advent of Sargeson in the thirties, feminist political romance gave way to masculinist oral narrative as the dominant short fiction of New Zealand literature.

fiction doesn't represent New Zealand as it really is. Isn't this the inevitable next step when for so many years you have been plagued by the good will and praise of critics who have found New Zealand perfectly represented in your work?'¹¹

That Sargeson should have been seen for so long as a writer who 'perfectly represented' New Zealand raised some questions about the kind of fictions he wrote and about who might have recognised nationhood in them (even in 1978 the contributors to Islands are overwhelmingly pakeha and male); but I think it also points to the historical and political context in which his fiction was produced.

Sargeson's sketches were first published in Tomorrow an independent weekly edited in Christchurch, in 1935. Tomorrow was closely modelled on Orage's New Age. It set itself up in opposition to the 'official' press and as the voice of alternative truth. 'Tomorrow is a satire on today and shows its weakness' announced the issue for July 11, 1934. In the first number, FS (Fred Sinclair, a regular contributor and in later numbers as H. Winston Rhodes points out, often confused with Sargeson) attacked the 'New Zealand Mind - so morbidly sensitive to hostile criticism, so nervously respectable, so deferential to outside opinion, so lacking in independence - in a word, so provincial.' By far the largest part of Tomorrow was given over to political commentary, on both internal and international politics. As the thirties continued political commentary became more pressing and more critical; eventually in 1940 the journal was effectively 'clubbed' by the Labour Government.¹² It is in this anti-provincial, political and internationalist context that Sargeson's realist, nationalist and provincial sketches were first published.

All the fiction published in Tomorrow was sketch-length, clearly due in part to Tomorrow's constraints of space. But the sketch also has some structural advantages as a piece of short fiction published in a political context. It can

function as an illustration of type in the vernacular or as a parable or anecdote which gives sharp focus to a particular question. In comparison to the psychological sketch of the nineties, used as the basis of free indirect discourse by Mansfield in order to create emotional depth, Sargeson's sketches, and the sketches or parables of other writers published in Tomorrow concentrated on educative anecdotes. As W.H. New has put it: 'Sargeson chose not to make his art subservient to the popular stereotypes of society; but to use those stereotypes in his art - in the process subverting the stereotypes and teasing nuance from the vernacular.'¹³

To the readers of Tomorrow, or perhaps more precisely, the contributors and producers of Tomorrow, it was the accuracy of Sargeson's political eye which was so compelling, as its Literary Editor, Winston Rhodes later recalled:

'If I stood by the long drawing board at the window with my baby grand piano and looked down into Hereford Street, more than a few passers-by seemed to my uncharitable eyes exact replicas of the narrator's uncle who 'couldn't suppose''.¹⁴

But when A Man and His Wife came out as a collection in 1941, a reviewer in the Dominion commenting on McCormick's praise of Sargeson, remarked that 'the dialogue is certainly convincing, but do not their weak structure, their appalling sentimentality, spoil them?''¹⁵ Although Sargeson's stories did not receive acclaim when they appeared, his representation of local idiom eventually functioned as a coercive frame for the 'real' to a very wide readership, though, as Roger Horrocks has observed of The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse edited by Allen Curnow, what strikes one readership historically as 'reality' may well strike a readership differentiated in time, in quite a different way.

'What strikes me [about the Penguin Book] today are its myths, its quests, its icons. What struck me in 1960 were its realities'.¹⁶

What was 'real' in Sargeson's sketches published in Tomorrow may suggest itself to readers over fifty years distant from their first publication, as frames in which the New Zealander can recognise the production of self reflecting icons, the myths by which we claim our reality.

Not all Sargeson's contemporary readers were comfortable with his realities. When a popular monthly like the New Zealand Railways Magazine, which began in 1933 'with a truly national outlook' could claim to its readers that its adventure and romance stories 'present to New Zealanders the story of the life and colour of their own land', Sargeson's sketches of Depression life on the margins hit a nerve. Reviewing A Man and His Wife in the Listener in 1940, Oliver Duff, the Listener's editor, made a distinction, no doubt not an uncommon one, between what 'most of us' see and what Sargeson 'can't help' suggesting about New Zealand:

'That New Zealand during the last twenty years has been a kind of rural slum ... most of us don't see it like that. We don't see our neighbours as morons, our young people as sensual louts, our teachers and preachers as liars and hypocrites, our patriots as profiteers. We know, however, that such people exist, and their place in the picture need not worry us if Sargeson sees them, can't take his eyes off them, and can't help presenting them as they are. It is his affair and not ours if he chooses to be laureate of hoboos.' (25 October, 19)

The great majority of stories published in the periodical press in the thirties followed conventional narrative patterns, and were directed at a conservative and implicitly untroubled readership. Sargeson's target is precisely that audience, the New Zealand he referred to as 'Little Bethel', a 'raw, aesthetically hostile' environment, puritanical, 'proper', a society and a historical time which is a 'combination of frightful crudity and even more frightful refinement'. What is remarkable about Sargeson's fiction is not that he chose to attack a society he perceived as morally

deficient and artistically negligible, but that he chose to attack it in an idiom that made such demands on his readers, by forcing them into political recognitions of stereotype and attitude as it represents itself in vernacular speech. It is for his 'convincing' dialogue that Sargeson received tribute; it is in the construction and shaping of that dialogue that Sargeson is at his most political. However, as he was always at pains to point out, he was writing fiction not social commentary, and though his fictions work to return the reader to a kind of social and moral imaginativeness both about fiction and what it might be taken to represent, as a writer Sargeson stressed that 'all I can do is be aware of this terribly complicated and difficult situation, and I can only make marginal comments in the form that seems to suit me best - that is, by creating fictions.'¹⁷

In 1935 Sargeson wrote an article for Tomorrow about Sherwood Anderson which might also be read as a description of his own narratives. He stressed the 'value of repetition', the 'short suggestive sentence', and Anderson's use of words to 'narrate the imagination':

'Histories are told in the commonplace words and phrases that you find in the Old Testament, but they have nothing of the flatness of life. In life the third dimension often appears to be missing. Anderson makes it his job to put it in.'¹⁸

Sargeson's fictions also have the effect of having 'put in' the 'third dimension'. The texture and surface of his fictions is incomplete, not fully self-referential; instead they initiate a process in which the reader must participate in order to 'make sense' of the fiction, in order, indeed, to 'make' the narrative.

In the sketch 'A Piece of Yellow Soap' the 'facts' presented by the narrative are minimal and sketchy; only the outline of a story is told, without explanation, so that what is not said between the facts is left to the reading process itself. The milkman knows what it is like to have bloodless and shrunken

fingers, and the sight of a piece of yellow (cheap, washing) soap arouses in him an identification with the woman holding it that blocks his speech, an identification participated in by the reader, who, like the narrator, is blocked from 'knowing' any more about the woman than her piece of soap suggests, and who can only 'understand' the narrative by feeling, like the narrator, what it signifies. The sketch ends with a return to the present tense, in which the woman is dead, and the image of her piece of soap is understood, by the narrator, in the context of his own uncertain beliefs, the larger moral frame of the woman's imagined entry to Heaven. 'If God is a Person of Sensibility, I don't doubt that when he looked at that piece of yellow washing soap He felt ashamed of Himself'.¹⁹

'A Piece of Yellow Soap' restricts the information, points of view and narrative explanation given to the reader to an image and an anecdotal voice. But the effect of that image on the narrator and his attempt to understand it, represents both the milkman and the woman as participants in a social relationship suggestive of larger moral and economic questions than those explicitly raised. It is the power of the particular, the yellow, washing soap, to signify an economic discourse, a discourse of the 'real' concrete world, and the power of the individual, the narrator, to signify a moral one, that define the characteristic structures of Sargeson's sketches. In the play between the image and the narration, which typically sets up incomplete contexts for the image, the reading process is the connecting and educative force. The will to understand Sargeson's stories lies in the will to 'read' his idiom. Though Sargeson's fictions represent themselves as speaking of the lives of working-class white males, often poor, ill-at-ease with the language, recounting anecdotes with incomplete or uncertain understanding, they speak to the reader who is probably none of those things (except perhaps male), but who is, like God, a Person of Sensibility. When he looks at that piece of yellow washing soap, he feels, or is made to feel

ashamed; the fiction infects the 'real' context of the reader. Sargeson's fictions are overtly political and educative in their narrative intention; in his hands short stories became, in his own phrase, 'marginal comments' on the complicated social fictions of history.

Bruce King has said of Sargeson's work:

'Nationalism often identifies authentically with rural areas and the poor - the land and the people. In contrast high culture is seen as foreign metropolitan, cosmopolitan, snobbish, elitist, a form of imperialism. The writer rebelling against his middle-class background usually either heads towards London, Paris or New York, with their international and metropolitan values, or identifies himself with the land and the people, Sargeson, like Mark Twain or Synge, creates a folk tradition from those on the fringes of society.'²⁰

Although Sargeson's work clearly identifies authenticity with the poor, and with an idiom that also seems impoverished, its implied reader is suggestively able to fill in a context for the poverty of the characters, that is essentially a political context in which material poverty is something to be redeemed from but also a condition in which moral and emotional positives are most clearly at work. Whereas the narrator's uncle who is partner in a big firm, doesn't understand what a social picnic might be in 'Conversation with my Uncle', the milkman identifies with the woman and her bloodless fingers and with the more general notion, which includes the reader, of the Persons of Sensibility who understand and are implicated in the shamefulness of social conditions represented by the woman and her piece of soap. Where the stories themselves make distinctions of sensibility between rich and poor, there is always an implied reader in Sargeson's fiction who is imaginatively 'rich' enough to compensate for 'my uncle' who 'never reads a book'. It is in demanding a 'richness' of sensibility from the reader that Sargeson politically educates him, a transaction between writer and reader that Sargeson acknowledged:

'I learned to use my imagination to assist me in becoming explicit on paper, while at the same time leaving a good deal to become intelligible to the reader only upon the condition of a half-way meeting: he must not expect much from me unless he used his imagination.'²¹

'That Summer' is Sargeson's major narrative of the thirties. Located in a shifting male environment of boarding houses and pubs, it begins with an image of rural New Zealand as the place of origin that has been left behind. Even though 'things couldn't be worse in town', that is where Bill's itchy feet take him. The move into town places Bill in an environment where the things that identify him are gradually removed; from having been a good farm worker he becomes one of the many unemployed (cooks, sailors, barmen, farm workers) awash in the pubs and in the registry offices of Auckland; from having plenty of chips in his pocket, he is without the price of a tram fare after Ted robs him; from being a man on holiday enjoying looking at the sheilas in the park, he is arrested on a charge of sexual assault and imprisoned; from being a man trying to pick up a girl at the pictures he becomes someone whose emotional motivation is love of another man and whose possible relationships with women contract to his landlady, her small daughter and a transvestite. In the process of narration all the reader's assumptions about Bill are deconstructed not so much by Bill's proving to be other than he appears as by the gradual and inevitable constriction of his circumstances; his power to choose steadily retreats. It is this constriction and confinement that the text enacts, but it brings with it an instability of social and gender roles that is politically educative. As Bill suffers a series of social transformations he is also literally emasculated; being marginalised socially is accompanied by an erasure of or the creation of ambiguity about Bill's other characteristics until he has moved outside normative and conventional assumptions about New Zealand men, and this is imaged in the increasingly boxed-in location of the narrative, finally contracting to the room Bill shares with his sick mate Terry, where he is not even able to articulate what he wants to say:

'I'd look at him lying there.
Terry, I'd say.
What is it boy? he'd say.
Nothing, I'd say.
And then I's say Terry.
And instead of answering he'd just have a sort of faint
grin on his face.
Terry, I'd say.
But I could never get any further than just saying Terry.
I wanted to say something but I didn't know what it was,
and I couldn't say it.'²²

Although Bill is increasingly locked in by social conditions and circumstances in 'That Summer,' his relationship with Terry offers the only emotional stability there is. While his farm job was a good one, 'him and his missus were always rowin'; Mr and Mrs Clegg go it 'hammer and tongs'; when Bill heard Bert start to beat up Maggie he left and didn't go home 'for a long time that night', there are no conventional (or apparently conventional) human relationships that Bill is witness to which are not marked by violence and unhappiness. When Bill is in the role of provider and nurturer with Terry, his life, as R.A. Copland notes, 'becomes purposeful.'²³ In a richly paradoxical inversion, the story shows Bill at a point of great emotional fulfilment when he is also most confined and marginalised, which acts as a commentary on the kinds of 'normal' human relationship he encounters and witnesses.

Some of Sargeson's titles like 'The Making of a New Zealander' or 'White Man's Burden' explicitly signal cultural discourse and almost all of his stories and sketches represent the relationships between men and women as destructive, often violently so, as in 'Sale Day'. But it is the commonplace words and phrases used by an anecdotal voice apparently only half-engaged with the narrative that produces the cultural significance of Sargeson's texts. When Bill in 'That Summer' hears he has won the double on Boxing Day, after knocking off work at the Dally's, it is a 'bit of All Right'. Not even at a moment of triumphant celebration can his language expand. Bill expresses himself only in recounting the sequence of

events as he experiences it; his speech contains almost no modifiers, few intensifiers, scarcely any adjectives or adverbs, no similes or metaphors; in other words Bill has no language with which to speak anything other than 'factual' reporting, and what he narrates demonstrates his limited ability to articulate his understanding of what he reports. The absence of a metaphorical, emotional and cognitive dimension to Bill's narrative prompts, in the reader, an insistent reading-in of that dimension; the reader's presence in the narrative is a product of the absence in Bill's but also conditioned by Bill's constriction. The reader can read Bill, and 'know' his story, but that knowledge confirms its 'realness'; by supplying the absent discourse, the reader authenticates and re-imprisons Bill: there is no other world in which to understand him.

These recurrent locations of Sargeson's stories indicate a preoccupation with identity in his fiction; gender identity, national identity, economic identity, social identity and cultural identity, all locations in which the 'real' can be constructed and deconstructed and textual identity destabilized. Simon During has demonstrated in what he calls an 'overreading' of 'The Hole That Jack Dug', that that story is a number of different texts, deconstructing in the process not just its own narratives, but also its implied reader(s).²⁴ In 'The Making of a New Zealander' the inconclusiveness of narrative events is reflected back to the definition promised by the title; the text as a text of cultural identity is thus called into question. The story functions to create uncertainty about what the term New Zealander might signify at the same time as it presents a narrator whose speech assumes a common identity with the 'real' reader.

As a story about cultural identity and as a story which illustrates some qualities of Sargeson's narratives, 'The Making of a New Zealander' shows how uncertain the boundaries of meaning become once conventional contexts are subverted or

questioned. The farm job turns out to be tough going; twelve hours a day every day, but in an environment which is significantly different from conventional expectation. The boss is alright, he sits by the fire doing his crochet and is happy and contented, a description so at odds with the term 'boss' and with the narrator's voice that it subverts the story from the start; in this narrative cultural stereotypes have crossed over. It is Mrs Crump who is the 'real tough one', and the narrator's relationship with her is the one we ought 'really' to be having with her husband, 'the boss'. But once the narrator has subverted cultural stereotypes by inverting them that narrative is aborted ('this isn't just a no-account story about how I began to get cheeky and put wisecracks across Mrs Crump') and he announces the 'real' story, the story that is to be taken account of:

What I want to tell is about how I sat on a hillside one evening and talked with a man. That's all, just a summer evening and a talk with a man on a hillside. Maybe there's nothing in it and maybe there is.' (Stories 100)

Although the narrator is knowledgeable, about farming, and about his relationship with Mrs Crump, like Sargeson's other narrator's he is not authoritative about his own story; whether or not it means anything, whether there's 'nothing in it' or not, is the reader's decision, it is the reader who must produce the meaning of the text. The conversation with the man on the hill is with Nick, a Dalmatian fruit farmer whose cobbler is in hospital. Nick is 'now' a New Zealander, and he is a New Zealander because he has learnt certain things: that the soil in New Zealand is not deep and sweet as it is in Dalmatia; that he must put sugar in the wine; that he cannot afford to get married; people tell lies, so he is a Communist. This knowledge of Nick's, the knowledge that makes him a New Zealander is confirmed by the narrator:

'I mightn't have put it the way Nick had, I mightn't have said I was born too soon, but Nick knew what he was talking about. Nick and I were sitting on the hillside

and Nick was saying that he was a New Zealander, but he knew he wasn't a New Zealander. He knew he wasn't anything anymore.' (Stories 104)

The narrative suggests an internal contrast between Nick and the narrator: that the narrator does know who he is suggested by his being able to recognise what Nick isn't, but his knowledge is never stated, only 'voiced'; the narrator's claim to cultural identity 'speaks' the narrative, especially in the common identity it assumes with the reader.

In the process of this story knowledge of various kinds is called into question; the knowledge of stereotypes for example, which might allow the reader to place the narrator in his farming job, is subverted; Nick's knowledge, which is why he says he's a New Zealander, becomes repetition and does not disguise another kind of knowledge, signified by the sadness on his face; what the narrator knows after listening to Nick dislocates him; the narrative ends in minimalisation. Although Nick knows what he was talking about, 'maybe it's best for a man to hang on'.

Having to construct the meaning of a narrative from a narrator who doesn't know whether or not there is any meaning in it, in the context of a title which suggests another agency to whom meaning is apparent, puts responsibility for the 'real' meaning of the story on to the reader without foreclosing on other possibilities. Neither Sargeson, Nick the Dalmatian, nor the narrator are going to make any big claims about cultural or national or gender identity, even as the narrator seems to revert to stereotype and forgets his problems in booze, leaving the question to the reader.

It is this kind of politically educative, destabilising of narrative and narrator while 'writing' his fictions in a provincial realist idiom deeply familiar to his audience that characterizes Sargeson's best work. It is deeply ironic that Sargeson's work should have been acclaimed for its convincing

and realist qualities when his narratives consistently work to undermine notions of the real; but in the process, the identification of the reader with the narrator by completing the narrative and supplying the lack in the narrator's speech, forces an affirmation of the 'realness' of uncertainty, of voice, of objects, images and events that is as expressive of a cultural context as it is of the fragmented partial and incomplete meanings of texts, in which nothing, not even the reader, is taken for granted. 'Well, that's it. If these pages ever have a reader I would expect them either to ring a bell, or not to'.²⁵

Sargeson's later stories like 'City and Suburban', 'An International Occasion', 'A Final Cure', 'Charity Begins at Home', 'Beau', or 'Just Trespassing, Thanks' focussed more on the 'writerly' aspects of fiction, with much more play with language, and perhaps some ironic referentiality to his own earlier fiction. Although his later stories still suggest a focus on, or identification with, people on the edges of conventional society, who are elderly, eccentric, live alone or have abandoned more conventional lives like the inhabitants of Mrs Hinchingshorn's lodging house, there is a shift in social register: Edward Corrie is 'occupied' with problems of syntax and reads a Latin grammar for pleasure, Sargeson's characters are educated, middle class, professional. Their use of language is complex and highly literary, and the apparent ingenuousness of his Bills and Jacks and Terrys has become the disingenuousness of the narrator in 'City and Suburban' or the 'defensive asceticism' of Edward Corrie. ('Just Trespassing, Thanks'). The focus is still on men and male sensibility: like his landlady Mrs Hinchingshorn, Sargeson's 'preference was for lodgers of the male sex: gentlemen were not so demanding, nor so apt to complain'.²⁶ When Sargeson writes of marriage or family relationships it is either with the distaste of the narrator in 'City and Suburban' whose intimations of mortality are brought to crisis point by the discovery of a crypto-phallus on a beach and his wife's crude emotional and sexual

responses, or separation has occurred. Throughout his work, heterosexual relationships are the ground for antagonism and dis-ease.

Where Sargeson's earlier stories seemed, in their distinctive idiom and their critique of a puritanical society, to force a recognition of 'real' New Zealand, his small group of stories written sporadically from 1964 to 1975 insist on their status as fiction, focussing on the improbable, the unlikely, in language that draws attention to its complex construction, its 'written' qualities which are distinctively unlike spoken idiom, its reference to other texts and languages. In 'Just Trespassing, Thanks', the invasion of Edward Corrie's house by three young strangers who speak a language which is sometimes literally incomprehensible to him, nevertheless awakes in him a 'glowing area' of response which is almost erotic in its effects, and which separates the young people from 'worldly morality'; they are Ovidian, deities, whose irruption into the life of a suburban recluse, spouting poetry (though notably the woman does not do this; perhaps she, too, prefers Hugh Walpole to Henry Lawson) shifts both the events of the day and his perception of them, into

'a country of the imagination, a transfigured region illuminated by shafts of light which had their origin in poetry: it was a region that was permanent although entirely with^{out} substance, and inviolate even though readily accessible'.²⁷

Although the reader can infer a different narrative from Edward Corrie's (the young people are 'hot' and marked by the language and attitudes of the sixties) the story is nevertheless 'about' a shift in perception occurring in Edward Corrie whose boundaries are transgressed and thus magically transformed into a country of the imagination. In the same way the written text shifts itself away from traces of the cognitive 'real' world, where both the reader's predictive and judgemental response to the young people might be rather different, into the affective dimension of language, signalled

by the glowing point that poetry and romantic young men are able to awaken in Edward Corrie.

But while Sargeson's stories, over time, moved away from the sketch model and also from the characteristic narrative subject of his early fictions, the isolated, socially marginal, apparently stereotypical Kiwi jokers of 'A Good Boy', 'I've Lost My Pal', 'A Pair of Socks', stories like these remained the location of New Zealand realist fiction for a long time, and still carry iconic freight in our cultural history. The male writers who followed Sargeson positioned themselves as Lawrence Jones has put it, under my uncle's hat.²⁸

In an extended interview in 1970 Sargeson claimed that he was never conscious of writing in the shadow of Katherine Mansfield or of reacting against her but that Mansfield 'imposed a pattern on our writing...Hosts of young women wrote Mansfield stories'. There has long been a tendency in New Zealand literary history to see Sargeson and Mansfield as progenitors of divergent though coexisting traditions. Sargeson himself in the same interview registered unease about its consequences:

'When I came along a lot of people felt, I think that because of a certain amount of power in these early sketches they seemed to relate so much to New Zealand. And that's right, relate - it wasn't New Zealand itself; it related. But people felt, 'Ah, this is the way you write.' So therefore, instead of opening up something for New Zealand, both Mansfield and myself have tended to be constricting influences. I mean who wants all of New Zealand life to be seen in terms of Mansfield or in terms of Sargeson?'²⁹

But for twenty or more years after the first publication of 'Conversation With My Uncle' the short story in New Zealand's literary magazines, anthologies and published collections was dominated by Sargeson's presence and by male writers. Although women kept writing short stories, as shown by C.R.

Allen's London-published collection Tales by New Zealanders (1938), which includes stories by Robin Hyde and Eileen Duggan, as well as a number of lesser known women writers, they tended to write romances directed to a homogeneous readership neither sharply local nor political, but loosely middle class, educated and white, who were as comfortable with the idea of Britain as a fictional environment as with a pastoral and affluent New Zealand. The New Zealand short story feature which appeared weekly in the New Zealand Herald, was entirely dominated in 1936 by romance and adventure stories, mostly by women (May Gurney, Joyce West, Lucy Winn, are the recurrent names) and while it is probable that most of these writers were aware of Mansfield (and possibly of Sargeson), the short story in the popular press and in popular journalism remained, as it does today, confined to particular narrative models (the romance, the yarn, the adventure story) in which fundamental types of human experience were reaffirmed as essential and universal.

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Male Worlds: Post Sargeson Stories and Story Writers

Women writers clearly could not (or would not) use Sargeson's stories as literary models, even though he was extremely helpful personally to a number of women writers, including Greville Texidor, Helen Shaw and Janet Frame; and although Mansfield's work provided the heartland for a sentimentalized view of early New Zealand, (especially in childhood) common in magazine romance none of her formal innovations (her symbolist prose techniques, or her use of complex layered narratives) was taken up in the work of her successors in New Zealand. With Sargeson, the focus of the short story shifted to the idiom of men. His characterization of New Zealand as a puritanical, narrow minded and provincial society, framed by the point of view of a young man or a boy, expressed in an orally impoverished, repetitive, and largely non-figurative idiom, and as a society torn by conflict between the sexes, became the realist ground on which the short story flourished. But whereas an explanatory context in Sargeson's fiction was the Depression, and the social structure of a depressed provincial economy, many of the writers of the forties and fifties narrowed the broad critique of social institutions and systems that is the subtext of Sargeson's narratives to the war, and to the game playing preoccupations of the New Zealand male. A.P. Gaskell, G.R. Gilbert, John Reece Cole, Dan Davin, James Courage, O.E. Middleton, Roderick Finlayson have all been termed by W.H. New 'Sons' of Frank Sargeson.¹ What is common to their work is a general reliance on a 'real' New Zealand invented by Sargeson and a willingness to push the terms of that invention into more formal and definite shape. Where Sargeson's narrative method worked to destabilize assumptions, the work of Gaskell or Davin affirms them, and stories like G.R. Gilbert's affirm the 'reality' of Sargeson's puritanical, emotionally underprivileged New Zealand by satirising its habits and pretensions, often from the point of view of someone who could represent social conventions but resists them. When the narrator in Gilbert's title story 'Free

to Laugh or Dance' gets the sack for using 'Elizabethan' language when addressing the Vice-Chairman he tells his workmates:

'Don't worry like that, I said, its alright, everything is great. I've wanted the sack for weeks. Having no job is the right way to be. You've no idea how I feel - I feel like Alfred the Great and Shakespeare. That's what was wrong with me - I had a job.' (Gilbert, 12)

In the stories of A.P. Gaskell, the typical New Zealand male likes football and beer, finds relationships with women difficult, and has rural connections even if he doesn't actually farm.²

Gaskell's stories are typically presented through a first person narrator 'like someone talking', but the kind of deconstruction of the narrator by his narrative that occurs in Sargeson's fiction, tends not to happen. In 'The Big Game' Bernie's consciousness of his preparations for the big game represent him as typical of a society for whom such games are deeply serious; his straightforward and humble appreciation of his part in the team acts as both record and affirmation of the relationship between men seen as a group, in pursuit of a common objective and as an icon for a social structure much larger than themselves: a tram-conductor recognises them, their names are in the paper, crowds queue to see them play, they represent their university. It is an explicitly male collectivity, and its boundaries are marked out by the team's relations with women. Women are spectators (girlfriends) whose presence after, or on the outskirts of the game (in the stands, outside the changing sheds) divides the serious from the nonserious: where women watch from is ex-centric, and their interests and opinions are secondary to those of the male world which sees itself inscribed in sport. The narrator's placing and valuing of his girlfriend occurs within the primary context of his own identity:

'I was lucky to have a girl like Betty who was keen on football. Some of the girls used to go very snooty when the blokes couldn't take them to the Friday-night hops.'

In fact nationhood itself is the metaphorical context of 'The Big Game'. The narrative closes as the players move out into the roar of the crowd, about to be tested and proved; their identity and success as people is unquestioned, and the outcome of the particular game irrelevant. The 'real' point is that Bernie and his team mates are culturally tested and proven.

Gaskell's later story, 'All Part of the Game' is a more complex treatment of game-playing as social metaphor, and employs a narrative that established a paradigm for many subsequent short stories. Although Bernie in 'The Big Game' proves his maturity by his willingness to match up to the rest of the team, he is in fact adult, has left his family and is at university. In the later story Gordon is at primary school, though perhaps pubescent, when he is propelled into an environment of difficult adult emotions and masculine occupations. The game, in the later story, is more explicitly associated with living, though it is articulated as horse racing; winners and losers in the actual race are also winners and losers in the larger context of adult sexual relationships; and the story functions as a piece of observation about adult society as it is partly understood by a male child. When Norman the unsuccessful jockey and lover is found hanged in the loft, Gordon is forced into a sad adult recognition that 'someone always had to be the loser'. His transition into an adult environment, in which those who don't succeed or conform are ignored or rejected, functions as a critique of that environment in a way that is typical of the male realist tradition. Gordon's shock on seeing Norman, and his sympathetic and simple affection for him, are an indication of his sensibility; like Bill caring for Terry in 'That Summer' or the cheerful comradely affection of the rugby team in 'The Big Game', or the sore hearts of the boys and

their father in Dan Davin's 'Death of a Dog'.⁴ Emotional sensibility and a kind of solidarity and truth are thus located in young boys and in male environments. Very often the knowledge that marks the child's transition to emotional awareness is caused by or associated with the behaviour of women. In Sargeson's stories, in Davin's stories of childhood, and in many of Gaskell's, women are often figures of power, especially emotional power (though Sargeson's women are often physically large and strong), who care too much for social distinctions, like Gordon's aunt in 'All Part of the Game', or are not emotionally honest, like Mrs Connolly in Davin's 'Death of a Dog'.

'But the boys weren't fooled. No speeches from her would make them forget her part in it. It was just like her, trying to change sides when it was too late. At lest you always knew where you were with him.'⁵

Written in first person vernacular, 'All Part of the Game' represents Gordon's experience of the society in which he lives as typical and authentic. Displacing perception from the adult narrator to the adolescent or child allows that perception to be presented as undisguised, simple, truthful, Simultaneously the narrator writes himself as the point of sympathetic identification for the reader, the place where social values are most clearly seen and most explicitly gendered. In Gaskell's stories the women quite often have moustaches, they are brutally unsympathetic to the weak, to the unsuccessful, and to Maori; they cause instability and are oppressive in their physical presence.

In 'The Fire of Life' nervous Mr Pinkney's search for 'Life' takes him from the authoritarian, aggressive boys' school where he is satirically nicknamed the 'Sheik' to tea with the family of a colleague, where he meets Miss Payton, who 'was dark,

but carried it to excess, with heavy eyebrows, and the hint of a moustache',⁶ Her physical characteristics match her behaviour, and her company is 'as stifling as a hothouse'. Far from showing himself a 'regular sheik with the women' Mr Pinkney becomes the object of undesirable and threatening attentions from Miss Payton, who comes to represent a gendered environment antipathetic to men:

'A vision of having Miss Payton in his house, mightily occupied with it and with him, crossed Mr Pinkney's mind. A stifling thought. Claustrophobia. He recalled at home, years ago, entering the sitting-room just after his mother's guests had left. The windows were all closed, and the air held a soft thick feminine smell. Stuffy.' (Gaskell, 67)

Miss Payton's femaleness (which is represented physically as bordering on maleness) and her femininity which has taken on the socially constructed characteristics of masculinity (Mr Pinkney feels powerless and thinks of her as an 'overpowering brute') combined with the way in which she signifies, for Mr Pinkney, marriage and family life, becomes in the story an opposition of male and female in which conventionally opposed characteristics have crossed over. Mr Pinkney's nervous distaste at being the object of Miss Payton's desire, his physical intimidation and his repulsion at her 'brutish' qualities, associates the female (and her potential role as wife and mother) with qualities of coercion and threat that are inimical to more sentimental constructions of the family, in which the wife and mother, are, like Mrs Edwards, nurturing and affectionate. Mr Pinkney retreats from 'Life' in the 'outside' world of women and families, to the 'inside' masculine environment of the school, where there are no 'women floating

round loose all over the place, altering the scale of values, and breaking up the order of things.' (Gaskell, 66)

As in 'The Big Game' women are contained, their looseness and potential alteration kept controlled, by being excluded from, or kept at the edge of, male locations of the 'real':

They lit their pipes and talked in friendly man-fashion about school and sport and the South Island.'

(Gaskell, 66)

The middle class family as a place of constriction and gender battle is a commonplace in the realist short story, whose narrative model of escape is found in the sensitive young boy or the kind of male environment offered by sport or war, an environment of generic names (Ted, Joe, Mac, Bill), intense physical activity and incompletely expressed emotion. This stereotypical masculine environment is at the same time challenged and affirmed by its narrators, who record it (thereby asserting the authenticity of the stereotype) but also challenge it through the very nature of their activity, since the man who writes and in particular the man interested in exploring emotions and ideas is, according to the stereotype, unmale. As a result narrators are often younger, or sexually ambiguous, or 'outside' in some distinctive but non-disabling way. Mr Pinkney's qualities of sensibility are both threatened by the overpowering attention of Miss Payton, and satirised by the boys at school, who quote him in 'affectedly stirring' tones, drawing attention to his difference from them at the same time as the narrative heightens and emphasises the difference of women. However Davin's stories about the Connollys, a poor rural Southland family, Catholic and Irish, represent the family as a place of support as much as conflict, which is associated with its location in a social and regional community: Mick, Ned, Paddy, Matt and Nellie along with their parents must all participate in unremitting work to keep their family afloat, as do the other families in the district, and while tensions and gender hostilities surface, they are subordinate to the larger necessities of the group. The economic dependencies of the

working class are seen to generate a more cohesive community in Davin's stories than the middle class ambitions and sensibilities narrated in Gaskell's fiction.

The fictions of John Reece Cole are, as Cherry Hankin has remarked, only indirectly about war, unlike Davin's stories which are about actual combat as experienced by New Zealand soldiers on active duty in Crete or Italy, who remain assertively and expressively grim with their 'narrow hearts' and their regional idiom. (The further Davin's soldiers are displaced from home, the more at home this travelling environment becomes. When off duty the men read Free Lances round the billy). Cole's stories occur on the edge of war, with the survivors and the damaged, back home. Unlike Davin's, his fictions are not picaresque or documentary, but associate war-related damage with the kinds of damage experienced by outsiders in civilian societies. In the eponymous story of the collection It Was So Late a town welcomes back its returning soldiers with a reception in the local grand house, where one of the returnees, Flight Lieutenant Brent, had grown up as the child of the maid. The conjunction of past and present acts as a commentary both on the kind of childhood he experienced and the loss it represents, and the different kinds of war fought in civilian and military contexts. In Cole's stories there is a liberation for men in going to war, since real emotional bonds are established as distinct from conventional social ones. In 'The Sixty Nine Club' a returned soldier visits his friend's mother to tell her about his death:

'Jimmy's mother was sitting with her head resting against the back of the chair, her eyes closed. He wondered whether tears were coming and felt emotion knot up in his stomach. She opened her eyes suddenly. 'I did everything possible for him, didn't I?' It came out more like a challenge than a question. He thought, where is the sorrow? Where is the grief?'

However in Cole's most sharply focused fictions, 'Up at the Mammoth' and 'A Babble Between' the return of soldiers into civilian society reveals it as alien, combative, anxious, its citizens living at cross purposes, unable to pay service to the myths of honour and duty and love; the return of the stories is not away from the desert but back to it, to use a simile that occurs at the end of 'A Babble Between':

'He pressed back into the dark seat, silent as the car settled into the long fast drive into the city, his own inadequacy stretching before him like a desert.'

The inadequacy of oral language to express anything other than conventional attitudes, or its identification with an 'approved' code of speech that permits only a certain kind of expression, provides the functional frame of short narrative after Sargeson. Sargeson's minimalist dialogue which acts as an ironic dialect for the reader, forcing recognition of the unexpressed, took on the status of a 'real' language in the work of Gaskell, Davin, Middleton and others. As part of the official language of war, it becomes in Davin's war stories a kind of truth-telling, as if undecorated prose, the 'permitted' language of shared identity, bears witness to the kinds of moral qualities valuable in soldiers, a sign of national and personal character. Partly this is seen to be an effect of war: the flatness of soldiers' language acts as a defense against the realities they witness, and their emotional consequences. So the speech of Davin's characters and narrators hints at what cannot be said by expressing only the most prosaic, and reduced, versions of wartime experience, a recording eye which has no, or only a limited, response to what it sees:

'Curtis was lying on his face when they got to him, no longer trying to get up. The sergeant turned him on his back. His right leg was gone, from the thigh. The left foot was hanging from the shinbone by a few ragged strands.'

'Get out your field dressings', the sergeant said to the others who had all come up, 'He musn't see his legs.'

The driver sat on Curtis and lit him a cigarette. The corporal knelt and kept his fingers pressed down on the artery just below where it joined the groin. The sergeant from the other side tried to find enough thigh to get a purchase for the tourniquet. Curtis had begun to scream now and heaved from time to time. Each time the blood gulped out more swiftly than before. The dressings were soaking already. The sergeant did his best with the tourniquet and then turned to the left leg. The ragged trouser was in the way.'⁸

The emotional significance of wartime events is left implied, which acts to intensify it, in rather the same way as Sargeson's stories heighten the moral and emotional dimensions of experience by requiring the reader to supply it. In war stories such as Davin's or Cole's, this flatness or reticence acts as a commentary on the nature of war experience and as a mark of difference between the perceptions and knowledge of soldier and civilian populations.

With the return of the short story to the timber yards and community picnics of small-town New Zealand life, the constriction of spoken language takes on, textually, a more complex meaning. In Greville Texidor's story 'Epilogue' it is used ironically, as Rex tells Jim's pacifist parents about his heroic death as a combatant.

'Rex got through the story he had told again and again. It was stale even before he had begun to tell it, because so many people had been killed that way. The old man frowned, seemed to be groping for something, Mrs Chapman flushed and swallowed. Rex thought, they still don't really believe it.

Do I understand you to say that my son met his death as a soldier, a combatant?

Why certainly said Rex. He was a good soldier. He died like a hero.

They sat in silence while a death ripple passed over the face of the old man.

It must have been a terrible shock to you, Rex said.

It is a terrible shock, said Mrs Chapman.

You see we didn't know, said his wife. He went over to do relief work for the Quakers.'⁹

In John Reece Cole's 'Up At The Mammoth' a displaced and unreturned fighter pilot suggests in his speech an inability to locate meaning in language.

'He did not drink much, his glass, usually partly full, stood at his side. Once when he came over to the slide Jim O'Rourke tried to draw him into conversation. But it was like trying to talk to someone who could hear only his own thoughts. He began to speak, but it was as if Jim O'Rourke's question had brought to the surface something that had been troubling him'.¹⁰

In Davin's anthology New Zealand Short Stories (1953) Gaskell's sketch of racial oppositions 'School Picnic' was juxtaposed with Greville Texidor's 'An Annual Affair'. In Gaskell's story, Miss Brown's pejorative, stereotyped, officially 'correct' language to her Maori pupils and their families is set against their colloquial speech, the frame in which her 'civilized' behaviour is ironically defined by their generosity and affection. In Texidor's story, the clichéd and truncated dialogue is framed by Joy's unofficial youthful comprehensions of what is not intended or expressed, the fullness on the other side of speech, the significance of nonvocal expression, signalled to her by her emotions or her observation. In 'An Annual Affair' all speech becomes a coding of what cannot be said either because it is too complex, or because noone wants to hear it, or because there is a refusal, on the character's part, to engage in anything more than the expression of conventional attitudes which do not require thought or which disguise emotional realities. Simple speech is not evidence of plain truthfulness, but rather a masking of a truer, or more difficult response. At the same time, people who speak in simplistic truisms wish to be heard to conform, even when, like Mum, they are in a

situation of unexpressed conflict, or, when like the Reverend Allum, their speech is not dialogue but egotistic monologue.

'Quite a good crowd down here today, Mum said. But the Reverend Allum's smile was for Miss Jenkins. I expect you must find it pretty quiet, he said. Oh no, she said, I love a day in the country. You're right too, the Reverend Allum said. When she was younger Joy had used to think that when the Reverend Allum said You're right too, she'd hit upon something clever. It always turned out though, when he'd enlarged on it, that it wasn't what she had said after all.'¹¹

As the picnic continues, the environment, both social and physical, in which it takes place, becomes more divided; men from women (the men are absent in the pub almost all the time), older from younger, soft green Maori land from fertilised pakeha land, children from adults; and it becomes less certain, more threatening, everything about to change, the war looming, like Joy's adulthood bringing loss, and even the landscape, like speech and human actions, is diminished in meaning, flattened, coded:

'The hills were black and flat, like the advertisement letter across the picture, painted across the sky for some reason.' (Texidor, 168)

Texidor places her stories at a kind of intersection, between the rural, puritanical New Zealand of 'An Annual Affair' where the community is attempting to hold off change, and the 'outside' world of her later stories; 'outside either because their fictional scene is away from New Zealand altogether as in 'These Dark Glasses', or because the appearance of foreigners in wartime Auckland generates uncertainty about who or what New Zealand might be. In Texidor's stories the homogeneous society is a myth like any other, and New Zealand is a foreign country writing its necessary fictions, all the way from farce to tragedy;

'Fred had once bought a little rocky island up North. He meant to farm it. I think he pictured himself as a sort of Gauguin, only beneficent,

bringing health and enlightenment to the Maoris. He'd even been meaning to marry a Maori girl and had had her to housekeep as a tryout, but after three weeks she'd run away.'¹²

Texidor's fictions force a recognition that cultural identity is invented in language and image, through her introduction of outsiders, who bring with them, like Lilli in 'Goodbye Forever', the photographs and stories and language of another world. By contrast, the New Zealand stories of James Courage, discontinuous narratives of squattocratic Canterbury affirm cultural identity in the ways they focus on the tensions of a closed family environment as they are apparent to a small boy. Courage moved to England as a young man, but published stories in Landfall during the forties. Just as Texidor's fiction enacts a shift from the outskirts of the Spanish Civil War to provincial New Zealand, and Cole's a movement from English air raids to bleak Auckland suburbs, Courage's stories also document personal and family transitions. However both Texidor and Cole focus on the intersection of individuals with wider social structures and systems. Courage, as Charles Brasch indicated in the title he chose for a collection of Courage's stories, emphasizes the subjectivity of individuals: 'We are all of us - each of us - such separate creatures.'¹³

Although Courage's settings and subjects are quite different from the dosshouses, farm labourers and kiwi soldiers of his contemporaries, his narrative structure shares their typical focus on the perception of young boy, and his stories require the reader to interpret his protagonist's observations. There is little attempt at regional distinctiveness: their idiom is a class idiom, and the narrative environment is self contained and hierarchical, solidly white, upper class and pastoral. The kinds of conflicts Walter Blakiston witnesses and participates in are those that exist between genders and in families; he is confined by his father's expectations of him. What connects Courage's fiction to those of his contemporaries is not the social environment he writes about but the

unresolved antagonisms that exist between the sexes in families (between husband and wife, and mother and son) amongst which the child Walter is asked to identify himself as masculine. Sometimes these antagonisms are displaced on to animals and children. In 'Uncle Adam Shot a Stag', Courage's first published story, Uncle Adam's hostility to women is displaced on to the stag he had shot, which 'ran like a ruddy stag-woman'; Walter is overcome by Uncle Adam's dancing with the carcass, angry, laughing and waltzing. In 'After the Earthquake', Walter's knowledge that he had seen a horse tied to Miss Duncaster's verandah is denied by the adults around him in order to conceal evidence of adult sexuality: Miss Duncaster is supposed to be in mourning for her mother, not receiving visits from her lover on his bay horse.

The group of stories Courage wrote about Walter Blakiston and his parents focus so intensely and exclusively on the relationships between father, mother and son, and on the structures of subjective identity that broader questions like class, nation and race appear to be simply accepted as part of the unquestioned cultural and social identity within which the characters live. Neither the Depression, nor the war, nor motorized transport, have disrupted affluent pastoral life; battle is gender-based and contained within the family group; but by locating the colonial past in Walter's perception, the perception of a child for whom gender is still fluid and adults complex, fearful, and incomprehensible, Courage reinvents the Canterbury settler as a dominating, angry and fearsome father, who stands for the attitudes and social knowledges of the 'Old Country' he has left:

'Of course you saw the damned horse,' said his father suddenly. 'Shut up about it, that's all.' And he went on, to his wife, evenly: 'I was thinking yesterday, you know, I shall probably never go back to the Old Country. It's too far away now, too long ago.' (Courage, 71)

Courage's 1940s child is sensitive, curious, questioning, unwilling to conform to the stereotype expected of him, uncertain about what is right and what is wrong, the child of a new country. While the point of view of a young boy or premature adult man often represents the emotional sensibility that expresses a more covert and reticent male world. It may also stand, as it does in Courage's stories, for a perceived immaturity in the society it describes. The use of childish point of view is so insistently present in writing since the thirties it is easy to associate it metaphorically with emergent nationalism and post colonialism in New Zealand literature. Even Mr Blakiston will 'probably never go back' to the Old Country, and in the stories of O.E. Middleton the origins of the old people have widened geographically (the Hansens in 'First Adventure' are Norwegian, other stories feature a family of Jorgenson's and a Mr Larsen) while the children identify themselves with the pre-European history, racial diversity, and geographical location of New Zealand: Billy, in 'First Adventure' disobeys his father in order to bury the ancient bones of a Maori in the beach, he and his brother fish with the Maori children from the settlement, and the narrator of 'The Stone' writes in his exercise books:

Donald Skinner

Te Hoki
New Zealand
Southern Hemisphere
The World¹⁴

In stories by Courage, Davin, Gaskell, Middleton, it is the child narrator who explores, discovers and identifies his place in a world characterised by tension between the sexes, the necessity of rural work, conflicting social, moral and behavioural codes, gender, class and race distinctions. Within an environment represented as male, provincial and regional, it is most typically the child who must discover or identify selfhood, very often through loss, registering a transmission between states of knowledge, in which the environment is confirmed as (at least partly) knowable and significant, and one in which he replicates or re-discovers his father's

experience or at least 'male' experience, such as Gaskell's representation of game-playing, or Middleton's stories of boys fishing or hunting with actual or surrogate fathers, or Davin's stories of work on the farm. It is a context of meaning which affirms the child's growth into understanding, and also allows his place in it and movement through it, both narratively and cognitively, to register and characterise its distinctiveness. It seems that the combination of a child's point of view and the establishment of a characteristic environment that represents 'New Zealand' became conventions of short fiction post-Sargeson: writing of New Zealand as a place where romance and adventure had been supplanted by the hole that Jack dug presented his successors with a narrative model that proved irresistible. Few writers were able to move aside from the realist, socially committed, narrative of a young boy's version of cultural truth, and few possessed Sargeson's narrative subtlety: invention became stereotype, complex ambiguity turned iconic platitude, as in the stories of Barry Crump. For better or for worse, realism in the New Zealand short story stayed within the terms in which Sargeson was seen to have invented it for at least twenty years. But there were some writers who engaged with questions other than those of gender and cultural stereotype.

ENDNOTES

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6. Gaskell, A.P. All Part of the Game, AUP/OUP, 1978: 64
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11. Texidor, G., 'An Annual Affair' In Fifteen Minutes You can say a Lot, 163
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13. Courage, James, Such Separate Creatures: 43
14. Middleton, O.E. The Stone and Other Stories, Auckland, The Pilgrim Press, July 1959: 3

Writing the Maori: The Stories of Roderick Finlayson and Noel Hilliard

It is perhaps a reflection of the dominant realist model that Finlayson's stories of Maori life between the wars had difficulty getting published. In his introduction to a collection of Finlayson's stories published in 1973, Bill Pearson remarked:

'Editors of most of the New Zealand journals of the time were not interested in his stories. Brown Man's Burden and Sweet Beulah Land were published at the author's expense ... There were no more than a few hundred of each book printed, distribution was poor, and the two collections between them attracted no more than six short reviews.' (Brown Man's Burden 1973 xxiii)

Unlike Sargeson's stories, Finlayson's short stories are 'plotty'. Written in third person vernacular, the drive of the fiction is not on the play between the narrator's account of events and the reader's interpretation of them, but on the outcome of the story. Formally, Finlayson's stories are a kind of hybrid derived from the tale-telling mode (very often cast into an ironically-treated romance frame, as in 'Hemi's Daughter'), and the idiomatic sketch, and the narratives mix spoken Maori/English idiom with a third person idiom suggestive of heroic tale, and of a legendary cultural past. Like Alfred Grace, Finlayson also writes of the Maori as a dying race. There is a continuous background of death through consumption, drink, poor health, violence or accidents, and most of it, directly or indirectly, is associated with dispossession by the Pakeha. But unlike Grace, Finlayson does not sympathize with the Maori while simultaneously characterising them as bloodthirsty, diabolical and alien. In a story like 'The Totara Tree', the effects of dispossession are subtly shown to have developed over generations, and the kind of racial and cultural conflict that all the stories describe does not, as it does in Grace, assume the ultimate superiority of one culture over another. In 'The Totara

Tree', the variety of Maori attitudes to the Pakehas who want to cut down their tapu totara to make way for an electricity pylon suggests that tribal systems are in decay, with a younger generation weary of Uncle Tuna's exploits, and men and women boasting around a barrel of home-brew of what they'll do to the Pakeha, but there is no sense of the Pakeha inspector and his men as anything but other. If Maori resistance degenerates into a rubbish fire and drunken shouting until only the dead old lady is a figure of dignity, the Pakehas, with their red faces and their blustering and their wasted money have no more dignity and are considerably more alien, associated not with trees and drunken camaraderie but with Power Boards and concrete foundations. In 1940 Finlayson published a pamphlet, Our Life in this Land, in which he represented European technology as 'Death feeding on Life.' He claimed 'Modern or Materialist Science results only in the Consuming of Natural Resources and in the Disintegration of Society.'¹ Finlayson's pamphlet is a polemic on the decline of the 'Natural Qualities' of European pioneering settlement in New Zealand; the way in which he opposes, as contributory forces in decline, technology and agriculture, materialism and culture, is replicated in his stories, with Maori as direct victims.

'Now the only 'good' looked for (or even dreamed of) in New Zealand as in the rest of the world, is the 'good' predicted of an increase in Science on the one hand, and an increase in so-called rationalisation on the other. So that our idealists proclaim their tinsel paradise (sanitary, sterile, and equipped with chromium-plated plumbing no doubt) where work is neither hardship nor pleasure but merely a bore, and where culture is merely a more sugary bore to distract us 'till death ends us all. Even the average childless pair, the steady job, the all-electric flat, the little car, the radio-heaven enough O God! And to maintain this little worldly paradise we allow the utmost scientific exploitation of the land.' (Finlayson, 13)

According to Finlayson, culture 'grows...from the soil' a view represented in various ways in his fiction. When Uncle Tuna in

'The Totara Tree' hears of the Power Board's plans, he exclaims angrily:

'Can't the Pakeha bear the sight of one single tree without reaching for his axe?'

Uncle Tuna points to a distinction between Pakeha and nature/culture that is alien to Maori; the Pakeha pursuit of material 'progress' includes debased behaviour: the Inspector shouts to his men to 'pull the old woman down by force' and when he leaves in his big car, 'tightlipped with rage', he scatters the children 'amid a stench of burnt benzine.' In 'Standards of Living' Mr Puttles believes in 'economic efficiency and the educative value of advertising and he had a salary of £750 per annum.' The 'native standard of living' is not a standard Mr Puttles approves of, but when he spends a day in the pub with Moses, it astounds him 'how an obviously poor Maori like Moses was able to get so much fun out of life.' The generosity and warmth of Moses' community-based hedonistic life is contrasted with Henry Puttles's cramped, funless and timid existence in a way that has become a stereotypical mark of cultural difference in New Zealand fiction, but illustrates a point that Finlayson, like Grace before him, constantly focusses his stories on: the relative freedom of Maori from European conventions and the conflicting constructions of value characteristic of each race. When the rangers come to arrest Mr Puttles and his new friends for spearing trout, Mr Puttles is caught by the aspect of his selfhood hardest to get rid of:

'The Maoris all vanished in a moment into the tea-tree, but Henry, without his trousers, was obliged to stay in the pool. If he'd been a native he might have run to the house without them. But pakeha conventions were too strong with him...' (Finlayson, 40)

But Finlayson's stories do not sentimentalize the Maori, nor do they represent the Maori as less complex or ambiguous than the Pakeha. In 'New Year', 'Maori matters' are opposed to

institutional procedures. But the local Maori youth represent themselves as characters in a western, with 'dark heavy coats and wide-brimmed hats pulled down over their eyes'; the pretty girls think of one of the young men as a 'sort of Arizona Kid hero'. In 'Hemi's Daughter' Ripi and Huia's romance begins in the colouring language of legend: 'For Ripi the strong had looked upon her, and Ripi the handsome had set his spell upon her', but soon collapses into the comic ironies of realist narrative.

Whereas in Alfred Grace's stories, the clash of cultures and races is signified by the conflict of individuals or groups of individuals, in Finlayson's stories the narrative frames the Maori as individual but the Pakeha as institution or the representative of an institution, as in 'Johnny Wairua's Wonderland'. Johnny has his eyes opened in Rotorua by the fine big cars Maori are driving and opens his valley to the tourist trade. Eventually his valley is taken over by a host of Government Departments and Johnny is rigged out as Official Caretaker in a peaked cap, deprived of his valley and of 'all the half-a-crown from all these big tourists', but able to buzz off to Rotorua for a bit of a spree. Maori speech in Finlayson's fictions signifies cultural dislocation and is fundamentally at odds with Pakeha systems and institutions. In 'A Man of Good Religion' Henare Tinirau upholds his religious principles by getting married too many times; in 'Wi Gets the Gospel' Wi's conversion deprives Meri of her husband. The appropriations of language are deeply ironic in Finlayson's stories, where the tourists 'smiled sweetly and said "kia ora"', but 'the youngsters cried, 'Atta boy!' as they raced to the store to buy bright-red fizzy drinks'(Finlayson, 53). But though the Maori is comic, tragic, cheerful, drunken, dying, polluted and corrupted, characterized by the muddled ambiguities of a colonized existence, the stories affirm a culture whose loss brings deprivation, violence, caricature and absence to those Maori who reject or forget it. In 'The Tangi' Hemi, who comes drunk

to his father's tangi, has been dispossessed for the 'greed and cruelty' of his behaviour, squandering money on motor cars and fine clothes, gambling and drinking. The extent of his exclusion from his community, and the self-destructiveness of his behaviour is imaged by his exclusion from the tangi and his actions. Hemi is locked in a room with barred windowss and conceives the idea of setting fire to his father's house, an action that might represent the loss and the violence that is a consequence of deculturation. Although in the story Hemi is to blame for the punitive cycle he is caught in, the origin of his decline clearly belongs to the general distinction Finlayson's stories make between Pakeha materialism and selfishness and Maori generosity and communality. It is Hemi's transgression of Maori moral and social codes that allows him to conceive of destroying the house of his father, filled with the members of his whanau, and so represent the destructiveness both to a cultural community and to an individual of the erosion or rejection of culture.

Finlayson's last collection of stories Other Lovers (1976) consists of three long stories each about a pair of lovers, in which the major concerns of his fiction, particularly the destructive effects of social conformity and technology, are re-presented. The final story, 'Jim and Miri' illustrates both the attractiveness and vulnerability of the rural Maori community to European materialism. Although Jim's welcome by the Rocky Bay pa community makes him realise how destructive his employer's plans for development are, he is unable to resist the claims and ambitions of Pakeha culture:

'He thought of tomorrow when the Pakeha world would claim him again, when he would have to get on with the job that would perhaps - it came with a sudden stab of intuition - end all this. He had been welcomed as a guest, and he felt a little like a spy and a traitor to these simple people. And again he felt he would be a traitor to his world if he did not do his job.'³

Inevitably physical incursion by the Pakeha into Maori rural life results in the disruption of community and community values. The settlement disperses and its betrayal by Jim is imaged in his betrayal and abandonment of Miri, and his own troubled conditions (he survives by becoming addicted to 'relaxing' pills). 'Jim and Miri' is locked into an oppositional narrative (Pakeha/Maori, urban/rural, male/female, materialism/generosity, individual/community) that is worked out through all Finlayson's fiction and becomes the stereotypical working out of difference in most Pakeha writing about Maori. Although the Maori world clearly has its failures, like Charlie in 'Jim and Miri' who is an opportunist on a large scale, they are also the product of a situation in which not to conform to Pakeha ways is to die off, or vanish. Generally Maori represent moral, spiritual and emotional value; by being exposed to it, characters like Jim face an implicit choice, but the conventions and expectations of his own world are too strong for him, and he loses the potential gifts of Maoridom, in a paradigmatic narrative for Pakeha-driven New Zealand society.

Finlayson's fictional environment is rural Maori, with city Pakeha looming on the margin and infecting the speech, belief, values and systems of Maori life. In Noel Hilliard's two volumes of stories, written mostly a decade or more later, the rural Maori is displaced even further into the Pakeha system by leaving the country for the town. When Hilliard's first collection A Piece of Land (1963) appeared, reviewers praised its realism, seeing it as a consequence of the writer's own life:

'The author writes about life as he himself has lived it, and has seen others live it, on farms, in railway camps, newspaper offices, the university and now as a high school teacher in a country town.'

A tendency to see social realism as biographical in origin and thus documentary, makes claims for 'authenticity', and

suggests an association of Sargesonian social realism and colonial oral narrative. In the case of Finlayson and Hilliard it also sets up a frame of reference in which characteristic oppositions between races, cultures and systems can be represented as truth, narratives recorded from experience, both personal and general, and in which the characters bear witness to a wider environment. Louis Johnson praised Hilliard's collection for its 'faithfulness to the facts and to the environment',⁵ particularly in the 'Maori family stories'. A Piece of Land sets its stories in the landscape of social realism distinctively characterised by Sargeson. Johnson's review notes:

'Wharfies on strike, Maori labourers ⁿcountering the race - prejudice of Wellington boarding-house keepers, miners, the underprivileged children of boozers...are his subjects'

but, like Finlayson, Hilliard's stories are coloured by their preoccupation with the uneasy co-existence of Maori and Pakeha, and the oppositions they work out are a familiar ones. Rural Maori struggle to retain a hold on their traditional lands and represent a point from which to judge the materialism, waste and excess of Pakeha, as in the 'hundreds and hundreds' of flounder netted by Pakeha and thrown away to rot.⁶

Very often the point of view in Hilliard's story is a child's, but a child who signifies loss, or damage, as in 'Eruea', where a neglected child spends his life outside the pub waiting for his father. Generally though, the stories in A Piece of Land represent Maori as poor, disadvantaged and at risk but still rural-based and within relatively stable family structures. The title story, in which Joe and Mutu's dreams of wealth vanish on hearing the land they have inherited is 'about the size of the tennis court', affirms their humour and solidarity, and the group of stories which closes the collection celebrate the traditional values of rural Maori

community, generosity, good humour, cohesiveness and communality, in a context of pastoral plenitude:

'The women went out to help Mum set the tables; the children were running back and forth carrying things from the house. The men opened the hangi in a cloud of steam, and as the wire basket was lifted out the children raced over to pick off the cooked meat still sticking to the hot stones.

"Haere mai te kai! Fill up the seats!"

A breeze shook the trees. Dad said the blessing. The tables were crammed with food: raw mussels, lettuce salad, grated carrot, cockles, pipis, beetroot, sliced tomato and cucumber, boiled corn, raw snapper in water with chopped onions, bottles of soft-drink, cordial in preserving jars; tomato sauce, vinegar, pickles, chutney, cream to mash with potato; cake, buttered takakau, scones, biscuits, savouries. The women served: roast chicken, stuffing fragrant with thyme, hangi pork smoking hot, cauliflower, beans, peas, kumara, big dishes of potatoes - "Help yourself to the riwai, take what you want!" Everyone had brought something..."

Ten years later, when Hilliard's second collection Send Somebody Nice appeared, a significant shift had occurred in his representation of Maori. Fewer of the stories explicitly identify characters as Maori, than in the earlier collection, and of those that do, most of them are about young Maori girls who are in state institutions ('Absconder', 'The Girl from Kaeo'. 'Corrective Training'). There are a number of stories in which the characters are not explicitly Maori but are young women on their own, without any kind of support, who are engaged in prostitution. Most of the gender relationships in these stories of Hilliard's are focussed on sexual practice, ranging from the innocent ('Send Somebody Nice') and the rejected ('At Angelo's') prostitute to the discussion of Pakeha contraception in 'Puti Wants a Beer.' Maori women and especially young girls (even children as in 'Matilda') are represented as at risk, exploited, brutalised, commodified, the victims of racist assumptions and prejudices; and very often their language (many of these are first person texts) is sharply differentiated from the 'official' language used to

place and categorise them. In 'the Girls from Kaeo' a first person narrative in idiomatic, ungrammatical and unpunctuated speech is interleaved with the regulatory language of an institutional inquiry ('Would you say her living conditions were very high? high? average? poor? very bad?') which stresses both the contrast between the official construction of an individual as a 'case', and her self representation, and also the way in which Maori language-use, like Maori behaviour, creates an idiom that is 'outside' Pakeha/English rules of conduct. Hilliard's stories, both as narratives and as texts, represent Maori, and especially female Maori, as marginalised, alone, and institutionalised, either by their physical presence in institutions or because the female Maori body involuntarily signifies itself as a commodity to a predatory, materialist and masculine environment. There is only one story in Send Somebody Nice which represents Maori community as still existing, and successfully incorporating change. In 'the Tree' a whanau fells an ancient matai by traditional methods in order to make room for a community centre which will be built from the timber of the tree. In a collection preoccupied with racism, the exploitation of Maori women, the presence of young Maori in state institutions, the replacement of families by gangs, and a generally implied shift in register from communal solidarity and pastoral abundance to sex as the signifier of debased but transferable value, 'The Tree' seems a wishful predictive illusion, as insubstantial as a fairytale in the textual environment of cinema verite.

ENDNOTES

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5. Review of A Piece of Land by Louis Johnson, The Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune, May 11, 1963: 4
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Finding the Machinery: the stories of Maurice Duggan and Janet Frame

C.K. Stead's edition of Maurice Duggan's stories published in 1981, shows the movement of Duggan's fiction over thirty years of publication. His stories travel from Sargeson to Wedde, from the modernism of James Joyce to the postmodernism of his last published story 'The Magsman's miscellany': thirty stories in thirty years, from 1945-1975. Duggan's early fictions signal their intertextuality explicitly; 'Conversation Piece' published in 1947, is a parodic sketch of Hemingway; 'Faith of our Fathers', Duggan's first published story (1945), rewrites early Joyce, and 'Machinery' first published in Anvil in 1945 and again in Irish Writing is written in a Sargesonian idiom. Interestingly Sargeson himself chose, for his suggestively titled anthology Speaking for Ourselves (1945), a story of Duggan's which is far removed from the prevailing realistic 'free' story Sargeson established as New Zealand idiom. 'Notes on an Abstract Arachnid', a story in which the texture of language attempts to drive 'beyond words', is not a story Duggan later liked, or thought was successful,¹ but Sargeson's aim was to promote a range of 'voices' which might speak for 'us'. In his own work, Duggan's recognition of a variety of textual models shifted the ground of the short story. The rich textual surface of his stories, feeding off other texts, insisted on itself not as mediator of locally recognisable idiom and regional or social 'reality' but as medium of narratives. As Duggan himself commented, referring to these qualities in his writing: 'in what else could a culture be embalmed, enfolded or expressed?'²

Duggan's complex 'enfolding' of culture in language provided the focus both of his own more extended later fiction and of critical commentary on his work.³ His fictions travel away from the familiar, relatively simple Joycean precedents in the early Lenihan stories (or in the sketches of Roman Catholic

childhood such as 'Guardian' or 'In Youth is Pleasure') to stories in which there is a much richer play of textual surface, away from the representational clarity of a story like 'Race Day' to the concentration of the puzzle in 'A Magsman Miscellany'. Like the stories of Janet Frame, Duggan's later stories challenge and trouble the narrative expectations of realism.

As the narrator postulates in 'A Magsman Miscellany', a story which invites the reader to consider the relationship of the 'writer's' comments on texts, readers, language and writing to the fragmentary narrative it plays with:

'[A]ny book, any work of a serious intention, may after all induce moments of response, greater or lesser reverberations of a note almost incidentally struck.

Perhaps that is the meaning of the maze - a structure devised by the searcher (or writer) to enable him to locate the mouse or monster he conceives of?'

The chronological sequence of Duggan's work suggests a writing environment in which the historical proximity of Sargeson affected the kinds of narratives he wrote. His first collection, Immanuel's Land (1956) is prefaced by a quotation from Pilgrim's Progress 'When the morning was up they had him to the top of the house and bid him look south. So he did and behold at a great distance he saw a most pleasant mountainous country beautified with woods vineyards fruits of all sorts flowers also with springs and fountains very delectable to behodl. Then he asked the name of the country. The said it was Immanuel's Land.' (Duggan: Immanuel's Land). The stories that follow, while acknowledging a 'most pleasant mountainous country', also take as their object Sargeson's puritanical society, most obviously in 'Chapter' and 'Towards the Mountains', where the constrictions of public attitudes as they are expressed by parents and schoolteachers, and in the courtroom, force the young or the dispossessed into antisocial, sometimes violent behaviour. It is a society

marked out by the prejudices and hostilities of adults: 'Now, she said violently, you'll perhaps listen when I tell you you're to keep away from people like that. Irish, Mrs Atkinson said, and Dallies and Catholics; and God knows what besides,'⁵ a society in which teenagers are pressurised by half-understood, unrealisable, desire:

'Down there... they had wandered into a landscape more confusing than this; had wandered, carrying a useless gun, into the hot territory of adolescence, as if it had been a secret world...'⁶

What the adolescent boy stumbles on, in an impossible projection of his own half-realised self, is 'a man and woman, lying naked and spreadeagled' who seem to be 'the nameless, faceless, naked puppets of his fantasy...miming the role he had made for them.' It is the discovery of a 'hot territory' of congruence between adult and adolescent worlds, fantasy embodied, that marks out a boundary for the boy, a recognition of his 'own frustration and sadness and despair.' The lovers represent exclusion, in embodying fantasy they have caused it to 'founder'; his response is explicitly made in a related register:

'He swung the gun up without knowing where lay his target, pumped the shell into the breech again, and fired - at them, or at the goats, or at the world, he did not know.'⁷

For Duggan, like Sargeson before him and many writers after, sex, violence and the punitive restrictions of a puritanical society lock its members, but especially the young, into a state of impossible conflict (carrying a useless gun into hot territory), conflict which is not so much moral as psychological and emotional, with painful consequences for the cultural self-recognition of New Zealanders. In Duggan's fiction the opposition of conformity and individuality, which is often expressed as an opposition between social systems or institutions (marriage, family, church, specifically the

Catholic church as in many of the stories in Immanuel's Land, or, as in 'Towards the Mountains', the coast) and the desire of the subject which threatens or tries to deconstruct boundaries by transgressing them, is typically associated with and represented in an acknowledgement of language as the medium in which knowledges are constructed and may be reconstructed. The stories in Immanuel's Land draw attention to their metaphorical reliance on another text: they too, are tales of pilgrims' progress, journeys into unknown territory, which signifies a country of the soul, or at least the psyche, in which language, and its references, *are* pointing to some other way of constructing meaning than a simple recognition of the conflicts and oppositions making up the 'real'; however, in most of the stories of Immanuel's Land language mediates the 'real', representing its sequence of events as a narrative in which characters' experiences of the fantastic, the unreal, can be distinguished within the real, confirming the significance of its context. A cluster of stories are written around the Lenihan family, from the point of view of the children and particularly of Harry, who grows from a small child in 'A Small Story' to a young man in 'Chapter'. Like Davin's stories about the Connollys or Mansfield's about the Burnells, Duggan's Lenihan stories constitute a discontinuous narrative in which individual stories function epiphanically; within a general process of transition, some moments signify. Harry's narrative is about becoming a New Zealander; as in 'Towards the Mountains' some moments and objects represent the process by which a child becomes an acculturated adult. In 'The Killer' Harry's uncle's guns represent for Harry his own 'heroic' view of the war, in which 'men' are constantly engaged in heroic activity 'playing a savage and entirely absorbing game', a view at odds with the 'old fashioned and dull' presence of his uncle who is 'one of the lucky ones' because all his shots were fired on the rifle range. Harry's images of war (and 'men'), which come from picture magazines, not history or his uncle's talk, illustrate the coercive fantasies which imprint maleness on a growing boy. In

particular the association of developing sexuality with the gun-wielding man is a recurring one and may be said to represent, in a more general way, the means by which masculinity has been perceived in a society which prohibited sexual activity outside approved contexts, and sanctioned some kinds of violence. The violence suggested by guns, with its undercurrents of repression ('Towards the Mountains') is not unlike the violence done to the incompetent, prematurely adult Hopkins, in 'In Youth is Pleasure', who is made 'scapegoat of the class' by Brother Mark, practising sanctioned violence on the ego of a physically adult boy, punished because his body is more developed than his mind. Adulthood is both recognised in, and denied to Hopkins; like sexuality and violence it is one of the constantly changing indicators of an individual's relationship to social conventions, prescriptions, and doubleness: Duggan's fiction continually stresses the problematically fluid and elusive relationships between the individual subject and the environment he inhabits. For Harry Lenihan the progress to adulthood is marked by the construction and uncertainty of different realities. When the ship his brother Terry is on has left the wharf, Harry looks at his stepmother painting her mouth and thinks 'Would he ever be able to tell what was real and what was not?'

In 'Chapter', when Harry sees from a train a weeping Maori woman, a child and a dog, 'He felt that should he return this way in years to come he would find this scene unaltered, still beyond any ravage of time or season'; the moment in which he sees the child, woman and dog, is more 'real' than Harry's existence in the train. As a spectator of a scene in which he will never participate Harry is also a signifier for the artist, predecessor of Duggan's Magsman, witness to the textual frame fixed at its point of clearest signification, but excluded from it. For Harry Lenihan, seeing the woman and the objects and beings which surround her 'fixed within that frame beyond which was only chaos', it 'was as if he had walked into a cinema to confront a scene without movement, the

players grouped and their last words still echoing, and must construct from that all he was ever to know.' All Duggan's fictions engage, explicitly or metaphorically, with such 'construction' of knowledge in language; where Sargeson's language offered an apparently transparent screen through which the real was transmitted, (though a 'real' significantly similar to Duggan's), Duggan's fictions increasingly concentrate on the problems and uncertainties of language.

'Along Rideout Road That Summer'; from Duggan's second collection, Summer in the Gravel Pit (1965) is his best known story. As a fiction it engages immediately and directly with textual experience; the context of Buster O'Leary's narrative is the knowingly literary medium in which it is transmitted: a bookish lad shouting Kubla Khan and observed by milk-white unicorns. Buster O'Leary's account of experience explicitly recognises the problem of 'how to cope with the shock of recognition of a certain discrepancy between the real and the written' (Duggan, 196) but the narrative is complicated by further uncertainties about the narrator and the status of his narrative, which serve in the end to destabilize everything but the subjectivity of the narrative and the textual experience it represents. Buster O'Leary's ornamented prose account of his encounter with Puti Hohepa's beautiful daughter Fanny with its continual references to other texts, is deeply conscious of problems of connection. How to connect Coleridge's dulcimer with Fanny's ukelele suggests cultural discrepancies as well as the 'certain discrepancy between the real and the written', and implies a further difficulty of connection between Buster and his audience, addressed in the plural as 'gentlemen'. How to 'read' Buster O'Leary is the real problem posed by the text. The 'gentlemen' to whom the text is addressed provide a knowingly ironic perspective on Buster's romantic and sexy story, but even though Buster's youthful emotions are placed within an adult frame of knowledge, memory and repetitious experience ('so few variations to an old, old story'), their significance, both to

the adult narrator and the reader is preserved, buried as it were, in Buster's compulsive and prolific retelling of his story. Hearing Buster put tongue to the narrative shows what he is: the volume, energy and multiple self-representations of his language, within which the 'story' is consumed, rewritten, retold and finally escaped from, suggest the difficult connections between age and youth, memory and desire, language and experience, story and story teller, narrator and audience.

In a general sense, it is the problem of connection, with all 'Rideout Road's' gestures towards narratives of passion, adventure and cultural conflict, that the body of Duggan's fiction is concerned with. All his stories centre on loss and what follows after. Loss is the condition of living and also the context of remembered happiness, whether it is the loss of a mother and the uncertain change in families as in the Lenihan stories, or the loss of youth that Buster O'Leary's adult commentary voices. The process of transition typically provides the narrative structure of Duggan's fictions, voyages, uncompleted journeys, real or fictive departures, or what a reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement described as 'Duggan's repeated plot'... some ritual of beginning, another act of breaking out and departing'.¹⁰ This context of transition is reiterated both in the human relationships his stories represent and in their stylistic variety, which Duggan once described as 'the problem of hanging whatever it is on the conventional peg, finding the machinery.'¹¹ Duggan's characters inhabit complicated difficult or unsatisfactory adult relationships, always heterosexual, in which, very often, the women, as represented by the male narrator, expect men to seduce them and/or offer emotional/sexual opportunities to men who are unable (or dis-able) to accept them. When Miss Laverty ('Blues for Miss Laverty') asks for 'A little human warmth', Robert Mooney offers her 'a straight-out loan', but her anonymous neighbour speaks for the wider environment when he says 'what a hope...Lady, what a hope.'¹² The kinds of

repression enacted on the Catholic white male seem often to escape women in Duggan's stories, but to create an environment where sexual and emotional happiness between a man and a woman is a transitory, irrecoverably past, or asymmetrical and accidental thing, squeezed by chance out of a world where suspicion, stupidity, meanness and antagonism characterise most relationships. Duggan's stories are typically engaged in some kind of confrontation between the representations and demands of art and the flesh, and the materialism, expectations and conventions of society. But Duggan's is also a densely textured prose which references itself out, continuously, to other writers and writings, a depth of association that acts to disperse attention away from character, or narrative as the 'real' constructions of the text and on to the text itself, machinery for the production of Riley's Handbook, or O'Leary's Orchard, in which the mixed languages of the narrative create multiple textual environments all of which contribute to as well as continually shift, notions of 'character' and 'story'. When Isobel and O'Leary's improbable affair continues after the play has been closed down, the narrative's shift into language of a different convention constructs an ironic/comic point of view on the characters as well as drawing attention to the way in which textual boundaries can be transgressed so that a different textuality, requiring the reader to connect several codes, is created, insisting on the narrative's existence as text as much as its transmission of events:

'Time: 4p.m.. Day: Sunday. Weather: South-westerly squalls with hail; thunderstorms intermittent. Temperature: 52 degrees Fahrenheit. Humidity: 70 degrees. Position of Miss Isobel Bernstein on O'Leary's bed: axis NNE SSW, as near as dammit. O'Leary's position: SSW NNE axis unstable and veering. Lighting up time: not given. Room temperature: 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Miss Bernstein's vital measurements: 34, 26, 36. For O'Leary: 7½, 8½, 10½, 16½; hat, gloves, shoes, shirt - none of which he was wearing.'¹³

Duggan's stories, which began in modernism, anticipate postmodernism in their shift away from a focus on the subject to a stress on the multiple construction of the subject in language[s]; 'O'Leary's Orchard' connects its various narrative languages to O'Leary's speech, so that the story suggests a 'voiced' character but one whose existence is as much textual as biographical and whose speech draws attention to the connectedness of texts and living, and the gaps between them where subjectivity is constructed.

'He had lied. He would miss her more than that. His life had been a preparation for a sense of loss. He had missed her often enough already, over the years. It would continue, an indulgence of himself, O'Leary's O of regret, unvoiced. It was what his life was fashioned to contain, this gentle fabrication, this bright figment.'¹⁴

Duggan's final published story, 'The Magsman's Miscellany' which appeared posthumously, is about texts and fictions and partial views; the problems of knowledge and its transmission in language. The story of Ben McGoldrick and Rosie Finan is written around by marginalia, written across their two lives, written within their differences, their different writings; all the time the miscellany draws attention to its own incomplete, possibly random, variable existence, the separations in the printed text acting metaphorically as a marginal comment on fiction, on human existence and on language:

'Language is so much a part of what defines and imprisons and paroles us ... in a world where riddles and metaphors may serve a certain purpose.'¹⁵

While Rosie irons, Ben writes. The gap between their activities can be measured as 'fourteen feet and some inches', or as a work of fiction, a fantasy, or a gap that is 'not bridged'. 'A Magsman's Miscellany' draws attention to process, to gaps and silences and alternative selections, shifts of view, territories of promise signposted but

unexplored. In the course of his thirty year writing span, Duggan moved away from the pastiches of his early writing to a looser, more textual prose medium, in which narrative and plot are less the objective of writing than 'a way of putting people into our mouths, of giving substance to our many voices'.¹⁶ In Duggan's hands, the short story, ample, literary, self-reflecting, moved firmly away from realist sketch, instead drawing deliberate attention to itself as a product of epistemological and literary conventions as much as of the workings of social forces.

If the construction of a canon can be tracked through anthologies such as the series published since 1953 by Oxford University Press, then the short fiction of Janet Frame is a continuous presence in New Zealand literary history, with each of the four collections published over forty years including a Frame story.¹⁷ Although the bulk of Frame's work consists of novels and autobiography, she began publishing in 1952 with a collection of short stories, The Lagoon, one of four collections of short fiction she has published over her career. In An Angel at my Table she described how the publication of The Lagoon redeemed her from a projected leucotomy, while she was a patient in a mental hospital.¹⁸ Such interactions of text and world, the power of language to express difference and earn survival, recur in Frame's fictions and in her accounts of the events of her life. Constantly in her writings Frame explores problems of meaning; all her fictions are journeys in words, experiments with identity, inscriptions of being, repeated attempts to write the real. But whereas Sargeson's construction of the real takes place in a locally recognizable context, Frame redefines her contexts continually, so that apparently normal narrative situations are suddenly menaced, and illustrate the fragility of existence, or, in her later sketches, questions of truth and knowledge can be approached only in fantasy and fable.

The Lagoon (1951), is a collection of 24 short stories, some sketch length, almost all written from the point of view of a child. The few that are not are mostly either about people in mental hospitals, such as 'The Pack' or, as in 'A Beautiful Nature', someone who is 'simple'. The world the stories construct is one in which understanding is limited, either because the protagonists are children, or because they are segregated from properly adult society and live in the foreign world of a mental hospital, or because things are simply too puzzling. In 'Swans' Mum does not understand the railway system and ends up at the wrong sea, confused about what she has done. In Frame's fictions the surfaces of existence are always confusing and unstable, liable to turn out, at any moment, to be something else. It is clear that there are rules and customs, but for those who do not understand them appearances only temporarily disguise waiting menace, the breakdown of stability, corruption, and mortality. Language itself provides perhaps the least stable surface of all. The eponymous story of Frame's first collection signals preoccupations which have remained central in Frame's work. The lagoon of the title is a shifting presence, for 'at low tide the water is sucked back into the harbour and there is no lagoon'. It is a place where you can find unexpected treasure, or 'see your imaged tripled up'. It is also a place where the grandmother lives. Family history in Frame's narratives is often female, and her visionaries and story tellers are also often female, like Daphne, singing from the dead room in Owls Do Cry. Although the grandmother talks about the lagoon, its sea weed, and drifting wood and smells, she does not tell a 'proper' story about it to the child, who finds out the 'real' story only when she is grown-up and the grandmother is dead. It proves to be a story of murder and passion, 'the sort of story they put in Truth'. This distinction between 'real' stories, which, in The Lagoon, correspond to the official encodings of the adult world, films, books, newspapers, and 'unreal' comforting stories that children like, (such as, 'this is my castle we said you be

father I'll be mother and we'll live here and catch crabs and tiddlers for ever ...'¹⁹ repeats itself in various forms throughout Frame's work. It generates later distinctions between environments and codes of behaviour, between autobiography and fiction, but it never loses its textual focus. 'Real' stories are the fictions and events in which people recognize their violent behaviour, their hypocrisies, the nature of their illusions. Other stories rewrite the world as a place of safety and comfort, where children can be brave, confront fear, and 'know' the real, as in Frame's later story 'The Reservoir'.

'Well we were not afraid of it, oh no, it was only the Reservoir, it was nothing to be afraid of, it was just a flat Reservoir with a fence around it, and trees, and on the far side a little house (with wheels inside?), and nothing to be afraid of'.²⁰

The gaps between speech and meaning, between narrative and event, between individual understanding and publicly sanctioned codes of explanation, between image, or signifier, and signified, are the unstable difficult territory Frame explores throughout her fiction.²¹ In the story 'Keel and Kool', Father takes a photograph:

'There you are, he said. It's taken. A happy family.'

But at the moment of presenting the picture in language, a contrary representation surfaces, concentrating in Winnie, whose sister has died, and who can only begin to represent the 'real' state of her life by picking a fight with dead Eva's best friend and hearing a seagull 'speak' a truth that is unspoken in human language:

'Only up in the sky there was a seagull as white as chalk, circling and crying Keel Keel come home Kool, come home Kool. And Kool would never come, ever.'²²

Frame's fiction typically focusses on the point in experience at which a shift or slide occurs between one kind of knowledge and another; the point at which the photograph's inability to represent a happy family shifts 'truth' into another register, seagull language, or, as in 'Prizes', when Hessie Sutton's 'understanding smile' destroys the narrator's excitement in her first piece of music and reverses her relationship with the phenomenological world:

'You see how derivative I was made out to be? Nothing belonged to me, not even my body, and now with Hessie Sutton and her spying ways I could not call my feelings my own. Why did people have so much need to stake their claim in other people? Were they scared of the bailiffs arriving in their own house? I stopped learning music. I was in despair. I could no longer use prizes as a fortress. In spite of my books bound in calf, my scrolled certificates, the prize essay on the Visit to the Flour Mill, and my marks of merit in the children's newspapers, I was being invaded by people who wanted their prizes from me.'²³

As with the narrator in 'Prizes' events in Frame's fiction radically alter the relation of narrative persona to her environment, and very often shift the story away from realism, so that as the narrator perceives herself as a source rather than a recipient of prizes, the text shifts into a narrative of metaphor, in which the 'real' boundaries of experience are displaced by the embodiment of metaphor as real, which inscribes as narrative, the change that has occurred in the narrator's self-perception.

'And now I lie in the pit, finally arranged, faded, robbed of all prizes, while still under every human sky the crows wheel and swoop, dividing, dividing the spoils of the dead.'²⁴

Stories like 'The Reservoir' or 'The Bull Calf' contain their shifts in knowledge and perception within a realist mode, but Frame's later collections show these stories are a minority. Frame's two collections of stories published in the sixties, The Reservoir and Snowman, Snowman show a movement away from

the realistically framed narrative based on childhood to sketches, fables and fantasies explicitly concerned with the unreal, the visionary, usually associated with a revelatory landscape of death. W.H. New expressed reservations about these later stories.

'While these experiments produced some of Frame's finest work - 'The Reservoir', for instance - the fables proved largely end-closed and mechanical, serving a preconceived and rigid scheme of judgements rather than serving as the medium of narrative discovery that the earlier stories had promised.'²⁵

But it is clear in Frame's work as a whole that realism did not suit her purposes, and the kinds of knowledge she works to undermine are represented as much by the comfortable stabilities of 'proper' stories and straightforward narrative language as by the rules of, for example, hospital life. There is an intermittent but fairly constant stream of stories about writing from 'Jan Godfrey' in The Lagoon, to 'The Triumph of Poetry' in The Reservoir which suggest that the context of the stories, their means of production, is also their subject. Correspondingly they give the impression of being more and more written. They seem less a transparent medium for the transmission of lived experience and more a place where identity is actively constructed, mysteries acknowledged, truths questioned. Frame's later fictions rewrite the urban domestic and personal environments of her earlier stories as places where nothing certain can be known, and in which the only reliable shape or form is the end-closed fable, with a narrative persona delivering a fabulous verdict. It is significant that a very large number of these fables, or sketches, are preoccupied with a deconstruction of a recognisable 'daylight' world of comprehensible human activity introduced in a deceptively realist way ('After a night of frost and a morning of mist the day is cloudless'²⁶) into a fantastic landscape of death, in which blowflies and tomcats talk like humans; all forms of life implacably disease, rot,

decay, twist and deform, and 'Death at last subdues the piratical activities indulged in by Life'. The realism of Frame's openings is replaced by the grotesque possibilities of animism, of legend, parable, fairytale and metaphor used as if there is no distinction of perception, convention or textual form between realistic and fabulous narrative.

Many of the later sketches have as their focus an 'I' persona observing some small event. In 'The Linesman' a woman alone at her window in a suburb crowded with people, watches a linesman up a power pole. Far from being afraid for the Linesman's safety, the narrator hopes he will fall; and she is herself prey to 'marauding despair'. Frame's hard, shaped little stories are a parodic rewriting of fable, legend and fairytale, instructing rather than engaging the reader. But the main point is not so much their overt didactic purpose as the destabilizing effect of their parodic form. A tension exists between the seemingly closed narrative with its didactic authorial voice and the apparently disordered world of emotions and events it describes in which any conjunction is possible, and there are no boundaries left to divide experience (or reading) tidily into real and nonreal categories. The overall effect is to emphasize the incomprehensible relationships between acts and responses, between the authorial voice's isolation and the busy world she observes, between the world that language claims to represent and the slippery fluid difficulty of language in use in which many worlds become possible between those who belong and understand what is around them and those who do not. Although Frame's fiction can seem to have no relationship to social realism, this is a product of its refusal to stay within the boundaries of realism rather than the kinds of questions the reader has to confront. Many of Frame's stories challenge social convention, authority, materialism, and expectation, though at a more fundamental level, the inquiry they initiate into the structures which place and contain individual subjectivity is ultimately concerned with the role of language

in the construction of the world. But there are many examples of the failure to make comprehensible connections between individuals and their environments that preoccupies Frame's fiction, from the realism of Olive in 'The Bull Calf' - who worries why no-one forms twos with her: 'Is it because I stink? She thought' to the narrator in 'Royal Icing' who asks:

'Is it better to want and get an icing-forcer, a mincer, than to walk for the remainder of our lives about the house with a little dagger in our pocket trying to catch Death bending over the coal in the coal house...[?]'²⁷

Frame's most recent stories, included in the collection You are Now Entering the Human Heart (1983) represent a return to a realistically framed narrative which subtly contains a shift in register by exploding the doubleness of language, the way in which a named object, or substance, or place, will lose its restricted boundaries of meaning and become code for an ontological condition. When the narrator in 'Insulation' refuses to buy insulation because her house is already well insulated, her language slides into the more open landscape of metaphor even before she has a dream which links insulation and the painful instabilities of the subjective world.

'How well insulated I am! How solid the resistance of this house against the searching penetrating winds of Stratford. The hunted safe from the hunter, the fleeing from the pursuer, the harmed from the harmer. How well insulated I am!'²⁸

It is Frame's exploitation of the multiple possibilities of language and her deconstruction of all the boundaries by which meaning is represented as digestibly singular which characterises all her fiction. In an article she wrote about cross-cultural encounters in literature Frame praised translators in a figure of speech which seems aptly to

transfer to her own rich explorations and discoveries and crossing-overs:

'I praise those translators who so often have been accused, rightly or wrongly, of 'losing' the 'genius' of the works they translate, of dropping and mislaying meanings and atmospheres, as if in carrying the work from one language to another they were part of the folk-song, 'There's s hole in my bucket, dear Henry, dear Henry.' Beasts of burden. Water-carriers. Bearers of the spirit of life.'²⁹

Her stories also play with short narrative forms and so make the category 'shortstory' a more inclusive one. In some other respects though, she shares some of the features which might seem typical of short fiction in New Zealand. Both Duggan and Frame in their early stories use the narrative perspective on New Zealand, established by Mansfield, of the experience and point of view of a child. Where Mansfield's children are middle class and Protestant, well off and living within an extended family, Duggan's are middle class, Catholic, and their father has married again, and Frame's are working class, poor, and visited by illness and death. It is possible to read processes of social change into these shifting family circumstances, but the real point seems to be the persistence of the child's point of view in New Zealand writing. In the colonial story, writing about children explored questions about dependence and cultural identification which functioned as a metaphor for larger issues of colonial relationship to the 'parent' culture. In the later short story, the focus on children may suggest a reinforcement of the earlier narrative emphasis on dependence. In Duggan's and Frame's stories, however, children are placed outside, or at the edge of, a largely incomprehensible 'adult' world, an environment of rules and codes and beliefs that remains 'foreign' to the child. A typical instance is the behaviour of their father and stepmother to the Lenihan children, whose distance from the world of adult events in 'Race Day' is suggested in the miniaturised scene they observe through the wrong end of the telescope. In Frame's stories, the focus on children is often

a recognition of difference which may be sexual, economic, behavioural, as well as based on age, and it may include the family, as in Owls Do Cry, where almost all the members of the Withers family are on the outside of 'normal' life.

In the stories of Frame's contemporary, Helen Shaw, whose first collection, The Orange Tree and Other Stories, was published in 1957, the focus is largely on family remnants (especially the elderly and the unmarried), who represent a vanished society. Many of Shaw's stories explicitly refer back to a colonial generation whose disappearance has marooned their descendants in large houses on subdivided estates. In 'The Blind'³⁰ the family has contracted from large beginnings in another country to two elderly daughters, one unmarried and one abandoned, caring for their senile mother in a large, old, once grand house. The only children are phantom children, or the dead children of the past; the journey towards a new life has thus reached a dead end in the lives of these women, and though one has a grown-up son he has disowned her, like his father before him. 'Praise the Lord, Wilson'³¹ is a more direct representation of colonial conflict between generations. When young Wilson has at last persuaded old Miss Barclay to sell him a half acre of her wilderness, he declares ownership by cutting down all the trees. In Miss Barclay's terms he is a vandal, and she loudly and powerfully resists his progress; Wilson, after felling the poplars, vanishes to the pub. Most of Shaw's stories are built around family and generational structures and the possession or dispersal of property, and they imply colonial discourse as it has been transmitted to the daughters and granddaughters of pioneers. Significantly, Shaw's narrative focus stays with the women. 'The Orange Tree' is one of the few stories which ends with the defeat of the hopeful acquirer, perhaps because the owner of the section Jack and Mercy wish to buy is an old Maori woman who refuses their bribe of an orange tree. But in most of Shaw's fictions, the elderly women left in possession of estates see their inheritance going, and are left childless

and marooned. As the large family networks break up, such characters are increasingly enclosed by their large houses which bear the decayed signs of their inhabitants once powerful cultural heritage, wealth and skills. In 'The Gypsies', a later story, the 'pillared house with its stone portico and verandas and balconies' built by Paolo Rosa is now run down and inhabited by itinerant young people.³² The house of culture has become nothing more than a memorial to its past, an oddity, irrelevant in a society which wants a motorway more than a house and garden.

Where Mansfield's concentration on family structures and children's points of view in her New Zealand stories suggested the possibility of growth beyond the kinds of entrapment and conflict experienced by the adult (especially female) characters, Shaw's fictions are constructed around families in which the children are themselves elderly, in which growth is a youthful but external and destructive force, demolishing the artefacts of past generations and the cultural power they once expressed.

ENDNOTES

1. C.K. Stead includes a note in the introduction to Collected Stories of Maurice Duggan 1981, in which he notes that in Duggan's copy of Speaking for Ourselves in which this story first appeared, the pages of his own work are scored over and Duggan has written at the end 'what embarrassing crap!'
2. see Introduction to Stead's edition Collected Stories of Maurice Duggan
3. See New, 164
4. Duggan, M., 'The Magsman Miscellany' Collected Stories of Maurice Duggan, AUP/OUP, 1981: 360
5. Duggan, M., 'Towards the Mountains', Immanuels' Land, Auckland, 1956: 101
6. Duggan, M., Immanuel's Land: 103
7. *ibid*, 105
8. Duggan, M., 'Now is the Hour' Collected Stories: 89
9. Duggan, Stories: 101
10. Cunningham, V., Review of Duggan's Collected Stories, TLS, 9 April 1982: 404
11. Stories: 361, 364
12. Stories: 178
13. O'Leary's Orchard' Stories: 256
14. Stories: 284
15. Stories: 361, 364
16. Stories: 361
17. This is also the case with Duggan, who has a story published in each collection.
18. Frame, Janet, An Angel at my Table, 1984: 111
19. Frame, Janet, The Lagoon and Other Stories, The Caxton Press, 1951: 11
20. Frame, Janet, The Lagoon and Other Stories, Pegasus, 1963: 87

21. This territory has been indicated from Frame's first metaphorical title, The Lagoon
22. Frame, J., 'Keel and Kool' You are Now Entering the Human Heart, The Women's Press, 1984: 6
23. Frame, J., 'Prizes' The Reservoir and Other Stories: 97
24. Frame, J., The Reservoir: 97
25. New, 162
26. Frame, J., 'A Night of Frost and a Morning of Mist' The Reservoir p.9
27. Frame, J., 'A Night of Frost and a Morning of Mist' The Reservoir: 9
28. Frame, J., 'Insulation' You are Now Entering the Human Heart: 202
29. Frame, J., 'Departures and Returns' from Writers in East-West Encounter, Cultural Bearings ed Guy Amirthanayagam, Macmillan, 1982: 94
30. Shaw, Helen, 'The Blind' New Zealand Short Stories, ed. D.M. Davin, 1953
31. Shaw, H., The Gypsies and Other Stories, 1978
32. Shaw, *ibid*

Writing as Other; Other Writing

Short stories in English by migrant writers and by Maori writers also began in the 1950s with the publication of stories by J.C. Sturm in Te Ao Hou, Numbers, and the second volume of the Oxford New Zealand Short Stories series, and of Amelia Batistich's An Olive Tree in Dalmatia. These writers and those who followed them, particularly Yvonne du Fresne, Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera, used the short story to explore New Zealand as if from the outside, constructing narratives about people distinguished by their cultural and racial difference, which function both as commentary on the official homogeneity of New Zealand literary history and culture, and as an expression of heterogeneity. An Olive Tree in Dalmatia, which appeared in 1953, is about origins. Many of the stories are set in New Zealand, but it's a landscape and society as seen from the filter of Dalmatia - a place in which to make money and 'get on', but which never seems, as with the earlier British settlers, quite right.

Batistich's stories construct the villages, family networks, social customs, and complicated historical memories of the Balkan States as the background of displacement; her characters know New Zealand as a place where the local people are kind, where they themselves are hardworking and not poor, where the hills are burnt and hard, and from which, to borrow one of her titles, 'It's a Long Way to Dalmatia'. The direction and narrative tide of the stories is all back, back to the villages where the men send for wives, back to see the olive tree Stipan planted as a boy, back to the place all the stories are about, where words take on their final meaning.

'Having all that and being poor?' I wonder.
'It's a different kind of 'poor' from here,' Mama says. 'In Dalmatia you have everything but money.'¹

Batistich's fictions rewrite the making of a New Zealander; the complexities of racial and cultural identity are opposed

to economic identity, which in Batistich's stories is the simplest and most certain representation of a Dalmatian immigrant, one articulated again and again. But the problem of belonging is also a problem of description.

'That's one thing I'm glad I'm not. Poor. But I am Dalmatian and that's different from everybody else and when they want to, the other girls say; 'Poof! You're only an Austrian squarehead anyway.' Just like we all say to Minnie that she's poor'.²

Batistich's local fictional environment is still that of pioneer and settler: gumfields, clearing the bush, carving farms out of swamps so that a young strong bride can be sent for. Yvonne du Fresne's stories are more characteristically placed in the schools, farm settlements and historical events of New Zealand, and in this sense her writing constitutes a

not by the Carson Gang, but by Danes who were legendary workers, draining and clearing the swamps, surviving hardship.

Although in du Fresne's Astrid stories Astrid participates in the historical experience of her generation and she is part of the district (its boundaries include her while the inclusion of Batistich's Dalmatians is only notional) her cultural difference constructs heterogeneity and otherness. When in 1937 'Cherry Taylor and I turned into Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose' for the Coronation, the book which offers them royalty has been given to Astrid by Onkel Sven. Astrid keeps making remarks which demonstrate her lack of understanding; she is a 'Danish Dolt'; her father imitates the Duke of Gloucester travelling up the Foxton Line every night after dinner; and on the coronation Picnic to which the girls bring their Coronation pencils, Fader turns into a Viking;

'Charge!' he shouted. He pressed his foot on the accelerator, we reached fully thirty miles an hour!''

Like Batistich's, du Fresne's stories are densely imbued with cultural texts. Stories told by her Grandtante, the history of Jutland, and the myths and ghosts of Denmark are superimposed on the Manawatu; Cherry and Astrid with their raffia purses become English princesses and Astrid as Peter the Great gives orders to her playmates. du Fresne's fictions work towards the acceptance and reconciliation of difference, which is made in typically colonialist terms. In 'Houses' Astrid's fear of Cherry's grandmother gives way to astonishment that she knows their names and generations; her moder explains that they 'were pioneers ... here long before we came from Jutland.'⁵ The work of the pioneers thus legitimizes them, and the Danish/English difference in du Fresne's stories is historically familiar, and comfortably accommodated. It stops short of any larger questions about the ways in which colonizing and pioneering peoples impose

their narratives on the colonized, but draws attention to the heterogeneity of 'their' New Zealand, written in foreign tongues. By comparison Renato Amato's The Full Circle of the Travelling Cuckoo (1967) as its title suggests, is a narrative of displacement and otherness; its stories travel from fascist Italy where 'nothing seemed to fit' to a New Zealand just as alienating in its unfamiliarity and behaviour. The narrator of 'An Evening's Work' is taken outside by Al to look through the window at Barry and 'the lady' in bed:

'I felt sorry and sad. Not for the lady or Barry or Judy, but perhaps out of regret at having discovered something nobody should ever try to unveil. 'People are not like this', I kept wanting to think.'⁶

Displacement in Amato's stories, serves to heighten the isolation of the narrator, ideological isolation giving way to the cultural and geographical isolation of New Zealand. The stories form a discontinuous narrative in which the narrator is often at a loss for speech, not because he is not able to speak the language, marked out by linguistic difference as du Fresne's characters are, but because there is nothing to say in a context where stories/histories are incomplete, and the narrator (character) is always trying to make something from nothing, to make connections, establish himself, materially and psychologically, where he is. Amato's collection suggests an almost existential context for the immigrant, where displacement is vacancy, the overflow of 'nothings', and identity is 'imaginings':

'My days are full of nothings. They are so full that they overflow at times, and I have to stay awake at night waiting for the flood to abate and for my mind to clear.

Of all the things I was, all I am now is my imaginings from behind a great plate-glass window. That is not what everybody sees of course; all they can see is a thin bundle of clothes, all huddled up and withered, that makes them shake their heads and sigh.'⁷

In the 1950s the first stories in English by a Maori writer were published in a number of periodicals. Although it was not until 1983 that the stories of J.C. Sturm were collected and published as a volume, they are set firmly in the social realist country of Sargesonian narrative, writing of New Zealand as it looks and feels to a Maori woman in the 1950s. Sturm's stories, along with those of her successors, Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme, and others, engage directly with cultural oppositions as do immigrant writers. Like Batistich and du Fresne, Maori writers speak in a different language, but by giving voice to the silent other, the other who most explicitly and uncomfortably challenges cultural hegemony and given social structures, Maori writers rewrite New Zealand in English, their fictions breaking out of and therefore signifying their silence. Although Ihimaera's collection of short stories Pounamu, Pounamu was the first to be published by a Maori writer in 1972, earlier writers like Sturm, many of whose stories do not explicitly identify themselves as expressions of a Maori voice, from the vantage point of hindsight indicate the breaking of silence. Sturm's collection, The House of the Talking Cat (1983), is divided into two parts, which trace a kind of progression towards writing as a Maori. The stories collected in Part 1 have an implicit chronological connection, moving from a young woman in her first sexual encounter, to a woman alone with her small children, a mother taking an afternoon off, a woman contemplating an affair, a woman running a family and talking to the cat. They are narratives of women alone, caring for children, working, and with husbands who come home late, drunk, unable to offer comfort or protection from the threatening world outside the home. Sturm's stories represent women at odds with the environments - marital, maternal, sexual - in which they find themselves caught by necessity and emotional vulnerability. A recurring narrative is an incomplete journey, which has started out purposefully and been aborted, its objective lost or missed or vanished. At the end of 'The Dance' as the various couples leave after an

evening 'better than a football scrum', Bill, who has been looking for a remembered tennis-court, 'like something we'd all had a long time ago but forgotten...A sort of lost garden', stops to light a cigarette, and is so 'intent on shielding his handful of light and warmth' that he fails to notice a 'dark narrow turning on the other side of the road, that led to a footpath and a tennis-court hidden away in tall grasses pale under the moon'.⁸ In 'The Earrings' Helen goes to meet a lover in town, but the meeting is distressing and ambiguous, and seems accidental, pointless 'like two strangers...caught together in a crowd'. Sturm's female characters are represented in a narrative which cannot be completed; their destinations cannot be reached, as is suggested by the title of one of her stories, 'Where to, Lady?'; nor do they fit their environments, like the unnamed woman in the title story who remarks to the cat: 'Just for a moment, Thomas, I felt a stranger in my own house, as though it doesn't belong to me, or I don't belong to it...'⁹ Home is a place which cannot be left, though many of Sturm's characters try to leave it, but where they do not belong; a place of conflict, and isolation and being alone in the dark.

Although Sturm's women narrators are not explicitly identified as Maori until the stories collected as Part 2, their isolation, and their imprisoning domestic circumstances put them on the edge of the society they inhabit. In 'Where to, Lady?' a woman takes the afternoon off from her family, but finds, 'You can't just move out of one world and into another simply by boarding a tram.' Wherever she goes, her condition is reflected and heightened. Visiting friends she picks up a book and 'all the pain and passion, discoveries and loss, waiting and disappointments, the unending unanswerable questions, and the unwanted final statement, crept from between the covers and nestled in my hand.'¹⁰

Passing a jukebox the music gloats 'Oh, you'll never get away, you'll never get away'. But it is what is unsaid in Sturm's stories that signifies the absent context for her displaced

and isolated narrators. Eventually, caught in the rain, the narrator of 'Where to, Lady?' enters a cheap restaurant, full of men shovelling food, but at a side table is a half-caste Maori woman by herself who beckons to the young woman to join her. This kind of metaphorical positioning, at the table with the Maori woman in a room full of pakeha men, is typical of Sturm's stories. There is only one story in the collection which openly and explicitly deals with racial conflict (at a children's birthday party)¹¹, but the whole collection is concerned with characters on the edges of conventional society; women, cleaners and hospital workers, and the illiterate. Though Sturm's women narrators tend to be well educated, literary, and relatively well-off, in important ways they are seen and their environments reflect them, as outsiders, and their narratives exist in a kind of gap, the incomplete journey between 'home' and somewhere else. Their husbands are only footsteps coming up the path, their only real conversation is with the cat, and there is no answer to the question 'Where to, Lady?'

When Witi Ihimaera's Pounamu, Pounamu (1972) appeared, he became the first Maori writer to publish a collection of stories in English. Its title suggests writing is a kind of cultural wealth, a taonga. Ihimaera's earlier stories represent young Maori men as individually and successfully bridging cultures. The stories in Pounamu, Pounamu are mostly stories about rural Maori life. They stress community, family and tribal networks and children. Cultural and racial difference, as in 'The Other Side of the Fence' or 'Beginning of the Tournament' is expressed in difference of behaviour or attitude or convention, and the social problems these cause can be resolved by essential human emotions: love in 'The Makutu on Mrs Jones' and basic decency in 'The Other Side of the Fence'. Although in the story 'In Search of the Emerald City' there is a narrative frame for the drift of young Maori to the city, and the stories as a whole refer to Pakeha and in particular American culture,¹² the Maori is presented as still

connected to, and secure within, rural and tribal life. Like Patricia Grace, Ihimaera is concerned to stress the importance of the whanau (his stories are peopled by a multitude of relatives) and to construct a language that represents some of the spoken idioms of Maori English and incorporates Maori words as customary and unexplained. In Pounamu, Pounamu there is also frequently a division in Ihimaera's language between an 'official' Pakeha narrative voice (as in 'The Other Side of the Fence,' which is told in the third person using complex sentences and a formal vocabulary), and a spoken first person idiom, repetitive, often spoken by a child, dense with Maori phrases and vocabulary. Such an idiom 'speaks' Maori to a Maori readership, telling of the social context of the tribe and family, and of the physical context of the land by which, far more successfully than by cultural and racial opposition, the Maori is identified. Whereas in Sturm's stories (Maori) women are isolated and silenced in a confusing, threatening society, in Ihimaera's rural narratives there is an assertion of happiness in numbers, in the feeling of common origins. Racial conflict is a problem that can perhaps be distanced by the affirmation of a counter culture; the good-humoured rural Maori community. In 1978 Witi Ihimaera wrote about the objectives of his work, identifying the greatest problem for Maori as 'retaining our emotional identity'. Like other Maori writers, Ihimaera connects the emotional identity of Maori people with communality and a rural-based cultural identity associated with a specific tribal region. His fictions work always at interpreting cultural and racial difference by the assertion of a Maori value/belief system, of 'emotional identity', and it is this which Ihimaera claims is 'truly Maori':

'My concern is for the roots of our culture, the culture we carry within ourselves and which makes us truly Maori. It is a culture essentially rurally based, with toes firmly gripping the soil, and so I wrote at first about the rural Maori rather than about urban areas where - so I've been informed - all the action is. But only when I completed writing about the rural Maori to my

satisfaction did I uncurl my toes and write about how hard the city pavements are to our feet.

I write about the landscapes of the heart, the emotional landscapes which make Maori people what they are'.¹³

Ihimaera's second collection of stories, The New Net Goes Fishing (1977) shifted from rural to urban settings, framed, as W.H. New has remarked, by two stories 'Yellow Brick Road' and 'Return to Oz', which alluded to the 'perfectible fantasy world of the American writer L. Frank Baum',¹⁴ and which had been prefigured by the story 'In Search of Emerald City' in Pounamu, Pounamu. Allusions to the fantasy land of Oz frame stories of dislocation, poverty, family disintegration, violence, and racial discrimination of all kinds which signify the hardness of city pavements to use Ihimaera's metaphor. The move into the city is a move away from home, and the dream of the Emerald City that prompted it is an illusion. Yet once the possibility of journeying to Oz has arisen, it has to be taken, as Jimmy Jackson Heremaia acknowledges in 'Catching Up':

He has been pushed this far, led this far. And now?
He could not stop now. He had to keep on going. He
wanted to. He'd seen beyond the horizon. He hadn't
known what was there, but he had to find out.¹⁵

When Ihimaera's characters achieve Pakeha success, as in the story 'Cousins', the Maori self is submerged but it does not vanish. In fact it is the reinvention of the Maori in a Pakeha context that Ihimaera focuses on, the recovery of the displaced, not as it was, but as it pushes through and infects the experience and language of change:

You seem to be living two lives at once - sometimes
fragments of one life and then of the other and,
more and more often, both at the same time until you
are not sure which is the reality.¹⁶

The power of language to silence or to rewrite cultural identity is never more evident than in the work of Maori writers, who identify their writing as 'foreign' by burying in it the spoken idiom of another language, suggesting in that other language another version of 'real', of 'home', and another cultural identity. Patricia Grace's story 'A Way of Talking' which opens her first collection, Waiariki (1975) focuses explicitly on the self constructed in language. When Rose and her sister visit a Pakeha neighbour who refers to 'the Maoris' who are scrubcutting as if they are an indistinguishable group without individuality, Rose attacks her in what her sister thinks of as 'Pakehafied' talking. Just as the neighbour's language reveals her cultural assumptions, so Rose's adoption of Pakehafied talking acknowledges the weapon of domination with which she must fight her battles. Grace's stories, like Ihimaera's, imply that writing Maori in Pakeha language reinvents the Maori subject, allowing cultural and racial stereotypes to be parodically challenged.

'It's fashionable for a Pakeha to have a Maori for a friend.' Suddenly Rose grinned. Then I heard Jane's voice coming out of that Rose's mouth and felt a grin of my own coming. 'I have friends who are Maoris. They're lovely people. The eldest girl was married recently and I did the frocks. The other girl is at varsity. They're all so friendly and so natural and their house is absolutely spotless.¹⁷

Grace's stories also concentrate, like Ihimaera's, on extended family relationships among cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles, children, and elders. She has written of the need for Maori writers to represent Maori in order that the old stereotypes may be broken down. It is a need for writing that demonstrates the variousness, individuality and spirituality of Maori that Grace emphasises:

'[I]t is important for me and other Maori writers to write about us in all our variousness, our feelings and aspirations and values; attitudes to life and death,

affinity for land and land issues, about kinship and social orders and status; about the concept of aroha embracing awhina and manaaki; attitudes towards learning and work, towards food...And most especially about the spiritual aspects of all these things'.¹⁸

Grace has commented particularly on the sexual stereotyping of Maori women by non-Maori (male) writers, and the need to represent Maori women in relationships other than sexual:

'Earliest works depict Maori girls as passionate hip-swingers with flashing eyes (almost always a half-caste or a princess). In later writing the Maori woman seems to exist in fiction for one reason only. In Mulgan's Man Alone the main character has a sexual relationship with someone else's wife (illicit), she's the boss's wife (doubly illicit), she's a Maori (triple banger?) And to top it all off, near the end of the novel he is asked the question, "What was it like?"'¹⁹

Like Ihimaera, Grace asserts cultural difference by focussing on extended family and social structures, and value systems.

'After all, sex is important in all societies - cousins are not, elders are not'.

In Waiariki the fictions which represent the Maori range from stories which affirm traditional Maori social structures and values and are framed as realist - often oral - narratives, to stories like 'At the River' or 'And So Too' which emphasize relationships with history and landscape, articulating the mythological and elemental context in which Maori cultural identity is affirmed:

'And I lie on soil in all my heaviness and trembling. Stretch out my arms on wide Earth Mother and lay my face on hers. Then call out my love and speak my vow.'²⁰

The influential anthology of Maori writing edited by D.S. Long and Witi Ihimaera, Into the World of Light (1982), explicitly locates Maori writing by reference to the Maori creation myth,

which recognises three states of being from the beginning of the universe to the creation of man. The separation of Rangi (the sky father) and Papatuanuku (the earth mother) by their sons established the 'third state of existence' known as

'Te ao marama (the world of light). It is in this period that the first human was created out of the earth mother by Tane to establish Te ira Tangata (the life principle), the descent of man, and the world as we know it today'.²¹

The connection of the Maori to the land and to nature is thus that of a child to parents, and the focus in Maori fictional writing on family structures as paradigmatic for cultural identity signifies also the philosophical location of the individual in the phenomenological world. Pointing to Maori writing as the expression of this location marks out cultural difference as epistemological difference; writing Maori identity is also to write a science of knowledge. As Ranginui Walker points out:

'This personification of nature in the Maori cosmogenic myth codifies man's relationship to the earth and its resources. The code is progressively developed in succeeding myths and traditions'.²²

Maori writing draws on both social and mythic codes of relationship(s) to elaborate racial, cultural and spiritual distinctiveness. A story of Grace's, 'Parade', published in Into the World of Light was referred to by the editors as the story which best described the volume's purpose. A Maori girl in a parade performing action songs looks back at the crowd: 'I kept thinking and trying not to think, 'Is that what we are to them?' Museum pieces, curios, shells under glass.' In the story Grandpa Hohepa says to her, 'It is your job, this. To show others who we are'. Grace's fiction originates from the same impulse; her stories show 'others' who 'we' are with a significant inversion of conventional terms. Both Waiariki and Grace's second collection, The Dream Sleepers (1980) use

social realism to show Maori as an underprivileged race. The title story of The Dream Sleepers describes the lives of children whose mothers and grandmothers go out to clean office blocks at 3 a.m. In Grace's narrative world, however Maori identity is constructed not only by the menial or meaningless work her characters are obliged to do in an urban world of Pakeha conditions, but also by the monumental pregnant woman celebrating her condition in 'Between Earth and Sky' a story that draws explicit attention to the cosmogenic myth in which its significance is finally constructed, or the energy and intelligence of the children in 'Kepa' and 'Drifting', who inhabit land and sea without any restrictions on their freedom, vitality, and right to occupy the 'World of Light'. Figuratively stories like Grace's and those in Ihimaera and Long's anthology represent both the dark (social realist) twentieth century Maori environment and the arrival of Maori into the light of self-expression.

When Pounamu, Pounamu appeared in 1972, followed by Waiariki in 1975, the writers were characterised respectively as the first Maori writer in English and the first Maori woman writer in English. But both Ihimaera and Grace's writing had been appearing for some time in Te Ao Hou 'the Maori magazine'. This quarterly began in 1952, published by the Department of Maori Affairs and edited by E.G. Schwimmer, and announced itself as 'a magazine for Maori people... Te Ao Hou should become like a "marae" on paper'.²³ From the beginning Te Ao Hou explicitly encouraged Maori creative writers and artists to produce texts which would help to affirm a collective identity amongst its readers. Initially the texts it published were tribal legends, translated into English for Te Ao Hou's readership. Legendary fiction continued to occupy space in the quarterly throughout its publishing history, but as early as the fifth number (Winter 1953) a short story competition was announced, aimed at fostering Maori writers. Instructions for the competition suggest a prevailing view of the kind of story thought desirable, mimetic, documentary,

educational and concerned to demonstrate group identity: 'It is hoped that the stories will help to increase awareness of what Maori life today really is.'

Subsequently, stories were submitted in Maori and English; most numbers published at least one story and often several, and the magazine advertised ceaselessly for writers and artists, holding literary competitions every year. At the end of 1955 a series of stories by Maori writers was opened by J.C. Sturm's 'For All the Saints'. By the time Grace and Ihimaera published in Te Ao Hou, the magazine had already established itself as a publishing forum for Maori writers and in doing so, explicitly recognized that cultural identity is textual as well as racial, social, ceremonial, historical and linguistic. Heretaunga Pat Baker, Riki Erihi, Rowley Habib, Arapera Blank, J.C. Sturm, S.M. Mead, Rora Paki: a great many names appear in Te Ao Hou whose writing constructed a context for the writers whose work progressed from periodical to book publication. The story models that emerge in Te Ao Hou also act as a comment on New Zealand's then authorised version of unproblematic race relations, based on an assertion of equal opportunity and mutual goodwill.

For some time stories sponsored by Te Ao Hou remained obedient to the official version of race relations while focusing on a point of great tension, the departure of the young to another cultural environment. The Judge's Report on a Literary Competition held in 1961 commented:

'Every story was concerned in some measure with the basic problem of Maoridom today - adaptation to a new and sometimes bewildering complex way of life.... Somewhere, either directly or by implication, every writer insists that the Maori must learn to take his rightful place in the Pakeha world, and more significant - that such a place is waiting for him.'²⁴

Increasingly the stories in Te Ao Hou are narratives of Maori failure in both cultures: alienated from one and excluded, by lack of education, money and opportunity, from the other. The stories are mainly written in the first person. Like colonial writing by Europeans, Maori writing in English is predominantly oral narrative, representing itself as authentic experience. This may be read as a response to the frequent calls in Te Ao Hou for Maori writers to 'increase awareness of what Maori life today really is'; the text positions itself within the speaking voice of such 'real' life. Te Ao Hou stories are always located in the extended family, with considerable emphasis on grandparents. Sometimes the frame of the story consciously extends into whakapapa, and the post-European Maori family is shadowed by its larger, older, pre-European structures with their attendant values and responsibilities. This sense of a wider cultural responsibility and audience than a contemporary generation remains constant in Maori writing; Keri Hulme's story 'He Tauware Kawa, He Kawa Tauware' about a small community developing its cultural identity with a concert-party, describes the father of the leader encouraging the group by referring to support they will get from the 'old people':

'You'll be all right, he'd said seriously, nodding to each of us. You all do your best and the old people will do the rest. You'll have them on your shoulders when you go on, all of you remember that! Be proud, you are carrying your dead onto a strange place as well as yourselves'.²⁵

But as in the early work of Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace, the great majority of stories in Te Ao Hou focus on grandparents as a way of signalling cultural difference from the Pakeha family. Again and again in the stories of Te Ao Hou, a connection to a different past is reinforced by the active presence of grandparents, whose roots are tribal and who suggest a larger context for the immediate family. Representation of the Maori family in this way inevitably

emphasizes internal conflict, since the generations signify oppositions which are destructively stressed by the progress of Pakeha society: rural/urban, pastoral/technological, rural labour-based economy/income-wage earning economy, tribal knowledge expressed in legends, beliefs and behaviour and the acquired knowledge of Pakeha education and behaviour, especially behaviour induced by the ability to earn money: drinking, smoking, being fashionable.

As if to give emphatic point to the experience of transition and conflict that Maori stories describe in the fifties, sixties and seventies, many stories actually take place at bus-stop as the son or daughter of the family leave for the city, or the university, or some equally powerful location of difference. Although they are very often stories of failure, regret and nostalgia, it is significant that once the move away from grandparents and the rural and tribal environment has occurred, return is almost always impossible. The focus on grandparents suggests inevitable loss, through death, of the older culture.

A recent sketch, 'Butterflies', by Patricia Grace represents generational and racial difference through a sharp little comparison between school and home, which is elaborated into grandparent/granddaughter, rural/urban, pastoral/retail economy, Maori/Pakeha. When the granddaughter comes home and reads her story about killing butterflies to her grandparents who are hoeing cabbages, she reports her teacher's response: 'butterflies are beautiful creatures...You don't kill butterflies, that's what she said.' After a time, the grandfather's reply to his granddaughter is:

'Because you see', the grandfather said, 'Your teacher, she buy all her cabbages from the supermarket, and that's why.'²⁶

In 1959 Te Ao Hou published a special Maori Writer's Issue. Addressing the 'some dozens of Maori' who had started to write, the editorial posed some special problems: whether to write in Maori or English, and if in English, to a specifically Maori or more general readership. The editorial also asked if Maori were to see themselves primarily as 'Maori or New Zealand authors?'²⁰ Such questions became increasingly pointed in Te Ao Hou and the publications that succeeded it, Te Kaea, Te Maori and Tu Tangata. Te Ao Hou provided a separatist context, announcing itself as specifically for a Maori audience. But it became increasingly evident that being a Maori writer is only of financial value at the Pakeha end of the journey. As writers moved out of Te Ao Hou into wider recognition, they got translated back into the text of Te Ao Hou and its successors as the subjects of articles, writers from another environment as well as locals who have made good, reinforcing the narrative oppositions and shifts which preoccupy the stories. As Maori writing moved increasingly into Pakeha forums over three decades it became redefined as English language writing, with the Maori language remaining in the text only as macaronics, dispersed fragments of a superseded cultural identity. At the same time, as if to counter this absorption, Maori writing in English became more politically militant and confrontational in the late seventies and eighties. In 1959 a story called 'Goodbye' by Tirohia won the literary competition in Te Ao Hou. It is about a boy leaving the family farm and local community to go to the city and train as a doctor. His departure is opposed by his Granny. '"The Maori belongs on his land," she would argue, forgetting that there was no longer enough land for them all.'²⁷ That there is not enough land is, in this story, something that Granny has 'forgotten', and the boy's departure argues his superior understanding of necessity. But in the stories of Apirana Taylor²⁸ and Bruce Stewart²⁹ in the later 1980s the loss of land is an insistent political subtext, underwriting the violence, and the racial and gender conflicts in the narratives.

It is possible to make a number of interesting comparisons with stories by Pakeha writers of the same period. Maori writers seldom write about gender conflict. Patricia Grace's stories celebrate gender roles very often, as in 'Between Earth and Sky', an often-anthologised story, as do Witi Ihimaera's and the large majority of the stories in Te Ao Hou, but race relations are always present, providing a point of conflict in the text. Many Pakeha writers do not write about non-Europeans at all, whereas in fiction by Maori, race is invariably the foreground of identity. Ihimaera's latest collection Dear Miss Mansfield which rewrites a number of Mansfield stories, frequently turns on the racial identity of the characters, so that 'Her First Ball' is rewritten as the first ball of Tuta Wharepapa, invited to Government House, the only Maori in the room. In the more recent stories of Bruce Stewart gender is closely associated with race. Stewart's typical narrator is a person of mixed race, whose own identity is at a point of transition from one race to another, rather than fixed in an external movement from one culture into another. In 'Mangu' for example, the narrator's Pakeha father is identified as Pakeha by the maleness of his behaviour (his deer hunting, trophy collecting, and general acquisitiveness) in opposition to the Maori mother (herself regarded as a trophy by other deershooters) whose family are tribal landowners and practice conservation and resource management in their living habits. In Stewart's fictions such identification of cultures by gender is quite explicit, but throughout Maori writing in English since 1952 the oppositions explored by the stories imply the masculinity of Pakeha culture.

As used by Pakeha writers, especially in popular short fiction, cultural identification by gender can also prompt racist stereotypes. The stereotype of the fat, lazy Maori who fails to meet masculine standards of success is a familiar figure, but in Maori writing the opposition is more generally articulated as one between nurture and its associated forms of

knowledge (conservation, tribal economy, the land as text for identity), and use, characterizing Pakeha culture as greedy, obsessed with material success, violent, and destructive. Maori texts tend to be both pastoral and past/oral: the past is where identity lies, and its text is the land, and oral language is the medium in which identity is expressed.³⁰ Maori written texts constantly reach back to oral language and voiced narrative, but do not significantly employ dialect as Pakeha writers about Maori often do. Rather Maori writers tend to stress the orality of the written, the function of language as a medium for voice rather than for the kind of abstract or linguistic play that characterises language in, for example, postmodern stories. But while the use of Maori phrases or expressions as in stories by Ihimaera, Grace, Hulme, Stewart, Taylor, Habib and others enforces bilingual readings, and helps to force a reconsideration of the national identity as bilingual and bicultural as Ihimaera and Long claim in their introduction to Into the World of Light, it also 'buries' or marginalises Maori within English, in the same way that fiction by Maori places Maori experience and Maori identity within the larger, opposing but defining, Pakeha context. The Maori story is the other text which affirms context, as Maori language, in its incomplete written forms and sense of a voice translated into English, affirms (and opposes) a surrounding linguistic environment.

Read in bulk, Maori stories in English illustrate a remarkably consistent narrative of dispossession, conflict, and, eventually, anger. The writers who preceded and accompanied Ihimaera and Grace represented Maori identity as past/oral, spoken as it was disappearing. It is in a sense a linear narrative, from 'One by one the elders passed on, and we who were once richly endowed with Kaumatua, are now without a background',³¹ to the stories in Apirana Taylor's He Rau Aroha, which mix violence and comedy, generating humour from and affection about their characters as well as expressing anger about the situations in which they are placed. Taylor's

characters may be 'without a background' but they are also claiming a place in the world, and it is a world in which the knowledge of past generations still has value.

'The taiaha in this day and age, thought Karu again on the Friday before Mana arrived for this first learning...How to kill with a stick, he thought. In an age of nuclear war. Outdated, foolish, childish. He'd thought this many times before in his life and long ago realised that it was the spirit of what you teach that was important, and how you teach it, causing the mind to think. That's not foolish. That's not childish. That's not outdated'.³²

Taylor's later collection of stories, Ki Te Ao, represents Maori as able to recuperate cultural identity in an urban and Pakeha environment, as well as participating in interracial marriage in which the characters comically rework racist stereotypes:

'Hear that bloody Maori radio station. Te Upoko O te Ika. It's bloody great isn't it?' he called as he looked behind the couch. 'You know', he continued as he stood in the middle of the room and combed his hair with his fingers, 'It's you bloody Pakeha who are to blame. You steal our land. Make us Maori pay through the nose for basic essentials like undies and then steal them too.'

'You're lucky we came. You lot didn't have undies till we showed up'.³³

Like his character Ata, in 'Swept off the Street' Taylor's stories affirm the efficacy of values, and of what Ihimaera called the 'emotional identity' of Maori, the landscapes of the heart imaged in family and marriage, but express distrust and anxiety about the larger social contexts in which Maori are placed: government departments, the legal system, hotels, even when, as in 'The Inn' racist expectations are comically reversed. Taylor's collection finishes with two opposing images characteristic of his stories: the note of love left by his girlfriend on Ata's door, and an image of his people:

'Leaves leaves and more leaves. Leaves are more than just that to the Maori. They are a symbol of people. Leaves detached from the tree. Drifting in the wind hither and thither'.³⁴

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's Tahuri (1989) moves into a more explicitly gendered point of view on Maori narrative than earlier writers. While her stories construct racial and cultural difference along familiar lines (extended family, the emotional/cultural significance of grandparents, rural-based community, pressure on the young to participate in, and be judged by, another culture) they focus almost exclusively on relationships, including sexual relationships, between women. So the recognitions and representations of identity which occur in Te Awekotuku's fictions are both race and gender specific. Community becomes inclusive and exclusive as her narrators represent sexuality and desire as a process contained within race and gender groups, a secret self identification. When Tahuri, who loves watching Tihi, realises that Tihi's boyfriend Ahi has 'Cindy's eyes, and Cindy's voice. Cindy had come back as Ahi' it feels 'like a secret - it felt neat though!' The sequence of emotional identifications which ends in Cindy/Ahi and Tihi is 'magic', a protected secret which establishes a stronger and even more distinctive community than family or race alone can. Correspondingly the opposition between Maori/female/lesbian and Pakeha/male/heterosexual is heightened and more violent, as in the title story, where rape and abuse seem to be the only communications across gender and the destination of Maori girl runaways is inevitably a white male-run institution.³⁵ In Tahuri it is female community which supports and constructs identity for Maori; men, whether Pakeha or Maori, are threatening and abusive and consequences of heterosexuality intensify the social disadvantages of Maori women:

'Cassina with Heke and four little kids; Trina working in the draper's shop with a big puku'³⁶

It is Tahuri's magnified recognition of her self in the 'Big Girls', her desire and love of the Big Girls, which provides the female Maori narrator with the safest, most exclusive, but also perhaps most marginal environment:

'[S]he stayed in the wharepaku, where none of the big boys could ask her to jitterbug. She checked the toilet paper, and the washbasins, and the floors. She sat on the rubbish tin, and went out sometimes and got a drink, or had a dance with Reti, then back she came. Always, the the Big Girls came parading by. Watching the Big Girls. Loving them.

While Te Awekotuku's stories, like Grace's, stress family and community as the primary context of Maori identity, by making it a lesbian community which is desired, they inevitably suggest social vulnerability as well. But as Grace's discussion of male Pakeha representation of Maori women pointed out, female cultural identity is always in danger of appropriation and stereotyping, and Te Awekotuku's fiction might be seen to recover a sexuality for the Maori woman that is not dependent on the construction of gender roles but remains culturally distinctive.

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35. Taylor, A., Ki Te Ao: 155
36. Te Awekotuku, Tahuri: 52

The 'Free' Story

The predominant form of the short story in New Zealand in the last thirty years, which flourished as a successor to Sargeson's social realist sketches and novellas, amongst the major short fiction writers of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as providing the vast bulk of periodical fiction publication, might be described as the 'free' story. Clare Hanson derived the term from the English writer Elizabeth Bowen, drawing a distinction between the 'free' story and symbolist or modernist short fiction as follows:

'Character and locale are usually closely delineated by free story writers who are attracted to the particular rather than the general. They rarely use description for symbolic purposes: the emphasis is on the particular, concrete subject The free story also shows far more response to social pressures than does modernist short fiction.'¹

Maurice Shadbolt described his attitude to the short story by quoting Frank O'Connor who uses very similar terms to those used about the free story:

'The short story is the art form that deals with the individual when there is no coherent society to absorb him: when he has to exist, as it were, by his own inner light ...' Shadbolt added, ...' Or when a coherent society has hardly begun to exist.'²

Shadbolt's The New Zealanders (1959) is a 'sequence' of stories which explore, illuminate and transmit a 'vision of the national sensibility'³ by means of fictions which are in effect explorations of types: the Englishwoman pining for Home and passing her cultural identification on to her daughter, the Depression family man unable to get work because of his politics, teenagers in a small town set alight by sexuality, men whose manliness is a cover for their latent homosexuality. Most of the stories are end-closed, and because their focus is

not primarily on plot, nothing very much happens. Shadbolt uses events to reveal characters, and by extension society, a society still marked by depression characteristics, itinerancy, puritanism, conformity, suspicion and closed environments. An early reviewer remarked:

'Mr Shadbolt does not see his New Zealanders as a happy people. Neither is he drawn to the successful or the established...his writer's eye is best satisfied with rather dreary dairy farms, or, in urban communities, with those young people who cannot do other than coop themselves in flats.'⁴

Shadbolt's stories draw explicitly as his title might suggest, on a view of 'New Zealand' deriving ultimately from Sargeson, in which materialism and selfishness is opposed to emotional generosity, as in 'the Paua Gatherers' or 'The Strangers', and the only way to escape the demands and pressures of a work-oriented conformist society in which characters experience or represent a variety of constraints, particularly on their emotional/creative lives, is to leave. At the end of 'Love Story', for example, when Gloria's rape has resulted in her pregnancy and Ralph's rejection by his mother, their only course of action is to ride their bicycles out of town away from a puritanical and violent society. 'Outsiders' (Maori, foreigners like Irish Ted in 'the Paua Gatherers') are more likely to represent freedom or at least choice, in The New Zealanders: locals fit the stereotype scorned by Tim, a pseudo-Bohemian painter locked in his own inadequacies: 'Like all the rest', he said. 'You all like to look free and easy. But deep down you're inhibited as hell.' (Shadbolt, 109) In both The New Zealanders and Figures in Light (1978), the latter including stories from Summer Fires and Winter Country (1963) and The Presence of Music (1967), characters are placed in narratives by arrivals and departures. The society they represent and the national sensibility they illumine is one in which voyaging is endemic, homecomings ironic and ambiguous, and where social conflicts and divisions are frequently presented as a consequence of departure or change. In

'Homecoming' a successful London journalist returns home to her parents on a remote North Auckland farm, and eventually moves in with a Maori man, the lover of an old friend. He is associated in a dream with 'the country' and he becomes, in his rather sinister sexual presence, an object of desire for whom she betrays her friend.

In her dream Eve walks in a 'wasteland littered with broken stumps and dead trees tangled and white with intricate shadow; hills rose ulcered and bleeding...She came to the farmhouse she had lately visited in the scrub. No scrub surrounded it now: it stood apart, alone in the wasteland. Muru stood in the doorway, as he had before. He had the same sardonic smile.

"So this," Eve laughed maliciously, "is your country. Take it, and welcome."⁵

'Homecoming' represents 'home' as a territory of conflict, a wasteland like a damaged body. Eve comes 'home' by displacing her friend Sarah in Muru's house and bed. Her action is explicitly appropriative and invasive (she 'claims her victory'), a European woman dispossessing a Maori woman, but she is also metaphorically associated with the wasteland of her dream, the ulcered country 'taken' by Muru. 'Home' therefore is multiply determined, associated in the story with racial/cultural dispossession, and with the damaged (female) territory, the body of selfhood, that Eve represents, with Eve as the woman who both occupies and represents 'home' and, as her name suggests, stands for some kind of origin, left at the end of the story, as the object of Muru's silent, powerful unknowable gaze.

The multiple associations of 'home' are continually signalled in Shadbolt's stories. Although they often represent 'home' as rural and Maori, and thus also a commentary on or inversion of Pakeha and European culture, the stories are mostly framed as explorations of character and sensibility, 'about people' to use Shadbolt's own phrase.⁶ But a story like 'The People Before' explicitly engages with cross-cultural and racial

questions, so that when at the end of the story the narrator feels 'robbed' of something which was rightfully 'mine', his sense of loss suggests less about him as an individual than about the historical and racial questions raised by his brother's possession of ancient greenstone adzes, and the problems of ownership and belonging which are focussed by land and its histories. In practice, then, despite Shadbolt's insistence that in his stories 'the essence is human', his characters represent cultural identities as much as personal ones and suggest the issues associated with a particular region and its history, even when these are, as in many of Shadbolt's stories, represented in dream or imagery. The connections of individual subjectivities to landscape are never neutral but work to suggest the kinds of choices and conflicts by which subjectivity and cultural identity are constructed. When Janet drives away from her husband Philip in 'There was a Mountain' she leaves an 'empty plain' for the 'warm grass' on the edge of a river; their different landscapes represent explorations of choice whose eventual resolution is suggested by their respective entry into, and acceptance by, the Maori communities they encounter. Although the focus of the story is on Philip and Janet's relationship the context in which it is worked out and represented is a culturally specific one. This kind of textual dimension other writers of the 'free' story develop even more overtly. Philip Mincher's picaresque linked stories in The Ride Home (1974) of a young man and his girl on their bikes, travelling, fishing, hunting, celebrate the self-sufficient possibilities of an alternative lifestyle, but also function as a commentary on the puritanical social environment which in a larger sense, they inhabit, and with their freedom of movement and choice, resist.

In Maurice Gee's stories the behaviour of individuals is similarly suggestive of larger social pressures (as in his story 'The Losers'), but it is the characters' psychological and motivational distinctiveness that governs the narratives.

Published over twenty years, his stories have culturally significant locations: the racecourse, the town council, the beach resort, the bowling club. It is an environment of small-town families and business men and the narratives are constructed on antagonistic relations between the sexes, within families, and between generations. Usually written from a male point of view and with an increasingly elderly central character, Gee's fictions are always focused on a distinctive event, the event which isolates its protagonists from their social context but also reinstates the power structures which sustain it. In 'Eleventh Holiday' anxiety and aggression amongst males expresses itself competitively in a game of tennis between a bodgie and a middle-aged man. The tennis match is the overt representation of a number of conflicts (generational, sexual, economic, racial and political) and when the bodgie, who is the person without power in the social context, wins the game, he becomes a target of violence. Such violence is never far away in Gee's New Zealand, where sexual relationships are constrained by personal limitations or public disapproval, where men are territorial and underdeveloped emotionally, and women are managing and possessive. In the stories Gee's male characters age; the last four stories of his collection focus on elderly men, retired and finally senile (A Glorious Morning Comrade 1974) who represent powerlessness and are victims of constraining social forces. In every case they are opposed by or to women. In the title story, 'A Glorious Morning Comrade', Mr Pitt-Rimmer's escape from his daughter's bridge party, incontinent and wearing his dressing gown, suggests both the need felt by individuals to escape social structures and the futility of their efforts; the former judge become infant is only able to escape when senility makes escape impossible. Senility is represented simultaneously as a retreat from and a loss of adulthood; running away, as in 'A Retired Life' where the same situation occurs, is an action which marks out the boundaries of adult (social/family) containment which old age, like childhood, cannot cross.

'The old man kept up his wooden progress, looking straight ahead. He came to a place where a trickle from a stormwater drain had cut a shallow channel in the beach. It was only a couple of feet wide but Mr Webb went back and forth at its edge like a bird at the bars of a cage. He looked back and started to moan with fright.

I could hide him Cliff thought. Or tell the women to let him go'.⁷

Gee's stories work to expose or comment on social and cultural structures: the baptists objecting to a woman's hand on her partner's genitalia and Cliff who after forty years of marriage still can't tell his wife where the woman's hand had been are products and representations of a silenced sexuality;⁸ Vincent Brown, Stan Philpott, Cheryl Hughes' father and Eric Wilbraham produce from their anger, various kinds of violence, the response of the damaged individual to the systems which have damaged him. The stories in A Glorious Morning Comrade characteristically position themselves at the point of intersection of social constructions and the individual, and the New Zealand they write is a cramping and damaging environment where the exercise of choice is correspondingly constrained.

In a general sense Maurice Gee is one of a group of male writers whose stories share the cultural locations that produce (masculine) New Zealand: racing, rugby and beer, with their attendant gender divisions, small towns and orthodoxies. Vincent O'Sullivan and Owen Marshall also focus on this familiar New Zealand fictional environment, though their stories are framed by irony, satire and parodic reinvention. Throughout the 1970s Landfall, or the New Zealand Listener, and anthologies based on the short fiction published in periodicals, were dominated by the 'free' story, with its emphasis on socially realistic settings and character-based narratives. Perhaps partly as a successor to the 'voice' Sargeson established as 'New Zealand', the 'free' story as written by Gee, O'Sullivan and Marshall functions not so much as a spoken idiom signifying a culture, but as the idiom of a

culture identifying itself. The extent to which short stories had become recognisable types is suggested by A.K. Grant's parody, published in the Listener in 1973: 'An Inquiry into the Construction and Classification of the New Zealand Short Story' which includes such parodies as: 'The ordinary Kiwi working bloke short story' and 'The sub-Katherine Mansfield 'At the Bay' short story'.⁹ O'Sullivan and Marshall share with Gee, and with many uncollected short story writers, a concern with the way individuals mark themselves out from, or capitulate to, group identities, which may be based on gender, race, religion, politics, economics or class. The typical focus of the 'free' story is the signifying individual, whose behaviour opens up a number of discourses that characterize the larger environment. O'Sullivan's stories are less concerned with overt masculine locations than those of Gee or Marshall, but all three writers represent New Zealand as a territory of division and conformity, and local short story writing as the province of a brand of realism in which individual character is made the vehicle of social criticism.

O'Sullivan's first collection of stories, The Boy, The Bridge, The River (1978) provides a number of variations on people who locate themselves, or are located, outside norms. Sometimes they are Catholics, outsiders in a Protestant society and sometimes they are foreigners, like Latty in the title story. Others are marked out in some other, perhaps more mysterious way: Grove with his head dented in, or Mr Foster (in 'Letter from Orpheus') rewriting the lives of his workmates in a shoeshop. In the later collections, Dandy Edison for Lunch (1981), Survivals (1985), and The Snow in Spain (1990), the reader is invited to recognise the narrative process by which fiction is created, (the 'story' which is like a lie told by a professional as described in 'The Professional': 'It's the arc where you control the appearance of things'), as well as its relation to the world, 'the appearance of things'.

O'Sullivan's stories typically take place at a point of transition, which often also entails, as in the story 'Dandy Edison for Lunch', a recognition of loss. The smart talk between Kevin and Karen, their successful careers and their wealth, is thrown into a different focus by lunch with Dandy Edison, an old man and a childhood neighbour, whose honesty functions as a kind of visionary subtext to the coded languages adopted by Kevin, the narrator who continually glosses the conversation so the narrative is subjectively retrospective and contextualised by his unspoken commentary on it. O'Sullivan's stories often use a conflict or a confrontation in individual histories to suggest larger subtexts. The story of Dandy Edison's prostituted daughter and her early death is received by the narrator's famous and successful wife Karen as if 'what [she] looked at was a kind of veil and what [she] sought was on the other side'¹⁰. The story of prostitution becomes a metaphor, a figurative counterpoint to the marriage of Karen and Kevin, suggesting an inversion of conventional ideas^a about which sexual arrangements are socially acceptable and represent emotional and moral value. Karen and Kevin's relationship is a register of the late capitalist attitudes: they are good at 'being vile' to each other and their relationship provides the text for Kevin's successful commercials, while Kevin's memories of childhood provide another context in which to read his behaviour.

'I suppose I didn't give a stuff whether I was crude about it or not, I wanted Dandy Edison with his Churchill histories and his prissy voice to know that I wasn't playing in the back yard of a state house any longer, scoffing a bar of chocolate before my sister came home?'¹¹

O'Sullivan's stories infer complex social patterns which are suggested by the ambiguous and volatile relationships between individuals which in turn construct subjectivity as a process playing over history, memory, ambition, desire, emotion,

gender, class and culture, and focussed, temporarily, on a moment of choice, or transition.

Latty, in 'The Boy The Bridge The River' is an explicit example of O'Sullivan's focus on transition, on choice, on bridging (with all its implied separations and divisions) as the structure of narrative, and subtextual definition of society. Latty, who has no name in New Zealand, except the abbreviation of his presumed origin, Latvia, spans two narratives, one a fragmented and incomplete narrative of his past (coming home over a bridge with a load of grain and his nephew, a narrative cut off by memory's obliteration of subsequent events) and the narrative history of small town events, the Lion's Fair, the marching girls, the boss caught with a marching girl in the clubrooms after the fair. The boss's hatred of Latty positions him as the point of power where the two narratives reflect on each other, where Latty functions metaphorically as a bridge between cultures, where values are placed in defining perspectives, and where the choices people make become part of a more complex content than individual morality.

Although the bulk of fictions in Dandy Edison were set in New Zealand, a number moved offshore to New York, the effect being to emphasize cultural rather than regional boundaries. Other writers of the 'free' story in the 1970s and 1980s (including Joy Cowley, Shonagh Koea, and Fiona Kidman) also located some of their short stories outside New Zealand with a similar effect. In O'Sullivan's Survivals (1986) the settings shift geographically between Australia and New Zealand, but their unchanging focus is middle class pretension, aspiration and self-representation; the cultural boundaries they draw are unaffected by geographical transition. The title of Survivals indicates both the ironies of the collection and its narrative preoccupations. In 'The Last of Freddy' the life of a famous painter is reconstructed by three lovers who 'survive' him. As in many of O'Sullivan's fictions death signifies not itself

but the absence of life around the dead: in the title story, 'Survivals', the dying man Richard, and his lover Monica, represent intense emotion, hope, grief, in a surrounding milieu where belief and passion are absent. O'Sullivan's stories present estrangement and division and emotional hypocrisy as a narrative that has supplanted the 'real' story. The subtext of his narratives is typically a story which is not being told, like John's homosexuality in 'The Club', which, when it emerges as a shadowy reflection on the 'real' story creates a rereading, a refocussing on moral questions and generally emphasises the separation of an individual from collective (conformist) identity. The Snow in Spain (1990) typically engages in moral questioning though satire of social pretensions (several of the stories were first published in fashionable Auckland magazines) or black comedy. The title story is about dwarf-tossing and is narrated by the dwarf whose story reflects on a grotesque audience:

'the lovely bit, never mind it's only a second or so, the bit when arms out and all i'm really flying. then the racket starts up again and i thud on foam mattresses and they're shouting out fucken beauty'.¹²

The Snow in Spain as a collection also draws attention to narrative process, the 'arc where you control the appearance of things', and particularly the way in which characters fictionalise their own lives, as in 'Testing, testing...' where Max and Sue tell each other lies and stories in order to heighten the (sexual) excitements of their marriage. Almost all the stories refer to the process by which art reinvents and revitalises the world: film, music, photography, fiction, painting; there is hardly a story which does not explicitly 'frame' its narrative realities in a way which becomes increasingly self-referential and satirical. When the film in 'Location' is reviewed,

'New Images' remarked, that old-hat verisimilitude was not what the piece was after, that an externally signified 'reality' had thank God died in the arse'.¹³

At the same time as O'Sullivan's stories frame themselves, by reference and image, as representation, reinventions of an 'externally signified reality', they are also a commentary on the fiction of the 'real', a story shared and colluded in by the reader, who is encouraged to recognise and participate in, connections made across the fictions of reality that pile up in the stories. The collection is dense with references to the detail of a shared (Western) cultural environment - literature, painting, music, knowledge, sculpture - the connections made between the worlds invented and framed by fiction and those inhabited by the reader are numerous and insistently recall the problematic playful reflectiveness of art and 'reality'. When Tim in 'Reflections in a Moving Surface' explains physics, the explanation reaches out both as an analogy for the fictional text and for the recognition the reader might carry between 'Story' and 'Life'.

'Because Tim was the scientist among us he liked to talk occasionally as he did at Faleron, about chance and probability and the intersecting planes where what was barely conceivable and what actually occurred might coincide. Or he told us the simple mysteries of physics. Once he showed us a shadowy cat drawn inside a box, those lines of dots that are meant to suggest two positions at once. For the cat lies dead but also stands alive.'¹⁴

Despite the self referentiality and textual play of O'Sullivan's stories, in the later collections particularly, they do not move into postmodernism because, often through satire or black comedy, some kind of meaningful (often moral as in the title story) commentary on the 'real' world is inferred. Writers of the 'free' story characteristically affirm a moral context for subjectivity, even if it is suggested only by the inversions of satire or black comedy. In an article on the work of Owen Marshall, O'Sullivan wrote of 'writers who...believe that writing is not only an

inextricably social act, but who neither expect nor want text to cut its moorings from experience...a text - apart from much else - is a way of making sense, a model of intelligibility'.¹⁵ In Owen Marshall's 'Body and Soul' a man tries to talk to his brother, a painter, about painting, but the conversation is abortive: 'They talked no more of it: not because it was too theoretical, but because it was too personal. The inner landscape of belief is hazardous ground.'¹⁶ Although Marshall's more recent stories have pushed into the unstable territory of postmodern fiction, like O'Sullivan's, his work invites recognition of its worldliness, suggests itself as 'model of intelligibility' for worldly experience, mapped in the 'inner landscape of belief'. Marshall has written of his discovery as a reader of:

'another world beneath the directly observable one. A world of emotional configuration. I became aware of the fallibility of the real: aware that the splendidly detailed objective world of sounds and colours, shapes and textures, was essentially opaque and that beneath it could be glimpsed the shimmer of things of great horror and ineffable joy. I began to see that fiction at its best was a way of communicating truths that are often too difficult to talk about face to face'.¹⁷

It is just this apprehension of the opacity of the 'real' and fiction's communications of its truths that distinguishes the work of Marshall, O'Sullivan, and other writers of the 'free' story from postmodernism. Not only does their work affirm the existence of truths, it also relates these to a culturally distinctive environment, which associates the recognition of truth both with universal knowledge accessible to all individuals and with the specific location which individual characters represent and affirm. While reality may be 'fallible' it is also present, and lends itself to the production of 'another world'.

Marshall's first three collections of short stories, Supper Waltz Wilson (1979), The Master of Big Jingles (1982) and The Day Hemingway Died (1984) are on culturally familiar ground:

Anzac ceremonies, rugby matches, schoolboy battles, farms, farming families. Like Sargeson, Marshall also writes sketches, ironically framed moral parables (like 'The Homily of Mr Poose') which function as a kind of commentary on narrative method when published alongside the longer, realist stories. Through his collections characters recur, and there is a loose clustering of stories set in a small rural South Island town, Te Tarehi, which gives the fiction a regional frame and suggests historical 'reality'. His stories hint at discontinuous narrative, (perhaps just at the level of metaphor), so that though the 'inner landscape of belief' can only be approached indirectly, in repetitions and silences, it exists as a subtextual profile, 'another world', occasionally glanced at in the fictional surface.

When, in Marshall's first published story 'Descent from the Flugelhorn' the old man suddenly dies while the narrator and his friend Wayne are selling him Rugby Club raffle tickets, the 'realism' of the story's cultural and regional setting gives way to a half-expressed view of the landscape of belief:

'Wayne had stopped crying, and dug with a twig in the sand and leaves. 'Sorry about that,' he said. He gave a rather shy smile. 'Do you think everyone gets the feeling sometime or other that they've passed themselves going the other way?''¹⁸

'New Zealand' is produced, in Marshall's fictions, by small towns like Te Tarehi, and the way in which individuals belong to and distinguish themselves from (therefore affirming) collective institutions and groupings; characters like Raf or Simon (Marshall, 1982) who are distinguished by their passion and their nonconformity and assert, in their difference, the character of the surrounding environment; stories and histories that reach out and populate the 'real' world of fiction. As one of his characters thinks:

All of us had lived together in the place, yet each had a separate experience of it: in the same way we share life, I suppose.¹⁹

Whereas O'Sullivan's fictional world is characterised by ambiguities and antagonisms, Marshall offers 'a lesson about human nature presented with an almost magisterial authority'²⁰. His fictions illuminate the social patterns and codes by which individuals live, and the landscapes into which histories and memories settle. As David in 'Bravo Echo Victor' puts it: 'Some places are stained with the sweat of our minds'²¹. Time, language, memory, experience; the constructions of personal and cultural identity in New Zealand; journeying back to Te Tarehi to the bedrock of the national [male] self; the 'fallibility of the real': these are the physical and verbal landscapes of Marshall's fictions, shifting through language in multiple (re) formations of the text's model of reality.

'That's how it was for me on the day that Hemingway died. I had meant to give it all a humorous gloss, and get in a bit of sex; bed-springs and muffled cries. That's what people like in a story. But it remains much as it was. Cold and wet, horseshit and broken eggs, no heat in my room and a landlady I disliked crying aloud in the kitchen.'²²

Marshall's most recent collection The Lynx Hunter and Other Stories (1987) pushes more explicitly at the shapes of realism. In the title story there is no mediation between the narrator and the narrative, no orderly sequence of possible events which might allow a reader to construct the narrator by or against the narrative. 'The Lynx Hunter' is the free indirect discourse of a narrator through whom a walk to work functions as deliberate self-representation: 'See me stand respectably dressed....See me smile back to my wife'. Such injunctions identify the reader as the paranoid 'seeing' self addressed by the subject: 'Mirrors catch mirrors catch mirrors'. As the divided self is its own audience and

performance, so the view through its eyes mirrors back what is inside the head: a daughter rides past to school while a dromedary waits beyond the breakwater, and the snout of the lava flow smokes by the Farmers' Co-Op. If the world is constructed in language, then a man walking to work can have many dimensions of possible experience in the storage of his skull. In 'Joining the Ishmaelites' Marshall parodically relocates the small town man walking to work with his head full of history, paranoias and galaxies, as the middle class writer, who inhabits fictions, matching 'life' and 'experience' to the typewriter's need for authenticity: an 'inexorable bounty hunter of reeling copy-and fame'. This story comments satirically on the notion that fiction is something that occurs outside 'real' life as 'The Lynx Hunter' emphasizes the fictionality of appearance and the de-forming constructions of language. Marshall's stories trace a movement from the recognizable codes and practices of masculine small-town South Island New Zealand to an often idiosyncratic, unfamiliar, and menacing environment, in which his narrators are deprived of such comfortable identifications, and which has become more explicitly fictional ('Comvalence in the Old City', 'Wyldebaume at the Frontier'). But at the same time as his stories increasingly focus on un-likeness on, fictionality and on what distinguishes one thing or person from another (sometimes in a formalised implicitly self-mocking taxonomy as in 'The Divided World' or 'Off by Heart') they also maintain the boundaries of actuality, that is to say the actuality of the text as textual experience, as well as its reflection of a world where 'the force of experience is accepted as a relevant and continuing field of reference'.²³ As a character in 'The Castle of Conceits' remarks:

'It's just that I take stock occasionally: snap the shutter shut sometimes on my life to frame assessments. The world is spinning fiercely while we are here. Here not there, this time not another. Immense concentration is needed to maintain actuality.'²⁴

The 'free' story in New Zealand fiction and particularly those written by Pakeha men, is deeply pre-occupied with gender relationships and in particular, with sexual relationships. In exploring character as a signifier of a larger cultural context, the stories of male writers focus on male locations which can only achieve definition by reference to gender-based difference. As a result cultural identity is represented as sexual identity, difference as gender difference, and signs of anxiety and unease express themselves in bad marriages, unforgiving partners, failed or inadequate sexual performance, and conflicting emotional claims. Marshall's 'Mumsie and Zip', a black comedy of an elderly couple locked in paranoia, sadism, and claustrophobia, with Mumsie placating and managing Zip's violence, provides an extreme, sinister vision of suburban New Zealand marriage, sinister both in its familiarity and its difference, premised on gender-based violence and antagonism expressed by husbands; 'a narrative of sexual meanness and female subjection that makes even Sargeson's gender exchanges comparatively thin.'²⁵ Gender antagonisms are not always directed at women, but are often presented as a function of sexual identity in a puritanical and hypocritical society which at its most extreme punishes difference of any kind, and seldom encourages love.

C.K. Stead's 'A New Zealand Elegy' whose title clearly aims to suggest a culturally central experience, opens with a family discussion of 'Freedom' somewhere in suburban Mt.Eden, during which the narrator's father remarks: 'Its all very well for poets.... Some of us have to live in the real world. And that means you, my boy'.²⁶ The 'real world' the story engages with consists of teenage boys, bikes, beach resorts, suburban Mt Eden, the freezing works, Hamlet, dances, a Norton motorbike - the story speaks for Auckland in the 1940s when the prize for being first to fuck is six milkshakes. The narrator, Ian's friend, is identified formally only as 'I', which perhaps allows him to be read as a signifying type, (and perhaps as fictional biography) representing youth and male

sexual desire. 'A New Zealand Elegy' narrates a 'real' world in which the actions of the youthful male narrator are governed by sexual longing so intense that it functions as identity, in an environment where other people's sexual behaviour is the occasion of hypocrisy, prurience and puritanical judgement and where the narrator's neighbour Marion, engaged in an extramarital affair with a truckdriver, symbolises the freedom and pleasures of adult life. The object of both the narrator's and Ian's desire is not an individual woman, but a sexual encounter; women are undifferentiated and simply represent potential objects. But the story does differentiate between the narrator and his friend in two ways. Ian is the first to achieve sexual intercourse, and he is killed in a motorbike accident which is a macabre parody of sexual experience. Accelerating round a corner, Ian runs 'up the tailpipe' of the parked truck where Marion is meeting her lover. Ian's death is both a vicarious consummation for the narrator, an experience which makes him adult and signals the temporary end of desire, and a commentary on the society which they inhabit. Death is less significant than extramarital sex in the world that Marion perceives:

'Nobody cares about the kid anyway. All they care about is that it was us in the truck, and that's given them a lot to chat about hasn't it?'²⁷

In Stead's 'A New Zealand Elegy' the elemental taboo is sex which is also the governing condition of desire in which all men and a very few, socially outcast, exceptional women, live. In Stead's earlier story, 'A Fitting Tribute', New Zealand is also represented as a puritanical and conventional society, but his focus is less on sexual taboos than it is on a comic or satiric view of social norms and values. The story of Julian Harp who transforms from an eccentric to a National Hero by inventing engineless flight, exposes a society which is unimaginative, intolerant of difference and opportunistic. 'A Race Apart' satirically inverts the 'New Zealand condition'

by having as its focus, both narratively and as an object of desire, a New Zealand male athlete, working as a chauffeur in an upper middle class English family deconstructing, both sexually and socially as New Zealanders are claimed to do, class boundaries. But where both 'A Race Apart' and 'A Fitting Tribute' locate their central characters outside the norm, it is precisely its exploration of a historically and culturally referenced 'norm' that allows 'A New Zealand Elegy' to signify a social reality. In Stead's later story 'Concerning Alban Ashtree' New Zealand vanishes into unreality seen from the unreality of an American campus in winter and is the least significant aspect of the story's play with realities, focussed on the ironic, knowledgeable and worldly narrator.²⁸ However the narrator's discovery of a New Zealand literary magazine 'called Landslide, of course (or was it Eyeful?)' prompts a parodic textual construction of 'New Zealand' as social realism ('this is life, man. A slice of life. No phony plot') which stresses, within its own highly self-conscious textuality, the choices and processes by which texts construct cognitive models for experience which are then deconstructed in favour of another process, another version, another narrative, making, in their turn, literary history. 'Reading it [the story in Landslide] I translated it into a western movie...Now write on...'.

ENDNOTES

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16. Marhsall, O., The Master of Big Jingles: 160
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26. Stead, C.K., 'A New Zealand Elegy' Five for the Symbol: 139
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28. Stead, C.K., 'Concerning Alban Ashtree', Landfall, 159, pp.292-310

The Postmodern Story

By the early 1980s what has come to be called the postmodern story was well established in New Zealand, published regularly in periodicals, (Islands, Mate, Landfall, Climate untold, Sport and Parallax) and challenging the domination of short fiction by the realist-humanist or 'free' story. It also began to be visible in anthologies and collections. Like modernism, postmodernism began as an international phenomenon initially characterized by John Barth as a 'literature of exhaustion'¹, and subsequently came to be used as an umbrella term for a more general cultural and economic shift occurring in the later twentieth century described by Frederic Jameson as the 'Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'². In short fiction there is a breakdown of unitary narrative and of the structures of meaning which sustain conventional story-telling realities: character, time, plot, social and historical experience, and language. In other words an attack on 'realism' and its suggested correspondences with a world outside the text is characteristic of postmodern fiction, and has been responsible for postmodern writing's reputation as reader-unfriendly.

In New Zealand the case for the postmodern story was presented in an anthology (The New Fiction) edited by Michael Morrissey and published in 1985. Morrissey's lengthy introduction was less a preface to the writers whose stories appeared there than a history of postmodernism and an attack on the writing which had preceded it in New Zealand. While conceding that a writer like Frame had always produced 'new fiction', Morrissey attacked the 'New Zealand short story' for having had a largely non-innovative, almost oral, history:

'Story after story has had the same beige moral tone... the same dreary humanism... - the same truncated banal dialogue occupying itself with similar issues, confrontations and characters'.

In Morrissey's view the result was a procession of lookalikes: 'writer has imitated writer like the boy on the Bycroft

biscuit tin.' Postmodern consciousness, on the other hand, heralded a 'new aesthetic fearlessness', placing its practitioners in 'the international context - to which the writers of The New Fiction belong'.³ Internationalism and a new aesthetic; these are the major shifts which postmodernism has claimed to bring to short fiction; from provincialist social realism to internationalist metafiction, a shift which broke down, as postmodernism has claimed to do, both modernism's privileging of the subject and the idea that fiction transmits or reproduces a specific locality which helps to characterise it as a regional literature.

The writer who in effect introduced New Zealand readers to the postmodern story was Russell Haley, whose The Sauna Bath Mystery and Other Stories appeared in 1978. Haley's fictions broke with both modernism and realism, avoiding the 'difficult scholarly density' of a writer such as Joyce, refusing to confirm the 'special, usually alienated, role of the artist', concentrating instead on an essentially playful breakdown of narrative certainties. Like the succeeding work of Ian Wedde, Chris Else, Morrissey, and others, Haley continually draws attention to the fictional nature of subjectivity, and to language, and to writing itself as the subject of writing. Since no distinction between the 'real' and the 'unreal' occurs in postmodern fiction it is often preoccupied with shifts in time and place that complicate and undermine the boundaries between memory, dream, experience and knowledge. Haley's 'Barbados - A Love Story', which opens Morrissey's anthology, suggests in its title and opening sentences a typical pattern of displacement and fictional complication.

'I have chosen to call this room Barbados. Ah - I can feel you shrink back already. Oh God am I going to be nagged by another of these madmen who is so confused about reality that he imagines his fireplace is a white sandy beach and that the brown

bottle of beer on his table is a character named Nick Tromso?"

The narrator's stress on his environment as fictional, a product of imaginative will ('I have chosen') directly addresses the reader, who remains dependent, throughout, on the version(s) of reality constructed by the choices of the narrator. 'Barbados - A Love Story' is an anti-linear narrative. Owing to failures or uncertainties of memory, understanding and knowledge, it is not possible to fully untangle the events of the story; in any case, all its events occur only in the context of the multiple possibilities presented by the narrator's mind, and the story is thus 'about' the narrator's consciousness of himself as the story's subject and creator. His narrative is punctuated by the phrase 'let me tell you': another story, one of my favourite stories, a real joke. He keeps notebooks, begins to interpret himself, and feels he is the subject of 'some fully coherent plot', understood, presumably elsewhere. His referent for reality, in a bar, is Literature (Michael Anthony and V.S. Naipaul), and he eventually provides an 'account' of the story's events with a conclusion.

While the narrator's narrative insists on the fragmented and uncertainly known or perceived nature of 'reality' transmitted through language, Haley's story, like many other postmodern stories, insists equally on the presence of the body in experience and knowledge. Tortillas eaten in Acapulco pursue the hapless narrator with increasing urgency on the bus and into a washerwoman's privy. Physical existence is never in doubt. The body eats, defecates, has erections, swims, drinks, and experiences sensations but all in the context of a multidirectional narrative in which the narrator resists definition other than by the most primary terms: male, not elderly, travelling in the Caribbean, lived or living in Auckland. Think of a person and 'they' exist. Haley's narrator recalls a friend thousands of miles away, and he appears in the next paragraph: language makes no distinction

between thought or fantasy and event. A postmodern fiction like 'Barbados - A Love Story' thus leaves the reader with minimalized certainties. Stories have been told, but all the other questions which might be asked of a fiction - what happened? to whom? where? when? what does it mean? - can be answered only partially, if at all. It is the story's relationship to a world of narrativised realities that is questioned, the notion that the life of an individual has meaning, is continuous and linear, and can be told is constantly deconstructed for the reader, who, as the narrator's direct address suggests ('Ah - I can feel you shrink back already') has to take an active role if there is to be a meaningful narrative.

The experience of postmodern fiction is concentrated on the experience of language, and postmodernism sets out to demonstrate the primacy of the text. Consequently there is often a great deal of play with highly formalized textual strategies, with codes, abstract vocabulary, scientific language, and the language of facts. Even when stories seem deceptively familiar as in Bill Manhire's collection The New Land, A Picture Book (1990) the text positions itself with reference to another kind of text, so causing uncertainty about what it might be (a picture book?), by including an extensive index with entries such as 'Arsenical Soap', 'Broccoli, stir-fried with Hoisin Sauce', 'Federated Farmers', and 'Maori Radicals', which suggest that the text might be constructed, or might construct itself, in any number of categories of writing and knowledge: history, cookery, politics, chemistry. Postmodern fictions also play with historical events or people, juxtaposing incompatible historical realities, as in Michael Morrissey's 'Jack Kerouac Sat Down By the Wanganui River and Wept' or 'A Very Timid Little Boy Called Franz Kafka'. Such stories directly challenge notions of probability, and exploit the possibilities offered by discontinuities of space, time and place, collapsing the conventions of meaning usually shared

between reader and text. The postmodern text is continually interrupted and invaded, deflected from the narrative it appears to offer, at any one point, as its principal concern. The only constant factor is the process of transformation itself, which never concludes, and remains obstinately self-referential, emphasizing its own artifice, and complicating, for the reader connections that might be made between the cognitive models it offers and a world outside the text. Michael Morrissey's collection The Fat Lady and the Astronomer (1981) opens with a taxonomic 'preface', 'An Auction', a list of literary or literary-historical memorabilia, myths and allusions, including the titles of Morrissey's stories, which resists collective definition except as items in some kind of marketplace, and in which the range and diversity of references has a characteristically undifferentiated status:

'The Rod of Moses, Nietzsche's pen, two Georgians with ear-trumpets, Sherlock Holmes' Death Mask, a pint of Godswax, the Fat Lady, a brick from the House of Usher, the last surviving quagga, Kafka's sensibility...'⁵

By refusing to put 'fiction' in a different category from fact in a marketplace whose items for sale suggest metaphors, fantasies, furniture of the imagination, as well as referring to a commercial context in which memorabilia and literary artefacts have financial value, Morrissey both places fiction in the world of facts and money, and makes 'facts' and money part of fiction; a volatile and uncertain implied environment where 'Katherine Mansfield's cough' has as much actual marketability as Nietzsche's pen or an ounce of pity. Accretion of undifferentiated detail in a context which is not recognisably part of, but may make reference to, the 'real' world, is characteristic of postmodern writing, and presents the reader with a textual surface that is, or can be, bewilderingly multi-directional, ample, scarcely containing its profusions, deconstructing boundaries, but offering no easy structures of meaning, no process by which what is insignificant may be excluded and the significant recognised.

In doing away with the possibility of fiction's providing an answer to the mysteries of existence, postmodernism has thrown much greater emphasis on the mysteries. The stories of Chris Else, Ted Jenner, Wedde and Michael Gifkins focus on puzzles, either as explicit forms of brainteasing (some of the shorter pieces in The New Fiction play with language in the form of visual puzzles) or by presenting codes of information which, when detached from structures of meaning, assume a puzzling or comic or bizarre character. In Chris Else's stories quixotic characters search for truths amongst mathematical equations, popular songs, religious rhetorics or the paraphernalia of spy novels.⁶

In Else's 'A Mess of Pottage' two brothers spend their time in their father's library in the 'time of the Great Plague'. The story, like the code that Andre, the narrator's brother spends months deciphering, is in the end inexplicable by means of conventional fictional realities, there is too much incomplete information, so the reader like the narrator, is left in a state of indecision, with the narrative action still encoded:

'Later, in the library, I found his notes. On the last page he had scrawled the sentence 'There is no meaning in blood'. I do not have his enthusiasm for the work, nor his energy, and progress is slow. I have not even been able to decide whether his last statement is a piece of translation, a clue, or a comment on the whole exercise.'⁷

By taking the emphasis off solutions, postmodern writing problematises or encodes the idea of 'reality'. After finishing with the code, Andre leaves the castle and begins helping the sick and burying the dead, behaviour which is as puzzling to the narrator as the columns of figures he has been investigating, an attitude which places the narrative action in the same category of information and explicability as a coded text and refuses to establish a hierarchy of meaning or even a connection between them.

Postmodern fiction often plays with the formal strategies of texts, using footnotes, scholarly references, research data, even parallel texts, in order to break down the boundaries between fictional and other texts. Bill Manhire, Wystan Curnow, Jenner and Malcolm Fraser have all explored such possibilities, replicating the formal writing procedures of nonfictional modes in order to fictionalise them. Malcolm Fraser's, 'The Original Community of James Fox' was reprinted in the New Zealand Whole Earth Catalogue as a genuine account of a polygamous community on the Hauraki Plains.⁸ Many postmodern stories create 'factions' in which real events or people occur in fictional contexts. At the same time, they exploit a highly topical and culturally specific environment. The references to popular songs, contemporary drugs, and topical events and personalities that occur in the work of Ian Wedde or Michael Gifkins tie it closely to its historical period at the same time as the stories collapse the boundaries of time and space and create a kind of fictional world in which any number of conditions and possibilities can co-exist within the text. In a Preface to his collection The Shirt Factory (1981), Ian Wedde observed 'You think of fiction as a kind of rhythm beneath the endless obsolescence of fact; a swell beneath the surface chop'. His stories focus in detail on the surface chop, and on the many specific dialects and registers that identify people. The postman in 'Paradise' notices seasonal changes on the surface of the ground on which he pisses. Otto's ambivalent loathing of the bourgeoisie in the title story; and the drugs and booze and food and songs and desire which course through Herman Flag in 'Snake', spreading 'character' so thickly with 'culture' they become indistinguishable aspects of each other. In the end, it is the textual density of the surface chop, its stops and starts and accumulations, that suggests a kind of deep flow, an underlying process, a process that becomes an inferential connection between the reader/audience and the narrator mediated through the text with its dispersed and multiple focus:

'Well, I think we're now at the point where I can, shall we say, unlock the final casket of the story. The key is Otto's plausible manner. And the contents? A kind of tragic alphabet soup, you might say, atomised fragments of all the points I've made, with a few seasonings.'

Postmodern fiction in New Zealand has typically been the province of Pakeha male writers. As David Dowling's review of The New Fiction pointed out, of the twenty-one writers represented, five were women: 'Morrissey argues in his introduction, in a rather muddled way, that women were not as concerned as men with 'high' formalism (betraying already, perhaps, a bias in that adjective); rather with the 'low' mimeticism of Frame. but it is certainly true that in the US and Australia, for example, 'experimental' fiction has until recently been dominated by male writers and critics.'¹⁰

However, during the 1980s the influence of postmodernism was gradually diffused through the story writing and reading environment, shifting and altering the main short story forms, so by the end of the decade it was rare to find social-humanist-realist stories in major periodicals. But though it challenged a number of orthodox traditional literary concerns and expectations, postmodern fiction did not disengage itself from the masculine. From Haley to Wedde and after, the narrators of postmodern fiction are identified with their masculinity. Their desire is predominantly heterosexual and their identification of the languages and codes of power, as well as their social relations and fictional contexts, are defined by their sexuality. Postmodern fiction, in its New Zealand origins at least, was a masculine story, gender is a continuing preoccupation as it had been with writers of the 'free' story. If race is not a form of difference with which postmodern fiction engages, gender is. Like the narrator in Haley's 'Barbados - A Love Story' Wedde's narrator in 'The Shirt Factory' speaks to a male reader, who, like the narrator, can slide into sympathy with Otto's sexual

appetites, slip into his gaze while participating in convivial male drinking:

'Otto's sexual appetite's aimed without exception at the most exquisite daughters of the middle classes - is in fact the least dialectical of phenomena, brooks about as much argument as the angry penis of a sailor hurrying from the ship for a one-night stand! Working-class girls he finds repulsive, without exception. But Otto gets quite beside himself at the races...where he may catch sight of an expensive Italian shoe, allow his acetylene eyes to rise the length of a leg, and almost faint at the sudden thought of the scented sweets, subtly laced with irrepressible musk, that must lie within the pantyhose of the poised creature whose Gucci scarf's caressing the jade curve of neck and shoulder..., it's not hard to imagine is it? Ha ha... Another drink?'¹¹

The male body, and especially male sexuality, is inscribed again and again in the texts of postmodern writers, so insistently as to suggest itself as the only irreducible context in which subjectivity can be constructed and deconstructed. As the body images itself or is the point of reference to which 'atomised fragments' of narrative return, its presence in postmodern texts becomes the screen, or frame, over which the incompleteness and instability of the narrative is played.

'The first naked person he sees is a holographic image. Hans has been in the factory so long that he is not surprised. His body-heat, footfalls, gravity, have created specific scenes as he moved in corridors, entered blank warehouse facilities.'¹²

To appropriate a title of Haley's, it often seems as if the (male) body is the only real illusion of the postmodern text, marking out a phallic boundary pointing back to the 'real' story:

'His member was wedged firmly between her sorry its not that kind of story is it well it may not be a story it may be a series of propositions some provable some not so provable some downright impudent in their aspiration to

help solve the mysteries of life death and other ecological matters'.¹³

By transferring the scene of the postmodern story out of the partially specified regional context of The New Fiction and into an environment of multiple socio-economic signifiers, Michael Gifkins locates his fictions and his reader in the atmosphere of high fictionality that characterizes late capitalism. All three of Gifkins's collections suggest wealth as the ultimate signifier of western culture. After the Revolution (1982) remained onshore, mostly in Auckland (although in the title story, Antony's introduction to the social scene is a journey into foreignness), but his subsequent collections, Summer is the Côte d'Azur (1987), and The Amphibians (1989) moved into ironic and geographical distance. His characters inhabit the densely inscribed landscape of Southern Europe; cosmopolitan, international, wealthy, often artistic or engaged with the arts. The sexual configurations into which couples and communities fall act as analogies for their imaginative and artistic lives, and sexuality and creativity/spirituality are closely connected. In 'Mediatrix' (Gifkins, 1989, 75-88) Lucy's inability to paint is associated with difficulties in her relationship with her husband, and when she decides not to accompany him to London but instead enters the sea with the dolphin she has been trying to paint, the boundary between human art and animal life, between different representations of 'life', vanishes: 'the code was starting to change, become infinitely subtle'. Lucy's painting is swimming before her eyes. The stories play with ideas of mediation and points at which difference vanishes or re-codes itself, to re-emerge as something else, something 'fictional'. They pursue a narrative deceptively familiar in its linearity but at the same time located in a highly 'novelised' environment where counts and young heiresses and the eccentric rich meet in apartments and villas and cafés along the Côte d'Azur, subject to the textuality and epistemological insecurities of their surroundings.

'I smelt again the garlic beneath the Diorissimo, and through the artificially blonde ringlets, caught the ingrained patterns of acne on her cheek. What was it we were doing here?' (Gifkins, 1989, 11)

The stories are crammed with the entries and departures of an international, travelling, community, whose relationships to each other are never fully explained and whose presence in the narrative is not sustained. ('Bianca has taken a studio in Ventimiglia', 'Amy has just arrived back from Reggio di Calabria', 'I sit with my Scandinavian friends'). Gifkin's narrators are also incompletely contextualised but at the same time all the characters in the stories display, and are instantly cognisant of, the cultural signifiers which place them as members of a shared environment: 'the pink lurex tights and purple sweater were straight out of the American dream, circa 1960, as were the silver stilettos. And she was so big! No doubt a heart of gold beat through the red jacket - last year's Florentine chic'.¹⁴

The titles of Gifkins's collections suggest both the fictional code by which we recognize their play and their mimetic reference to a recognisable 'real' world of novels and tabloid magazines, (After the Revolution, Summer is the Côte d'Azur) as well as the fluid transmission of fiction from one dimension to another (The Amphibians). Gifkins has marginalized New Zealand as a location for his fiction in a way that makes nationality, as a point of origin, as fictional as any other notion of place; a number of stories contain a spoken reference to New Zealand as a place suggesting the exotic, the foreign, the mystical, far off; a place where dolphins do play with children without accident or ill feeling.¹⁵

In Gifkins's work the postmodern story creates an undifferentiated continuum on which 'Art' and 'Life', 'fiction' and 'real', 'home' and 'away' co-exist. The displacements of his characters which result in a kind of

circumstantial self-reflexivity always return the linear narrative to circularity; the reader is returned to fictionality however much the story may suggest a transition from narrative to commentary can be effected. In the end the text reasserts itself as text in which the reader, too, must be constructed. The stories close, not with conclusiveness or with endings, a sense of resolution, but with the camera clicking its shutter on the perfect shot, a moment of immobility chosen by the imaginative will, in which the reader is compelled to acquiesce: the text imaged as momento, souvenir, holiday snap, the moment of reflection which leads back to an acknowledgement of text:

You pause before the mirror but the mirror lets you pass. You are wearing your small black dress. You smile. You toss back glistening curls. The Mediterranean proceeds to Africa. Mimosa is close outside the window and light reflects its calm back to the world.¹⁶

Although the stories in John Cranna's Visitors (1989) pursue a more linear narrative than does the work of Haley, most of the contributors to The New Fiction, or Gifkins, their realist surface is based upon unknown or unknowable conditions, as in 'Archaeology', where a lack of information about the wider environment forces the reader to construct a possible reading for 'that summer of the war', the events of the story, and eventually the title; or the story transgresses the boundaries of acceptable 'real' behaviour, as in 'Accidents', but without any glosses which might provide a causal or psychologically interpretive context; instead the story sharpens its focus with claustrophobic hyper-realism. Cranna's narratives combine geographical with cultural and temporal mobility, and mix an apparently recognisable world with inexplicable irruptions of 'outside' events which come from nowhere, and are never interpreted by the narrator. Like the grandfather's stories in 'Visitors', information, contexts and sequences remain incomplete:

'A story that began in Djakarta might end in Santiago without his being aware that the location had changed, and fragments and characters from one tale would find their way into others, so that his monologues were jigsaws of confusion that held me entranced for hours, but which I could never fully understand.'¹⁷

Cranna's fictions affirm the incomplete understanding of the reader while narrating an apparently familiar, richly detailed world, one that includes in 'Soft Targets' some parodic reworking of familiar literary New Zealand landscapes ('Along Rideout Road that Summer'), and also makes reference ('History for Berliners') to the political and historical map of the late twentieth century. By constructing the reader too as a visitor to the narrative, unable to fully possess and comprehend it, while playing with a mimetic referentiality to the 'real' world of history, geography, literature, politics and behaviour, Cranna's stories enact the postmodern fictional environment.

Similarly the stories in Bill Manhire's The New Land A Picture Book sketch the possibility of linear narrative which the reader may access with reference to 'reality' (the Queen's visit to Dunedin and the Tangiwai disaster in 'The Days of Sail' for example) but simultaneously harpoon any ideas of a singular or unitary reality, stirring up the water until whatever monster of the real may be below fiction can only be guessed at. Manhire's stories frequently play with fictional referents: the metafiction of the story is another text, or another story model explicitly functioning as the filter through which fiction is read. 'Cannibals' plays with South Pacific adventure stories, and tales of exploration, taking in on the way glimpses of New Zealand poetry and literary institutions, so that the reader is always being led out of one text into another: it is somewhere in the gaps and connections that the 'whole story' exists.

'That is how it is, adventure and regret, there is not getting away from it, we live in the broad Pacific, meeting and parting shake us, meeting and parting shake us, it is always touch and go.'¹⁸

In 'Some Questions I am Frequently Asked' the connection between a writer's life and work is mocked, as the writer invents fictions as 'answers', and in 'South Pacific' the story is invaded by another text, Janet Frame's The Envoy from Mirror City, ('suitable gifts for travellers') as El Vici Mario, Janet Frame's Spanish fiancé, bicycles up to New Zealand House, 'Another traveller lost in a foreign city'. As Manhire's title suggests, the stories in this collection with their focus on the Pacific and on writing, continually reinvent New Zealand both as a place of origin and as a textual artefact, discovered in literature and in history, indexed as and referenced to any number of possible versions/text of itself, like the pictures in 'Nonchalance', a 'song about the next new land, the one which is travelling by word of mouth from a place beyond the ranges, which is as yet beyond reproach, still at the stage of making up its mind.'¹⁹

Manhire's focus on New Zealand as a textual locality and a suggested historical reality, places his work, more explicitly than Cranna's or Gifkins, within postcolonial discourse. Whereas, as Simon During has argued, the decentring of postmodernism may be read as a decentring from 'within a centre so expanded, so powerful, that it has no other, no outside by which it can be identified as a centre',²⁰ which seems to be the context in which Gifkins' fiction might be read, postcolonialism turns 'on a desire to enter the otherness which will allow postmodernism to be recognised not as decentred but as centred...Postcolonialism then is the name for products of the ex-colonies' need for an identity granted not in terms of the colonial power, but in terms of themselves.' The New Land pictures 'newness' and locality, explicitly suggesting in its index the multiple texts of identity and knowledge in which a new land might be constructed but always returning the reader to the referent by

which the text is understood, the signified centre, the new land. Although Manhire's stories, like postmodern fiction generally, trade in images of replication, the replications of his texts figure 'New Zealand', which becomes the cultural centre that fiction returns to, travelling as it does, through the layers of texts which represent a process of self-recognition:

'That is how it is, adventure and regret, there is not getting away from it, we live in the broad Pacific, meeting and parting shake us, meeting and parting shake us, it is always touch and go.'²¹

Damien Wilkins' Collection The Veteran Perils (1990) also represents New Zealand as the scene of writing, though his narratives are less playful than Manhire's and stress, as his multiply signifying title suggests, the dangerousness of the 'real' environments transmitted incompletely and imperfectly through a subjective narration: 'prolix mazy history, from which the journey, my engagement, I hoped, might fashion an escape.'²²

Wilkins' narrators, verbose, 'mazy', never complete connections or establish contextual information that will explain the narrative, yet they call continually on the knowledge, understanding, and referential framework of the reader.

'You know how it is with break-ups, you think it's all happened in about twelve hours, a dozen seconds, you want to find that guy upstairs who's snapped his fingers. You're baffled by the quickness of the world's ugly ways. Cannot reason touch this tenderness into being once more, you say, you're even a poet now, duncehead.'²³

Like Manhire's, Wilkins' stories construct themselves in the shared environment of narrator and reader, inferred, incompletely described. Although the narrative's location is, in the middle section 'Out in the Field', international,

mobile, intertextual, culturally dense, transmitting itself through a highly specific idiolect, from which 'character' must be constructed (as in 'United Nations'); in the final section of stories the focus is much more explicitly on the myths, texts and images by which nationalism and the narrative subject are invented, in which cultural identity is seen to possess the text of its postcolonial discourse.

'Finally, as an experiment in obtaining relief, he lets himself into the story, he enters as a character and thinks what his lines would be. Maybe a trip across the street, up into the bush, to check on that crash site could be on in the morning he thinks tentatively. Then he begins to warm to it.'²⁴

Postmodern texts stress the incompleteness of knowledge and the inability of a narrative subject to provide fully articulated structures of meaning. Subjectivity is fractured, replicated in the pastiche-process of the postmodern text, and is no longer the foregrounded context in which the narrative explicates itself. Instead, postmodern texts refer the reader onwards in a transference of reflexivity, rather in the manner of the narrator in Russell Haley's story sequence The Transfer Station:

'When you think about my father going on about an open door you can make almost anything you want out of it. What I am saying is that if there is a door in a dream then it is you and it's also you on either side of it. Open it or slam it closed and it all amounts to the same thing except that it make you feel that there's a mystery going on and you don't know everything.'²⁵

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'I am writing a story about a girl who is not me': stories by women 1970's - 1990

The growth of anthologies of women's writing in the 1980s reflected an interest in gender-based categories of writing as distinct from traditional generic groupings. The short story is a form practised by many women writers perhaps because, though less durable than the novel, and more easily lost in the great bulk of periodical publication, it is also marketable and does not necessarily require extended commitment. For decades the New Zealand Listener carried stories by women whose names seldom appeared in major anthologies such as the Oxford series. Landfall and Islands, which set literary standards for periods of their publishing history, had times when few women writers were published, and it was not until collections began to appear in the late 1970s and early 1980s which reconstructed literary history outside the major publishing forums that the extent of writing by women became more visible. It is easy to infer from the bulk of largely unnoticed published writing by women that some forms of discrimination have been practiced by editors and publishers of anthologies in New Zealand as elsewhere. Having said that, it seems an increasingly pointless line of enquiry to pursue the vexed question of separate traditions as if it were a process consciously undertaken by male editors and women writers. Nevertheless the work of women does reveal some common preoccupations and literary choices, which are as suggestive of the constraints women writers may have felt themselves to be under in a restricted market as they are of anything that might stand for a collective identity. Women writers, perhaps even more markedly than men, fall into two distinct groups: those who have published a collection and those who have not. In the 1970s, the short story writers who achieved the status of a collection were generally also novelists: Joy Cowley, Margaret Sutherland, Fiona Kidman, Patricia Grace, Yvonne du Fresne. In the later 1980s, a number of women emerged initially as short story writers (Shonagh Koea, Barbara Anderson, ^{Anne} Kennedy, Stephanie Johnson,

Sue Reidy) and anthologies like Women's Work, In Deadly Earnest, the New Women's Fiction series, Shirley Temple is a Wife and Mother, Goodbye to Romance and others indicate the extensive territory occupied by short fiction written by women.

The predominant kind of fiction written by women in New Zealand until very recently has been social realism with a close domestic focus. Since the 1930s fiction by women has been concerned with the family as the real politik of female experience, most often in white writers as a place of restraint, repression, and conflict. While the social roles of women have been largely determined by the family - wife, daughter, mother - short fiction by women is particularly concerned with the meticulous investigation of the female condition and its emotional landscape rather than more overt connections between the individual and society. Cowley's description of her practice as a writer suggests a view of language as a medium for emotion, and of storytelling as an articulation of the territory of the self.

'[E]very story, whether for adults or children, still begins with the heart, something I've mentioned in a light little story called 'All About Love'. The story which comes head first as an intellectual exercise, will never be born alive: it remains a corpse and decomposes with repeated writings until I end up burying it. But since stories must begin with the heart, the intellect can know little about them until the work is finished. Then the mind reads them, as it were, for the first time.'

Interestingly Cowley sees the 'body' of the story as a corpse if it is constructed as an 'intellectual exercise'; knowledge, in Cowley's terms, is a product of emotion.

'[S]ince stories must begin with the heart, the intellect can know little about them until the work is finished. Then the mind reads them, as it were, for the first time.'

Very often the narrative concerns of fiction of the 1970s and early 1980s identify selfhood as a product of emotional self-knowledge, and stories delicately investigate where the boundaries in social relations lie, giving metaphorical density to the identification with particular social roles that women see themselves as making. In Cowley's story 'The Silk' the little man waving from the bridge in the piece of Chinese silk affirms the point of Mrs Blackie's wifeliness, and all her competencies, qualities and strengths are directed towards celebrating the woven silk landscape which signifies her successful marriage. At the same time Cowley's fiction, like that of Sutherland and Kidman, is effectively anti-romantic; post-marital rather than pre-marital, its choices and possibilities occur in the competing self interests of marriages and families where selfhood is so closely identified with role and fighting for existence, that the playful constructions of a Herman Flag or Julian Harp have no space in which to exist.²

A great many stories by women are preoccupied with territorial space. Settings are often quite literally interior, walled, defined, the narrative taking place in domestic environments which function metonymically to signify women, and seldom moving into a larger or less controllable terrain. There is no equivalent of Man Alone in the fiction written by women. Cowley's 'The Colonel and South America' explores its differences (age, gender, nationality) almost entirely within the metal walls of a bus as the clear air and colourful environment of the Andes unrolls outside. In 'Distances' marital warfare occupies a no-man's-land inside the house; it is not until the female character stops ironing and goes out onto the lawn that she can express herself in feelings. In 'Heart Attack' it is the emotion of the male character that is imaged in spatial analogy: 'There was no room in the house for his grief. It was a pain too big to be contained within walls and yet there was nowhere else to go.'

In 'House With a View' Marion's recognition of 'all the warmth and familiarity of a forgotten dream' in a house she wants to buy becomes the expression of desire and choice with which she asserts herself against her husband, a choice which in the end is denied her. The house shifts metonymically through the story to signify Marion's resistance to her husband's will and the collapse of her self-assertion as he re-establishes her relationship to him by telling her about the suicide that makes 'all the difference in the world'. Suggestively it is the husband of the vendor who has killed himself in Marion's desired space, as if a metaphorical liberation, or a wished-for fact, (like a forgotten dream) has been offered and withdrawn.

'Home' in short fiction by women is represented as the place in which female selfhood is most clearly recognised and where it is most at risk, perhaps because, in its accommodation of the shifting identities that include daughter, wife, and mother, 'home' is a continuous re-invention of place and condition. In Kidman's story 'Mrs Dixon and Friend' Bethany and her house are indistinguishable from the point of view of Bethany's ex-husband; the house represents for him both what he has lost and the characteristics of his ex-wife which threaten to disorder or rearrange his own existence:

'For wasn't it Bethany who had resisted the flat lawns and level-edge hedges and the new wallpaper in the hallway each spring where she had let the children put their dirty hands, and the kitchen repainted annually because the fat splashed over and her cigarettes burned holes while she read books?''³

Bethany's books, habits, and life after separation all argue an expansion into independence and freedom that is reaffirmed by her house:

'there were books lying open on the refrigerator...on closer inspection they were about communism which made him suddenly frightened'

Kidman's stories are representative of the work of many women writers in that they make domestic space into a metaphor and identify female subjectivity with its area of occupation. More specifically, female sexuality is often identified with the possession of enclosed space. What alarms the ex-husband about Bethany in Kidman's story is that her house reveals her self-expansion; her fat-splashed kitchen, her body spilling out of its dress in the sun, and her open books, suggest the extent to which she is not confined to the role or identification her suburban house and her wife/motherhood might seem to predicate, but transgresses boundaries and enlarges territory. Indeed she does not even enact boundaries, but lets the children put their dirty hands on the wallpaper. In many of Kidman's stories, and in stories by Margaret Sutherland or Rosie Scott, the physical enlargement of women signifies their resistance to enacting or submitting to other forms of control and containment. In Scott's story 'Senseless Violets' the physical bulk of the narrator, Dorry, which scares away some visiting children, is also an instrument of power and self-assertion. As Dorry confronts Angel, her sinister lodger, she feels 'all powerful, huge, absolutely still'.⁴

In Sutherland's 'Dark Places, Deep Regions' a young journalist recently arrived in Papua New Guinea finds himself able to record in language the facts of his new life, the 'known ground' of his profession, but not his 'feeling of openness, compared with which his past life seemed a static, half-lived state'. The inability of men to manage or articulate feeling or to accommodate ambiguity is commonplace in fiction by women, particularly during the seventies. Sutherland's journalist experiences Papua New Guinea as a journey into sensation and loneliness, eventually alleviated when he rents a room from the wife of an army sergeant who is absent on a jungle training course. Moving into her house he moves irresistibly into the absence contained within her domestic structures and implied by her sexuality which is both

represented and affirmed by her feeding baby. As the journalist succumbs to the dark places and deep regions of his own selfhood that Joy opens for him, he is 'annointed' by drops of milk spilled from her breast. The significance of entering a new land is emphatically repeated in his entering a new house, a new woman and a new self-knowledge. House, woman, and country of the senses are thus metaphorically connected in Sutherland's story as territory or 'depth' which a man may enter but which represents 'female'.⁵ In Sutherland's story of adolescent sexuality, 'Codling-Moth', the enclosed space of teenage knowledge and possibility is suggested in the intense focus that two girls have on each other, in their insistent consciousness of their bodies, and in their rituals, a friendship unable in the end to withstand the reconditioning of female sexuality that Mother carries out.

'I'll tell you what I'm talking about; you see far too much of that girl, that's what I'm talking about. In case you don't know it there are some funny people about, very funny men, and funny women too, and no girl of mine is growing up into one of them.'⁶

The narrator of 'Codling Moth' is forced into a denial of the Body and Blood. She refuses communion on the Ninth Friday ('Nine consecutive First Fridays and nine communions and heaven is a promise') and experiences both the pain of separation from her friend, and the denial of her sexuality, which is connected, in Sutherland's story to the isolation of the central character, who, after being spoken to by her mother, remakes herself in guilt, loneliness and pain. 'Codling Moth' suggests that it is the forced transference into heterosexual difference in a girl which is also a coerced conformity to 'normal' social/sexual identity as represented and governed by Mother, that generates the emotional condition of a woman. In Janet Frame's story 'The Bull Calf' Olive's sexuality figured both in her shameful bleeding body and in

in her family ('Why were they so secretive? What was the mystery?') and so is represented as fearful, mysterious, shameful, uncontrollable; something that must be hidden away and unknown. Many stories by women represent girls as sexually ignorant, unable to claim their own sexuality before they are claimed by men and re-invented as mothers, nurturing not just the babies they bear but also the men who desire them, as in Sutherland's 'Need':

'She loved the job. Mr Blundell taught her about prices and the adding-machine and how to cash up; and sometimes, after hours, she learnt from him that married men too were subject to the need. Surprising, you'd have thought...But Julie never pursued thought past that point; instead counted the pyramided baked bean cans, hoped they wouldn't come tumbling down. Afterwards she would stroke through damp striped cotton those plaintive spasms of bone, Jim Blundell's shoulder blades.'⁷

Stories by women write and rewrite the social/sexual roles by which women are constructed, which accounts for the domination of social realism in short fiction by women and its characteristic narrative locations. Mary Paul and Marion Rae, editing the third collection of New Women's Fiction remarked that a 'women's collection...tends to attract stories about problems and issues, resulting in a sameness of approach and subject matter - particularly in documentary treatment of personal problems.'⁸ Fiction makes it clear that the domestically figured boundaries of femaleness in the work of Pakeha women writers enclose and reflect the gaze of the female subject, who sees herself only from the inside, an inside which infers and so affirms another, more threatening, more open (male) 'outside'.

'And living in this muddled, gloomy, dirty, peeling house with its knowing walls which defy any form of taming - a great mass of brown, dark and dirty shapes and tainted with maybe a death and certainly a long and indecipherable life littered with all sorts of fears and last sad and sordid relics. A feeling of being placed right in the middle of the vortex, no escape, or any of the escapes prepared are only hollow and pathetic appeasements. With the wicked traffic zooming past and

walking out to the dirty, sad, unloved pavements. And the mess within, centre no longer there, a sweet attempt to have a last sincere dialogue above the continual frenetic record-player, or in between the faceless women flitting in and out, or the varied job hours. The six of us continually returning to this room because it is dark and womb-like and a little bit sad and very safe.'⁹

The documentary dimension of much short fiction by women, especially in the seventies, is continually connected to a representation of female subjectivity and sexuality as enclosed, isolated, barricaded and in retreat, locked into an ambivalent 'safety', while outside the 'wicked traffic' zooms past and the pavements are 'unloved'. It is an insistent association of women/home/house/nurture/selfhood (opposed inferentially to man/world) that fiction by women makes, and very often one in which home, as in Rosie Scott's story, may be womb-like but is also decentred, littered, without any means of escape. However a concentration on the metaphors of female identity and sexuality and on the structures by which it is regulated and contained, can be seen as the groundwork from which short fiction in the 1980s reformulated and reshaped the connection between female identities and roles.

The first anthology of lesbian writing (The Power and the Glory) appeared in 1987 edited by Miriam Saphira. By the mid 1980s the process of investigation of gender roles, which was often a process of ambivalent affirmation, had started to shift into more fluid representations, a shift represented at its most politically radical in lesbian writing, which surfaced in feminist periodicals: Broadsheet, Hecate, and Spiral. Lesbian short fiction typically challenges the heterosexual family by rewriting romance as lesbian. In this respect it adopts in order to subvert what has been the dominant model for both male and female writers (though romance is mostly written by women) for representing heterosexual gender roles. Lesbian romance preserves the essentialist attributes of heterosexual romance (recognition of selfhood and value in the discovery of oneself as a lover

or as beloved) but transfers them to a liaison which threatens the social fabric. Conventionally literary as it may often seem, lesbian romance inscribes difference on the dominant structures of social experience and gender conditioning: by redefining the environment of short fiction it extends the territory of 'women's writing', though Saphira's preface suggests that writing by lesbians serves the same documentary function as writing by women generally; the stories 'bring our struggles, our loves and our humour on to the page.' (Saphira, 7)

Lesbian fiction is also colonizing. The stories in Saphira's collection are very often about the discovery of collective female identity. Like the writing of all minority groups (much the same thing occurs in Maori writing), lesbian texts are concerned to represent the extent of homogeneity, rather than difference, amongst women, whereas other women writers of the later 1980s are concerned to deconstruct the idea of gender itself in order to pursue difference. The stories in Saphira's anthology typically focus on a moment of recognition, perhaps not so much a moment of colonization, as a recognition of an extension of selfhood, a repeated 'I am' that sets up a different social structure.

And I remembered a time on the patch all those months ago when a women's voice, two rows away, was heard saying, Maudie's gay you know. And I stood up and shouted, so am I, I'm gay. And Nikki next to me instantly straightened and said, I am too, I'm a lesbian. And shouts from the other three came to us as they stood - me too, I'm a lesbian. I am. I am. I am. And the whole patch stopped work and unfolded like a pack of cards righting itself. (Saphira, 41)

More recent lesbian writing, such as Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's Tahuri, is more playful in its separatist assertion of difference. 'The Basketball Girls' associates the lesbianism of the 'big girls' with glamour, seductively reflected in the gaze of a pre-sexual child, for whom the discovery that Ahi is

not a man, but had 'Cindy's eyes, and Cindy's voice' represents the mystery and thrill of romance.

In Te Awekotuku's stories, recognition of subjectivity and sexuality is always located in/reflected by another woman, so that masculinity, opposing, violent, is always constructed as other, 'outside'. 'Signs of life', a recent story by Annamarie Jagose plays with difference, with otherness, by sliding from metaphor into magic realism. Alison, a radical lesbian separatist, unemployed and unemployable, socially marginalised, drowns her sorrows in a pub and is confronted by two men (Big Nose and Moustache): 'puffed out chests and aggressive pelvises.'

'Ya Fucken dog!'

'Bumfucker!' shrieked Moustache, accuracy giving way to hysteria.

'Ignore them,' says Alison's mother. 'Don't stoop to their level.'

Alison felt her teeth lengthen and her spine shorten. She lunged on to the bonnet of the car and was comforted to feel thin metal give way under the weight of her limbs.'¹⁰

As Alison is constructed by the male gaze, so she transforms into a dog, and bounces back on the men (who are identified, as women often are, only by their physical attributes) reflecting and using against them their aggression, and the subjectivity they attribute to her. While writing by lesbian women represents gender difference at its most extreme and outside heterosexual norms, it has also heightened the associations made between woman/house/nurture/selfhood/sexuality which are conventional in fiction by women, so lesbian women characters are often wonderful cooks, gardeners and housekeepers and build strong communities, their domestic environments representing the freedoms and values of difference, figured in their sexuality and collective identity.

'There would be coffee going out in the kitchen. Also, if she knew women's parties, some stimulating discussion. Some of the best discussions she had ever entered into had been held spontaneously, in the kitchen at lesbian women's parties.'¹¹

Fiction by lesbian writers typically heightens both documentary realism and the essentialist association of female subjectivity with domestic community ('family') and environments characteristic of women writers, but has only recently begun to deconstruct gender, or represent it in a less value-laden way, or focus on textuality rather than realism. But a number of women writers of the 80's have moved away from the realist story or modified it, so the connections between narrative and a reality outside the narrative are no longer simply mimetic, but play through and around, perceptions of the text, linking 'character' with language, and stressing the text as the primary environment in which fictions are made.

'The woman writes a note on a piece of paper already wearing a ready-to-wear gas bill. She turns it over, revealing checked lining, a reversible raincoat for a fine day, and writes: 'This is goodbye. Now I must disappear. I love you!' She leaves the note on the kitchen table. Now she must disappear.'¹²

Anne Kennedy's 100 Traditional Smiles a 'novella' broken into numbered paragraphs, suggests how a narrative might be constructed by its constant allusions to knitting, but also insists, textually and visually, on the gaps between connections which throws the relationship between an act in language and an action, into relief. After the phrase 'Now she must disappear' the page whitens, leaving a space in which disappearance can be signified in the reader's perception. Kennedy's novella, like the stories of other women writers influenced by postmodernism, and like the work of Janet Frame, asserts the primacy of the text over a meaningful 'reality'.

Janet Frame's anti-individualistic, anti-essentialist fiction, which questions all given structures of knowledge, has been the most radical of all New Zealand writing, and in the specific ways in which she deconstructs gender roles and the significance of the individual self her texts are reference points for recent writing. In an early story entitled 'Jan Godfrey', the narrator observes:

'Alison Hendry. Margaret Burt. Nancy Smith. We cling to our names because we think they emphasise our separateness and completeness and importance, but deep down we know that we are neither separate nor complete nor very important, nor are we terribly happy....'¹³

Such an observation might have prefaced Barbara Anderson's 'Up the River with Mrs Gallant', a story written without a narrator and composed entirely of reported speech of the flattest kind, the speech of provincial newspapers. Almost every sentence opens with a proper name (Mr Lewis invited them, Mrs Gallant said, Mrs Kent said, Mrs Kent remarked, Arnold said) which focuses attention on the absence of a narrative frame, inviting readers to 'read' the story for themselves. It also subordinates the name of the speaker to what is said, for it is not the use of proper names which differentiates the characters but how they define themselves in language. Anderson's first collection I think We Should Go Into the Jungle (1989), uses a highly ironic and flattened language to suggest continually the detachable surface of the text. Cut loose from the traditional anchoring of a narrative point of view, located mostly in the social occasions and defining situations of middle class white New Zealand, the stories re-view the familiar as strange, composing their narratives from foreshortened perspectives, with an emphasis on picture, texture, colour, collage, and leaving structures of meaning and knowledge to the effort and will of the reader.

'The sunporch was made as a sergeant's billet. A Royal Stuart rug given them as a wedding present covered the low bed. An alarm clock, a small Swiss

army knife, a yellow Gollancz, a blue plastic glass of water shared the kitchen chair alongside. Una lay awake each night listening for his snores.'¹⁴

As well as removing emphasis from the narrator and, under the influence of postmodernism moving away from unitary narrative, recent writing has also burst out of the domestic post-romance frame characteristic of earlier writing by women. Shonagh Koea, Sue Reidy, Stephanie Johnson, Anne Kennedy, Fiona Farrell Poole have all published collections of stories which largely take place outside the family and outside New Zealand. In the title story of Koea's collection, The Woman Who Never Went Home and Other Stories (1987), a woman in pursuit of a man she fancies in a New Caledonian hotel recuperates from her past in an environment where she is anonymous. Travelling, afloat in another culture, as if on a metaphorical journey away from home, reconstructed in another language, like Koea's woman who can tell in French what she has told no other because the 'words were strangers to her', is perhaps the most commonly represented female condition of recent fiction by women. Johnson's fictions are set in Sydney, Reidy's in Indonesia, Fiona Farrell Poole's travel between Europe and New Zealand, across historical time and geographical space. As the expansion of the physical environment of fiction by women breaks down the metonymic association between 'home' and 'woman', gender roles, in the work of Johnson and Poole and Reidy, become conscious game-playing. In Johnson's 'The Invisible Hand' the narrator earns her living receiving obscene phone calls from men. It is her deliberate adoption of the role of sex-object, her commercial investment in the marketability of her gendered voice and the telephone's receptivity to male fantasies, that earns her an income, and gives the story its point: gender exploited as a commercial asset threatens the acceptability of sex roles by making them explicit, and re-valuing them. Robyn's friend Sue leaves in disgust when she discovers Robyn's occupation, telling her she is unfit to be a mother. On the wall of Robyn's bedroom are

signs: 'I am a Strong, Free-Spirited Woman. I Control My Own Destiny.'¹⁵

Fiona Farrell Poole's 'Choose Your Own Adventure' reconstructs the familiar gendered narrative of adolescent pregnancy as an adventure game structured on reader-choice. The multiple ironies of using a conventionally masculine game strategy to represent a situation in which there is only Hobson's choice sharpens gender difference, satirises the role of the reader who exercises choice, and throws essentialist constructions of gender roles into relief. Poole frequently locates her stories in historical narratives in order to regender history ('The Tale of Richard Seddon', 'Footnote') or frames them ('Home Movie' 'Interest-Free Terms 'Translation from the Original') in terms which suggest fiction as a kind of re-processing, so that even as her stories replicate familiar social/historical or gender environments they distance themselves from a 'real' version of the world.

Being female is to exist in a conjunction of impossibilities, as Johnson's title story, 'The Glass Whittler', might suggest, with its image of concentrated effort and pain. Far from giving gender roles or the domestic location of women some kind of metaphorical affirmation, the stories of Johnson or Rosie Scott and Sue Reidy attempt to unsettle preconceptions about gender. The musicians, solo parents, and travelling adventurers who people their stories are located outside the home, and represent anti-domesticity. The scientists, artists and entymologists who appear in the stories of Wendy Pond, whose environment is constructed wholly by their work redefine subjectivity as occupation.¹⁶ Frame and Anderson explicitly, and all female writers implicitly redefine it as textual. In Reidy's magic realist stories, strange events invade and interrupt apparently realistic surfaces so that possibilities are extended and 'reality' deconstructed. In 'Alexandra and the Lion' Alexandra's nocturnal voyages on the lion's back break down the apparently stable structures of marriage (where

gender occupations are reversed) job, and apartment living; in the title story of Reidy's Modettes, Rose 'does not question why a Hindu goddess should be eating a Chinese meal in the middle of the night in her apartment'. (Reidy, 23) Anything can and does happen in magic realism. Rose travels through Indonesia in a number of the stories in Modettes, and there is no such thing as improbability. Her clothes are appropriated by a beautiful Japanese man, to whom she becomes 'Rangda the Queen returned from the dead' (Reidy, 26). Any construction of the self is possible in an environment where cultural and social definitions are fluid, changeable or vanished. In recent writing by women, gender, role, nationality, culture, like the text itself, have burst out of familiar containment, calling into question all the terms which might precondition identity: wife, mother, daughter, lover, woman, New Zealander, narrative, story.

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14. Anderson, Barbara, 'Una Benchley thinks about David Hockney' Sport 3: 7
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16. Pond's stories have been published in Sport and Landfall and appear in several gender-based anthologies.

CODA

Anthologies, periodicals

In a publishing environment as short lived as that of the short story, anthologies carry more weight than perhaps they should. In representing the short story over a period of time, or less traditionally, as it is represented in a sub-genre category (ghost stories, detective stories, love stories, postmodern stories) anthologies impose boundaries on short fiction that imply hierarchies or homogeneity.

Early anthologies were anxious to stress the homogeneity of short stories as evidence of their mimetic realism. O N Gillespie, editor of the first collection ever made of short stories by New Zealanders' New Zealand Short Stories 1930, associated the lack of 'any national outlook or distinctive atmosphere' in the stories he collected with the purpose of 'our people' who, he claimed, sought 'to refashion in these islands the homeland they had left', an easy task because 'the purest British stock in the world was dealing with the country which was, of all the world, nearest in natural features to Britain'¹. It is New Zealand's likeness to Britain that Gillespie connects to the lack of 'distinctiveness' he identifies in the short story, but his discussion has nothing to say about texts and treats his own impressionistic view of New Zealand society as if it is synonymous with literature. No distinctions are made between writers or story types, instead 'story' and 'society' are interchangeable terms, the difference between them collapsed by Gillespie's phrase 'stories of life'. Even 'our Maoris', who feature in a number of stories in the anthology, can only be a saving grace (that is, supply the lack of distinctiveness) by leaving us 'with a slight golden tinge'; for Gillespie the function of stories is to stand behind the real world.

C R Allen's Tales for new Zealanders 1938 featured a foreword by Sir Hugh Walpole (but included no sketches by Sargeson) taking an identical though opposite view to Gillespie's: 'I

know of no book that for a long time at least has given me so clearly the smell and sound and touch of New Zealand country'². The analogy Walpole chooses, shows that he, like Gillespie, confuses writer and text so both stand in for 'New Zealand':

'as though a number of intelligent, observant men and women were guests in your house and began one after another to give you their idea of New Zealand'.

Both Gillespie and Allen rely heavily on the conventional models of short fiction, particularly romance, which dominated magazine publishing, decorated with 'local colour' and read unproblematically by these editors (and presumably the readership) as stories which show or reflect New Zealand. By the time Dan Davin edited New Zealand Short Stories First Series in 1953 the picture of homogeneity and truth had become more complicated and the connection of writing to reality less absolute; Davin's editorial plan was 'to include stories which are complete in themselves and which are all, if not anchored, at least tethered to a time and place that is recognizably New Zealand'³. Davin's anthology constructs a history of the short story that still serves predominantly realist purposes ('Katherine Mansfield's is a Wellington not yet changed beyond recognition; Anthony's cows still have to be fed during the Taranaki winter') but does also raise questions of textuality; concluding 'there is no specific New Zealand contribution to form'. It is significant that Davin's introduction is as much about absence as presence, in particular the absence of nineteenth century short fiction, and stories by writers such as John Mulgan and Jane Mander. It is clear that Davin, like most anthologists and literary historians only considered for selection short fiction published in book form, so the quantity of nineteenth century stories published in journals is not represented in his collection, which identifies and evaluates writers as writers of books. This version of short story history inevitably suggests that the short story is something 'also' written by novelists or that it becomes part

of history and high culture only when published collectively. Within, therefore, the already prescribed boundaries of literary history that Davin was working with, his editorial choices were governed by the story's transmission of 'local settings' and 'literary quality' which is placed within the 'fallible judgements' of the editor. It is these twin emphases of Davin's, distinctiveness (both as texts and as literature about new Zealand) and the identification or construction of a canonical literature within the undeclared criterion of book-publication that became the standard starting point for anthologists, particularly those continuing the Oxford series, C K Stead, Vincent O'Sullivan and Lydia Wevers. Stead's introduction is concerned to justify the status of represented writers and talks of the 'appetite for mirrors' satisfied by New Zealand fiction; O'Sullivan identifies three 'major talents' (Sargeson, Frame, Duggan) and suggests that the stories are 'patterns of fiction which finally clarify to ourselves the kind of tribe we are'; and I argued, in the fourth series of New Zealand Short Stories for a limited number of 'good writers' at any one time, and discussed the shifts of representation that took place in short fiction's 'New Zealand' over ten years. But anthologies, with their (usually) explicit evaluations of writers and texts and their boundaries of space, time, and, usually, form or publication, (though this has changed over time with some anthologists including stories from the periodical press), cannot avoid constructing a canonical or at least suggestively selected view of short fiction which affirms the significance of some texts (or groups of writers) and ignores others.

The first domain of the short story is newspapers, magazines or literary periodicals. Journals like the Listener, Landfall, Te Ao Hou, Islands, Mate, Climate, And, Untold and Sport establish a market and a readership for short stories and generally also favour a house style or are perceived to do so; what becomes dominant in short fiction over a period of time may have a great deal to do with editorial selection in

a leading journal. This is perhaps particularly noticeable in the work of women. During the fifties Landfall published very little by women writers. That many women were writing is evident from other periodicals, especially newspapers (the most ephemeral of all publishing forums) and more popular magazines, but their work did not receive 'serious' attention from the most highly regarded literary journal, and so the view of New Zealand and New Zealand literature which prevailed for some decades was male-authored and masculine. Recent anthologies devoted to the writing of women illustrate a continuing publishing history of work by women that has been incompletely represented in the major short story anthologies, such as the Oxford series. It is clear that more than one kind of writing exists but some kinds are valued more highly than others, and any anthology is a partial representation of the genre and one governed by a number of historically, culturally and editorially determined factors that means that an anthology always invents itself as a frame enclosing some of the large territory of short fiction.

The short story is an infinitely flexible and variable form. At the same time, in a population as small as New Zealand's there is a fairly consistent body of writers who publish regularly and who achieve collections. But there is a far larger group of writers who publish stories but not collections, and it is the value of journals of current writing that they provide a forum for work which will not get published in bookform. A recent anthology The Penguin Book of Contemporary New Zealand Short Stories (1989) edited by Susan Davis and Russell Haley contains, in its 375 pages remarkably few 'new' names; comparing it with the three issues of Sport published over the last two years suggests that Sport is creating a market for new or unpublished writers, where an anthology is more likely to reconstruct 'literature'.

Some anthologies do try to create a market or supply an absence. The New Women's Fiction series which opened in 1987

advertised for material and made its selections from the submitted work, so a great many of the writers who are published in the series are writers who have not published before or are relatively unknown. Regional collections and collections that are produced from writing groups around in New Zealand represent local difference, and, in a more significant way, Ihimaera and Long's anthology of Maori writing Into the World of Light brought before a wider readership new Maori writers or work that had previously been published in Te Ao Hou or its successors, thus enlarging the readership and claiming a different version of the 'real' for 'New Zealand'. Michael Morrissey's The New Fiction challenged the predominance of realism by showcasing postmodern fiction, suggestively rewriting short fiction and its related context 'New Zealand' as did many of the gender-specific anthologies of the eighties, all of which contributed to a more general deconstruction of a canonical, social realist, largely masculine 'tradition' of short fiction in New Zealand literature. Although some writers and stories clearly are more successful than others, short fiction is misrepresented if it is seen to be a mapped landscape in which peaks are surrounded by voids. The gaps and holes in some anthologies' guides to the New Zealand Short Story can be suggestively filled by the wider field of periodical publishing, and produce more complicated versions of what that Story might be. Short fiction in all its forms, constructs a various, polyvocal, polyvalent kind of cultural history and it is for this reason that the wider the new net goes fishing, the better view we get of what that net is.

ENDNOTES

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Yearbook of the Arts

Zealandia

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