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# NEW ZEALAND ARCHITECTS ABROAD

MICHAEL DUDDING

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ZEALAND  
ARCHITECTS  
ABROAD

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# NEW ZEALAND ARCHITECTS ABROAD

An Oral History Study of the experiences and motivations of New Zealand architects who undertook postgraduate studies in the United States during the immediate postwar period.

by Michael Dudding

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A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an oral history based investigation of four recently graduated architects (Bill Alington, Maurice Smith, Bill Toomath and Harry Turbott) who individually left New Zealand to pursue postgraduate qualifications at United States universities in the immediate postwar period. Guided interviews were conducted to allow the architects to talk about these experiences within the broader context of their careers. The interviews probed their motivations for travelling and studying in the United States. Where possible archival material was also sought (Fulbright applications, university archives) for comparison with the spoken narratives.

Although motivated by the search of modernity and the chance to meet the master architects of the period (Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Wright) what all gained was an increase in the confidence of their own abilities as architects (or as a landscape architect in the case of Turbott who switched his focus while in the United States). This increase in confidence partly came from realising that their architectural heroes were ordinary people. Although searching for modernity, their encounters with the canon of architectural history also had a profound effect. This detailed knowledge of what these four subjects felt about architecture, architectural education, and their experiences of studying, working, and touring abroad has helped to shed light on the development of and influences on postwar architecture in New Zealand.

The series of oral history interviews that were recorded during this project not only form the basis of the research material for this thesis, but are, in their own right, a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of New Zealand's postwar architectural history.



## IN MEMORIAM

Stanley William (Bill) Toomath (1925-2014)

Harold (Harry) Arthur Turbott (1930-2016)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>In Memoriam</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.0 A History of a New Zealand Architectural History</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 The 'Historical Narrative'	7
1.2 Peter Shaw's History of New Zealand Architecture	11
1.3 Normativity I - Perfectibility	16
1.4 Normativity II - Place	18
1.5 Making New Zealand Architectural History	19
1.6 Outsider Authors	30
1.7 On American Influence	33
1.8 Conclusion	39
<b>2.0 Methods</b>	<b>41</b>
2.1 The Participants	41
2.2 Oral History	42
2.3 The Interview Process	45
2.4 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis	49
2.5 Oral History as 'Data'	50
2.6 Data Analysis	52
2.7 Thematic Clusters	55
<b>3.0 Experiencing History</b>	<b>59</b>
Note to Recording Notation	62
3.1 A Remote Correspondence Course for Europe	62
3.2 European Itineraries	64
3.3 Experiencing Medieval Gothic	69
3.4 Existential Authenticity	74
3.5 Experiencing an Authentic History	80
<b>4.0 Experiencing Modernity</b>	<b>85</b>
4.1 Getting There	87
4.2 Motivations	94
4.3 Modern Architecture	98
4.3.1 West Coast	100

4.4.1 East Coast	107
4.5.1 Frank Lloyd Wright	113
4.4 Modern Education	116
4.4.1 Smith at Massachusetts Institute of Technology	117
4.4.2 Toomath at Harvard University	123
4.4.3 Alington at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	127
4.4.4 Turbott at Harvard University	131
4.5 Modern Practice	133
4.5.1 Turbott and Dan Kiley (Vermont)	134
4.5.2 Smith at Cape Cod	136
4.5.3 Alington at Robert Matthew and Johnson-Marshall (London)	139
4.5.4 Alington at Eberhart and Murphy (Urbana)	141
4.5.5 Toomath in Paris	143
4.5.6 Toomath at The Architects Collaborative (Cambridge, MA)	145
4.5.7 Toomath at Webb and Knapp (New York, NY)	146
4.6 Finding Modernity	148
<b>5.0 Conclusion</b>	<b>157</b>
5.1 An Education Completed	158
5.2 Reconsidering Existing Narratives	160
5.3 Reflections on the Research Process	162
5.4 Future Directions	164
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>177</b>
A) Timeline	178
B) Thematic analysis – thematic clusters	180
C) Thematic analysis – sample worksheet	182



## INTRODUCTION

In the immediate postwar years a small group of recently graduated architects individually left New Zealand to pursue postgraduate qualifications at overseas universities. This in itself was not a rare act, as travelling overseas became an increasingly common experience for young New Zealanders after World War II (J Wilson 36). The subjects of this study, William (Bill) Alington (b.1929), Maurice Smith (b.1926), Stanley William (Bill) Toomath (1925–2014), and Harold (Harry) Turbott (1930–2016), are part of a small group of travellers who did not simply trace the path of least resistance between the United Kingdom and her antipodean dominions. Instead, they elected to spend the greatest part of their time overseas in the United States. Although these men represent only a small sample of actors drawn from within the postwar architectural scene, their unusual decision raises a number of interesting questions: what were the motivations for their travel to the United States, what experiences did they have, and what meanings can be assigned to both? Although the international qualifications that were earned by the subjects of these studies are usually touted whenever they are referred to in subsequent literature and events, there has been no sustained investigation of the experiences that they had, and what those experiences meant for them. These are the primary areas of exploration within this thesis.

While at first glance these enquiries might seem overly narrow and perhaps superficial, in fact they resonate intriguingly within the context of New Zealand's architectural history. To begin with, each of the subjects are recognised figures within New Zealand architectural history. Their work has been published in local architectural media—both contemporaneous with its production as well as in more recent architectural history surveys—as recipients of New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) awards (including “25 Year” and

“Enduring Architecture” awards)<sup>1</sup>, and in monographic exhibitions, publications, and academic studies (including my own master’s thesis on Alington in 2009).<sup>2</sup>

Yet despite this recognisable presence, in many ways these architects remain at the edges of New Zealand’s architectural history narratives. The postwar architectural history of this country has been constructed around the potential manifestation of an architectural expression or practice that is recognisably of New Zealand. The ‘canon’, as much as one can be said to exist, is often explicated in those terms; an architect is seen to be working toward or within a distinctively local idiom, or is otherwise deemed to be an internationalist. This has been traced throughout the defining literature of New Zealand architectural history in Chapter 1 of this study. The role that architects themselves have played in framing this narrative is a key issue; from 1940 until the 1990s, our architectural history was largely founded and written by its own protagonists. As an examination of the self-told narratives of *other* protagonists (architects who have, in varying degrees, *not* played a significant part in crafting the dominant themes of our architectural history), this thesis achieves two things. The research conducted for it provides a lasting record of the lives and experiences of architects who might otherwise have remained on the margins of historical discourse (Toomath’s presence is an obvious exception here, see Chapter 2). This record exists in primary form in the oral history interview recordings, as well as in interpreted form within the body of this thesis. At a more critical level, the value in obtaining and analysing these

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<sup>1</sup> Alington House, the recipient of an Enduring Architecture award in 2007, has been recognised by both Heritage New Zealand and DocomomoNZ as a significant example of New Zealand modernist architecture (see Heritage New Zealand; Sharp and Cooke 188)

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Julia Gatley’s *Long Live the Modern* (2008), which features the work of: Alington (pp.77, 135, 162, 204); Smith (p.85); Toomath (pp.136, 200); and Turbott (p.141). More extensive surveys of Alington’s and Toomath’s work can be found in Stephen Stratford’s *4 Architects: William Alington, James Beard, William Toomath, Derek Wilson* (2010).

narratives is also significant beyond the individual lives and practices of the subjects. When examined within the context of an architectural history that has thus far excluded them, new light is shed on that history, and especially on how those original narratives came about.

As explained in Chapter 2, talking with protagonists is not unusual in this field of research; oral history is everywhere in New Zealand postwar architectural history. However, this thesis is markedly different from previous work by virtue of both a formal adoption of the methods and protocols of oral history research, and, more significantly, an explicit awareness of the limitations and opportunities inherent within this approach. At the heart of this work lies the recognition that history is created through a series of narratives, crafted, told, and upheld at both personal *and* social levels. An appreciation of the subjectivities of both memory and the autobiographical 'self' has facilitated the identification of the points of convergence and divergence between these levels of narrative. It is here that meanings are revealed that might otherwise have lain dormant in a more straightforward analysis of the narratives, or indeed in a more conventionally researched historical study aimed at uncovering objective truths.

This research had its genesis in the work carried out for my master's thesis in 2004-5. That project was an examination of Alington's theories on architectural design, which he formulated during the writing of his sub-thesis at Auckland University College in the mid-1950s. This research showed that Alington's work and outlook did not sit easily within the dominant narratives of New Zealand architectural history, a point that was discussed explicitly within my thesis (Dudding, "A Useful Exercise" 4). That master's thesis treated Alington's formative period as ending with his Auckland graduation, arguing that the ideas he developed in his sub-thesis were manifested directly in his practice, beginning with the design and construction of his own house in the early 1960s. In making that jump from sub-thesis to Alington House, the entirety of his overseas experience was skipped over in a single paragraph,



and its significance went unnoticed. The impact of that exclusion is further highlighted by there being two interview sessions (out of a total of seven) of the WH Alington Oral History Project devoted entirely to Alington's overseas experiences. Those particular interview sessions provided substantial material for this doctoral research, but were almost completely ignored in my master's thesis. Reflected in that omission was my own inability at that time to see beyond the defining narratives of architectural history in this country. The United States experience, in particular, pointed to something that could not be easily accommodated and, as a consequence, was simply quickly passed over.<sup>3</sup>

Returning to that topic in this thesis, in order to redress the original omission, has provided an opportunity to explore the significance of that historical anomaly in light of Alington's experiences and those of his peers who made similar choices at the completion of their undergraduate study. To that end, this thesis is unapologetically an historiographical study. It is an examination of the narratives of architectural history, rather than its artefacts. The limitations of oral histories conducted with architects of this era (see Chapter 2), mean that any attempt to determine the likely effect of the United States experience on their subsequent built work could only be speculative. Value exists in an interpretive approach of that nature, but against that, this work is representative of a belief in the value of critically engaging with historical narratives to help shed light on the development of architecture and its discourse. In enriching our understanding of New Zealand's architectural history, there is as much to be gained from a deeper exploration of the

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<sup>3</sup> Instead I simply noted that Alington's time at the School of Architecture coincided with both Bill Wilson's absence and Vernon Brown's waning influence, and that, as a consequence, Alington's lack of acceptance of a local regionalism as a suitable architectural pursuit placed him outside existing narratives (Dudding, "A Useful Exercise" 4, 21-25).

defining narratives of that history, as there is in considering the actual architecture – the buildings that are its physical manifestation.

The structure of this thesis reflects these concerns. Chapter 1 presents the dominant themes in the writing of New Zealand postwar architectural history. As a survey of primary texts and key moments of a socially upheld narrative, it provides the context within which the subjects of this study created their own personal narratives.

The second part of this thesis contains the analysis and discussion. Chapter 2 provides an explanation of the oral history method used for recording the participants' narratives, and the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methods employed to identify the themes. Chapters 3 and 4 present a discussion of the main findings of the analysis, divided into two parts – Chapter 3, which primarily looks at the time that the subjects spent in the United Kingdom and Europe, and Chapter 4, which focusses on their time in the United States, including their postgraduate education.

Chapter 5 concludes this thesis by briefly examining the most significant findings from Chapters 3 and 4 against the New Zealand historical context described in Chapter 1. A summary of the main findings of the analysis and discussion is included in the concluding section, accompanied by an evaluation of the research methods used.



## 1.0 A HISTORY OF A NEW ZEALAND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

This chapter consists of a review of the literature that constitutes the main historical narratives of New Zealand architectural history from approximately the 1940s to the beginning of the 1990s, thus covering the period in which the architects interviewed completed their education, went on to the United States and practised as architects. These four decades begin with Paul Pascoe's *Making New Zealand* articles of 1940. These articles can be seen as the foundational texts for a relatively coherent historical narrative that became entrenched during this timeframe. At the other end of this period are Peter Shaw's *New Zealand Architecture* (1991) and Terence Hodgson's *Looking at New Zealand Architecture* (1990); the first key works to present a serious alternative to that narrative.

The aim in this chapter is to lay out and examine the main texts upon which the historical narrative of New Zealand architectural history has been constructed, and in doing so, provide a suitable framework against which to compare the oral histories.

### 1.1 THE 'HISTORICAL NARRATIVE'

To begin with, it is necessary to define the idea of historical narrative in greater detail – especially as it applies to New Zealand architectural history. The term *historical narrative* implies a coherent, probably linear, descriptive account of a given phenomenon over a period of time (Stone 3). A historical narrative is usually driven by individuals and their wilful acts, and exists in its most recognisable form at the heart of most historical surveys. However, Justine Clark has proposed, in her article "Ephemera: The Elusive Canon of New Zealand Architecture", that here in New Zealand architectural discourse and history have been complicated by the lack of "major texts" (47). She suggests that New Zealand's "elusive canon" is formed iteratively, and largely outside of widely disseminated publications:

The lack of sustained publication in the years following 1960 meant that these iterations continued to happen in local, oral ways. Of course every architectural culture gives rise to debate which has little lasting public expression, but New Zealand's size, and the lack of publication generally means that the effects of all this unrecorded talk are perhaps more significant. (52)

As a reflection on the 'canon' and its formation, Clark's article almost sidesteps the issue of historical narrative, and its primary role in the generation of the canon. Following the example set by Juan Pablo Bonta, Clark asserts that a building may be subjected to various and sometimes competing interpretations, and that over time these interpretations evolve and coalesce into a common or canonical interpretation; the process is both an iterative and a consensual one (47-48). Bonta's work is concerned with architectural interpretation as a process that begins with multiple, individual, and tentatively weighted readings of a building, and the subsequent published dissemination of those readings through various iterations until the largely singular canonical interpretation is produced. What is missing from Bonta's description is the fact that interpretations are made from within a particular sociocultural context and in light of historical narratives that are, to a large degree, responsible for the construction of the shared meaning that creates that context. The process is more accurately one that moves from collective context, through individual interpretation, and back into the collective realm. In fact, the evolution of an interpretation and its subsequent acceptance is a direct function of how well they can be accommodated within the existing historical narratives. This is a reciprocal process, insofar as critical interpretation can cause shifts in the

historical narrative, but for the most part, the canon is a product of the legitimising historical narrative.<sup>4</sup>

The process described by Bonta is nonetheless useful as a description of how socially shared meaning is constructed. His are relevant not only for canon formation, but also as a description of how historical narratives develop as an iterative and collective process, although historical narratives are informed by a broader cross section of figures, and not just the authorised intellectuals and critics implied in Bonta's writing. These figures include the initial protagonists (an important point for this thesis), affected social groups, popular media, political agendas, and so on.

Clark also notes that the processes described by Bonta are inadequate as an explanation of developments in New Zealand architectural history (48). But where she posits the lack of sufficient local publication as being the cause for this divergence, I would argue instead that it is Bonta's separation of the embedded act of criticism from its context within the historical narrative that is the root cause. If, as Clark suggests, the New Zealand architectural canon is ephemeral, it is because the historical narrative that defines it (the valorisation of an indigenous architecture), is too firmly exclusive to admit most of what has actually been built. It is not so much a lack of architectural history writing – the quantity is irrelevant in this respect – but that what has been written is too definitive for a solid canon to emerge. The canon is ephemeral because it is still an idea.

The role that architects themselves have played in framing the narrative that defines the New Zealand architectural canon is a key issue in the perpetuation

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<sup>4</sup> Christine McCarthy's article, *"Voices of Silence reconsidered"*, is an excellent study of how interpretations of John Scott's Futuna Chapel have coalesced and changed over time. McCarthy is able to demonstrate how the Chapel was articulated within the existing historical narrative, and how Walden's canonical interpretation subsequently refashioned aspects of that narrative in terms of a bicultural architecture.

of this historical construct. From 1940 until the 1990s, our architectural history was largely founded and written by its own protagonists. This is an important factor to keep in mind when examining the self-told narratives of *other* protagonists – architects who, in varying degrees, have *not* played a significant part in crafting the dominant themes of our architectural history. How do they locate their own stories (and identity), within and/or against these dominant narratives? And what can the slippage between these narratives tell us about the historical context of these decades?

This chapter then, is an attempt to outline the development of the dominant historical narrative of New Zealand architecture, concentrating on its foundations from the first published historical survey in 1940, to the point at which its legitimacy is first seriously challenged in the last decade of the twentieth century. This, roughly fifty year period, also encompasses the formative and mature periods in the careers of the architects who are the subject of this study – a coincidence of timespan where the subjects are not yet ‘subjects’, but are the active participants within an architect-authored architectural history. At face value, this serves to give a sense of the historical setting within which the experiences of the subjects of this study are played out (see Chapters 3 and 4).

At a deeper level, the historical trajectory briefly covered in this survey provides a line of reference against which the oral history narratives can be examined. It should be kept in mind that, as a reference, these narratives should not be considered as being immutable. Both the overall historical narratives and the individual oral history narratives are malleable; they each act as tools for the shaping of the other. This shaping manifests in the solidification, evolution, and/or displacement of the various elements of each narrative as they are juxtaposed; this is important because it emphasises the need for careful consideration of the historical narratives that are outlined in this chapter.

## 1.2 PETER SHAW'S HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND ARCHITECTURE

The suspicion that borrowing from 'overseas' models is somehow less respectable and less honest than confronting built traditions that exist in New Zealand is a constant refrain in architectural criticism, mostly written by architects themselves. (Shaw, *A History of New Zealand Architecture* (2003) 255)

In light of the negative reviews that the first edition of Peter Shaw's survey of New Zealand architectural history attracted in the early 1990s, the above excerpt, from the 2003 third edition of the book, may well be seen as little more than a defensive rejoinder. Yet there is a certain validity in Shaw's position. In it, he identifies areas of concern that need to be addressed by anyone trying to understand how New Zealand architectural history came to be what it is. Understanding how architects construct their own biographies is no different; they are embedded within this very paradigm.

The first issue to which Shaw draws attention in the quoted excerpt is the valorisation of a certain notion of what New Zealand architecture should be. That New Zealand architects had a duty to pursue a distinctive response to local conditions (and thus, formulate a distinctively indigenous architectural expression) has coloured much of what has come to constitute the narratives of architectural history in this country. But Shaw's criticism of this "constant refrain," and the fact that it is ascribed to writers of "architectural criticism" rather than to writers of architectural history, can be read in two ways. Shaw is either drawing a dividing line between the writers of past architectural histories, on the one hand, and the contemporary critics who had criticised the first edition of his book on the other, or he is suggesting, somewhat subtly, that what has previously been written about New Zealand architectural history cannot be considered 'history' proper; its normative nature meant that it lacked the necessary objectivity. It is possible that both readings might equally be true.



The second issue that Shaw highlights is related to the first. Whether he is castigating previous architectural writing as being too normative to function as legitimate history, his point that it has been “mostly written by architects themselves” is accurate. The observation contains important ramifications for understanding how the oral history narratives in this study are shaped. What is important to note here is that the issues raised by Shaw – the “constant refrain”, and the presence of the ‘architect-author’ – are defining characteristics of the overall narrative that is New Zealand architectural history. And, it is this historical narrative, shaped by those characteristics, that provides the context within which the oral histories collected for this thesis were crafted.

The first edition of Shaw’s historical survey was published in 1991 as *New Zealand Architecture: From Polynesian Beginnings to 1990*. It followed, by only a matter of months, the publication of a similar survey: Terence Hodgson’s *Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand* (1990). Together, these publications represented a significant turning point in the telling of New Zealand architectural history, and consequently the criticism that the authors of both books received, reveals much about the historical narrative that had been constructed and upheld until that point. By looking more closely at the nature of the criticism directed at these two books, it is possible to provide a sense of just how embedded the basic ideas underlying our historical narrative were at that time, and the degree to which the architectural ‘insider’ still dominated and sought to shape that discourse. The two issues are, of course, related.

The decision to concentrate mostly on the reception of Shaw’s book, rather than Hodgson’s, is due to the fact that it appeared more controversial at the time, yet has persisted as the most authoritative survey of New Zealand architectural history to date. Despite its initial reception, and with its present-day colour photography (courtesy of Robin Morrison), its larger scope (being twice as long as Hodgson’s) and easily accessible prose, and no doubt its internationally connected publishing house, Shaw’s book has retained a lasting appeal. Revised editions were published in 1997, and again in 2003.

Hodgson's book, on the other hand, has quietly slipped from attention, although its use of archival imagery makes it a useful companion volume to Shaw's.

In the late 1980s one could obtain and read fairly comprehensive histories of art in New Zealand (such as Gordon Brown and Michael Dunn's *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting, 1839-1980* (1988)), but no such volume existed for the field of architecture. Unaware of Hodgson's contemporaneous project, Shaw felt that there was a gap in the literature of New Zealand's cultural history. His aim in writing *New Zealand Architecture* was simply to provide the kind of text that he wanted to read (Shaw, "Untitled Lecture").

Although a number of books addressing various aspects of architecture in New Zealand had been published during the 1980s, the most recent attempt at an historical survey was not current, substantial, or widely available. Martin Hill's *New Zealand Architecture* was a booklet published in 1976 by the School Publications Branch of the Department of Education (based on a series of articles previously published in the journal, *Education*, in 1975). Although broad in scope, it only amounted to forty-six profusely illustrated pages. Another historical survey published three years earlier, John Stacpoole and Peter Beaven's co-authored *Architecture 1820-1970* (1972), consisted of almost twice as many pages as Hill's survey, but it too was very limited, featuring only eighty buildings and brief contextual essays. Published almost twenty years before Hodgson's and Shaw's books, it was also quite out-of-date – a concern noted by some reviewers of Shaw's book (Dunn 87; Lochhead 10; Reid 131).

Supporting Shaw's assertion that New Zealand architectural critics frowned upon overseas influence, a number of reviews made much of that very point (Walden, "Cutting Architecture into Styles" 5; Dunn 87; Kernohan 53). Russell Walden in particular, lamented New Zealand architecture more generally

because of this tendency, and seemed to resent the fact that Shaw's work clearly exposed that aspect of our history. Others, including Walden, went on to suggest that, as an outsider, Shaw was unable to recognise the New Zealand "sensibility" (Walden, "Cutting Architecture into Styles" 5), and simply did not give enough attention to "an 'indigenous', 'characteristic' or 'vernacular' New Zealand architecture" (Kernohan 52).

These reviews were written by figures embedded within the local architectural scene, those who were in active practice or teaching in one of the architectural schools, or typically involved in both. Both Walden ("Cutting Architecture into Styles" 5) and Gerald Melling (22), reviewing the first edition of Shaw's book for *The Evening Post* and the *Dominion Sunday Times* newspapers respectively, were scathing of Shaw's outsider status, while David Kernohan hinted at the same limitation in his review for the *Listener* (52).

There is a marked contrast between these evaluations and those put forward by other reviewers, especially Bruce Petry, Ian Lochhead, and Chris Orsman, who were then less directly connected to the architectural profession. Their reviews were more receptive of the diversity of overseas influences that Shaw connects to local architectural developments – even commending Shaw for "extending the breadth of our knowledge" (Lochhead 10). Although both Petry and Orsman had trained as architects, at the time they were working as heritage researchers for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Lochhead taught architectural history at the University of Canterbury, but within an art history programme rather than within a professional architecture school.

The review that Paul Reid provided for *Fabrications*, the journal published by the Society of Architectural Historians of New Zealand and Australia (SAHANZ), is also interesting. Like Walden and Kernohan, Reid held a position in a school of architecture and had trained and practised as a professional architect. Reid was an expatriate New Zealander, however, who was completely embedded in the Australian profession – most famously as chief

architect for the Australian National Capital Development Commission from 1975 until 1983, where he oversaw the physical development of Canberra (Cox). At the time of writing the review he was a professor of architecture at the University of New South Wales. The stance that Reid took on Shaw's emphasis on overseas influences was more measured; he even noted the obvious parallel between this aspect of architectural development in New Zealand with the experience of Australia and other British colonies. Instead, his criticism was aimed at the lack of a "larger message" or "logic" (132).<sup>5</sup> For Reid, the perceived lack of a coherent narrative of development defined the survey as a chronologically arranged encyclopaedia, rather than a "history" (131) – a distinction also emphasised in other reviews (Dunn 89; Kernohan 52; Melling 5; Wilson 2). While some reviewers praised this quality, Dunn calling it an "indispensable reference for years to come" (89), others, like Reid, were seeking more:

If the lesson is that history is that 'events proceeded haphazardly and without logic' then history is a poor guide for the future. If New Zealand and its architects are going to find their way out of the current maze of blind alleys they will need more help from critics and historians than this book provides. (Reid 132)

Reid does not suggest (openly at least), that the answer to the problems of contemporary New Zealand architecture lay in discovering an authentic vernacular. Nevertheless, the nature of his criticism is important as it offers some clarity as to what lies at the heart of the criticism offered by the other reviewers. Reid's call for a "lesson" is a demand for a normative historical narrative. Specifics aside, this is the same basis from which the criticism put

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<sup>5</sup> The same point is made by Hamish Keith in his review of the second edition of Shaw's book in 1997: "We need answers, even rough answers, to the large questions more than we need a patient account of buildings..." (Keith G7).

forward by those calling for less emphasis on overseas influences arises. For these reviewers, history is a future-oriented endeavour in which a specific narrative is established in order to legitimise a specific contemporary approach to architectural design (and criticism). Those who specifically criticised the lack of attention given to a New Zealand indigenous architectural expression were simply indicating the polemical parameters for the 'lesson' that they felt Shaw should be delivering in his survey.

### 1.3 NORMATIVITY I - PERFECTIBILITY

As Tournikiotis states in the introduction to his *Historiography of Modern Architecture*, the expectation that an architectural history text should provide solutions to present day (or future), architectural problems is perhaps the most defining feature of twentieth century architectural history writing (4). This conflation of theory and history has defined architectural texts, at least since Vitruvius's account of the origins and proper proportions for the Orders (102-107). But twentieth century architectural history writing does not share the same tradition as the architect-authored treatises of the past, and in fact, has an important point of difference because of this. Where pre-twentieth century architectural history and theory were written by architects, and aimed largely at justifying and asserting the correct methods with which to recreate and use elements from an architectural *past* for a contemporary era, twentieth century architectural history writing developed with a different goal in mind – to establish an evolutionary narrative from which a *new*, and appropriately specific, architecture could emerge for *this* age.

The Hegelian notion of 'zeitgeist' lies at the core of this change in emphasis, in more ways than one. Hegel's philosophy of history identified artistic expression as one of the keys to understanding the nature of society and culture in any given era – the 'spirit' of that particular 'time'. Works of art provide evidence of historical progress, but are also a part of the system from within which that development is generated (Hatt and Klonk 24). In effect, Hegel's philosophy

births art history as an autonomous discipline that, along with histories of religion and philosophy, are central to understanding humankind.

Hegel's primary influence, however, lay in his assertion that the *zeitgeist* is reflective of a progressive developmental history. For Hegel and his followers, history was the record of human development marching upward toward a state of rational perfection.

The most influential architectural histories of the first half of the twentieth century emerge from this line of thought. Art historians trained in the German tradition, where Hegel's thinking remained powerful, turned their attention to architecture – defining, just as others had for painting and sculpture, periods of stylistic or formal coherence that could be assembled into a grand historical narrative. Nikolaus Pevsner and Sigfried Giedion are the two most prominent exponents of this approach in the English-speaking world. The normativity inherent in their work (Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement: from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (1936), and Giedion's *Space Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (1941)), arises from both the formalistic evaluations that they devise (which, it must be noted, are quite different), and their adherence to the Hegelian notion of *zeitgeist*. The latter is especially important in raising the stakes of architectural normativity, as both authors see their own time as the dawning of a new age of reason and enlightenment, in turn the logical conclusion to the positive development of mankind (assuming the inevitability that architects adhere to the formal and stylistic criteria that they have identified as being appropriate to the modern age).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The nineteenth century historian, Jacob Burckhardt, who opposed many of Hegel's ideas, criticised this aspect of Hegel's philosophy as a "theodic" leaning promulgated by those who, in taking Hegel's theories to their logical extreme, wished to project the destined "perfectibility" onto their own era (Dale 40-41).

## 1.4 NORMATIVITY II - PLACE

The second stream of historiography that informs the normativity of New Zealand architectural history writing has its roots, perhaps indirectly, in the romantic nationalism of the nineteenth century. The French architect and theorist Eugène Viollet-le-Duc is a key figure in the development of theories that legitimised historic and vernacular building techniques. Unlike Pugin or even Ruskin (for whom the Gothic Revival was a direct moral imperative) Viollet-le-Duc was concerned with finding in the past architecture of national groups, the most appropriate way of building for that group. He upheld a particular notion of the structural and decorative rationality of medieval architecture, insofar as each element performed a necessary function (structural and/or aesthetic), but this was only half of the story. His other concern was the appropriateness of the architectural expression to the national character of its builders. Gothic Revival appealed to the French, he argued, because it was rational *and* because it conformed to the “national genius” of the French. According to Viollet-le-Duc, this latter aspect, the national genius, descended from primitive built responses to the needs of the inhabitants in their specific locality. As part of their “racial signature”, these building practices pass through subsequent generations, persisting even after the originating conditions are no longer apparent (O'Connell 441-442). The national genius and its distinctive national architectural expression are rooted in the rational or pragmatic responses of the past vernacular.

Viollet-le-Duc's writings on the matter can be considered as being symptomatic of a wider cultural movement of romantic nationalism, linked with the development of the nation state, rather than as a moment of origin. And although there is no evidence of a direct link between his theories and mid-twentieth century architectural history writing in New Zealand, there is a thematic lineage that runs parallel with the development of modernist architectural theory. Thus, while this localised and backward-looking approach at first seems a sharp contrast to the Hegelian-conceived modernity of the twentieth century architectural historians, they are not incompatible. For

example, in his drawings in *Entretiens sur l'architecture*, Viollet-le-Duc demonstrated how modern materials, most notably cast iron, could be used to build contemporary buildings that followed his interpretation of medieval Gothic principles – remaining both rational *and* of the French national genius.

The rise of political romantic nationalism and its attendant *völkisch* element across Europe in the wake of World War I was played out in architectural design as it was in other cultural expressions, especially art, literature, and music. National spirit was evoked in responses ranging from a return to vernacular building methods (particularly in domestic buildings), to a vernacular-inflected version of modernism. For example, Sibel Bozdoğan's *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* documents the critical shifts that occurred in the relationship between modernist architecture and Atatürk's nation building project in the 1930s modernising Turkey. Similarly, in his book *Modern Houses in Britain: 1919-1939*, Jeremy Gould documents a shift in English domestic architecture, also during the 1930s, away from the heroic white modernism of the 1920s, which often disguised the underlying brickwork, toward the visibility of more traditional building materials (particularly timber and brick), and a simple, and perhaps more humane, functionalism. The work of these English architects<sup>7</sup> was cognizant of precedents in Scandinavian building design from the late 1920s, as were prominent New Zealand architects such as Vernon Brown (Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture* 145).

## 1.5 MAKING NEW ZEALAND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

The concerns of a progressive zeitgeist and an indigenous architectural expression are clearly brought together at the very genesis of New Zealand architectural history. The first published historical survey of New Zealand

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<sup>7</sup> The architects of this period also numbered among them prominent émigrés from continental Europe, such as Erno Goldfinger and Walter Gropius, as well as from the former British colonies, including New Zealanders Amyas Connell and Basil Ward.



architecture was written by a Christchurch architect, Paul Pascoe, and published in 1940. Not only is its main thesis embedded within the ideals already discussed, but it is also a strongly normative piece of writing – despite being written for a general audience.

Panayotis Tournikiotis discusses the normativity of mid-twentieth century architectural histories in terms of the development of a theory of “what-ought-to-be” (Tournikiotis 237). He describes the result as an “historical text that projects onto the future the terms of an *architecture-which-is-coming*, to some extent identifying research into the past with the theoretical thinking and architectural action of the future” (Tournikiotis 237-238).

Paul Reid, in decrying the lack of a ‘lesson’ in Shaw’s historical survey, is simply seeking an absent “what-ought-to-be”. Having trained during the 1950s, when Pevsner’s and Giedion’s books were staple reading for architecture students (Beard JABOHP 2.01/0:49:46), Reid would no doubt have had those texts in mind when contemplating what it is that an architectural history should do.<sup>8</sup>

Appearing almost simultaneously with these publications, and in fact preceding Giedion’s, the first historical survey of New Zealand architecture is no different. In fact, Tournikiotis’s description of the key works of Giedion and Pevsner could just as easily apply to Pascoe’s foundational texts – two articles penned for the *Making New Zealand* series of magazines in the late 1930s. There were smaller published commentaries on aspects of New Zealand architecture prior to Pascoe’s work, and as Clark and Walker have shown, these appear to have set in place the various themes that would come to define the normative

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<sup>8</sup> In fact, Shaw is very clear what the lesson is in his text, but it is one aimed at the general public more than professional architects. In the ‘Author’s Note’ he states his desire to “make the past available and useful”, clearly expressing an intent to try to prevent the wholesale demolition of New Zealand’s heritage buildings (Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture* 6).

aspects of subsequent written histories (27), including Pascoe's.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Pascoe's two issues, and the "Houses" piece in particular (the other was "Public Buildings"), represent the first attempt to construct a local historical narrative, based upon a coherent development of architecture from precolonial to contemporary times.

The *Making New Zealand* publications were a New Zealand government produced series of magazines to celebrate the centenary of the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Each issue of the series (covering topics from infrastructure and defence, to fashion and sport) was to present an objective overview of the history of its subject – within the confines of a publication commemorating New Zealand's history. Joe Heenan, as Undersecretary of Internal Affairs, and whose job it was to organise the 1940 centenary commemoration, was keen for the event to "celebrate 100 years of colonisation", bringing "the bright side of our national progress" before the eyes of the world (Heenan, qtd. in Jones, *Picking up the Traces* 277).<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Jones describes the pervasive tone of the centennial as being grounded in a belief in heroic "national progress" with New Zealand pioneers (the purest of the British stock) "transforming the land into a pastoral paradise, and in building a just and prosperous society" (174). In effect, this myth charted the creation of New Zealand as a particularly English utopian land – more English than England.

The approach taken by Pascoe was something of a departure from Heenan's initial vision. Instead of adopting the positively biased tone that defined most of the official centennial activities, Pascoe is more forthrightly critical of most of

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<sup>9</sup> Clark and Walker cite texts by the following architects: Hurst Seager (1900); Clere (1916); and, Gray Young (1924).

<sup>10</sup> Heenan based the format for the *Making New Zealand* publications on a similar series of publications from the United States, entitled *Building America* (see Maclean 92).

New Zealand's past and present architecture on the grounds that New Zealand's architectural development was derived from English models (a point made more emphatically in the second Pascoe issue "Public Buildings"), and that New Zealand's colonial period "coincided with the collapse of the architectural good taste of the Regency period in England" (Pascoe, "Houses" 30).

The disjunction between Pascoe's tone (and he was not the only author to adopt this particular attitude) and Heenan's original vision for the centennial celebrations reflects the mixed points of view across many of the centennial publications. While some were happy to articulate their topics in terms of New Zealand's exemplary progress as a British colony, others became interested in producing a more realistic narrative, grounded in the social realities of this country, including its negative aspects. Rather than making a case for the maintenance of cultural continuity, these latter writers sought a national identity arising from cultural adaptation to the specific conditions of New Zealand as a *new world*, but also subject to influences from outside. (Jones, *Picking up the Traces* 277-282)

This 'anti-myth', as it has become known, was consciously developed by a new generation of academics, most notably JC Beaglehole, EH McCormick, and the literary figures with whom they associated, known as the 'Phoenix-Caxton' group.<sup>11</sup> Both Beaglehole (as typographical advisor), and McCormick (as editor), were on the *Making New Zealand* editorial team, along with Pascoe's twin brother, John Pascoe (as illustrations editor) (Maclean 178-179). Paul Pascoe's role (probably acquired courtesy of his brother's position), went beyond authorship of the two architecture-related issues. He worked closely

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<sup>11</sup> The term *Phoenix-Caxton* group is commonly used to refer to poets linked to either the literary magazine *Phoenix* (1932–34) or those published by Denis Glover's Caxton Press in the 1930s and 1940s. Among its members, including Glover, were Charles Brasch, Allen Curnow, ARD Fairburn, RAK Mason, John Mulgan, and Frank Sargeson.

with his brother producing illustrations for other titles in the series (Maclean 108).<sup>12</sup>

The anti-myth explored by the *Phoenix-Caxton* group played an important role in the centennial publications under McCormick's guidance (albeit more emphatically in the series of book length *Centennial Surveys* (see Barrowman; Jones, *Picking up the Traces* 278-282; Renwick)). Those who most closely followed McCormick's editorial vision,<sup>13</sup> including McCormick himself in his *Centennial Survey*, "Letters and Arts in New Zealand", were *re-making* New Zealand in a conscious attempt to present what they saw as a more truthful and critical evaluation of the state of the nation and its history.<sup>14</sup> It was an attempt to create a history of this country that looked more critically at its own past by making a case for a national character rooted within this place, and the specific experiences associated with it, rather than the continuance of an unbroken narrative of the expansion of the British empire and her people. The Hegelian progressive ascendancy is still apparent, but to a large extent 'reset' in the transfer to a far-flung land. Thus it is combined with a burgeoning romantic nationalism that, rather than defining the people of this land as being more English than the English, sought to define the unique qualities that made the people of this land 'New Zealanders'.

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<sup>12</sup> Pascoe's close involvement with *Making New Zealand* was commended by Heenan, who stated that he had one of the most brilliant young architects in New Zealand on his staff (cited in Maclean 108).

<sup>13</sup> Barrowman includes the *Centennial Surveys* produced by Beaglehole and FL Wood (both of whom served on the editorial committee with McCormick) (175), while both Renwick and Jones draw attention to the *Making New Zealand* issues authored by Paul Pascoe, GL Gabites, and Doris McIntosh (Jones, *Picking up the Traces* 281-282; Renwick 185).

<sup>14</sup> In his 1980 memoir, one of the key figures, Charles Brasch, wrote: "what the Phoenix said was, in effect: 'Here we are: New Zealand literature begins here'" (Brasch 185). This has obvious similarities to Bill Wilson's famous rallying cry to architects in the 1940s: "But there is no architecture in New Zealand. NONE!"(27).

As with Viollet-le-Duc's 'racial signature', the defining qualities of the New Zealand identity were parsed from their origins as a people (pinned on early European settlement rather than the pre-existing Māori culture). In practice, this meant a valorisation of simple and pragmatic responses to problems of colonial settlement in the new world. That this aligned nicely with the general principles of modernity is no mere accident, but rather betrays the paradigm from within which these figures were working.

In this respect, Pascoe's historical narrative arrives in a similar place to that of Pevsner' – the *what-ought-to-be* is decidedly modernist for both authors, even if the narrative that legitimates it is quite different. Both Pevsner and Pascoe situate their narratives in reaction to the stylistic confusion of the nineteenth century. Pevsner does so on grounds of purity, taste and the inability of historical eclecticism to properly express a modern zeitgeist of scientific rationality. Pascoe's argument is based both on taste and the inappropriateness of transplanted styles in a new land. So while both are presenting normative architectural histories, which legitimise a functionalist view shared by proponents of international modernism, Pascoe's is rooted in the New Zealand condition – as a local inflection borne of the anti-myth argument being played out explicitly in the Centennial activities by the *Phoenix-Caxton* group – rather than within a broader sweep of international developments.

To have these ideas recognised in government authorised publications, and put before a mainstream audience in an official nation-building exercise, was a victory of sorts for the anti-myth proponents. In the field of architecture, it also provided a watershed moment. As Shaw points out, Pascoe's account became one of the most influential architectural texts of the 1940s (*A History of*

*New Zealand Architecture* (1997) 147).<sup>15</sup> While Shaw is referring to the effect of Pascoe's writing on the local architect audience, which should not be underestimated, the impact of Pascoe's narrative is more profound. As the first published survey of New Zealand architectural history, it effectively brought New Zealand architectural history into being.<sup>16</sup> It created a framework within which subsequent histories could be articulated. And this is precisely what occurred. Beginning with "Architecture in New Zealand" – H Courtenay Archer's 1942 article in the English design magazine, *Architectural Review*<sup>17</sup> – subsequent authors constructed their own narratives upon the foundations provided by Pascoe's writing.

The basic elements of Pascoe's structure, which go on to inform subsequent histories at least up to the 1970s, consist of: a pre-contact distinctive Māori architecture, developed by a people in "intimate contact with nature" ("Houses" 3); settling and pioneering phases, where buildings developed from rudimentary shelters (including Māori whare) of make-shift materials; a prosperous period of the second half of the nineteenth century, associated with a typically Victorian mixture of styles; and finally, a survey of the range of

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<sup>15</sup> The other, as cited by Shaw, was Plischke's *Design and Living*, which was published in 1947. Plischke's historical narrative borrows heavily from that put forward by Pascoe in the *Making New Zealand* publications.

<sup>16</sup> By comparison, Professor CR Knight's essay "Architecture", also a centennial historical survey of New Zealand architecture, does not appear to have been as influential. Knight's position was much more conservative (being modern was cast as a style rather than a conviction (178)), and, like most of the other essays collected by Auckland University College academics compiled in the book, was mostly focussed on New Zealand's British Victorian heritage. That it was published, unillustrated, in an academic book, would also have lessened its appeal and reach.

<sup>17</sup> Archer's article is very close to that of Pascoe's, even using the same illustrations and wording in some parts. This is unsurprising, given that Archer consulted with Pascoe during its writing (Skinner, pers. comm.). He does, however, elaborate Pascoe's basic thesis further, from a specifically socialist point of view, in relation to the relationship between architecture and New Zealand society (Halliday 56).

responses to the contemporary house – including bungalows, state housing, modernistic, and modern houses.

The final section of *"Houses"* speculates on the New Zealand homes of the future, and it is here that Pascoe makes the normative bent of his historical narrative most explicit. Throughout the article the qualities of "simplicity and truth" recur as positive and desirable traits. He commends the "simple but beautiful houses of the Māori (3), the "economical and straightforward" plans of early pioneer houses, which, in the absence of "mass-produced frills" gave the early pioneering houses their admired "simplicity" (10), and, of course, the superiority of modernist houses, which have deliberately "been made as simple as possible" (24). In the concluding section, Pascoe states that New Zealand architecture has "reached a degree of maturity," and it is from this position that he not only hopes that its continued development will follow "along the lines of simplicity and common sense", and the "natural fact of 'form before function'", but that it will also develop a style of its own in fulfilling these primary needs (30). He ends on an appropriately optimistic note (given the nature of the publication and the search for a national identity that accompanied it), suggesting that it should be possible for New Zealand, in following this path, to contribute something unique and valuable to 'architecture' more broadly (30).

By valorising the "simplicity and truth" throughout his narrative, and especially when discussing houses of the pioneers, Pascoe is not only elevating those characteristics of rationality and honesty, core modernist concerns, but is also locating them as part of a distinctly local response to the times and conditions, which resulted in an architecture that might be thought of as, or at least capable of developing into, being recognisably of New Zealand. Thus, as Clark and Walker observe, modern architecture becomes written into the historical discourse as "a kind of national trait" (28). An appropriately local

regionalism is seen as the inevitable result of adherence to this proper mode of building.<sup>18</sup>

This normative promotion of a particular modernist regionalism lies at the foundation of architectural history writing in New Zealand. It is repeated two years later in Archer's article and reprised by Pascoe and his partner in practice Humphrey Hall in a 1947 article in *Landfall*, entitled "The Modern House". Plischke's *Design and Living*, also published in 1947, replays the same basic historical narrative – from the simple and functional pioneer cottages (32-3), through the lavish and superficial eclecticism of the nineteenth century (34), culminating in the modern house (38-47). Illustrated with line drawings (of a more precise quality than those used to illustrate the preceding historical styles), the modern house is given considerable attention. It is, in essence, a manifesto of Plischke's own approach to domestic design (notably without mention of the possibility of a national distinctiveness).

It should be remembered that Pascoe's speculation is for a New Zealand architecture that does not yet exist – that architecture is a 'projection' of his text. A genealogy is established, and defining qualities laid out, but the examples offered (including a house of his own design<sup>19</sup>) are only tentative and not upheld as canonical examples of the *architecture-which-is-coming*. This is important to consider when revisiting Clark's point that the New Zealand architectural canon is "elusive". Here we have the foundational history, upon

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<sup>18</sup> This position is, ironically, a global development of the 1930s and 40s. Stanford Anderson discusses equivalent, and no doubt influential, developments in Scandinavia and the United States in his article "The new 'Empiricism-Bay Region Axis'", while Sibel Bozdoğan's *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* explores similar issues.

<sup>19</sup> Pascoe's houses of this era bear obvious similarities with work being built in England during in the mid-1930s (coinciding with Pascoe's time spent in England). Leading English architects at this time (including European émigrés), were, with an eye toward Scandinavian work, moving from concrete or rendered masonry construction toward making visible more traditional materials – fair-faced brickwork, and timber (Gould 22-25).



which later writers would fashion their own stories, that charts a particular emphasis yet to find full realisation. There are no canonical buildings to be held up against this normative standard. Bill Wilson, the key polemicist within the Group Architects, makes this point even clearer in his 1948 article “The Small House”, when he writes that “there is no architecture in New Zealand” (27) (see also footnote 11 on page 16 of this thesis).

Others went further and began to populate Pascoe’s framework with the key architects who would remain the dominant figures within the historical discourse. In particular, the 1954 exhibition, *Home Building, 1814-1954: The New Zealand Tradition*, popularised the myth that had been constructed around a group of recent architectural graduates, who were known as Group Architects, and their mentor Vernon Brown. The catalogue to the exhibition was put together by James Garrett, and provides a neatly laid out history of housing in New Zealand, clearly derivative of Pascoe’s general schema. However, where Pascoe suggests that the qualities inherent in early pioneer housing might become the basis of a future indigenous vernacular, Garrett and the exhibition curators place Vernon Brown and the Group Architects as among those successfully realising that vision. Garrett even labels the architects pursuing this approach as the “New Pioneers” (*Home Building* 18). Six of the buildings selected for the New Pioneers section of the exhibition were designed by either Brown or the Group Architects. Two were by Richard Toy – another influential figure at the School of Architecture in Auckland, and another by Brown’s practice partner Robin Simpson. The last house in the selection, the only one not in Auckland, was the house Bill Toomath designed for his parents in Lower Hutt. Toomath had a connection with The Architectural Group, being a founding member and signatory to their famous Group Architects manifesto. The repetition of Pascoe’s basic thesis by a range of authors, and perhaps especially in Garrett’s extended reprisal in the ‘Architecture’ entry for the 1966 *Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, has seen the idea of a New Zealand tradition become the dominant narrative within local

architectural history – one that, as Clark and Walker point out, is still just as active today:

Evidence of a widespread contemporary acceptance of the Group as a key part of New Zealand's architectural heritage is now to be found by opening almost any recent issue of the popular magazine *Home and Entertaining* (formerly *Home and Building*, which began in 1936). Here one finds journalists and architects citing the Group (often also conflated with Vernon Brown) as key influences. Yet these statements, and the work they refer to, demonstrate little understanding of the actual work. (50)

While the point being made by Clark and Walker seems valid in the popular architectural press of today, it probably has more to do with a local version of the contemporary revival of modernist architectural language, than in being the outcome of an unbroken historical narrative. For example, by the 1970s architectural writers (and they are still mostly architects rather than historians) would have had difficulty in reconciling that particular regionalist narrative with the visible facts of the built environment in New Zealand towns and cities. While a modernist and functionalist architectural language had reshaped most cities and towns during the previous two decades, notably including a massive programme of infrastructure construction carried out by the Ministry of Works and Department of Housing, there was little within it that could be described as being unique to this country. Indeed, the historical surveys published in the 1970s by Stacpoole and Beaven (75), and Hill (37) are able to treat regionalist aspects as little more than a paragraph within a range of responses. Both histories maintain the general structure put in place by Pascoe however, even if Hill, in presenting the more objective and comprehensive piece, is

operating within a quite different set of values, including being almost dismissive of the work of the Architectural Group.<sup>20</sup>

A regionalist understanding of our architectural history makes a return in other forms during the 1980s however. David Mitchell's influential book and television series *The Elegant Shed* has a regionalist structure underpinned by ideas of popular 'vernacular', and Russell Walden's monograph of Futuna Chapel, *Voices of Silence*, attempts to paint John Scott's as distinctively and uniquely of New Zealand, embedded within a paradigm of a local 'architectural biculturalism'. Even Linda Tyler's master's research work on Ernst Plischke, the epitome of an 'internationalist' architect, casts him as an embattled 'other' struggling in an environment of parochial concern for vernacular expression.

## 1.6 OUTSIDER AUTHORS

The writing of architectural history, by outsiders such as Hodgson and Shaw in the early 1990s, and also by an increasing number of heritage researchers on behalf of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, was a significant departure from the architect-authored histories that preceded them. There are many reasons for this, including the objectives of each writer and their intended audience. But the most fundamental difference between the 'architect-authors' and these 'outsiders' was the direction to which they looked. While architect-authors examined the past to project an *architecture-which-is-coming* – a forward oriented endeavour – the outsiders were interested in understanding

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<sup>20</sup> Stacpoole and Beavan, while still endorsing the idea of a local architectural idiom, especially in relation to houses, remain enthusiastic about an expressive functionalism – endorsing both heroic modernism (75-76) and the diversity of departures from it (76). Hill, on the other hand, makes an overt case in the final section of his survey, "The New Look", an anti-heroic community and environmentally responsive architecture – able to borrow from the past in genuine rather than imitative ways. He points to the house selected for the front and back covers of the publication, Ian Athfield's McIntyre House (1969-72), as one of the better examples of this new approach to architecture (40).

and preserving the past. Both Hodgson and Shaw explicitly draw attention to the heritage demolition that had changed the face of New Zealand cities since the late 1950s – Shaw in the author's note and Hodgson in the epilogue of his book. They both sought to encourage a wider definition of heritage significance that went beyond the belief that only our very oldest buildings were worth saving.

Understanding the past for Hodgson and Shaw meant placing the buildings within their historic context rather than within a potential future one. This is the real turning point that occurs in the shift from architect to outsider authored histories, and helps to explain the criticism that Shaw's book received from the architect-reviewers. Most of the negative reviews of the first edition of Shaw's book took pains to point out that Shaw's background was that of an 'outsider' rather than an expert on local architecture and its history. Of the reviewers who positively reviewed the book, Bruce Petry, then a researcher for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, explicitly acknowledges this very point. He declares a suspicion that "architects have a mistrust of non-architects writing about architecture" ("The Challenge of History" 120). Writing his review for *Architecture New Zealand*, Petry goes to the trouble to distinguish Shaw from amongst the "rapidly growing group of enthusiastic interlopers"<sup>21</sup> by positioning him as an expert, pointing out that Shaw had written more on the topic than any contemporary commentators ("The Challenge of History" 120). Instead of addressing the potentially problematic issue of patch-protection in the writing of New Zealand architectural history, Petry reconciles Shaw's outsider status by inclusion, effectively anointing Shaw as an expert within the field based upon his prior work.

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<sup>21</sup> Petry had earlier written a review of Terence Hodgson's *Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand*, also drawing attention to Hodgson's background, which was "not specifically architectural" (see Petry, "Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand" 118).

The architect-reviewers generally felt that an outsider to the profession could not grasp the essence of architecture. Walden is the most insistent on this point:

Shaw as a lay person – a school teacher who has taught English and art history – writes about the art of architecture in terms of style and exterior imagery. This dominates his thinking, and this methodology leads him nowhere. For example, Shaw uses six times as many exterior images as he does interior... Not once does he deal competently with the quality, the sensibility, the spatial concern of architecture. Shaw's methodology belongs to the art history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. ("Cutting Architecture into Styles" 5)

The obvious emphasis on the exterior of the surveyed buildings, identified in Walden's 6:1 ratio,<sup>22</sup> was a frequently cited issue across the reviews, both in terms of the quality of Robin Morrison's photographs, with which the book was profusely illustrated,<sup>23</sup> as well as Shaw's stylistic analysis (Melling 22; Kernohan 52; Dunn 87; Reid 131).

While these reviewers saw this as a limitation of Shaw's art history background, Orsman, in his review for the literary journal *Landfall*, suggested that such a focus on architecture as a "public object" seemed both appropriate and

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<sup>22</sup> If Walden's analysis is accurate, the ratio of interior to exterior images is actually better than most previously published (including architect-authored) histories: Garrett, in the "Architecture" entry of *An Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 1:19; Stacpoole, *Architecture 1820-1970*, 1:17; and Pascoe in both the "Houses" and "Public Buildings" issues of *Making New Zealand*, 1:7. Only Mitchell and Plischke included a greater ratio of interior imagery; Mitchell managed a respectable 1:2.5 in *The Elegant Shed*, while Plischke achieves a 1:1 ratio in his hand-drawn images for the very brief history in *Design and Living*.

<sup>23</sup> In later editions of the book, Morrison's photography is supplemented with images by Wellington photographer Paul McCreadie.

revealing (125).<sup>24</sup> As well as allowing the book to have a greater scope – breadth at the expense of depth – Shaw’s approach also shone more light on the range and “pervasiveness of overseas’ influences” (Orsman 125).

### 1.7 ON AMERICAN INFLUENCE

If the dominant historical narratives of this study period are regionalist and normative, it is little wonder, when looking back at material, that it is very difficult to make a definitive statement on the nature of influence from the United States. It is not that the presence of such an influence emanating from that vast country is overlooked in the narratives of this period, or even misrepresented – simply that it is neither celebrated nor scrutinised.

Acknowledgement of influences from the United States are as old as New Zealand architectural literature. From the very beginning writers such as Samuel Hurst Seager (1900) and Frederick de Jersey Clere (1916) bemoan the lack of a properly New Zealand architectural expression. Seager talks of an architectural language “developed in England, Italy, America, and elsewhere” (Seager 15), while Clere, noting our strong Englishness, bemoans the influence of carpenter-architects and their reliance on English or United States pattern books with equal disdain (Clere 49–52).

Writing a few decades later, Pascoe maintains a similar position on the importation of overseas mediocrity, particularly in domestic design (Pascoe, “Houses” 14). However, his point of view is tempered by a more positive stance on the influence of overseas (including the United States) technical achievements and planning on contemporary public architecture in New

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<sup>24</sup> Chris Orsman was a trained architect who graduated from Auckland University in the early 1980s. He briefly practiced as an architect before moving on to other vocations, achieving some acclaim as a poet from the early 1990s (New Zealand Book Council). In this light it is probably more appropriate to cast him as an informed outsider, rather than as someone who is embedded in the professional and/or educational architectural scene.

Zealand (Pascoe, "Public Buildings" 12, 22). In an article written with Humphrey Hall a few years later in 1947, Pascoe would even go so far as to say that the modern movement had reached its mature form in the United States (Pascoe and Hall 122).

At about the same time a second theme arises, which explicitly positions architectural developments in New Zealand in the same 'new world' sphere as countries, and the United States in particular, that shared a colonial experience. This mirrors similar trends in New Zealand literature, which had emerged in the previous decade, most notably in the works of Frank Sargeson and John Mulgan, who found the American vernacular to be more resonant than the "polite traditional English style" for the "direct, colonial type" (Jones, "Colonial Like Ourselves"). Cedric Firth's 1948 article in *Studio* effectively translates the same movement to an architectural setting:

Communications with the United States were established early in the life of the New Zealand colony. The influence of America, whose development more closely paralleled that of a new country than did that of England, became more pronounced. Today the typical New Zealander lives in a bungalow very much of American pattern. (Firth 127)

In the late 1940s New Zealand architectural writers also begin to extend the comparability of United States and New Zealand beyond just the shared colonial experience, discovering a rather more specific regional similarity.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This repositioning of New Zealand in the "Pacific", and the consequent downplaying of the contemporary relevance of Britain as 'Home', coincides with the rise to prominence of the regional modernism being designed by architects on the west coast of the United States (see also Section 4.3.1).

Similar developments in Sweden and Switzerland were also being promoted by the *Architectural Review* under the label of the 'New Empiricism'. According to Group Architect Alan Wild the influence of this New Empiricism was not significant compared to that of the west coast work of the United States (cited in Barrie 216). It would seem that New Empiricism, aside from the feature articles of 1947 and 1948 (see Pevsner,

For example, Gordon Wilson, in his 1949-50 series of articles for *Design Review*, attributes the ubiquity of the Californian bungalow to “the similarity of climate, social and economic conditions and methods of building construction between California and New Zealand (FG Wilson 97).

This is popularised in the ‘Architecture’ entry in the 1966 *Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. As noted in Section 1.5 above, Garrett’s encyclopedia article is a reprise of the narrative that he first put forward in the *Homebuilding* exhibition of 1954. In the catalogue to that exhibition he emphasises the British origin of pioneering houses in this country, noting that the same British influences were also felt in the United States (Garrett, *Home Building* 8). While overseas influences are generally treated negatively in this text, bearing in mind that the narrative is positioning the Group Architects as working toward a New Zealand indigenous expression, there is a nod to the influence of “the mature tradition of timber buildings of California, Japan and Scandinavia” (Garrett, *Home Building* 18). When it came to putting together the encyclopedia entry over a decade later, Garrett is more emphatic about the similarities of the “New World of the Pacific” in both countries’ early histories (Garrett, “Architecture” 58). With the added distance in time between articles, he is also able to identify a growing postwar awareness of New Zealand’s place in the Pacific, including, of course, the Pacific coast of the United States, and the impact of United States culture more generally (for example, Hollywood movies, glossy magazines, and ranch house typology) (Garrett, “Architecture” 69).

These directions are most precisely summed up in the eyes of an outsider however. Pevsner, after his tour of the British dominions in 1958, lamented

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“The New Empiricism”; de Maré), seemed most influential as a short-lived concept. By contrast the work of William Wurster, Gordon Drake, and Pietro Belluschi on the west coast of the United States was published regularly in the United States architectural press (and was much more evocatively photographed by Ezra Stoller and Julius Shulman). Robin Skinner addressed this issue in an article for *Fabrications* in 2012 (Skinner, “False Origins”)



that "England as a source of inspiration has been eclipsed by America" (Pevsner, "Commonwealth I" 152). Of New Zealand in particular Pevsner noted a great but "platonic" respect for England, pointing out that:

The majority of the work of the younger architects is small private houses of timber, and for these England has nothing to offer. Looking across the Pacific pays better, and Californian houses in the journals are pondered over with more profit than English ones.<sup>26</sup> (Pevsner, "Commonwealth I" 152)

This basic acceptance of the influence and relevance of the United States architectural developments is little altered in subsequent narratives, up to and including the books by Hodgson and Shaw in the early 1990s. This includes Alington's survey of New Zealand architectural developments between 1952 and 1977, published in celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee (1997), in which he repeats Pevsner's assertion that the United States had become a focal point for young architects in the 1950s (made more meaningful by Alington's own United States experiences) (Alington, "Architecture"). It also includes Hill's historical survey for the Department of Education (1975), and the more significant book length survey by Stacpoole and Beaven (1972). The only anomalies are Sir Miles Warren's "Style in New Zealand Architecture"

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<sup>26</sup> In Australia Pevsner, no doubt under the influence of local protagonists such as Robin Boyd (see Goad, "Constructing Pedigree"), observed commonalities between developments there and those of both Scandinavia and California. He also suggested that Australian architects who when "looking for practice rather than theory... [found] the [*Architectural*] *Forum* more helpful than the [*Architectural*] *Review* and both more rewarding than the local journals" (Pevsner, "Commonwealth I" 25).

Arguably this could be applicable to New Zealand. Pascoe similarly highlights the importance of overseas journals in his "Architecture, Public Buildings" entry for the *Encyclopedia of New Zealand* (1966). In that article he cites the influence of the United States-published *Architectural Forum*, but does not include the English *Architectural Review*. (Pascoe, "Architecture – Public Buildings." 76)

Similar conclusions were tentatively posited in my own oral history-based work (see Dudding, "Memory, Evidence, and Artifice").

(1978), and more significantly, Walden's *Voices of Silence* (1987). Warren's article for *New Zealand Architect* gave particular weight to the influence of the London County Council and almost entirely overlooked United States influences. Although not necessarily acknowledged as such, the narrative established by him is clearly driven by his own experiences, Warren having worked for the London County Council in the early 1950s.

Walden, on the other hand, is more emphatic about recasting the existing historical narratives when he suggests that New Zealand architecture looked to England for its influences until the 1960s, since when local architects have been more concerned with addressing New Zealand's place on the "Pacific rim". Walden's revision is a necessary outcome of the narrative that he constructs around the potential of a bicultural architecture emerging from a synthesis of Māori and pākehā cultural values, and which finds its first expression in John Scott's Futuna Chapel (Walden, *Voices of Silence* 21-22).

Walden is effectively relocating the search for local architectural expression later in the historical timeline, in order to create a 'significance' for Futuna Chapel. This has the effect of extending the dominating influence of British and European developments on New Zealand architecture right up to the 1960s, ignoring the Group Architects and Garrett's associated 'new pioneer' narrative. To maintain this new narrative, of being a pivotal point away from "the European modern movement which repressed regionalism" (ignoring the 'New Empiricism') toward an understanding of the place of New Zealand on the Pacific rim, any prior influence from the United States could not be admitted. Similarly the possibility of Scott's own approach being influenced by similar attempts to humanise modern architecture is eschewed in favour of

Scott's maverick brilliance and his ability to evoke an indigenous biculturalism.<sup>27</sup>

If, as Robin Skinner suggests, the argument for a truly local architecture has been taken for granted in New Zealand's postwar architectural literature (Skinner, "False Origins" 81), perhaps much of the blame for this could be laid at Walden's feet. The success of his argument for an indigenous architecture is tied to both the accessibility of *Voices of Silence* for a broader audience (as a book rather than a journal article or conference paper) (McCarthy, "Voices of Silence Reconsidered" 42), and in an argument crafted, in part, to appeal to the concerns of its own era (especially the rejection of International Style modernism, and the hope for the emergence of a local expression in the resulting pluralism).

Compounding Walden's indigenous arguments with Garrett's earlier narrative (which could not realistically remain overlooked by everyone) saw the rise of an exclusionary historical narrative, which picked over the strands of those written histories written before Walden's. The speed at which this narrative became pervasive can be measured in the architect-reviewers' responses to Shaw's book only a few years later.

Although this study does not survey the literature beyond Shaw, it is important to note that overseas influences, including those of the United States, have been steadily readmitted to the postwar historical narratives. Although there is still room for much greater critical scrutiny, even the Group Architects have recently been submitted to more attention in this regard (see, for example: Barrie 215-216; Skinner, "False Origins").<sup>28</sup> Clark and Walker's *Looking for the*

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<sup>27</sup> See also McCarthy, "Voices of Silence Reconsidered".

<sup>28</sup> To date the most significant exploration of the influence of the United States on the development of architecture in New Zealand has been limited in scope to the pre-World War II period: Toomath's *Built in New Zealand* (1996) and Ann McEwan's

*Local* (2000), while brilliantly perceptive in its dissection of the 'looking for the local' narrative, further amplifies the significance of that same narrative within New Zealand architectural history, whether warranted or not. It remains to be seen whether Gatley's *Group Architects* (2010) will have a similar effect.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

The 'Making New Zealand' narrative established by Pascoe was the foundational narrative anchoring New Zealand architectural history in the period surveyed here. In many respects that anchoring still exists today, despite recent attempts (since the 1990s), largely from academics within schools of architecture, to challenge or perhaps enrich those narratives. That does not mean, however, a denial of the significance or pervasiveness of overseas influences (as Walden and Kernohan might argue). As has been shown, Pascoe's argument traces these overseas influences as the genesis of architecture here, first from the United Kingdom, and subsequently the United States (although others have shown these influences to be parallel). In this respect, the work of Shaw (and Hodgson) is little different.

Perhaps the overriding point of difference is the approach to narrative. Shaw's history is encyclopaedic in breadth, and only loosely develops any sort of narrative with which to cohere the various projects featured within its pages. This is the opposite of Pascoe's work, which is first and foremost an articulated narrative, illustrated with examples. This is not to say that Shaw's work is without narratives; it develops these chapter by chapter, however, and not with a larger narrative of progress in mind (if anything, it is the opposite). Having the benefit of a half century of hindsight, Shaw is not positing modernism as the inevitable and logical conclusion of architectural development, nor is he insisting that a local architecture should and will develop out of the local

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doctoral thesis, "An 'American Dream' in the 'England of the Pacific': American Influences on New Zealand Architecture" (2001).

conditions of New Zealand. In the absence of a hierarchy of significance (in fact it is unclear what criteria of significance are active in the book), the text cannot function as a normative guide. It does not set in place the qualities that an architect might aspire to achieve in their work. This is what makes it *not* architectural history in the eyes of many of the architect reviewers, and why they appeared to have so much difficulty engaging with it.

In the end, neither approach is more accurate than the other. Each was written with a specific audience and purpose in mind and has its own truths to tell. What is significant here is the sharp disjunction between these approaches – and what this reveals about the creation of the architectural myths that provide the historical framework within (or against) which the subjects of this thesis have created their biographical narratives.

So while architect-authored narratives have generally downplayed international influence and its value for locally produced work, the architect-created biographical narratives of this study are a means of investigating this further, albeit confined to the opinions and memories of the initial four subjects. Choosing to investigate the remembered experiences of the four architects who travelled in both Europe and the United States as a means to complete their education is a first step in this wider search for international influences in the development of New Zealand architecture. How access to these memories is to be approached is described in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Chapter 3 reports on the four architects' experiences of Europe, and particularly its historic buildings, while Chapter 4 reports their experiences gained from searching for modernity in the United States. Chapter 5 brings together the threads of the narrative, reports on the limitations of the thesis and suggests areas for further research.

## 2.0 METHODS

This chapter provides an overview of the methods that were used to gather and analyse information for this research project.

### 2.1 THE PARTICIPANTS

The focus of this study directly determined the selection criteria for the participants: New Zealand architects who studied in the United States during the 1940s and 50s. Reliance on oral history also meant that the subjects must be living (or at least had substantial oral histories recorded prior to their deaths).

William (Bill) Alington was already known as a potential subject, as the topic arose out of previous oral history based Masters research, where Alington was the subject (Dudding, "A Useful Exercise"). Stanley William (Bill) Toomath was also already known to have studied in the United States. Both Alington and Toomath had travelled to the United States on Fulbright scholarships, and subsequent investigation of Fulbright grantees revealed three further potential subjects: Maurice Smith, Harold (Harry) Turbott, and Donald Wilson.<sup>29</sup>

James Beard was another potential candidate. His overseas experience, on a MIT scholarship, was made in the capacity of a research assistant (to Kevin Lynch), rather than to pursue postgraduate study. He did return to the United States to undertake a Master in Landscape Architecture at Harvard University in 1967; however, this falls outside the period included in this study.

Investigation of Travelling Scholarships awarded by Auckland University College was carried out by examining the Auckland University College Council

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<sup>29</sup> Joan Druett's book, *Fulbright in New Zealand*, contains a list of Fulbright alumni up until the late 1980s (the book was published in 1988). More recently, Fulbright New Zealand have published an updated list of alumni on their website.

minutes and the University of New Zealand Roll of Graduates. The two sources of information provided an incomplete, and in some places contradictory, list of Travelling Scholarships in Architecture, but did not add any further names to the list of potential subjects for this research. The University of New Zealand Roll of Graduates has more recently been published online by Wendy Leahy, via her genealogical research website called *Shadows of Time*. This appears to be more complete and consistent than the records made available by the Auckland University archives, and investigation of names that appear only in that list may well bring to attention further subjects – although research of readily available material has not revealed any so far.

It is possible that others may have travelled to the United States to further their architectural studies during the period under consideration, both via more obscure scholarships (including United States-based ones), and those who travelled at their own cost. However, discussion with the subjects who were identified, who would likely be their peers, and a survey of New Zealand architectural history literature failed to turn up any further names. One such ‘accidental’ discovery of a seventh person did occur very late in the project however. The obituary of expatriate New Zealand architect Paul Reid (a reviewer of Shaw’s book, mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis), revealed that he gained a master’s in architecture at the University of Michigan in 1960. Reid’s death in 2001 removed any potential for him to be included in this study.

## 2.2 ORAL HISTORY

From the late 1980s onward, the use of the personal interview has become commonplace in New Zealand architectural history research. Published in 1988, Walden’s monograph of the Futuna Chapel, *Voices of Silence*, drew extensively from interview material. Walden acknowledged the architect John Scott, sculptor Jim Allen, and clients Fr James Beban and Br Joseph Kelly as having “given long interviews” during the research for Walden’s book (Walden, *Voices of Silence* 7). Shaw’s *New Zealand Architecture* also provides

a substantial list of names in its acknowledgements (6), and although it is not specified which (if any) were interviewed during the research for the book, Shaw's later reflections indicate that interviews with architects and their clients were a key part of his research approach (Shaw, "Untitled Address").

Contemporary architectural history research, particularly where it is focussed on the postwar period, also relies heavily on personal interviews, and especially personal communications – the ubiquitous *pers. comm.*<sup>30</sup> For example, all of the major architectural history books published over the last fifteen years are informed by discussion between the authors and the protagonists of the study. This includes Clark and Walker's *Looking for the Local* (2000), Julia Gatley, Gill Matthewson and Kerry Francis in Gatley's *Group Architects* (2010), Gatley's *Athfield Architects* (2012), and Gatley and Walker's *Vertical Living* (2014). While Clark, Gatley, and Walker are prominent voices in recently published architectural books, other authors, whose work is more often found in academic journals and conference presentations, similarly make use of the *pers comm.* McCarthy's "Voices of Silence Reconsidered" (2009), and Jessica Halliday's "Who was H Courtney Archer?" (2008) are examples.

The rise of the personal interview and use of personal communications to supplement historical research from the late 1980s occurs just as the writing of architectural history is shifting from architect-authors to expert outsiders (such as Shaw and Hodgson) and academics (such as those listed above). Their use of personal communications with the architects who are often the subject of their research is, at face value, simply a means of verifying or filling in what is often a fairly sketchy historical record. The ramifications of this have a

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<sup>30</sup> In practice, there does not seem to be much to distinguish between the two terms – for example, the 1994 interview of Alington, Beard, George Porter, Toomath, and Tony Treadwell is described both as a "*pers. comm.*" and an interview in the same footnote of *Looking for the Local* (Clark and Walker 17).



significant but unacknowledged effect on the legitimisation of historical narratives. While the histories may no longer be authored by architects they are, in effect, still being authorised by them. This phenomenon also highlights the closeness that exists between historians and their subjects, and architecture and the academy. This might simply be the result of the relatively small size of these institutions in the New Zealand context.

Rarer, are the more formalised oral history projects that begin to appear in the early 1990s, notably Petry's *New Zealand architecture post-World War II oral history project* (1992), the *New Zealand Institute of Architects Oral History Project* (1997), and the Architectural Centre's *Early Architectural Centre Oral History Project* (2002). These projects, and others like them, often have a different *raison d'être* from the personal interviews conducted to provide focussed research material for a specific research project (for example, a book or journal article). Influential United States oral historian Ronald J Grele describes this tendency as "oral history as archival practice" – where the oral history projects are not collected to support specific research outputs, but are instead often gathered simply to create a record or general source of information (44). The interviews, and accompanying documentation, take on the qualities of a finished output in their own right, irrespective of whether the researcher goes on to interpret, aggregate, or edit and report the interview material for publication in another form. This approach encourages a broader scope in anticipation of the, as yet unknown, needs of future researchers and listeners. Petry's work, and the NZIA Oral History Project, are good examples of this type of oral history work, with the recordings deposited in public archives for future researchers to use.

The approach taken for the oral history interviews conducted for this thesis adheres to the conventions of oral history as it has developed as an archival practice in New Zealand. Like those projects mentioned above, the interviews are broad career histories, recorded with the intention of depositing the original recordings in a public archive – in this case, as part of the national

collection held at the Alexander Turnbull Library's Oral History Centre. The essential difference between personal interviews conducted for the purpose of a specific research project, and the more general career histories captured in this study, is that the latter allows the individual narratives of the protagonists to be compared against or alongside the broader sweep of historical narratives.

This 'oral history as archival practice' necessitates operating within standards of ethical and technical practice to ensure that the recordings are of an acceptable archival standard for a public collection, and that appropriate permissions have been granted for subsequent listening to, and publication of, the material contained within the recordings. Included within those standards is a basic expectation of associated documentation for the project. In New Zealand these standards are set by the oral history community, and published by the National Oral History Association of New Zealand (NOHANZ), as the *Code of Ethical and Technical Practice*.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

With the exception of Alington, whose oral history had already been recorded, each potential subject was sent a letter containing a description of the intended research and an invitation to become a participant. Smith and Turbott agreed to take part. Toomath agreed to a smaller-scaled oral history project; he felt that his recently completed interviews for the Tony Hiles directed documentary, *Antonello and the Architect* (2007), and earlier participation in both Petry's *New Zealand architecture post-World War II oral history project* in 1992, and the *Early Architectural Centre oral history project* recorded between 2000 and 2002, meant there would be little value in revisiting his biographical narratives. Instead, a shorter series of more targeted interviews was agreed to

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<sup>31</sup> The Oral History Centre also plays a role in developing more specific standards of practice with regular instructional workshops and general educational outreach.

and carried out. Wilson was the only potential subject approached who declined to participate in the project.

Oral history projects were then carried out with each of the participants. Each participant's series of interviews was considered as a separate project, with the aim of depositing the recordings, abstracts, and other supporting material at the Alexander Turnbull Library's Oral History Centre at the completion of this study.

The WH Alington Oral History Project (WHAOHP) was recorded as long ago as 2004 and served as a model for the oral history approach used across all of the interviews recorded specifically for this thesis.

With the exception of the Toomath interviews already noted, the interviews were conducted primarily as 'career histories', but can also be considered as 'life histories', insofar as they also covered family background and childhood details, and, where participants were willing, touched on aspects of their personal lives throughout their professional careers. Each project was recorded over multiple interview sessions using digital audio recording equipment. The interviews lasted approximately two hours each, and surveyed a nominated thematic period of the participant's career. The overall structure of each project, and the thematic periods that formed the focus of each interview session, were determined in collaboration with each participant. This ensured that, as well as dedicating specific sessions to the United States experiences of the participants (which became the primary research material for this thesis), the participants could also structure the project within the overall framework – the significant 'periods' and 'turning points' – that give personal meaning to their life narratives.

Allowing the narrators to have their own 'voice' in this manner is an attempt to share the control of the life-story, and how it unfolds, and is a common aim in contemporary oral history practice (see especially: Frisch, *A Shared Authority*).

Aside from being good ethical practice, there are other advantages to be gained from adopting this approach, especially when interviewing subjects whose lives intersect with contexts that have already been defined by strong socially upheld narratives (as is the case here – see Chapter 1). How the narrator tells their own story within or outside of the bounds of that pre-existing framework provides many opportunities to elicit meaning that would not necessarily have emerged in interviews structured solely according to the researcher's concerns.

The topic for each interview session was researched prior to the interview, and a session guide was prepared and supplied to the participant at least two days before the interview took place. These session guides provided a loose structure to the interviews, from which questions could be developed and themes pursued during the interview session. The guides also served to gain participants' approval of the intended subject matter before recording took place, and provided time for participants to think about and recall events that had occurred, in some cases, nearly seventy years ago.

It is usual oral history practice to allow subjects to develop their own narratives, including digressions, when life histories are being recorded over a series of interviews (Slim and Thompson 145). It is this "unstructured" quality that allows a greater breadth of material to be collected in, as sociologists Andrea Fontana and James Frey observe, a manner that bears some affinity with the ethnographic (in-depth) interview (656). Issues of understanding the language and culture of the subjects, gaining their trust, and establishing rapport, are common to both interview methodologies.

In this respect, the session guides were suggestive rather than prescriptive, allowing the subject to develop their own direction. As the interview sessions were generally divided chronologically (driven by the subjects' own sense of their life narratives), the guides helped to provide a skeleton of the most significant events that occurred during the period that the session guide was

meant to cover. At times this included significant designs that were being worked on at the time by the subject, possible travels, changes in professional relationships and positions, important world events, and so on. This aspect of the guide was prepared after discussion with the subject (usually immediately after the previous interview session), and informed by subsequent research. In some cases parts of the session guide were left out to be picked up in subsequent interview sessions, or abandoned altogether if the issue had been addressed through other, unexpected narratives.

The interviews were generally recorded at the participants' own house, to best serve the comfort and convenience of the participants. Visiting different locations (selected Alington-designed buildings relevant to the theme or period of each interview session) was experimented with during the WHAOHP. As this feature of the Alington interviews did not offer noticeable additional value, it was not carried over for the subsequent oral history projects.

The WH Alington Oral History Project, which consists of a digital copy of the seven interview sessions, along with complete abstracts and a brief biographical overview, was lodged with the Oral History Centre at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, and made available for public use from December 2015 (Ref OHColl-0919-01). The HA Turbott and MK Smith Oral History Projects will be similarly prepared for depositing at the Oral History Centre at the completion of this thesis. The Toomath interviews were recorded in a way that was much more specific to this research, and as such, were not intended to become accessible in a public archive. However, the material contains a rich amount of detail and thus provides a valuable complement to the oral histories already available. For this reason the possibility of lodging the project with the Oral History Centre will be explored with the Alexander Turnbull Library and Toomath's family (he died in March 2014).

## 2.4 INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The central 'problem' of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the motivations and experiences of the group of New Zealand architects who sought postgraduate education in the United States during the 1940s and 50s. The method of analysis adopted for this work is based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative research methodology developed by Jonathon A Smith and others.

IPA was primarily developed for use in the field of health psychology, but is also found in other disciplines, including education, counselling, and occupational psychology. At its core is an attempt to not only understand the 'lived experience' of the 'phenomenon' being studied, but also to develop a detailed understanding of how the subjects make sense of their 'world', and the significance and meaning that they attribute to having experienced the phenomenon being studied.

As the name suggests, IPA research methodology is phenomenological: it is used to examine participants' lived experiences and perceptions. It is also interpretative, in that the researcher engages in interpretative activity in order to make sense of the participant's world (Smith and Osborn 53). As a method for the investigation of a particular phenomenon, IPA research does not attempt to produce an objective statement of that object or event itself (Smith and Osborn 53).

In the case of this study, relevant conventional historical documentation simply does not exist, and thus could not be employed in order to develop an in-depth understanding in a conventional historiographically 'objective' manner. Instead, the 'data' for this study is drawn from the oral history interviews that were conducted with each participant. An IPA approach allows this material to be analysed in recognition of the interpretative nature (for both the participant and the researcher) of this type of data collection, and it is for this reason that it was selected as an appropriate method of analysis.

It should also be made clear that this study does not seek to replicate the psychology intensive analysis of true IPA work. The analysis here is driven instead by the identification and comparison of conventional autobiographical and biographical devices, and recurring themes that connect with (or suggest alternatives to), current narratives of architectural history in this country – as befits an oral history based study of New Zealand architectural history. The general approach of IPA, however, has been used as a model for the analysis in this research.

## 2.5 ORAL HISTORY AS ‘DATA’

According to Smith and Osborn, IPA research can be based on diverse forms of personal accounts, such as journals and diaries, observations, artistic expressions, etc. (Smith and Osborn 57; see also Creswell 61). However, they identify the ‘semi-structured interview’ as the “exemplary method” of data collection for IPA, and state that it is by this method that most IPA research projects are carried out (57).

In many respects the oral histories that are the primary research material for this research are good examples of semi-structured interviews. There are two differences between the IPA semi-structured interview and conventional oral history research that are worth noting, however; the interview scope and the treatment of the final interview ‘document’ (i.e. recordings and/or transcripts). The scope of an IPA interview is closely focussed on the phenomenon being studied – although the semi-structured nature of the interview allows the interview to follow the interests and concerns of both the interviewer (if something interesting arises), and the respondent. In fact, it is precisely this latter aspect of the interviews that facilitates the investigator’s attempt to enter into the psychological and social world of the respondent – which is the central concern of IPA research (Smith and Osborn 58-59). Although oral history based research can also be focussed on a specific event or phenomenon, it is usually, and especially so in this study, informed by a broader ‘life history’ (NZ, Min. for Culture and Heritage).

The second point of difference is that, unlike IPA interview data, oral history is considered not only as a method for collecting data, but also for preserving that data (the narratives that have been recorded), and making it publicly accessible for posterity (see also Section 2.1). In contrast, IPA interviews are usually confidential, and therefore, not made available to subsequent audiences. Results are generally reported in an anonymised manner. This means that unlike standard IPA interviews, oral history interviews take on the qualities of a finished output in their own right, irrespective of whether or not the researcher goes on to interpret/aggregate/edit and report the interview material for publication in any other form. This approach encourages a broader scope in anticipation of the, as yet unknown, needs of future researchers and listeners. The resulting data for the study at hand also becomes richer, with a far greater amount of contextual information brought to bear on the phenomenon being studied – bearing in mind that, even though a broader life history is being created, the awareness of the topic of the study inflects the broader discussion from both the researcher and interviewee points of view.

Although creating a significant amount of extra work in the process, in both the recording and processing of the recorded interviews (including abstracting and analysis), the archiving of the subjects' stories is an important objective for this project – and one that goes beyond the findings of this thesis. It was on this basis that the broader life/career histories were recorded for this project, following accepted oral history protocols.

In most other respects the interview approaches are quite similar. For example, Smith and Osborn's description of IPA semi-structured interviews (58) can be compared with Moyer's description of conducting oral history interviews in her "Step-by-step Guide to Oral History". Both guides stress the importance of: establishing a rapport with the interviewee; being flexible with the ordering and wording of questions; and recognising and allowing the co-creation of



interviews – shaped by both the interests and concerns of the interviewee, as well as the probing of the researcher if unanticipated areas of interest arise.

The decision to use oral history methods for data collection also helped to ensure that an understanding of the studied phenomenon could be achieved within the context of notions of ‘history’, rather than remaining solely within the realms of phenomenological psychology. It was important that this work connect meaningfully with, and contribute productively to, the field of New Zealand architectural history. The broader scope of the oral history interview material allowed that objective to be kept in sight throughout the duration of the research project.

Furthermore, and despite the adoption of IPA nomenclature in this section of the thesis, working with biographical narratives is not the same as working with discrete units of ‘data’. It is important that this be noted, because this research is not an attempt to make historical research a ‘scientific’ affair. There is value in adopting some methods in the overlapping social science and historiographic fields of biographical research, but at all times throughout this study the broader context of the narratives has been kept in mind (the value of the career narrative approach of the oral histories). This means that the ‘phenomenon’ being studied here is situated in a much broader context than the more situation specific approach of conventional IPA research. While this requires much more work, the greater breadth of context is precisely what makes this ‘history’ rather than a purely phenomenological study (in the scientific sense).

## 2.6 DATA ANALYSIS

IPA research relies on purposive sampling to ensure that the research question is significant to a closely defined selection of participants (Smith and Osborn 56). The specificity of the phenomenon being examined in this study automatically defined the relevant sample, which being as small as it is, meant that close to the full population could be studied (see also Section 2.1). In this

case, the closely defined criteria, and the rarity of potential candidates initially identified, resulted in a relatively homogenous sample group, as befits the IPA approach.

Data analysis for this project is based on the procedures outlined by Smith and Osborn in their book chapter, "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis". Their basic process involves identification and 'clustering' of themes drawn from within the data in a series of, what Miner-Romanoff terms, "data reductions" (21). This is conducted on the 'first case' (i.e. one participant), before moving on to the other cases. In this way, an ideographic schema of interpretation is built up, which allows both within-case and between-case identification of converging/diverging patterns, paradigm shifts, and so on, to inform the on-going analysis. These results can then be used to describe the 'essence' of the phenomenon being studied.

As noted by Smith and Osborn, there is no definitive way for undertaking IPA analysis, and researchers should adapt the methodology to fit with the researcher's manner of working (67). Significant departures from Smith and Osborn's procedures that have been taken in this study are explained below.

IPA analysis involves deep engagement with the interview material – usually carried out by repeated and close readings of verbatim transcripts generated from the interview recordings. An exception to this occurs in the work of Conroy, who suggests that audio recordings should be repeatedly listened to and summarised. According to Conroy, this act of "careful listening" allows non-verbal communication to be noted ("silence, pauses, laughter and so on"), complementing the words already captured in the transcript (27-28).

This study follows Conroy's example, noting that Conroy's recognition of the significance of the 'orality' of spoken interviews places her approach closer to the ideals of many oral historians, including this researcher, who have insisted on the original recording, rather than a transcript, as the primary source (see

for example: Frisch, "Oral History and the Digital Revolution" 103; Portelli 33-35; Dudding, *Abstracting Oral Histories* 1-2).

In fact, Conroy's recommendation that a précis be prepared for each interview, to help "re-immense" the researcher in the "participant's world" (27-28), bears remarkable similarities to the oral history 'abstract' – a type of 'annotated index' used by oral historians (particularly in New Zealand, where practice is driven by the collecting policy of the Alexander Turnbull Library's Oral History collection (see Alexander Turnbull Library, *Abstracting Oral History Interviews*)), to facilitate access and searching within audio and audio-visual recorded interviews. These abstracts are summaries of the content of each interview (including keywords) – indicating the topic of conversation and the time-stamp where that 'snippet' of conversation is located within the actual recording. The abstract itself cannot be considered as source material for analysis in the way that text-based transcripts usually are. Instead the abstract (which remains text-searchable) simply points the listener to the appropriate part of the recording – thus preserving the primacy of the narrator's voice as the source.

A guide was developed and followed to ensure that abstracting across the different oral history projects was consistent (see: Dudding, *Abstracting Oral Histories*). Abstracting was then carried out for each of the interviews, following these guidelines. For this study the abstracts, always referring back to the recordings, provide the basic framework within which the subsequent analysis takes place. Verbatim transcription of relevant parts of the interviews has been avoided until writing up this research.

This is a departure from usual IPA process – even Conroy's précis works to complement rather than replace the transcript, with the recordings being largely put aside after the summarising stage. It is not clear that this deviation from standard procedures would have any effect (the analysis approach is still

the same), other than by creating the possibility for a richer layer of meaning to be extracted from the 'words' being analysed.

## 2.7 THEMATIC CLUSTERS

The familiarity of the WH Alington Oral History Project, having initially been recorded for a prior research project, meant that it was good place to begin the interpretive analysis for this study. As the 'first case' material, the initial data reduction process yielded a dauntingly wide range of potential themes. This involved repeated listening to the Alington oral history recordings, and freely recording interpretations in the worksheet. During the re-listening process emergent themes were identified and given simple descriptive labels to facilitate searching for further stages of the analysis. A diagram of this analysis process is found in Figure 1.

This process resulted in the creation of a schema of nearly one hundred concepts for the Alington interviews, which covered an extremely broad range of themes. These ranged from overt reflections that were directly relevant to the topic (for example, the influence of meeting significant architects while in the United States), to themes of less obvious relevance that nonetheless help to shed light on both the context and motivations for the decision to travel to study in the United States in the first place (for example, meaningful childhood experiences). A full list of the themes has been included in the appendices of this thesis.

The full list of themes was recorded in a second worksheet, and rearranged into related groups to give some order to the large number of themes identified. This grouping of the emergent themes – the second level of reduction – yielded thematic clusters that were used as a framework for conducting the thematic analysis of the narratives of the remaining subjects (after first re-listening to the Alington interviews to ensure that further related material would be captured). While this clustered thematic framework was malleable, it could accommodate new themes and/or clusters as required; it

remained relatively stable in the subsequent re-listening of the Alington material. This was also true, despite some additions to the themes within each cluster, when the other cases were subject to this same stage analysis. Most of the themes were identified from the first case data reduction – fewer than a dozen new themes were added while analysing the subsequent series of interviews. In the other direction, only two of the themes identified in the first case reduction were dropped as not proving to be of significance across the broader scope of the project. Although not all of the remaining themes yielded findings deemed sufficiently significant to report in this thesis (if only to keep the focus and scope under control), it was important to keep them for the duration of the analysis rather than eliminate potentially significant information prematurely.

A sample worksheet (Alington) is included in the appendices of this thesis, along with the list of thematic clusters.

This thematic cohesion suggests the existence of a degree of consistency between the narratives of each of the subjects. However, it should be kept in mind that not all themes are touched upon across all of the subjects, and when they are, there is not necessarily a consistency of value attributed to that theme by each narrator. It should also be noted that once themes have been identified in the first case reduction, they become more readily visible in the following analyses, and this is likely to have some effect on the perceived consistency of the thematic analysis. It could also be argued that the narrow focus of the project and the consistency of the oral history approach favoured a convergent outcome. Regarding the latter charge, however, the emergent themes were not predicted by the direction of the oral history interviews, aside from the known focus of the project. Furthermore, it must be remembered that not all of the oral history source material was recorded for this project. For example the Alington interviews in particular, used for the first case data reduction, were recorded prior to this project. Similarly, pre-existing oral history

interviews with Toomath, conducted by other researchers, were also used as source material in this study.

The overseas experiences of the four participants are described in the next two chapters, drawing from the results of the analytical techniques discussed above. These chapters bring together the most significant themes that emerged from across the thematic clusters. A brief summary of the eight thematic clusters can also be found at the beginning of Chapter 3.

## NZAA Interpretative Phenomenological Analytical Process

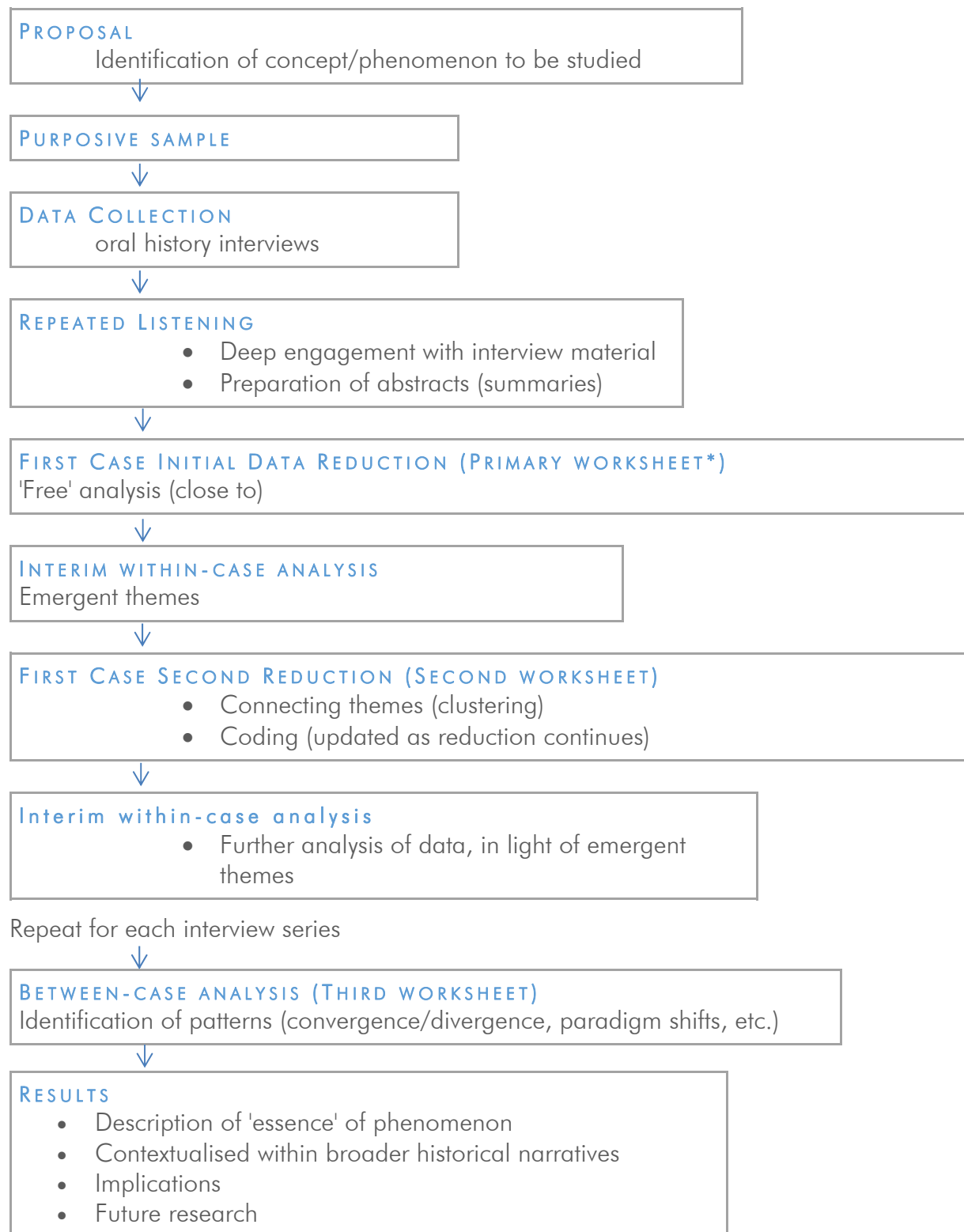


Figure 1: NZAA IPA Process Chart, simplified and modified from Miner-Romanoff (20)

### 3.0 EXPERIENCING HISTORY

The next two chapters are a record of the significant themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview material. Chapter 3 deals predominantly with themes relating to the time spent by the four subjects in the United Kingdom and Europe, while Chapter 4 focuses on the time that they spent in the United States. Both chapters emerge from a close consideration of the almost one hundred themes that were identified during the analysis. As described in the previous chapter, these themes were organised into thematic clusters in order to facilitate the analysis. Eight thematic clusters were created in this process as follows:

1. *Biographical devices* encapsulates the themes that were used by the narrators to structure their narratives. These are devices or motifs that explain how the teller became who and 'why' they are. These range from biographical genre conventions such as 'turning points' and 'notable mentors', to more specific architectural ones, such as self-identification as the talented outsider. In general these themes do not directly address the topic of the study, but do provide useful awareness of the values implicit within each subject's construction of their self. In turn, this information provides important contextual insight into the motivations and desires that led these subjects to pursue overseas education in the United States.
2. A *New Zealand* cluster was also arranged using themes relating to observations and general attitudes toward New Zealand and New Zealand society. These themes also included the subjects' observations of New Zealand architecture and architectural education, and the influence on them from both the United States and Europe.
3. *Europe* is a thematic cluster that groups together themes that touch upon the subjects' attitudes toward Europe and the



United Kingdom. This is another relatively straightforward set of themes that range from direct design influence through to observations of the historical richness of European heritage. While it might be expected that these themes would arise as part of researcher directed inquiry during the interviews (in order to compare with attitudes to the United States), in actual fact, these themes also naturally arose due to the subjects' experience of travel in the study period. Each of the subjects spent a significant amount of time in Europe as part of their overseas experience, either before or after studying in the United States.

4. The *United States* cluster was similarly created to contain the themes that addressed observations and reflections of the subjects' United States experiences. This *United States* cluster, as might be expected, contained the largest number of themes, ranging from first impressions of arriving in the United States, to evaluations of the quality and reflections on the impact of the education that they received.
5. A *Travel* cluster was also created as a set of themes distinct from both the *Europe* and *United States* clusters. The themes within this cluster draw from the observations made that relate to the experience of travel itself, rather than the specifics of the locations. This turned out to be an important thematic cluster, going to the heart of both the motivations for, and significant value of the overseas experiences of the subjects of this study. It is from here that most of the key findings emerged.
6. The *Intellectualism* cluster was set up to capture the material that arose relating to the subjects' engagement with the 'idea' of architecture. This is perhaps the most strained of the thematic clusters, but it became important to place together the range of themes that emerged. For example, all of the subjects were

involved in teaching at architecture schools during their careers, signalling some evidence of an academic engagement, of varying degrees, that goes beyond the norms of the discipline.

7. A separate *Modern architecture* cluster at first sight seems odd, since it relates strongly to material in both the *Europe* and *United States* themes. However, there is an inevitable overlap between clusters of certain key themes. For example, each of the subjects described their experience of coming into contact with one or more of the 'Modern Masters' during their time in the United States. While this and other related themes may accurately have been located within the *United States* cluster, it was felt that the emerging significance of this material meant it was more useful to locate it in a separate cluster. For this particular example, a *Modern architecture* cluster was created to contain the, sometimes surprising, attitudes toward modern architecture revealed in the interview material.
8. The *Influential figures*, which includes people met in both the United Kingdom and the United States as well as New Zealand, also draws together material which might well have also been located in those other clusters. For example, the 'notable mentors' theme may also be considered as a device typical of the biographical and autobiographical genres, and thus there is an additional overlap with the *Biographical devices* thematic cluster.

Such thematic overlapping of this nature does not affect the analysis unduly. In fact, this is one of the strengths of such a broad oral career history approach – a rich range of themes has emerged, the ingredients of which could not have been predicted before the project began. These themes, emerging from within spoken narratives and their analysis are necessarily sprawling and untidy, and far exceed the focus of this study in their scope. Managing the quantity and

scope of this material presented many challenges, but arranging them into thematic clusters in this way helped to mitigate some of that difficulty.

It is no surprise then, that the most significant of findings that emerged from the thematic analysis do not neatly accord with this cluster arrangement, and nor should they be expected to. The thematic clustering simply served to order the large quantity of information, and to highlight those areas of marked significance. Instead, the actual findings, the most significant of which will be presented in the rest of this chapter and the next, might be best described as ‘intercluster’ themes.

#### NOTE TO RECORDING NOTATION

The oral histories of each of the research participants were conceived of and carried out as separate projects and named accordingly – for example, the WH Alington Oral History Project (WHAOHP), the HA Turbott Oral History Project (HATOHP). The next level of notation provides the interview session number, followed by the track/file number (interview sessions were recorded over a number of separate recording files, depending on interruptions and breaks). The final numbers provide the time within the audio file where the information being referred to can be located.



### 3.1 A REMOTE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE FOR EUROPE

We were, in a sense quite fortunate in that Imi Porsolt arrived... he was familiar with a lot of the European architecture, and he was able to convey to you some of the excitement of some of these buildings. (Alington, WHAOHP 1.2/1:22:24)

Prior to their overseas travels, all four of the subjects of this study gained their bachelor's degrees at Auckland University College's School of Architecture; the only architectural school in New Zealand at that time. The arrival of European émigré Imi Porsolt (who began teaching architectural history at the School of Architecture in 1950) was a significant aspect of Alington's educational experience. Porsolt's presence provided something of an experience-by-proxy of the canon of Western architectural history, the key works of which could only otherwise be experienced here in New Zealand via recourse to images in books and journals that had been published overseas. These same monochrome and often poorly reproduced journal and book illustrations were the source of the visual material displayed during Porsolt's lectures, being projected directly from the hard copies using an epidiascope (WHAOHP 1.2/1:22:24).

Alington's words demonstrate that he, like the other participants of this study, placed a high value upon genuine experience. For these men, however, the idea of genuine experience and the desire for authenticity went beyond simply wanting to visit the key works of architecture (and in Turbott's case landscape) to which they had been exposed during their education. It extended to include the key figures as well, and among these in particular the "titans" (as Toomath preferred to call them) of modern architecture – Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Wright, and Aalto – the modern masters. In many ways these genuine experiences exceeded in value the official educational and practical opportunities provided by their travels.

All four of the subjects agreed that one of the main factors driving the urge to leave the country in order to gain these experiences was the remoteness of New Zealand and the lack of canonical works of architecture, either historic or modern, with which to engage first-hand during their education. Turbott described the history of architecture papers at the School of Architecture as being akin to learning about European architecture by "remote correspondence" (HATOHP2.01/0:03:40). Smith explains:

We were supposed to learn to draw sections through all the so-called important, mostly European, buildings. So you'd have to draw a section through Santa Sophia, a section through one of the English cathedrals, Salisbury or something, and all exercises like that... but we never had any idea what an 80ft high territory would be like, I mean there weren't any for us to practice on, so it seemed totally lateral, I mean you were going along here and this stuff was over there somewhere, and you'd learn to do it to pass the exam.  
(MKSOHP2.01/0:49:03)

The University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarships in Architecture that Alington, Toomath, and Turbott received. These were, according to Toomath, much sought after by the students for this reason (SWTNZAA2.01/0:09:29).<sup>32</sup>

### 3.2 EUROPEAN ITINERARIES

In terms of the range of places visited with the purposeful intention of experiencing great works of architectural and landscape design, each subject's itinerary differed according to their own interests. Both Alington and Toomath visited the United Kingdom and Europe prior to their arrival in the United States. Smith and Turbott first landed in the United States. Turbott and his wife Nan Manchester, in whose company he travelled, went on to the United Kingdom after their time in the United States, and from there travelled across Europe and Asia before finally boarding a ship back to New Zealand from Kolkata in India.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Smith never completed his final year thesis at the School of Architecture, so was not eligible for the scholarship. (MKSOHP2.01/1:53:42)

<sup>33</sup> A timeline of the European and US travels of each of the participants has been provided in Appendix A.

Smith spent only six months in Europe. Roughly a third of that time was used visiting friends and family in England and Ireland, but he also travelled within western Europe, staying for extended periods in both Paris and Barcelona. Part of his travels, from the Italian north to Rome, were shared with an MIT classmate. Due to the constrained time available to carry out interviews with Smith, which were recorded at his house in Harvard, Massachusetts, this part of his story was not explored in great detail, and for this reason, his European exploits do not form part of this chapter. Mark Jarzombek, however, provides an outline of Smith's European travels in "The Alternative Firmity of Maurice Smith" (2013):

He visited Le Corbusier's just-finished Unité d'Habitation in Marseille. The long central corridor left him cold, as did the famous roof garden and children's play area. More to his liking was the roof of the Château de Chambord with its complex aggregate of towers. It was designed as a place of twists and turns where the palace inhabitants could ambulate in a type of hide-and-seek. Its various and surprising views and the purposefully strange shapes of the chimney towers, some designed as mini-buildings, were a revelation, not only about the power of architecture and scale. Smith also photographed barns in Switzerland, hilltop towns in Spain, and Trulli houses of Italy. (Jarzombek 555)

Alington, who, like Turbott, was accompanied by his wife Margaret, lived in London and found work with the recently opened London office of Robert Matthew Johnson Marshall, working on designs for New Zealand House. The Alingtons also toured parts of western Europe on a Vespa motorscooter, with Alington primarily seeking out early Christian churches, and large medieval buildings to experience (WHAOHP 3.02/0:56:35).

Toomath, on the other hand, spent very little time in the United Kingdom. As a self-declared Francophile (a product of his French language lessons and

membership of the French Club at his school), his desire was to connect with the “depth and complexity” of his European cultural heritage, and in particular, French culture and lifestyle. He based himself in Paris for four months, and from there carried out his self-initiated research project, examining advanced modern building construction techniques (SWTNZAAOHP 1.01/0:30:44; 2.01/0:03:24). Toomath also spent a significant amount of time travelling western Europe following an itinerary he had put together from Pevsner’s *An Outline of European Architecture* and JM Richard’s *Introduction to Modern Architecture* (SWTNZAAOHP 2.01/0:31:59; 2.01/0:37:20). Toomath’s tour thus took in a wide range of canonical architecture, from Chartres to Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation at Marseille.

Turbott’s itinerary included famous examples of landscape architecture, as well as what he recalled as the usual buildings. Turbott had been suffering from degenerative memory loss prior to the oral history project, but despite this his long-term recall was relatively good. Nevertheless, he was unable to recall many of the places that he visited at this time. Only the real highlights remained etched in his mind, among them: the small formal courtyard gardens in Seville (HATOHP 4.01/0:03:43); the Taj Mahal (HATOHP 4.01/0:28:46); being caught up in a Sikh event at the Golden Temple in Amritsar (where he was invited to be an outside witness to an unspecified atrocity that was just about to unfold) (HATOHP 4.01/0:44:53); and the picturesque landscaping of Capability Brown at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (HATOHP 4.01/1:40:05).<sup>34</sup>

All of these places of significance for Turbott were unknown to him prior to his visits. He discusses this explicitly in one of the interviews, where he contrasts his ability to retain the memory of the gardens in Seville with his inability to recall any of the Gothic cathedrals that he had visited:

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<sup>34</sup> Turbott could not remember the name of the Capability Brown landscape during these interviews; Matt Woodside’s earlier biography of Turbott records this as Blenheim Palace (see Woodside 10).

Those were the things that were unexpected and strange and new, and that was exciting. To see a cathedral in Paris or something was just a bit boring really, because you'd had it quite a few times before. (HATOHP 4.01/0:31:19)

He goes on to point out that he had learned about the canonical works of architecture thoroughly: "you didn't get through History 3 (class) unless you could draw this, this, and this" (HATOHP 4.01/0:34:26), and that there was no sense of surprise or wonder when viewing the real thing.

Although referring to modernist works of architecture (which we will address in greater detail later), Turbott describes the impetus behind those more conventional aspects of his itinerary as meeting the "expectations" of what an architect should see when spending time overseas – noting that most New Zealand architectural graduates were not offered that opportunity:

You would be criticised greatly if you came back without having seen a Corbusier and this and a that and that and that. No one ever asked you what you thought of them, but you'd done the right thing. (HATOHP2.01/0:03:40)

And although Turbott seemed quite dismissive of the buildings experienced in such a manner, it is difficult to know whether that attitude is the product of hindsight rather than a feeling at the time. For example, he recalls the two "magic" destinations that he was keen to see in his travels – the places that he had learned about in his history of architecture classes; Italy, and especially Rome, and the Parthenon in Athens (HATOHP 4.01/0:19:53). Thus it is difficult to know whether the lack of enthusiasm expressed by the elder narrating Turbott is what the younger protagonist Turbott felt at the time.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In autobiographical narratives the 'self' is constructed from the contemporary desires of the narrator, and how they wish to portray their



In the end it matters little – what is of interest here is the nature of the experience. There is a clear difference between the experience of the ‘known’ canonic works and the more exciting and exotic ‘unknown’ works. While the former may have been a large part of the impetus for the architectural tours, carried out both as confirmation of what they had learned in their history classes and as an obligation, “something I should do” (HATOHP3.01/1:23:12), and “just an event that you would not want to miss, but you just did it on the way” (HATOHP4.01/0:34:26), the latter clearly had the greater impact.

The one anomaly in this scheme of ‘experience’ for Turbott was the Parthenon. Of all of these more traditional architectural destinations it was only the Parthenon that seemed to make a meaningful impact, and despite his somewhat detailed pre-existing knowledge of the place:

I can remember walking up a very sort of rough kind of muddled kind of place and there was the Parthenon, exactly like you'd been taught to memorise at the School of Architecture. You knew how many columns there were, how many rows of columns there were and that sort of thing... I have this vivid memory of standing on the Parthenon and hugging these great bits of marble. (HATOHP4.01/0:25:50)

Like Turbott, Toomath was able to recall certain affecting places with great vividness. Among these were the great cathedrals, by which Turbott was unmoved, along with a wide range of other canonic buildings, from Sir

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identity to both themselves and their potential audiences. Jerome Bruner, an early pioneer of cognitive psychology, characterises this relationship between the past and present selves as one in which the present self, the narrator, must bring the past self “into the present in such a way that the protagonist and the narrator eventually fuse and become one person with a shared consciousness” (Bruner 69).

Christopher Wren's St Stephen's Walbrook in London to Le Corbusier's Swiss Pavilion in Paris. The highlight for him was Chartres Cathedral which he describes as an:

...amazing, emotional building, or at least one's response to it is astonishing. It really brought me to tears...

It had something to do with the light and the circumstances at the time that I was there. It was late afternoon which meant that the western doors were open and a great shaft of sunlight struck part way down the nave... but when I went in you're aware of this gleam of light, of almost nothing beyond except a vague richness of deep blues and sharp reds, and just a ghostly kind of presence there, nothing tangible because of the glare contrast. But as I moved down the nave, got beyond the sunlight on the floor, the crossing, the transepts, and those superb columns with their ribs which rise up at the crossing, they came into presence. But at that time the feeling of the whole building embracing you as an entity was overwhelming... the scale of it was immense and yet the warmth of it was wonderful. (SWTNZAA2.01/ 0:33:44)

### 3.3 EXPERIENCING MEDIEVAL GOTHIC

Alington too greatly enjoyed the European leg of his overseas experience. His itinerary was much more specific than either Toomath's or Turbott's; as noted above, rather than attempting to put together a list of destinations that acted as a historical survey, Alington concentrated his journey primarily on large medieval structures. Among the places that he and his wife visited were the cathedrals at Florence, Pisa, Milan, Cologne, Ulm Minster, Strasbourg, Chartres, Amiens, Beauvais, Bourges, Rouen, and the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. An interest in early Christian church architecture also saw him visit places like Ravenna as a kind of secondary focus to their tour. This seemingly tightly constrained itinerary (for example, of Renaissance buildings "we didn't

bother with those so much" (WHAOHP3.02/1:00:54.8)) did not preclude visiting incidental buildings on the way such as a small baroque church in an Austrian village, which he recalls as something of a highlight, and St Mark's Basilica in Venice where, much to the consternation of their host, he made a beeline for the basilica, eschewing the other sights of the famous city. The architecture of Le Corbusier also featured in the Alington's travels, with visits made to see Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp and the Unités d'Habitation at both Marseille and Nantes-Rezé (WHAOHP3.02/0:56:35).

Alington was unable to recall exactly from where his interest in medieval architecture arose, but does mention that it most likely emerged from his more general interests in architectural structure, and the spatial qualities of architecture<sup>36</sup>. He also expresses his fascination with the "mindboggling" construction feats of the medieval builders, but it is not clear from the interviews whether this occurred before or during (or subsequent to) his actual experiences of the structures in Europe (WHAOHP3.02/1:03:30). Alington has maintained an interest in Gothic architecture throughout his career, even using photographs taken during his tour in the 1950s some forty years later in his

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<sup>36</sup> Alington is the only one of the subjects for whom Christianity remained a part of their identity throughout their lives. He describes a general indifference to conventional Christian dogma, instead developing what he calls a truly radical form of belief in which he questioned the received spirituality of church teachings, always seeking to arrive at "the roots of things" (WHAOHP7.02/0:15:07). We might look to the kind of thought disseminated later by Lloyd Geering as a parallel, and indeed, Alington describes the Student Christian Movement, an organisation of which he was a member while studying in Auckland, as an open and intellectually active environment where thought of that nature could be pursued (WHAOHP1.02/1:02:29.00). Nonetheless, he maintained an involvement with the Anglican Church and was a Wellington Anglican Diocesan Synods Person throughout the 1970s and 80s. His contacts within the church community of Wellington led to a significant number of church related projects throughout the course of his career.

This obvious interest in understanding the roots of Christian thought, and respect for teachings of 'Jesus of Nazareth – the man', rather than upholding a fervent reverence for the church-constructed figure of 'Jesus the Christ' (WHAOHP7.02/0:15:07), raises the possibility that there may have been a distinctly conscious but unspoken desire that drove the shaping of his European travel. Further probing of this point in the interviews would have been useful.

teaching at the School of Architecture at Victoria University of Wellington (WHAOHP3.02/0:56:35). Toomath makes similar comments: “the contact with the Gothic world totally blew me away and has always fascinated me ever since” (SWTNZAA5.01/1:25:48).

The centrality of Gothic architecture to the experiences and later interests of both Alington and Toomath, makes it an interesting topic on which to dwell further in these narratives. Gothic architecture was a feature of the School of Architecture history papers of Arthur Marshall, who taught Toomath (SWTNZAA2.01/0:42:21.6), and Porsolt, who taught both Turbott and Alington (HATOHP4.01/0:30:12), so the sense of discovery that both Alington and Toomath evoke when describing their experiences is not the surprise of the completely unknown that Turbott conjures when discussing the highlights of his overseas experiences. That Alington had created an itinerary focussed quite clearly on visiting these buildings also indicates that he had sufficient prior knowledge to want to give over his time in that pursuit, at the expense of the many other things he might have seen on the trip.

What both Alington and Toomath discovered in their Gothic experiences is quite similar. As might be expected, both were amazed by the drama of the buildings, in both the form and the construction technology of the time<sup>37</sup>, but they also discovered the structural rationalism that defined the conventional

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<sup>37</sup> Although Turbott did not share the same sense of wonder as an outcome of his experiences in the medieval cathedrals, he did suggest that he has since developed a much greater appreciation:

I don't think I appreciated the amazing quality of those things... Now if I look at some really good photographs of some of those early Gothic things, just the photographs, but then it was just “oh well, you know we've done this one today and we can do so and so tomorrow” and then we can get in the car and keep on going... (HATOHP4.01/0:30:12)

modernist appreciation of Gothic buildings. In the interviews Toomath is more specific about what this meant:

Gradually it dawned on me that the whole attitude of, let's say in the building world at any rate... were much closer to our modern view of following structure, of experimenting with forms rather than basing design on predetermined and preconceived forms. I realised that there was a degree of intellectual endeavour that consistently ran through this, but with enormous range of imaginative experimentation and extraordinary beauty... (SWTNZAA2.01/0:42:23.9)

The more I experienced Gothic, the more modern the buildings became, until ultimately you realised that they, in their final development, consisted of the focussing on the minimal area of vertical supports, and the maximum of open bay area, and the interlocking of the entire structure into a counterbalancing of forces – even to the extent of exposing the whole of the frame... outside the building. So the flying buttresses and the succession of naves, even five longitudinal volumes, all of the structure exposed on the outside. Now, it's a modern concept. (SWTNZAA2.01/ 0:46:54.7)

The identification of the structural rationalism of Gothic architecture as one of the significant precursors for modern architecture, which is essentially what Toomath saw, had been around for some time, however. For example, the writings of Viollet-le-Duc, who had promoted the structural rationalism of Gothic architecture from as early as the 1860s, were mentioned in Frank Lloyd Wright's biography as 'the only really sensible book on architecture' (75), a move that, according to architectural historian Kevin D Murphy, helped to rehabilitate the reputation of Viollet-le-Duc from amongst the then deeply unfashionable historicist architects and architectural writers of the nineteenth century (754). It seems more of a stretch to point to the single very brief

reference to Viollet-le-Duc in Giedion's enormously influential *Space Time and Architecture* (first published in 1941), although, as Murphy also points out, Giedion's placement of Viollet-le-Duc's writings at the very inception of the skyscraper and the Chicago School places him in a pretty prominent position in relation to the genesis of the modern movement (755). And then there was Sir John Summerson who, according to Martin Bressani "has probably done more to establish Viollet-le-Duc's reputation as a pioneer modernist than any other historian" (416). Bressani is referring to the collection of Summerson essays, published in book form as *Heavenly Mansions and other Essays on Architecture* in 1949, in which Summerson states that Viollet-le-Duc "left a structure of thought upon which many of our own ideas of modern architecture are based" (141).

Both Alington and Toomath owned copies of *Space Time and Architecture*, and Alington also had a copy of Frank Lloyd Wright's autobiography in his book collection. It is highly likely that Toomath too owned a copy of *An Autobiography*, and even if not, would almost certainly have read it as a student. The School of Architecture library had both titles and two copies of Summerson's book, and it is likely (although not verifiable) that at least one of those was purchased close to its publication, and thus available at least to Alington, if not also Toomath (Toomath's final year at the School of Architecture was 1949, the same year in which Summerson's book was published).

Thus, it does seem a little strange that exposure to this particular thesis was missing for both Alington and Toomath prior to their own discoveries made in Europe, but it must be kept in mind that both, as students at the School of Architecture in Auckland, did not receive formal training in theories of modern architecture – instead picking it up through their independent reading and via discussion with their peers. The Gothic architecture that they did learn about was, as Toomath describes, rather mechanical, consisting of little more than

the general form and physical dimensions of the most significant buildings (SWTNZAA2.01/0:49:42.3).<sup>38</sup>

### 3.4 EXISTENTIAL AUTHENTICITY

Neither Alington nor Toomath profess to a spiritual element in their appreciation of the Gothic cathedrals during their experiences of them, in a specific religiously spiritual sense (although it could almost be argued that Toomath's description of his encounter with Chartres Cathedral almost borders upon that). But if not spiritual, there is at least one further 'type' of experience at play here, particularly for Toomath, and perhaps also in a related way for Alington. As mentioned earlier, beyond any specific architectural motivation for Toomath's strongly felt desire to get out of New Zealand was the yearning to experience the roots of Western culture, and as an avowed Francophile, that meant France became the locus of his time in Europe. Thus the type of experience being sought was not simply a superficial observation of objects, architecture or otherwise. There is, in fact, a degree of 'authenticity' being sought in Toomath's quest that represents an attempt to go beyond the superficiality of the architectural tour and become immersed in an authentic lifestyle and culture.

During the analysis for this project this particular theme was given the label of 'Genuine experience – lifestyle', yet that is not quite accurate as a description of the themes that were brought together under that label, as there is more at stake here than that. Instead the term 'existential authenticity' will be borrowed from Ning Wang's writings on the sociology of tourism and used here, as it is

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<sup>38</sup> Smith remembered his interest in Gothic architecture as the result of reading James Hall's book *Essay on the origin, history, and principles, of Gothic architecture* (1813), which he discovered during his Auckland studies (MKSOHP2.01/1:44:45).

a much closer (yet still not exact) match for the type of experience with which we are dealing.

First introduced into the literature of tourism theory by MacCannell in the 1970s, the concept of 'authenticity', and how it is sought and encountered during touristic experiences, is itself a broad and contested notion. Wang provides a useful summary of that literature and the ongoing contestation of its key concepts in his 1999 article entitled "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience". In essence, and although there is considerable debate about the exact definitions, over the decades since MacCannell first introduced the concept of authenticity a general categorisation of two different types of authentic experience have emerged: 'objective authenticity' and 'constructive authenticity'. Again noting that these definitions are still not entirely agreed upon across the relevant literature, in general objective authenticity deals with whether objects are authentic, placing a great deal of significance on knowable originality. Constructive authenticity, on the other hand, is concerned with *how* objects are authentic. This concept considers authenticity as a projection of the socially constructed desires, expectations, and pre-existing categories of the tourist, who may or may not perceive or even value the originality of the object or experience. It follows that constructed authenticity is both relative and negotiable. (Wang 351)

Both of these categories of authentic experience provide reasonable descriptions of the motivations behind the tourist experiences of the subjects of this study, and Turbott's experience on the Acropolis in Athens is a good example of this. The physical remains of the Parthenon, as an authentic artefact, are clearly valued for their measurable originality. This is something to experience first-hand, not just because as an architect a completely embodied experience is privileged over visual representation, but because of the aura of originality that surrounds it. But the Parthenon is pure in not just the objective originality of the artefact, but also in its constructed authenticity as a prime



origin in the canon of Western architectural history. It is the latter that brings Turbott to literally embrace the building.

Wang's introduction of existential authenticity was an attempt to resolve some of the ambiguity and limitations that most commentators saw in the current theories of authenticity (350). He, like other theorists in the field, identified other touristic phenomena that did not necessarily accord with the two already mentioned categories of objective and constructive authenticity:

Phenomena such as visiting friends and relatives, beach holidays, ocean cruising, nature tourism, visiting Disneyland, personal hobbies such as shopping, fishing, hunting, or sports, and so on, have nothing to do with authenticity in MacCannell's sense. (Wang 350)

While none of these phenomena seem at first glance to have much in common with the kinds of experiences being covered here, Wang's definition of existential authenticity is nonetheless useful in helping to understand some aspects of the motivations and experiences that the subjects of this investigation ascribed to their time overseas. Wang discusses existential authenticity in terms of *feelings*, stating that in the act of carrying out non-everyday activities, "the liminal process of tourist activities", tourists *feel* much more authentic (351). So while both objective and subjective authenticities are the products of intellectual activity, objectively or constructively experiencing authenticity, experiential authenticity is both felt and transformative:

In such a liminal experience, people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life, not because they find the toured objects more authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily. (Wang 351)

So, as already noted, Toomath's desire to "experience" the roots of Western culture arose from a fascination that developed during his schoolboy education, that is, to confirm a clearly socially constructed set of expectations. His approach to realising the authentic is twofold. First, he developed an itinerary that allowed him to experience first-hand the physical artefacts of those cultural roots being sought, be they artworks, buildings, or the general built environment. The Gothic cathedrals are very much a case in point. Here the experience of objective authenticity of the original object, and what one might be able to learn from that, is highly valued. Toomath also sought a kind of existential authenticity, utilising his fluency in the language and culture of the French to immerse himself in that experience – choosing to live in France for an extended period rather than simply to tour it. In effect, he was forsaking the passive gaze for active interaction.

Another illustration of this is in the approach to experiencing the vernacular taken by both Toomath and Turbott. Although Toomath does not go into much detail about that part of his itinerary, he clearly valued seeing the rustic towns and villages of the rural parts of France. It helped him to complete the picture of French culture that he was experiencing (SWTNZAA5.01/1:25:48).

Additionally, he states that he developed a keen interest in vernacular building techniques, which he describes in terms that we usually find associated with the Group Architects with an emphasis on the process of building (see also Gatley, *Group Architects*), of which Toomath was a founding member during his student days in Auckland. During one of the interview sessions with Toomath we came across an image of a rustic building clearly set in the rural countryside (we were looking through some of the photographic slides that he took during his 1950s overseas experience). Toomath recalled:

That's a typical little farm building in Provence, characteristic of the indigenous and local buildings all through that area – just beautiful. Traditional methods of roofing, the lean-to, single mono-pitch on this, I think it was a granary or

something of that sort, and the solid stonewalling of the farmhouses and buildings there.

I became quite fascinated by the traditional villages, the cottages, the time-honoured methods of building on a particular spot. You go twenty miles further north – it's different, because the local materials, the wind direction, the climate... it's the vernacular I'm trying to describe.

(SWTNZAA3.01/0:33:15)

It is not clear from the brief discussion on this topic whether Toomath felt himself immersed in his experience of the vernacular, but it seems much more likely that this was for him a more objective type of experience. The first-hand experience of an authentic vernacular, much older than was available in New Zealand, was perhaps that much more meaningful as a result. While there will have been some aspects of experiential authenticity activated during these parts of his travels, insofar as the evocation of liminality via difference that Wang describes, these were probably of a wholly different order to the insider's perspective that might be gained from *dwelling in* rather than *passing through* these places on a motorcycle, living out of a backpack.

Turbott's experience of the vernacular is almost completely the opposite. He and his wife, like the Alingtons, spent a large portion of the European part of their overseas experience in the United Kingdom, although for Turbott and Manchester, their time was spent at Oxford where Turbott had plans to write a "revised history of landscape architecture" (HATOH3.01/1:34:45).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Because Turbott's student visa did not allow him to stay in the United States for longer than a year, he decided to utilise the University of Oxford library, on the basis that it would be the equivalent of Harvard's where he had been studying. He found, however, that he was unable to access much of the material that he wanted because he was not enrolled as a student. Diminishing funds and an uncomfortable living environment saw him give up on the project after about six months. (HATOH3.01/1:34:45)

Immediately after that they made their way in a Volkswagen van<sup>40</sup> to the southern coast of Spain (via the gardens of Seville), and settled in a small village near Malaga for a further six months. They then travelled around the Mediterranean (taking in the conventional Italian and Greek architectural pilgrimage sites), across parts of the Middle East, and into the Indian sub-continent before sailing back to New Zealand.

While the sheer 'exoticism' of much of this itinerary created a lasting impression on Turbott, he also describes the time spent living in the south of Spain as a highlight of the whole trip (HATOHP4.01/0:04:31). This part of their journey was planned to allow Turbott's wife to pursue her interests, as a kind of balance to the previous six months they had spent at Oxford. Manchester enjoyed the light and Mediterranean landscape, and used her time to draw and paint (HATOHP4.01/0:08:54).

Turbott describes the immersion in the local lifestyle as a wonderful experience, buying food direct from the farmers and growers at the village market, and after a time, feeling as though they were part of the local community. Turbott describes this time as "magic", recalling the simple rustic three-room cottage in which they lived, going for walks and swims, and enjoying that, owing to the fact that it was off-season for tourists, there were few other outsiders in the village at the time (HATOHP4.01/0:17:35).

Despite enjoying the romanticism of the experience (a point directly acknowledged by Turbott in the interview (HATOHP4.01/0:14:11), there is no

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<sup>40</sup> Although it is tempting to call it a Volkswagen Kombi, that was just one of a number of models of the Volkswagen Transporter available in the 1950s and 1960s. For this reason the vaguer term 'van' is used, following Turbott's usage in the interview (HATOHP4.01/0:00:24).

Historian Jude Wilson notes that independent van tours were common for New Zealanders on their overseas experience in Europe in the 1960s, and achieved "'classic' OE status" in the 1970s (86, 127).

real sense that his experience of the ‘vernacular’ was transformative. He enjoyed the landscape by participating in it rather than analysing it. He describes the crooked charm of the two-storied rustic buildings in the tiny rural village rather than, for example, finding the magnificent play of forms under the Mediterranean light. In his own words, the short period was one in which he was subconsciously running away from university and academia – a genuinely meaningful break from thinking about architecture or landscape architecture in any formal way:

I’d been four years at Auckland and I had one very concentrated year at the brilliant American place [Harvard University], and I’d spent six months being frustrated at Oxford, so I’d really had a gutsful of all that...  
(HATOH4.01/ 0:08:17.9)

In Alington’s case, aside from the backpacking stage of his European tour, he and his wife had settled in London, where they both found employment – Alington with the newly opened office of Robert Matthew and Johnson-Marshall. There is never any sense during the interviews that Alington was deliberately seeking an immersion in British culture, and London appears to have been a destination dictated by the presence of family (Margaret had cousins living in London (WHAOHP3.02:0:40:11), and more especially of the pragmatics of finding employment. Nevertheless, the Alingtons made the most of the opportunities of living in London, and also travelled around the United Kingdom, visiting important buildings (especially Medieval cathedrals), and also taking up an invitation to visit Robert Matthew’s home near Edinburgh (WHAOHP3.02/1:09:00).

### 3.5 EXPERIENCING AN AUTHENTIC HISTORY

While there is significant overlap in both the motivations and itineraries of these three European tourists, Alington, Toomath, and Turbott, they each sought and enacted their own unique European experience, inevitably leading

to different outcomes. Toomath is the clearest about what this period meant to him, in terms of an overall experience, and the significance of that experience:

The first year in Europe was the mindbender to me. That really was Michael. It was what I had yearned for... I'm thinking of the historic, of the whole background of the Western culture, if you like, putting it in the broad sense. The contact with the Gothic world totally blew me away, and has always fascinated me ever since. The intense variety of France and the whole of the history that lies behind the French towns and cities and villages and all of that, the richness of complex development over ages of localities and regions – these were things that made me realise how thin our whole [New Zealand] background is. (SWTNZAA5.01/ 1:25:48)

Toomath's approach to realising these authentic experiences was through an overall itinerary that fostered a combination of both objective and experiential experiences.<sup>41</sup> His immersion in contemporary Parisian culture, which was his primary reason for leaving New Zealand (above and beyond his postgraduate studies in the United States (SWTNZAA2.01/0:17:00), his carefully planned tour of the canonic buildings of Western architectural history and incidental experiences of the rural vernacular all added up to a confirmed appreciation of the cultural background of Europe, and thus a better understanding of his own cultural roots.

It is harder to make the same claims about Alington's European experiences, which appear to have been much more oriented toward the experience of objective authenticity. The key moments for him were mostly a result of the

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<sup>41</sup> As interpreters of a later time, it is valid to question whether these experiences are actually socially constructive rather than objective. But from the point of view of the 'experiencer', a modernist architect engaging with the primary artefacts of a canonic history, the experience will appear to be almost exclusively objective.

planned aspects of his much more focussed itinerary, and there is no discussion of the European vernacular that he would no doubt have encountered.<sup>42</sup> Alington is also less clear about the most significant outcome of these travels, aside from the increased understanding and appreciation for the major works of medieval and early Christian architecture that he encountered.

Turbott's experience, although traversing many of the same sites, was the most peculiar of the three. Being somewhat jaded by the ongoing study of architecture and landscape over the previous five or six years of his life meant that his experience of the conventional sites of architectural history were, for the most part, largely unremarkable. From Le Nôtre's gardens at Versailles to the medieval splendour of Chartres, few places from his tour left a lasting impression of any sort.<sup>43</sup> The exceptions were his experiences of the picturesque landscape, his immersion in the vernacular of the south of Spain, what he called 'Moghul' architecture (which he encountered both in Spain and as he travelled between Europe and India), and, of course, hugging the columns of the Parthenon. He could return to New Zealand and nod his head appropriately when quizzed on whether he had seen this or that example of important architecture, but his experience was marked more by the novelty of the unknown more than the sought-for confirmation of the wonders of our cultural past. With the exception of the Parthenon and Capability Brown's picturesque, there is a remarkable absence of confirmation bias in Turbott's

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<sup>42</sup> However, bear in mind that the WHA Oral History Project was carried out prior to this study, and that these issues were therefore probed less during these interviews than in the others in this study.

<sup>43</sup> Interviews with Turbott were conducted by Matt Woodside in 2002, which provide more detail than Turbott could remember during the interviews conducted for this project. In particular, the landscape designs of Le Nôtre were remembered in greater detail during the earlier interviews and a certain admiration for some aspects was expressed by Turbott (Woodside 10). At the time of the interviews for this project, however, Turbott was rather dismissive of Woodside's work, and in personal conversation admitted to having made up answers to some of the questions. Regardless of the veracity of Woodside's findings, the forgetting that occurred between those interviews and this project remains instructive.

experience of the places that he had learned about in his history classes – in fact, quite the opposite. Despite seeking an experience of history that would be more authentic than the “remote correspondence” courses that he knew, he came away instead valuing the ‘other’. The lesson that he took from the experience, about the importance of the integration of architecture within its landscape, which occurred to him as much in the exotic as it did in the canonic, is perhaps more profound as a result (HAT4.01/1:09:12).

And it is a genuine experience of ‘History’ that these four (Smith included) tourists were seeking.<sup>44</sup> Whether via the objective gaze upon an original artefact, or the existential immersion within an authentic context, they were seeking an authentic experience that would supplement, or even help to rectify, what they saw as the lack of *history* available within New Zealand culture. Although there are facets of ‘cultural cringe’ in some of the comparisons made during the interviews<sup>45</sup>, this was not the defining factor of their European experiences. Toomath, the Francophile, comes closest in his description of the thinness of his New Zealand background compared to the French, but even then the relationship is distinctly temporal. Rather than bemoaning the notion that Europe was superior to New Zealand, instead there was recognition that they are both part of the same thing – this Western culture. Visiting Europe to experience history was, more than anything, very much an act of time-travel.

Turbott, despite seeming off-hand about the conventional European tour, also observed this phenomenon:

To arrive in Greece, that little crumpled country, with little towns that are all, I mean they weren’t designed, but all happened to be exquisitely beautiful... there were no

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<sup>44</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that contemporary buildings were also part of the experience. This will be covered in the next chapter.

<sup>45</sup> Indeed, one of the themes identified in the interview analysis was ‘colonial cringe’ (see list of thematic clusters in the appendices of this thesis).



supermarkets or anything like that, it was just the thing that'd been the same for 200 years or 500 years, and that was gradually, I think, sort of being absorbed into me.  
(HATOHP/0:35:58)

Alington too, recalls discussing the sense of wonder at the readily available historical experiences with his office colleagues in London:

And of course being colonial... growing up in New Zealand, we up to a point missed out on a lot of that cultural background. Now I can remember in the office, telling the guys in the office in London, "Man, I've only just seen my first medieval structure." "Oh" they said, "Well, we see it every day when we pass it on the bus", you know, that sort of thing. And I remember Roger Klein saying to me "Well I used to come out of the lectures in the AA and go down the street and there was Inigo Jones's Banquet Hall..." I said "We don't, we have to look at it on an old epidiascope. We miss out on all of that". (WHAOHP7.02/1:10:14)

## 4.0 EXPERIENCING MODERNITY

During the 1950s the United States became a focal point for those interested in architectural exploration in a new world. Schools of architecture offered post-graduate and research opportunities, and some New Zealand students were able to avail themselves of these by the generosity of Fulbright and other similar awards. (Alington, "Architecture" 345)

The above is an excerpt from a survey of New Zealand architectural developments written by Alington for *Thirteen Facets*, the Ian Wards edited book commemorating Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee. As noted in Section 1.7, Alington is repeating Pevsner's earlier assessment of the postwar international influences that were helping to shape the direction of architecture in New Zealand, but is doing so from a position of experience, being, along with Smith, Toomath, and Turbott, one of those students who availed themselves of travel scholarships in the 1950s.

If their time in Europe was largely focussed on the search for an authentic experience of history then, for the subjects of this study, the corresponding time spent in the United States could almost be seen as the exact opposite. Instead of searching for the roots of their cultural experience in the richness of the western-European-past, they were exploring the proverbial "new world" as stated above in Alington's excerpt – seeking the roots of a cultural future, in the United-States-present.

This chapter is an examination of that search for 'modernity', as revealed in the motivations and experiences of the four New Zealand travellers. While it is mostly focussed on the buildings, people, and educational experiences that they encountered on the United States stage of their travels, it should be kept in mind that the division described above, of the western-European-past and the United-States-future, is not absolute. The seeking out of Le Corbusier's

work in Europe illustrates this, as do some of the more significant examples provided in Sections 4.7.3 and 4.7.5 below.

Like the aspiration to experience history, the desire to experience ‘modernity’ was borne of a perceived deficiency in both the curriculum of the School of Architecture and within the contemporary built environment of New Zealand. Toomath and Smith both stated that their history courses followed the material as laid out in Sir Banister Fletcher’s *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* (MKSOHP2.01/0:44:53; SWTNZAA1.01/0:57:12). Although it is not known which edition was being used at the School at this time, even in the final Fletcher authored sixteenth edition, published after Smith and Toomath had graduated in 1950<sup>46</sup>, modernist architecture is almost entirely overlooked. Alington’s memory of the history and theory papers that he was required to take at the School a few years later is quite similar. He learnt about modern architecture not from his history papers, delivered by Porsolt, or the architectural theory paper delivered by Professor Light, but from independent reading and primarily through conversations with his peers (WHAOHP2.01/1:23:45).

Turbott, on the other hand, who graduated two years *earlier* than Alington, recalled his history classes differently. Turbott arrived at the School in the same year that Smith and Toomath were completing their final year, overlapping with the first three years of Alington’s studies. He recalls a history course that surveyed Western architectural history, but with a strong normative emphasis on European modernism (HATOHP201/0:54:4). Given the fact that Turbott had difficulty recalling much detail in his memories of his time at University, it is possible that he is collapsing the memories of informal peer discussion and

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<sup>46</sup> Although they graduated in the same year (1950), Smith had started his degree in 1944, a year earlier than Toomath. Smith did not complete his final year thesis in the fifth year of his studies, due to being distracted by teaching opportunities at the School of Architecture. Instead, he went back to his Hamilton home, completing his final year thesis there in the following year. (MKSOHP2.01/1:53:36)

independent study with what was learnt more formally in the classroom. Alternatively, it could be speculated that Alington subconsciously misremembered his past, in a way that helped his personal narratives more neatly align with the socially upheld narratives of this era (that modernism was absent from the School's curriculum). In her book *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* (1993), renowned sociolinguist Charlotte Linde has argued that this type of misremembering is fairly common to autobiographical recall, fostering an internal coherence between the narratives of personal memory and other authoritative accounts.

Whether Turbott received formal education in modern architectural theory or, like the others, received knowledge of contemporary developments through other means, the point remains that experiencing authentic canonic examples was not possible in New Zealand. He arrived in Florida and immediately made a beeline for the Frank Lloyd Wright designed campus at Florida Southern College – thus straightaway fulfilling part of that desire (HATOHPI.01/0:11:49). This was, for Turbott, his first experience of 'real architecture': "There was no architecture in New Zealand – you built wooden houses and state houses..." (HATOHPI.01/0:11:49).

#### 4.1 GETTING THERE

Choosing the United States as a place to carry out his postgraduate studies was not without its difficulties for Turbott. It could be said that selecting any location other than the United Kingdom presented difficulties for those who, like Turbott and Toomath, were departing with a University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarship in Architecture. Although he could not remember which one it was, Turbott recalled losing one scholarship due to the fact that he was intending to travel to the United States rather than the United Kingdom. Being awarded the Fulbright travel grant was the real breakthrough for Turbott. Although it only paid for the cost of travel between New Zealand and the United States, it was the "high prestige" associated with the award that opened

doors in the United States, and seemingly here in New Zealand as well (HATOHP2.01/1:49:54.0; 3.01/0:03:11.7).

Toomath did not gain his Fulbright until after he had arrived in Europe, and therefore had to convince the University of New Zealand that Paris was a suitable travel destination for a University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarship. He recalled the surprise invitation to the University's Vice-Chancellor's office in Wellington, where Toomath was required to explain his intentions. He succeeded, but was required to send regular reports about the progress of his research (which will be described below) to Professor Charles Light at the School of Architecture in Auckland. (SWTNZAA2.01/0:10:14)

According to Toomath, the official reticence about sending scholars anywhere other than the United Kingdom was due to a lack of breadth in the University of New Zealand academic network. Scholars travelling to the United Kingdom would have someone from the hosting institution who would be available to monitor progress and offer guidance when necessary, but they could not offer this in Paris where Toomath wanted to be based. His fluency in written and spoken French was also questioned by the Vice-Chancellor. (SWTNZAA2.01/0:10:14; 0:25:27)

Turbott gave different reasons however, citing a deep anti-Americanism in New Zealand, which went from the general public to the "establishment". He believed this was a hangover from the American military presence in New Zealand cities during World War II, and jealousies created by the romantic success that the American soldiers stationed here experienced with local women (HATOHP2.01/1:49:54.0). He also described a generally-held point of view that things American were considered to be of an inferior quality to their British equivalents:

...there was an intense dislike for anything American.  
American things were shoddy, they were beneath contempt –  
America was just absolute junk. If you wanted something that

was good quality you had to get it from 'Home', which was England...

Now that didn't mean to say that you didn't like Hollywood films, but you didn't – that was entertainment – you didn't feel that you were being downgraded by enjoying *Popeye*...  
(HATOH2.01/1:49:54.0)

This anti-Americanism is similar to the position that Ann McEwan articulates in her doctoral thesis. She argues that one of the reasons that the American contribution to local architecture had been overlooked in the history of New Zealand architecture was “a dichotomy between low (American) and high (British) culture constructed by an aspirant intellectual and social elite” (McEwan 260).

Although a harboured resentment to the experience of hosting the US military in World War II was a very real thing, in both the terms that Turbott describes, and because many New Zealanders did not feel that the country needed American protection<sup>47</sup>, it is much more likely that the “class sensitivities and imperial loyalties” to which McEwan refers, and the practical limitations that Toomath identified were the real reason. As Joan Druett explained in *Fulbright New Zealand*, in the late 1940s and into the 1950s, most senior academics in New Zealand had a predominantly British educational background (being either British or having trained there) and little knowledge of corresponding universities in the United States (28). This would also have been true for those

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<sup>47</sup> Unlike Australia, New Zealand did not recall a significant amount of its military force from European and Middle Eastern theatres of war in response to Japanese threats at home. Instead, at a request from Churchill, who was keen for the highly-regarded New Zealand Expeditionary Force to remain fighting in Egypt, the United States sent a division to New Zealand to cover Japanese threats. (Taylor 622)

higher up the University of New Zealand ranks, including those who were responsible for administering the travelling scholarships.

The University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarship in Architecture was awarded annually on the recommendation of the University College (in this case Auckland University College) and professors in the relevant school or department. Based on academic performance, the scholarship funded two years overseas, allowing the recipient to further extend their knowledge in their field of study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they were highly prized by students at the School of Architecture as an opportunity to get out of New Zealand to see 'real' architecture.

While only Turbott and Toomath were awarded the University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarships in Architecture<sup>48</sup>, all of the subjects of this study were recipients of a Fulbright award.<sup>49</sup> According to Druett, the Fulbright programme was not officially publicised until 1952 – the same year that Smith and Toomath received their Fulbright grants (27). However, New Zealand graduate students had been travelling to the United States with Fulbright funding since the creation of the programme in 1949. Nevertheless, Smith and Toomath were the first architectural graduates from New Zealand to take part in the programme. Alington and Turbott received their awards in 1957, followed by Wilson a year later in 1958 (Druett 109-110).

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<sup>48</sup> Turbott recalled earning his University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarship in Architecture by default when the original awardee turned it down. This is not recorded in the minutes of the Auckland University Council meetings however, which state that the 1954 scholarship was awarded to Gordon Smith (Nichol). In 1955 Smith was a part of a team of architects who entered and won the Wanganui War Memorial Hall design competition – famously sending the drawings from London where they were then based (Whanganui War Memorial Centre). It therefore seems unlikely that Turbott received a Travelling Scholarship in Architecture that was turned down by Smith.

<sup>49</sup> Don Wilson's travel to the United States was also funded by a Fulbright award (Druett 110).

Because the Fulbright programme only funded travel costs between New Zealand and the United States, securing additional funding was a required part of the Fulbright confirmation process. Turbott and Toomath were able to use their University of New Zealand scholarships, although Toomath had already used one year of the two-year award while in Europe. Once his Fulbright was confirmed, he found he had access to a generous range of grants and alternative funding in the United States. He recalled taking advantage of a Smith-Mundt grant and a Harvard University scholarship (SWTNZAA5.01/0:21:26).

Alington, who was employed in the New Zealand Ministry of Works throughout his architectural education, made a case for his employers to support his United States study. His undergraduate study at Auckland had been funded by an Education Department Bursary rather than the Ministry of Works itself, a conscious move on Alington's part to avoid the five year employment bond requirement of Ministry of Works funding (WHAOHP2.02/0:05:52). This meant that Alington felt able to request financial assistance from the Ministry of Works, who agreed to keep him on full pay during his studies.

Smith, who had already applied for and been awarded a Maclaurin Scholarship at MIT while he was studying at Auckland, had difficulty finding sufficient supplemental funds to take advantage of that offer (MKSOHP2.01/1:26:15; 3.01/0:00:49).<sup>50</sup> Being the recipient of a Fulbright award helped with the travel costs, but he still needed to secure funds to cover his living

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<sup>50</sup> Richard C Maclaurin was a New Zealand professor of mathematics and law, and was the first President of MIT (Sinclair). No details of the Maclaurin Scholarship have been found, but according to Smith, it was awarded by MIT to New Zealand graduate students and covered tuition fees for postgraduate study at MIT. Smith also recalls being the first recipient of the award (MKSOHP2.01/1:26:15). The 1952 MIT treasurer's report indicates that a scholarship fund was receiving money for a proposed scholarship in Maclaurin's wife's name in 1952 – the Alice Maclaurin Scholarship (Snyder 201). Smith was awarded his MIT scholarship prior to this however.



expenses. He achieved this eventually, after having deferred both the MIT and Fulbright scholarships, by way of what can only be described as a seemingly unlikely chain of chance events. It began, according to Smith, with the last minute withdrawal of an American academic from taking up their Fulbright travel award to New Zealand. The only applicant available to take advantage of the placement at such short notice was Howell E Cobb, a faculty member of the architecture department of Kansas State College, who duly arrived in New Zealand in 1951.<sup>51</sup> Smith was introduced to Cobb via a contact at the School of Architecture (Smith was then working for George Clayton (Mick) Cutter, an Auckland architect better known as one of the partners in the later practice, Cutter Thorpe Pickmere and Douglas). Once Cobb learned of Smith's desire to get to the United States, he offered to write back to his home institution at Kansas State, and see whether he could convince them to employ Smith. While it was not MIT, where Smith could take up his Maclaurin Scholarship, it was a foot in the door, so to speak. And it worked – presumably due to Fulbright considering the American income as sufficient evidence of Smith's ability to support himself financially while in the United States. (MKSOHP3.01/0:24:47)

Aside from securing sufficient financial support for the duration of their American studies, the Fulbright awardees had to satisfy one further requirement before their awards could be confirmed – they had to have an invitation of study from a United States university. Alington recalls some difficulty in gaining his letter of acceptance, until he was advised by Eric Budge of the New Zealand Fulbright offices that he was 'not writing himself up enough', apparently a common trait for New Zealand applicants not used to

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<sup>51</sup> While in New Zealand Cobb contributed an article in the *Journal of the NZ Institute of Architects*, outlining general theories of architectural education then active in the United States, explaining, in particular, the approach taken at Kansas State College (see Cobb 121-128). Smith described a curriculum at Kansas State that appeared to be even more grounded in outmoded Beaux Arts teaching practice than that being delivered in Auckland at that time; thus it seems unlikely that the article created a significant impact (MKSOHP3.01/0:28:49).

the expectations of their American ‘audience’.<sup>52</sup> Once he had revised his application letter, Alington had little trouble gaining an invitation to study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. (WHAOHP3.02/0:08:18)

According to Druett, New Zealanders generally had little difficulty in being accepted into United States universities, although it should be noted the Fulbright selection process was oriented toward students with “high scholastic ability” (Druett 27-28). This was certainly true for Alington, Toomath, and Turbott, who had all won student prizes at the School of Architecture. Aside from the already mentioned New Zealand University Travelling Scholarships in Architecture, both Alington and Toomath were Senior Scholars – which consisted of a cash prize awarded annually to the top student in the third year of the undergraduate programme (WHAOHP1.01/1:14:43; Nichol). As high performing students of the School of Architecture, these were exactly the type of scholar that Fulbright desired to send to the United States, and armed with a Fulbright award, they were welcomed by the United States universities to which they applied (Alington’s initial setbacks notwithstanding).

Although Smith did not receive any formal awards while studying at Auckland, he recalled that his studio work was considered to be of sufficient quality that his fourth year studio project was selected to be sent to England as an example of the high quality of student work produced at the School (MKSOHP2.01/1:54:24). He also cites being “part-faculty” in his final year at Auckland (he was a studio tutor), as evidence of his standing at the School (MKSOHP2.01/1:17:57). Regardless of his academic success he had already secured the MIT

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<sup>52</sup> Whether Budge was being accurate in his generalisation or simply politely supportive is open to question, given that none of the other subjects of this study had difficulty being accepted to their first choice destinations. Alington’s humility is a much valued quality of his character amongst those who know him personally, and the difficulty he had in “blowing his own trumpet” (WHAOHP3.02/0:08:18) is likely more attributable to this than by an observable national trait.

scholarship prior to his Fulbright application. That fact may even have played a role in Smith being selected into the Fulbright programme.

## 4.2 MOTIVATIONS

Motivations can be difficult to unravel when conducting historical research involving individuals, and in the absence of input from the people being studied, is probably the biggest area of informed speculation. Access to documents, especially intimate documents such as diaries and personal letters, provides useful insight, and interviews (including oral histories) with the subject are also an obvious source of information about original motivations and intentions. But motivations can be revealing of deep personal desires that might seem unusual or even trite to others, work against others' interests, represent an element of unconventionality (or the opposite, conformism), and so on. They might also show evidence of a failed objective that the subject may not wish to acknowledge, or reveal thoughts and desires that have become socially unacceptable since the time in which they were first held. In short, confessing motivations might reveal more of the holder than they wish to share with outsiders.

A comparison of the motivations for studying in the United States that were recalled in the interviews against the reasons provided by the subjects to Fulbright New Zealand is a good illustration of some of these difficulties. There are also the actions that were taken by the subjects during their travels, which again can tell a different story. This does not mean that the researcher should disbelieve the explanations of motivations provided by either the documentary evidence or the testimony of the subjects themselves. At any one time there are multiple possible motivations behind the decision to take a course of action, some which suit one audience more than another. For example, Toomath's desire to experience French culture, which saw him spend the four months of his scholarship living in Paris, is unlikely to have been a feature of his University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarship proposal. The argument that he put forward in the latter case was based around a stated intention to

undertake independent research of contemporary construction techniques in reinforced concrete buildings:

My particular interest in that first stage was in the French development of so much in the way of mechanisation. They were using power-cranes, they were prefabricating concrete, amazing developments in shell concrete construction, so that all those things had obvious relevance to New Zealand.

So, you're saying they were more advanced in that kind of construction technology than other parts of the world at that time?

I think they were leading the way, yes, this was postwar reconstruction you see, and France had been very severely damaged... technically I think they had already been right into advances in concrete construction, after all you know, France was the home of *béton armé*...

(SWTNZAA2.01/0:03:24)

Both sets of reasons can be taken as valid motivating factors in the decisions that Toomath made. While he is quite clear that his long-held desire to immerse himself in French culture was the primary motivation for the whole overseas experience, superseding his desire to study in the United States, this does not make the secondary motivations any less valid

(SWTNZAA2.01/0:17:18). Toomath was keenly interested in those facets of construction described in his proposal, and did satisfy that motivation, as well as his primary motivation, while in France. It follows then, that both sets of motivations are able to provide useful information about the values that mattered to Toomath prior to his travel. And it is precisely at this point, when discussing the *values* held by a small group of New Zealand postwar architectural graduates, that we may begin to see some connection with (or

against) the generally understood patterns of values that arose during this era.<sup>53</sup>

The decision to undertake postgraduate study in the United States was driven by a diverse range of motivating factors across the four subjects of this study. However, a few significant overarching themes quickly became apparent during the thematic analysis. The first of these has already been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter – the desire to experience modern architecture.

Education was, of course, also a key motivating factor. There were no opportunities for postgraduate study in either Architecture or Landscape Architecture in New Zealand at that time, and while the United Kingdom may have been a default option for graduates, for very specific reasons the subjects of this study chose to further their education at various institutions in the United States.

A third group of common themes is centred on the people and personalities that the four scholars wished to meet. There is a degree of overlap with education related themes, insofar as each of the destinations represents a distinctive milieu within which the participants became immersed.

The remainder of this chapter explores these overarching themes, not only in terms of motivations, but also how those motivations were realised during the

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<sup>53</sup> This thesis does not have such grand aims, however, as there is little comparable research with which to compare the findings from this study. There are few extensive biographical monographs of New Zealand architects of this era, and the small number of oral histories that have been published have neither the breadth of participants, nor the depth of content that the longer interview format of this research has allowed.

As for the values that define contemporary 1950s literature, these are shaped by the myth-building concerns of a few protagonists (see Chapter 2). The degree that these values were shared more widely across the field is yet to be tested, and ongoing interest in this period and its associated myths in recently published work has not addressed this.

overseas experience. The three groups of themes that are described above are spread over three sections, the first two of which roughly correspond to the first two overarching themes: 'Modern Architecture' and 'Modern Education'. The third section, 'Modern Practice', rather than dealing specifically with the last of the overarching themes, covers the work experience gained by the travellers during or after their postgraduate study. The third overarching theme is instead addressed across all three of the subsections, as it is too difficult to separate the 'people' from the architecture and general educational and professional *milieux* that were experienced by the New Zealanders during their time in the United States.

But before doing that, it is important to note that it would be something of a mistake to assume that the idealistic motivations that are being recorded here were the sole determining factor in shaping the plans that the subjects made for their overseas travel, and in particular, the time that they spent in the United States. Plans, and even the motivations themselves, are shaped by the pragmatic concerns of contingency as much as by idealist desire. For example, it has already been noted that the existence of the Fulbright programme was a key factor in making the United States an accessible destination, in terms of gaining other funding from both New Zealand and United States sources, and in gaining acceptance into United States universities.

The precedent set by Smith and Toomath also played a role in the later decisions made by Alington and probably also Turbott. Alington specifically cites Toomath's experience as being instrumental in making him aware of the potential of a Fulbright-funded study opportunity in the United States (WHAOHP3.02/0:05:36).<sup>54</sup> Toomath and Alington, both practising in

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<sup>54</sup> He also cites Turbott as a precedent; however, Turbott's Fulbright award and time in the United States occurs at the same time as Alington's. It is possible that Turbott discussed his intentions with Alington before Alington made his application, or that Alington simply misremembered by confusing Turbott with Smith.

Wellington, knew each other through mutual participation in Architectural Centre activities.<sup>55</sup>

Turbott, on the other hand, knew Smith before either of them travelled to the United States, and although he does not mention Smith's (or Toomath's) precedence as a motivating factor, it might nevertheless have played a role. A more pragmatic reason also exists in that, for Turbott, who wanted to study landscape architecture at postgraduate level, the United States was the only option. While there were multiple programmes in the United States at this time, formal postgraduate landscape architecture programmes were not available in the United Kingdom until after 1960 (Woudstra 243).

There was also an element of serendipity that led to Smith studying at MIT. Although initially wanting to travel to the West Coast of the United States (the reasons for which will be discussed below), Smith ended up on the other side of the country because he saw a call for MIT postgraduate scholarship applications, and after finding out more about the architecture programme there, decided "it might be okay" (MKSOHP3.01/0:00:49).

#### 4.3 MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Toomath paints an evocative picture of the impact of his first experiences in the United States, arriving in New York in August 1952:

I had spent the whole previous year in Europe, totally immersed in the aggregation of centuries of European culture... and the impact of New York was just overwhelming. The intensity of movement, of traffic, of din, of movement and people and things of an intensity I'd never seen in Europe. And visually, the harshness of everything was straight-lined,

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<sup>55</sup> The Architectural Centre, formed in 1946, was a locus of activity within the Wellington intelligentsia, focussed on architecture and the arts (see Gatley, *Vertical Living* 2014).

hard, brittle, sharp-edged, and particularly in central Manhattan, which is where the ship berthed – Pier 80 or somewhere – it was complete chaos, absolute chaos. (SWT3.01/0:04:39)

He soon overcame the initial shock, but not his wonder at the many opportunities to see and experience a diverse range of architecture. And although this subsection is entitled ‘Modern Architecture’, and that was an obvious focus for much of what the subjects of this study sought and experienced, historic and vernacular architecture was also of some interest to them, and will also be addressed here.

In order to begin to understand the sorts of values that motivated these four graduates *before* they left New Zealand, a distinction needs to be made between the buildings and places that they intended to visit when planning their trips, and those that came about by coincidence or as a result of other factors *during* their United States experience. For example, Toomath visited the IM Pei Summerhouse in Katonah, New York on a class trip from Harvard, and again when he worked in Pei’s office after the completion of his studies.<sup>56</sup> Although Pei’s work was known to Toomath before leaving New Zealand (SWT5.01/0:15:34)<sup>57</sup>, the visit to the Summerhouse, which was under construction when Toomath first visited it in 1952, was the result of circumstance rather than by design. Taking the time to see a number of buildings designed by West Coast architect Gardner Dailey, on the other hand, was no accident. Dailey’s work was well-published in journals, featured in the Museum of Modern Art’s survey of contemporary American architecture

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<sup>56</sup> Pei actually threw a farewell party for Toomath at his summer house just before Toomath left New York to make his way back to New Zealand (SWTNZAA3.01/0:46:06).

<sup>57</sup> Pei’s own student work was published in *Progressive Architecture* in February 1948, and his first realised building, the Gulf Oil Building (1951), was published in the February 1952 edition of the *Architectural Forum*.



in 1945 (Mock 32-33, 78-79), and was selected, along with the work of a handful of other West Coast architects, to be shown at an exhibition in Melbourne, Australia in 1948 (Goad, "Constructing Pedigree: Robin Boyd's "California-Victoria-New Empiricism" Axis" 8). Sought-after encounters such as this provide an insight into the interests that Toomath carried with him when he left New Zealand.

Determining whether places visited were sought, and if so whether before or after leaving New Zealand, is not always an easy distinction to make, and is an area of the interviews that would have benefited from further probing. While there is generally a good amount of detail about the range of places that they visited in the interview recordings, there is less in the way of discussion about itinerary planning and what that might reveal. Nevertheless, useful conclusions can be drawn from the observable patterns that arose during the interview analysis.

#### 4.3.1 WEST COAST

The first and perhaps most obvious of these is the regional distinction between the East and West Coasts of the United States. Diana Painter argues that the regionalism of the West Coast (she defines this as consisting of the "Northwest Regional Style, as seen in Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver BC, and the Second Bay Tradition in San Francisco and the Bay Area" (Painter 773)), developed independently of the International Style of the rest of the United States, the latter being heavily influenced by the legitimising institutions of the Museum of Modern Art, Harvard and Columbia Universities, and Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago (Painter 776).

The attention to the West Coast is particularly interesting, as neither Alington nor Turbott visited there, and nor did architects of the Bay Area or the Pacific Northwest feature in their interviews, although both mentioned Richard Neutra once in passing. For Smith and Toomath however, the West Coast was a significant attraction, and for Smith, the reason that he wanted to come to the

United States in the first place. It is tempting to read this split between the focusses of Smith and Toomath on the one hand, and that of Alington and Turbott on the other, as being somehow meaningful, given that the first two travelled to the United States in the first half of the 1950s, while Alington and Turbott's experiences took place in the second half of that decade. That also means that their education at the School of Architecture occurred in different decades, and for Smith and Toomath, was contemporary with the presence of the Architectural Group at the School in the 1940s.

Did the Architectural Group's obvious affinity with West Coast residential architecture have a greater impact on students at the School in the 1940s, and if so, did this subsequently diminish in the following decade? While that could well be the case, and the findings of this research may be taken as tentatively supporting that interpretation, the situation is far more complex.

Toomath's trip to the West Coast was a very rushed few days at the end of a road trip across the continent from New York to Los Angeles and then San Francisco, where he left the United States to return to New Zealand. The short timeframe meant that he did not travel further north than San Francisco, and therefore did not have time to locate and visit many of the 'regionalist' houses that had interested him and others in the Architectural Group: "We were well aware of that before I went over to America, and Gordon Drake, for instance, his house was a lovely sort of precedent for much of the Group's... impetus at any rate" (SWTNZAA6.01/1:46:13).

Although only made as a humorous aside, Smith is even more direct about the close relationship between work being produced (or aspired to) in New Zealand and the West Coast influence, describing an example of his own student design as "...you know, sort of a West Coast-looking New Zealand thing..." (MKS3.03/0:20:14).

Aside from the few houses of this nature that he did see on the West Coast (and of these he only recalled Gardner Dailey's in the interview (SWTNZAA4.01/1:13:03), Toomath visited a number of Neutra's Los Angeles buildings. Although many of Neutra's houses have become classics of regionalism, what really struck Toomath was the Lovell Health House of 1927 – a building that is an important early example of the International Style in the United States (SWTNZAA6.01/1:23:03).<sup>58</sup> The house was even featured by Barr and Johnson in MoMA's *International Style* exhibition in 1932.

The other places of interest that Toomath visited were both in San Francisco (along with Dailey's work): the work of Erich Mendelsohn and the Olivetti Showroom. Mendelsohn arrived in the United States in 1941, but only practised there in the eight years between the end of WWII and his death in 1953. His two most significant San Francisco commissions, the Maimonides Hospital and Russell House are essays in the crisp formal language of International Style modernism, and both were important destinations of Toomath's brief West Coast tour (SWTNZAA4.01/1:13:38).<sup>59</sup> The inclusion of the 1953 Olivetti Showroom was the result of Toomath having already seen the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Olivetti Showroom in New York:

Now this was Italy brought to America, and it had a terrific impact. All of the freshness of Italian design postwar was in

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<sup>58</sup> Neutra was also of specific significance to the Architectural Group: Toomath recalls that he was approached for comment on their manifesto, primarily because of their interest in his book *Survival Through Design* (1954), in which Neutra articulates the importance of design being the product of close collaboration between the client and designer (SWTNZAA1:23:50) – an approach that also was important to the Architectural Group (Skinner, "False Origins" 86).

<sup>59</sup> Although Gatley documents Bill Wilson's interest in the architecture of Mendelsohn (Gatley, "Who Was Who in the Group?" 11), Toomath's interest is almost certain to have predated his contact with Wilson and the Architectural Group, owing to the presence of Mendelsohn's work in JM Richards' *An Introduction to Modern Architecture*, a book treasured by Toomath even before he took up his architectural studies (Petry, Tape1 Side1 0:36:00).

that one gem of a building designed by BBPR...<sup>60</sup> This combination of sculpture, of elegance, of beautiful lettering, of really fresh clean design – brilliant stuff.

(SWTNZAA3.01/1:15:30)

The San Francisco showroom, although designed by artist and designer Leo Lionni with architect Giorgio Cavaglieri, both Italian Americans based in the United States, featured a similar aesthetic of spare crispness that suited the futuristic elegance of the product on display. The Italian connection is important for Toomath, who believed that in the aftermath of the Second World War it was the modern architects who were working in Italy that were leading the way. The small amount of Le Corbusier's work aside, even in France Toomath noted a lack of modern architecture being built in the postwar reconstruction:

Italy, on the other hand, had so much going, and it was full of spirit and had become a live language. And in places like Milan and Turin and Verona and such like, you'd move around these cities and come across these fine buildings. They were not stereotyped, they were not codified, they weren't rigid sort of repetitions of what had become published as the modern manner. (SWTNZAA3.01/1:26:23)

The subject of Italian modern will be returned to later in this thesis, but here it simply draws attention to the fact that Toomath's West Coast itinerary leant heavily towards those architects and their buildings who were instrumental in bringing a European version of modernism to the United States. That is not to say that he would not have visited a more diverse range of places had circumstances permitted (it should be noted that the urban buildings that he

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<sup>60</sup> Toomath struggled to name them all correctly in the interview, but the Milan-based architectural practice of BBPR consisted of the following partners: Gianluigi Banfi, Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers.

did visit were more easily accessed than individual houses that might have been harder to access, or difficult to see from the street), and indeed in later years he did return and do just that (SWTNZAA6.01/1:46:13). It is significant, however, that this type of architecture was prioritised by Toomath in the short time that he had on the West Coast, rather than pursuing the regional modernism that might initially be expected.

The other significant components of Toomath's final tour before leaving the country were made *en route* to, rather than at the West Coast, but may also be included amongst the places that he visited on similar road trips. These include a trip to the Studebaker's South Bend plant in Indiana to collect his new car. During that trip he also took the time to visit Chicago (and the work of Mies van der Rohe and Wright) and Wright's Taliesin East in Wisconsin, by which Toomath was much taken. The trip between New York and San Francisco not only followed a trail of Wright-designed buildings, but took a route through the southern states and into Mexico. On the way he experienced many examples of 'small town United States', enjoyed the French colonial vernacular of New Orleans, and made particular effort to see first-hand the pueblo architecture of New Mexico. It is difficult to know what to make of the latter, but Toomath himself acknowledged it as part of an interest in indigenous vernacular, and stemming from an interest in the artwork of Georgia O'Keefe (SWTNZAA4.01/1:18:32).

Toomath's interest in the work of Wright evolved throughout his time in the United States. While he had developed a respect for Wright's architecture during his studies in Auckland, Toomath admitted that at that time he preferred the more abstract "Bauhausian" work of the European modernists, summarising his position on Wright's work by saying: "I would say I admired it, but it wasn't for me" (SWTNZAA6.01/1:34:39). He also suggests that there was a clear divide between those who were "enthusiastically vocal" followers of Wright, such as Peter Beaven, and those of his own peer group whose

positions matched his own (SWTNZAA6.01/1:34:39).<sup>61</sup> Toomath's self-identification with the Bauhaus-inspired European modernism is consistent with his West Coast itinerary, seeking out Mendelsohn and early Neutra at the expense of the more romantic regional modernism of the area (even if he did admire that work as well).

The geographic and climatic similarities of the West Coast when compared to New Zealand, fuelled Smith's desire to study in the United States. He explains:

The West Coast stuff – that was much different from the East Coast, and it had a whole string of people working there, not just Wright, and not just Schindler, but probably half a dozen other people, and they were sort of contemporary versions of the West Coast timber building people. So, that was much more like New Zealand than anywhere else in the States, and the further north you go, that relationship intensifies with the landscape by the time you get up to... Oregon and Washington you're almost in another version of some parts of New Zealand – and you got lots of rain and bumps and islands and forests, and you don't get that on the East Coast... So my geographic preference would have been to be on the West Coast, but MIT was where the opportunity was. (MKSOHP3.01/0:21:15)

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<sup>61</sup> Gatley cites Rotherham's identification of Wright as a crucial influence on the development of some of the Architectural Group's planning moves, and his Usonian houses on the design of some of the Group's housing (Gatley, "Geometric Houses" 100). This discrepancy between Rotherham and Toomath's positions not only highlights the diverse range of opinions upheld within the different manifestations of the Group, but also foregrounds the reductive nature of any one individual's views being upheld as representative of the Group, or the general milieu from which they emerged.

When Smith investigated MIT as an option for postgraduate study (after becoming aware of the Maclaurin Scholarship), the reason he decided that it might be “okay” was the presence of key staff members, including the Czechoslovakian György Kepes and the department dean, Italian American Pietro Belluschi (MKS3.01/0:02:34). Belluschi’s domestic architecture, built in and around Portland, Oregon, and especially his Sutor House of 1938, was widely published, and considered emblematic of the distinctive regionalism of the Pacific Northwest. But, as with Toomath, when Smith did get to the West Coast, in the academic break between his time at Kansas State, and before heading to the East Coast to study at MIT, his itinerary reveals greater complexity than a simple desire to experience West Coast regional modernism.

In Los Angeles he visited Rudolph Schindler at his house. This was not an audacious cold call on Smith’s part – he had made contact with Schindler while arranging visiting lectures at Kansas State. Although Schindler was too busy to take part in the lecture programme, Smith did succeed in bringing Wright and Neutra to Kansas. Smith and Tasso Katselas, another short term appointment in the architecture department at Kansas State, organised the visiting lectures through an architectural student sorority because the dean of the very conservative department refused to resource or endorse the proposed series:

[The sorority] had a letterhead and an official recognition in the University, so they (we), wrote to Wright and Schindler and Neutra, in that order, and to ask them if they would come as far as Kansas for a lecture to the students.  
(MKSOHP3.01/0:50:32)

A little later in the same interview Smith elaborates:

The pecking order for us then, and not so much different now, was Wright and Schindler were of equal interest – not because one was better at one thing than the other was, but

because they were different notions of what generic was...  
(MKSOHP3.01/1:18:33)

In other words, they represented different parts of the spectrum of architecture in which they were interested. Smith then goes on to explain his interest in their work in the distinctive vocabulary of the 'form language' that became a mainstay of his later teaching and practice.

Smith's desire for the architecture of the West Coast was not a straightforward 'looking for the local' then, although that might have been his initial intention. He did take in some of the work associated with the regionalism for which the West Coast became known, including houses by Harwell Hamilton Harris – although again, he explains his interest in terms of its formal and structural organisation, likening it to the work of Dutch structuralist architects such as Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger, rather than the regionalism for which Hamilton's work is known (MKS3.01/1:38:41).

In the end, Smith spent much less time travelling northward along the West Coast than intended, due to rapidly decreasing finances. Instead he spent most of that summer playing cricket in British Columbia, staying with extended family to conserve money (MKS3.01/1:45:59).<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.4.1 EAST COAST

The experiences of the four travellers elsewhere in the United States are much more consistent, with common destinations being the major cities of the East Coast, especially Cambridge (Massachusetts) and New York. This is unsurprising given that three of the four architects studied at Harvard (Toomath and Turbott) or MIT (Smith). The fourth destination, the United States Midwest

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<sup>62</sup> Smith joked that he "stupidly" turned down the opportunity of playing wicket-keeper for the British Columbia representative side in the state tournament, so that he could get to MIT on time to begin his studies (MKS3.01/1:45:59).



(Alington), while not geographically part of the East Coast, has been included in this part of the discussion, because it can be seen as part of the same general experience of modern architecture, and had similar commonalities for the subjects of this study. It is also reflective of the opposition between the architectural developments of the West Coast and the rest of the United States identified by Painter in the previous section. Painter argues that West Coast modernism developed independently of and was therefore less defined by the “development of architectural ideas and practice on the east coast”, of which she highlights the Museum of Modern Art as being the most significant instrument (Painter 776, 779). Her inclusion of Illinois Institute of Technology among these East Coast institutions reflects this oppositional point of view, rather than geographic accuracy, and has been adopted for this thesis.

Turbott travelled the least out of the subjects of this study. This was out of a combination not only of lack of means, as he was the only one not to have purchased a vehicle for travel in the United States, but also because of a general lack of interest, borne from the change in the focus of his studies, and also from a disillusionment with the contemporary architecture that he saw (this will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion to this chapter). Turbott took the opportunity to see important modern buildings when he could however, including the Wright designed Florida Southern College mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and, of course, the Harvard campus where he was studying:

The amazing thing about American things in comparison to New Zealand – the Americans have the richness and the idea that they could actually get the genuine thing, whereas I’d spent years having books, seeing photographs, and copying drawings, and doing things with no knowledge whatsoever of what it was actually like. I could go from my studio and just walk a couple of hundred yards and there was a genuine Gropius building, and a genuine something-or-other. So it was about five, at least I think five, genuine examples of these

great gods of modern architecture that I'd been taught to  
revere in New Zealand. (HATOHHP3.01/0:10:10)

As well as studying at the Harvard campus, which had, as Turbott notes, a number of Gropius designed buildings, Turbott also visited the nearby MIT campus, where he could see the work of Aalto (Baker Hall 1949) and Eero Saarinen (MIT Chapel and Kresge Auditorium 1955). He did not embark on an architectural tour as such, but rather took the opportunity to visit places that were close at hand, but, as with his time in Europe, Turbott was unable to recall much else of what he saw and could not even recall whether he visited New York during that period (HAT3.01/1:27:59).

From the activities that he did undertake, it is clear that architecture was not a priority for Turbott during this time in the United States, even if the following period spent in Europe did re-engage him with the ideas that he had studied in Auckland. In the United States he responded to a calling for 'other' experiences – he applied for a job as a planner for a Navajo reservation, and when that failed to eventuate, headed to Vermont to work for Don Kiley, a noted modernist landscape architect (HATOHHP3.01/0:15:49). According to Turbott, he learned of Kiley's reputation while studying at Harvard, but the real reason he wanted to work with him was because he had heard about the beauty of the natural landscape in the Vermont area, where Kiley lived on the shore of Lake Champlain (HATOHHP3.01/0:49:07).<sup>63</sup>

The university campuses of Harvard and MIT were also an obvious part of Smith's and Toomath's time in the United States, and Alington also took in both campuses during his travels. Similarly, all three took in the modern

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<sup>63</sup> Turbott had written to Kiley, expressing his desire to work for him, and misread Kiley's polite refusal as an open-ended invitation. Turbott and his wife arrived at Kiley's house to take up the perceived offer, surprising Kiley, but eventually gaining employment due to Nan's experience with farm work (HATOHHP3.01/0:16:44).

architecture of Chicago (primarily the work of Mies van der Rohe – including the Lakeshore Drive Apartments and the IIT campus), and both Alington and Toomath spent time in New York (Toomath spent his first two weeks there before heading to Cambridge to take up his studies), again visiting the major works of modern architecture that we still associate with the city in the 1950s: Lever House and various other buildings by Skidmore Owings and Merrill, the United Nations Headquarters, and for Alington, Seagram House (which was still under construction when Toomath was in New York).

For the most part, these were architectural tours that were very similar in spirit to those carried out in Europe – an itinerary of buildings that should be seen by every architectural graduate who managed to embark on such travels. But each of the architects, either out of circumstance or as part of their planned itineraries, also had more unique experiences. For example, Alington's planned itinerary included heritage buildings along the East Coast as well as modern architecture, with the desire to experience historic churches again playing a prominent role:

And we had a whole itinerary again, as we did in Britain, of things we wanted to see... I wanted to see Saarinen's work at MIT... and we wanted to see Aalto's dormitory, Baker Hall, I think that was at MIT too, to just go to Harvard to have a look at it, then to have a look at some of the early Georgian churches that had been built out on the East Coast – they were interesting. Then we wanted to have a look at Colonial Williamsburg... was interested in that as a historical restoration. Wanted to have a look at New York and see the Seagram Building, Lever House... We went up the Empire State Building... (WHAOHP3.02/0:40:51)

Smith visited Chicago on his way to MIT, after his summer in British Columbia. Aside from that, and his previous journey northward up the West Coast, he did not travel very far from MIT. At the completion of his MIT academic year he

spent the summer working for Serge Chermayeff from his summer retreat at Cape Cod (Smith's time with Chermayeff will be addressed more fully later in this chapter) (MKSOHP4.01/0:00:16).

Toomath's travels were more extensive. These include the already mentioned final journey across the southern states to the West Coast before sailing back to New Zealand, and his trip to collect his brand new car from the Studebaker factory in Indianapolis. Detours were made on this latter journey to see Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe buildings in and around Chicago, and Eliel Saarinen's Cranbrook Academy of Art and Eero Saarinen's GM Technical Center, both in the adjacent state of Michigan. His arrival in New York, and subsequent residence there during his employment with Pei, meant that he became very familiar with the architecture and lifestyle of that city – so familiar, in fact, that New York's lack of accessible 'nature' was one of the main reasons for Toomath's return to New Zealand (SWTNZAA5.02/0:01:51).

Toomath's itinerary reads as a fairly standard list of iconic buildings of the period and can, except for Wright's work, be considered as more or less fitting within the development of, what Painter characterised as, an International Style legitimised and promoted by the major East Coast institutions. This is also unsurprising given his own admission that his main design interests lay in the developments of the European Bauhaus tradition.

He also travelled on class outings while he was studying at Harvard. These took him to places that might not otherwise have been accessible to him as an individual, particularly inside private homes. Pei's Summerhouse at Katonah, still under construction, has already been mentioned, but Toomath and his classmates also travelled to Lexington, Massachusetts, where they were able to explore the Six Moon Hill residential subdivision. Consisting of two dozen or so

houses,<sup>64</sup> the community was a social experiment in cooperative living by the founders of The Architects Collaborative (TAC), Gropius's architectural practice, and was fashioned after Gropius's utopian socialism (Campbell A1).<sup>65</sup> But it was the architecture at Six Moon Hill that excited Toomath, and in particular, simply being able to see so many modern houses in one area. The detached family houses that made up the development shared a common language of simple cubic forms inspired by the houses that Gropius and Breuer had been building in the United States since their arrival in the late 1930s. The Six Moon Hill houses were exercises in low-cost timber construction, a characteristic that had some resonance for Toomath, given the context of domestic construction in New Zealand at that time, as did the simple open planning of the interiors (SWTNZAA4.01/0:18:32).<sup>66</sup>

Venturing slightly further afield, Toomath and his classmates made a trip to New Canaan in Connecticut. There they saw other examples of the Gropius/Breuer influenced modern houses from a range of architects including Eliot Noyes, Landis Gores, and John Johansen (SWTNZAA4.01/0:11:29, 0:20:46). They also visited Philip Johnson's Glass House. Toomath was quite taken by the surprising experience of repose at Johnson's house, the "Miesian showroom" of furniture, and Johnson's engaging "performance" (SWTNZAA4.01/0:00:27).

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<sup>64</sup> The land bought by the Six Moon Hill collective was subdivided into 29 house sites (Campbell A1). It is not known how many of the buildings were completed when Toomath visited in 1952.

<sup>65</sup> Although Gropius was a member of the Six Moon Hill collective, he was the only one of the TAC partners not to have built a residence in the community, having recently completed his own house in Lincoln Massachusetts

<sup>66</sup> Although Toomath did not acknowledge a direct influence in the interviews, it is possible to see the influences of these buildings in Toomath's Robieson Street houses in Wellington, including the house that he designed for his own family in the early 1960s, and especially the McKay House in Silverstream (1961).

#### 4.5.1 FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Frank Lloyd Wright deserves a special place in any consideration of modern architecture in the United States, and this thesis is no exception. Wright's work, and more importantly his influence, does not fit neatly into either the East or West Coast categories that have been used to structure the travel experiences so far, except perhaps, as a distant 'father' to both traditions.

All four of the subjects of this study had a fascination with Wright's work in some way, with Taliesin East at Spring Green, Wisconsin, being of particular importance to both Smith and Toomath. For Smith this was something of a surprise, as he was initially more excited about visiting Taliesin West. However, after visiting both he found that the experimental character of Taliesin West was surpassed by the carefully considered architecture of Wright's home and studio in Wisconsin (MKS3.01/1:16:24).

Toomath's experience of Wright's buildings had a marked effect on him. As noted in the discussion of West Coast above, Toomath clearly placed himself in the 'International Style camp' in terms of the division between Wright's romanticism and the functionalist inspired "Bauhausian" modernism at the School of Architecture in Auckland. But beginning with his visit to Taliesin East and the Prairie houses in Oak Park, Toomath began to develop a greater appreciation of the formal qualities found in Wright's architecture:

I think my first encounter with it was at Taliesin [East], and the boldness of it, the freshness of the forms, strongly architectural forms – there was no Art Nouveau, there was no gloss of Art and Craft obvious, there was no sort of recognisable stylism attached. They were rugged, strongly symmetrical, balanced, beautifully structured uses of stone and timber, and they impressed me greatly because of that reality – this was not superficial surface styling...  
(SWTNZAA6.01/1:26:38)

The split between followers of Wright and those who found greater inspiration in International Style modernism that Toomath identified at Auckland was also pervasive in the United States:

Even in the 1950s, in New York there was the *schism*, really, in the architectural fraternity between those who supported Lloyd Wright and those who didn't. And this was quite evident in Pei's office. Again one side of Ricky [Ulrich] Franzen – he virtually ridiculed people who admired Frank Lloyd Wright's work, openly. And there was this conflict in the American architectural world between the European-based Bauhausian basis, just to put it in brief, and the romantic Frank Lloyd Wright, and it was as strong as could be.  
(SWTNZAA6.01/1:36:20)

The combination of the polarising positions on Wright's work, and Toomath's obvious enjoyment of his initial encounters with Wright's architecture at Wisconsin and Oak Park spurred Toomath's curiosity such that his future travels in the United States utilised every opportunity to experience more of Wright's work. At one point he even refers to this as "a continual purpose, in part", of his travels (SWTNZAA6.01/1:26:38). In the context of his earlier ambivalence, Toomath effectively discovered Wright, in a personal sense, by way of the genuine experience of the physical architecture during his United States travels (SWTNZAA6.01/1:36:20).

The new appreciation that Toomath gained for Wright's work was not absolute however:

And the more I saw of his work, the more conflicting it is within itself. Some of it is sort of kitschy, the work in the '20s and '30s earlier was [an] over-elaboration of the geometric play of lines, and very ingenious, I mean he was a highly inventive mind... but it led at times to contorted structures,

some of the churches and things like that...  
(SWTNZAA6.01/1:36:40)

Like Smith and Toomath, Alington visited both Taliesin East and West, and the Prairie houses of Oak Park. He also visited the First Unitarian Meeting House in Wisconsin and the Unity Temple in Oak Park. The trip to Taliesin East was made as part of an organised class trip, but they were not allowed to go near Wright's house and studio buildings. They did see the Hillside Home School that Wright designed for his aunts, and the nearby Romeo and Juliet Windmill Tower, however. (WHAOHP3.01/0:57:51)

Alington's trip to Taliesin West, where he had hoped to meet Wright in person had an unexpectedly poignant ending, when upon arrival: "We were standing by that famous pool that you see illustrated, and the [Taliesin West] student remarked that 'I don't think you realise that Mr Wright died last week'. We certainly hadn't" (WHAOHP3.01/0:57:01).

In fact, Alington was the only one of the four New Zealanders who did not see Wright in person. Toomath simply caught sight of Wright when visiting Taliesin East (SWTNZAA6.01/1:04:58), while Smith met him in Kansas when Wright delivered the invited lecture mentioned earlier in this chapter. When comparing his Kansas meetings with Neutra and Wright, Smith recalled that Neutra was "a more reasonable person than some of his work", and that Wright was the opposite (MKSOHP3.01/0:58:35).

Turbott attended a lecture delivered by Wright in the Saarinen designed Kresge Auditorium at MIT – an experience that he describes in the same context that he described the Gropius designed buildings at the Harvard campus and those designed by Saarinen at MIT – as an illustration of the idea that in the United States "you could actually get the genuine thing":

...but then, things would happen, again it was all part of the American thing, suddenly someone would come into your



studio and say “Frank Lloyd Wright’s giving a lecture down the road at MIT”. Well, I’d read about Frank Lloyd Wright and I’d copied drawings and all that sort of thing, but there he actually was to be... (HATOHP3.01/0:10:10)

This feeling of excitement at being in the presence of the “gods” transcended the mixed feelings that he was having about the work that he had seen, describing Wright’s Florida Southern College campus as “pretty bizarre and absurd” (HATOHP3.01/0:10:10). Nonetheless, Turbott was fascinated by what he described as this “richness” of life in the United States – a richness not of financial wealth *per se* (although that is obviously a part of it), but of accessible cultural wealth, that he could suddenly experience first-hand. As another example from the same part of the interview, he recalled arriving late to one of his seminar classes to find a classmate, flanked by armed guards. Wearing white gloves, the student was handling a genuine van Gogh painting from the Harvard collection – using it as a prop to illustrate his seminar presentation. (HATOHP3.01/0:07:37)

#### 4.4 MODERN EDUCATION

The scholarship applications that were written by the subjects of this study and submitted to Fulbright New Zealand provide the only substantial area of documented evidence relevant to the scope of this research project (except for Turbott’s, whose file was not found).<sup>67,68</sup> The justifications for travel to the United States that are recorded in these applications makes interesting reading, but as noted in Section 4.2, caution needs to be taken when trying to

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<sup>67</sup> The Fulbright New Zealand files also contain various items of correspondence and progress reports from both the student and their host institutions.

<sup>68</sup> The archives of the three United States hosting institutions yield little information relating to teaching and broader curriculum issues of the relevant departments from the 1950s period. Harvard University Archives were able to produce a copy of the drawings for Toomath’s final studio project.

reconcile these documented intentions with those that are provided in the interviews – especially if the aim is to arrive at singular truths.

#### 4.4.1 SMITH AT MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The applications submitted by both Smith and Toomath seem relatively consistent with what might be expected of anyone interested in studying contemporary architecture in the 1950s. Smith professed an interest in prefabrication and building techniques, particularly in relation to mass housing and campus developments, noting quite bluntly that:

In neither of these fields is a positive general attitude manifest in NZ Mental [sic] architectural attitudes and building methods remain almost static—the country is often labelled a last refuge of Victorianism—while most housing and university work completed or projected is either archaic or haphazard in the extreme.

The United States affords considerable opportunity for study and observation of these issues which have been seriously investigated there for several decades. (MK Smith, "Application for Travel Grant" 5)

In the last paragraph of his statement of purpose, Smith also pointed out that there were no opportunities for postgraduate architectural study in New Zealand, and expressed a desire to “experience at first hand the contemporary architecture and culture of the United States.”

Obviously Smith’s preference for studying on the West Coast did not make it into his Fulbright application, given that by this time he had already been awarded the MIT scholarship and had decided that Belluschi’s presence at MIT was an acceptable alternative. During the interviews he could not recall the reasons he had listed in his statement of purpose, but when they were presented to him, Smith was able to explain how they had arisen from his

interests at the time. His interest in mass housing was influenced by his Bachelor of Architecture thesis project – “A Hall of Residence for Auckland Students” – and the experience of working briefly for the New Zealand Department of Housing Construction. The latter also influenced his interest in prefabrication, which he thought could be greatly expanded across the state housing programme (MKSOHP3.01/0:15:52).

At that time the postgraduate programme at MIT consisted of a year-long course of study broken into four consecutive six-week design studios – each led by a different visiting professor. The Danish architect Kaye Fisker, known mostly for his housing projects in Copenhagen, was the “celebrated visitor that year” (MKSOHP3.03/0:54:51). The other visiting professors were: Carl Koch, who at that time was working on his innovative ‘Techbuilt’ system of prefabricated house construction; Richard Buckminster Fuller, who was just coming to world attention for his work with geodesic domes; and John Ekin Dinwiddie, a West Coast architect whose practice Dinwiddie & Hill was selected as one of five representatives of West Coast regionalism for the 1943 Museum of Modern Art exhibition “Five Californian Houses”.<sup>69</sup>

While the range of visiting professors might have been expected to deliver well against Smith’s stated purpose for visiting the United States, as well as his unstated (in the Fulbright application) aim of learning more about the development of West Coast regionalist modernism (given the presence of Dinwiddie<sup>70</sup>), Smith was ultimately disappointed, and felt that he learnt very little from the experience.

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<sup>69</sup> The other architects featured in the MoMA exhibition were Hervey Parke Clark, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Richard J. Neutra and William Wilson Wurster (Museum of Modern Art).

<sup>70</sup> And also Koch who, although based on the East Coast, worked in a style that was influenced by the six months he spent working with Sven Markelius in Sweden, and

He did, however, develop valuable relationships with many of the permanent faculty and visiting professors, both as a result of the quality of his work, and his characteristically outspoken and forthright manner. A good illustration of this is provided in his account of a student project review – his first at MIT – for an introductory department-wide common sketch problem, set at the beginning of term before the proper studio courses began. As Smith tells it, the review panel, which consisted of the “top brass” of the architecture department, had selected six representative projects from the student work, and these were pinned up during the review presentation. Laurence Anderson, then the head of the department, summarised the body of work, after which he invited those students who felt their work had not had due consideration to have their say – an opportunity which was eagerly taken up by Smith. After pointing out where the reviewers had got it wrong, both in terms of their judgments of the projects on display, and in the deficient manner in which the problem was set (especially that no site was given for the project), he proceeded to pin up his own work in order to extol its superior virtues. (MKSOHP3.03/0:15:53)

Smith’s introductory performance endeared him to Serge Chermayeff (who at the time was teaching at MIT, but would move to Harvard in the following year). According to Smith, Chermayeff could not hold back his laughter – both at the impertinence of Smith himself, lecturing the staff on what they should have done, and at the problems that he raised. The end result was that Chermayeff, who detected a kindred spirit in Smith’s outspokenness, invited Smith to lunch with him and his wife. Unbeknown to him, the lunch turned out to be an interview, at the completion of which Chermayeff and his wife invited Smith to spend the summer with them in Wellfleet, Cape Cod, working for

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was thus closer in spirit to West Coast regionalism than to other developments on the East Coast (McCallum 172).

Chermayeff on the design of a small workshop for the local plumber.  
(MKSOHP3.03/0:28:21)

By this time Smith had already been invited to stay at Wellfleet with György Kepes's family while Kepes himself was out of state. Kepes, who alongside László Moholy-Nagy had been one of the key figures of the New Bauhaus in Chicago, had been employed by MIT to teach visual design at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The postgraduate course, a requirement for all Master of Architecture students, was delivered alongside the first term studio courses. Smith and Kepes struck up a good friendship, and Smith would often spend time with Kepes in his office prior to the beginning of class each day. (MKSOHP3.04/0:00:09)

Therefore, before he had even been attending MIT for a month, Smith's summer plans were being made in response to offers from faculty members. Thus when Koch, Smith's first studio instructor, also offered him summer employment, he had to turn that offer down. The studio project set by Koch was a housing development based on a real project on which he was working at that time,<sup>71</sup> and according to Smith, Koch was interested in further pursuing the design response that Smith had generated (MKSOHP3.03/0:00:13). Smith, in his characteristic way, had departed from the brief and produced a solution that he defined as shifting from the idea of "houses to housing"—reflecting his interests in multi-unit housing (MKSOHP3.03/0:54:51).

The second studio, led by Buckminster Fuller, was also derived from a real world project. He had been commissioned by the Ford Motor Company to

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<sup>71</sup> Koch was involved in a number of cooperative-based housing developments in the 1940s and 50s, including the earliest such development at Snake Hill (1941). The development being referred to by Smith is probably Conantum (1951-52), in Concord, which consisted of over 100 houses. According to David Fixler, Koch used the opportunity provided by Conantum to further his experiments in modular and prefabricated construction systems, which would soon become known under the name 'Techbuilt' (Fixler 28-29).

develop a prototype camper based on a 1953 Ford Ranch Wagon, a problem that he immediately passed on to the students of his masters studio. Duly completed and published in the July 1953 edition of *Ford Times* ("They're Tents - or Are They?"), the modified car drew considerable interest from the public. It was never put into production however (MKSOHP3.03/0:42:38). Smith would also work for Fuller that summer, after his time with Chermayeff ended, as part of a team of students helping to construct one of Fuller's first commercially commissioned geodesic domes at Woods Hole, Cape Cod (MKSOHP3.03/0:29:24; McMahon & Cipriani 220).

The second term of the academic year saw Smith looking forward to Fisker's studio; he remembers thinking: "at last an actual housing guy who knows about housing, and has done housing and not too bad housing for where it is..."<sup>72</sup> (MKSOHP3.03/0:54:51).

The project set by Fisker was a multi-story housing development, typical of the type of project that he had been designing in Europe. When it came to giving direction to Smith's work, Fisker admitted that he could not be of any assistance because Smith's work did not conform to housing typologies with which he was familiar. This was frustrating for Smith, who believed that Fisker should have been able to address the "specific form definition that is common to any good building regardless of authorship or nationality". Nevertheless, Fisker offered Smith a work placement in his practice in Denmark, which Smith again had to turn down due to his prior arrangements with Kepes and Chermayeff (MKSOHP3.01/0:54:51).

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<sup>72</sup> Smith's enthusiasm was restricted entirely to Fisker's housing experience, rather than to a knowledge of the latter's role in the contemporary debate between International Style functionalism and the regional modernisms of northern Europe and the United States West Coast (see Anderson).

The final studio project, led by Dinwiddie, was a small-scale suburban mall consisting of a local supermarket and other small retailers. During the interview Smith provided a lengthy explanation of his rather innovative response to the brief set by Dinwiddie, which again, according to Smith, stumped his studio instructor to the point where Dinwiddie was unable to provide any help to his student (MKSOHP3.01/0:59:39).

Given the lack of architectural training that Smith felt that he had received in the MIT master's programme, it may not be inappropriate that he did not graduate with a postgraduate qualification.<sup>73</sup> However, the main reason for his failure to complete the qualification was the lack of time that he had available over the summer, once again due to the commitments he had already made for that period. Students were expected to use the summer break between academic terms to prepare their thesis proposals, checking in at regular intervals with the thesis advisory committee at MIT. Smith was not willing to give up his time with Kepes's family, Chermayeff, and Fuller in order to spend time completing a proposal in the company of a committee, none of whom he considered to be even interested in 'architecture'.<sup>74</sup> (MKSOHP3.03/0:31:16)

When he explained his intention not to complete the thesis to the chair of the architecture department, Anderson advised Smith that his lack of the degree would make him ineligible for teaching positions at university level. Smith, who at the time was intending to teach when he returned to New Zealand, did not see this lack of master's level qualification as an impediment to gaining employment at the School of Architecture in Auckland. (MKSOHP3.03/0:40:54)

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<sup>73</sup> Smith was the only one of the architects in this study who did not leave the United States with the postgraduate qualification toward which they had applied to study.

<sup>74</sup> Smith elected not to name the individual members of the thesis advisory committee in the interviews, but did identify their professions – one was a practising architect, the second an 'acoustician', and the third a structural engineer (MKSOHP3.03/0:31:16).

#### 4.4.2 TOOMATH AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Toomath's Fulbright application, like Smith's outlined a purpose of study that was primarily focussed on the technical aspects of architecture. In Toomath's case this consisted of a desire to learn about "advanced planning processes and constructional systems, with special reference to structural design and standardisation, site mechanisation, and techniques leading to more economical building methods" (Toomath, "Application for Travel Grant" 5).

Toomath also stated in the application that his studies in the United States represented the second part of his larger venture, which of course included his time in Paris where he would independently research the same topics.

The final reason that Toomath gave in his statement of purpose was a:

...particular wish to study at the Graduate School of Design under Dr Walter Gropius, recognised throughout the world as one of the leaders in the development of rational construction methods, the industrialisation of building, and the study of the social implications of architectural planning. (Toomath, "Application for Travel Grant" 6)

Toomath was clear in the interviews that this last justification, the desire to study under Gropius, was actually the primary reason for wanting to get to the United States (SWTNZAA1.01/0:49:22). Such was the draw of the Gropius-led postgraduate architecture programme at Harvard, students came from across the United States, and as Toomath himself illustrated, from around the world. Over half the students who began the year were from overseas.<sup>75</sup> Toomath also speculated that the reason that the course was not fully subscribed in the

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<sup>75</sup> Aside from Toomath from New Zealand, the other international students included two from the United Kingdom, and one each from Germany (Ed Sutte), Switzerland (Rolf Hofer), Norway (Christian Norberg-Schulz), and Japan (Yoshinobu Ashihara) (SWTNZAA5.01/0:05:40).



year he attended was because Gropius had left Harvard and was no longer leading the programme (SWTNZAA5.01/0:05:40), a fact that Toomath only discovered after he had arrived at Harvard. The news had not reached Toomath because he was travelling around Europe, and then sailing on to the United States when the announcement had been made (SWTNZAA2.01/0:23:03).

In the end Toomath came to feel that Gropius's absence from the course may have been a good thing. There was a general feeling, which Toomath discovered during his year at Harvard, that Gropius's course had become "rather stilted" and "repetitive" (SWTNZAA5.01/1:12:17). Long before leaving New Zealand Toomath had already developed the opinion of Gropius that "the American attitude had overwhelmed him", insofar as his work had succumbed to the luxuries of a wealthy society and he had moved away from the socially responsible functionalism of his time in Europe – "that he'd been captured by the devil" (SWTNZAA5.01/1:17:44). Smith cites Gropius's promotion of New Monumentalism as symptomatic of this 'selling-out', giving the example of the Pan Am Building (now known as the Metlife Building) in New York, built after Toomath had returned to New Zealand, as an illustration of the negative outcome of this period of Gropius's practice (SWTNZAA5.01/1:17:44). Nevertheless, Gropius's role as a teacher was still attractive to Toomath, who considered him to be "one of the great thinkers of the architectural world", and it was for this reason that he wanted to study under him (SWTNZAA5.01/1:03:07).

He also felt that the four architects who had been hired to deliver the studio projects covered an interesting diversity of approaches. The newly shaped Harvard master's course that replaced that of Gropius was a series of four separate six-week studio projects, each led by an expert designer, which is essentially the same framework as Smith described at MIT. For Toomath's year the visiting professors were Pei, O'Neil Ford, Kay Fisker (who had also taught Smith's class at MIT), and Alfred Roth. (SWTNZAA5.01/0:15:34)

According to Toomath the studios were not used to push overt doctrines by any of the visiting professors (SWTNZAA5.01/0:55:44). In fact, his experience in the Harvard master's studios did not differ much from his undergraduate experience in Auckland, and studios run by the likes of Vernon Brown, where students worked independently and were assisted by the studio instructor, who circulated around the studio to help them on an individual basis (SWTNZAA5.01/0:54:12).

But even if there were no overt ideologies being pushed at Harvard, there, unlike Auckland, modernism was the accepted manner of working – after all, the students had been attracted to the course by Gropius's presence in the first place. This was refreshing for Toomath, who believed there was an active resistance to modernism exhibited by the senior staff at the Auckland school. For this reason, he suggests that a phenomenon such as the Architectural Group would not have emerged at Harvard as a result of student dissatisfaction. (SWTNZAA5.01/0:55:44)

The four studio projects assigned that year were a shopping centre (Pei), a school and community buildings (Fisker), an office building for an oil refinery (Ford), and an art museum (Roth) (Toomath "Activities as Fulbright Student" 2). It was the first of these projects, the shopping centre set by Pei that Toomath recalls the most vividly, and which also had the biggest impact on his time in the United States. Toomath, together with Rolf Hofer and John Hejduk, worked on a radical scheme for a humanistic shopping centre. The three students had come together to work on the project as a group, encouraged by the residual influence of Gropius's 'Teamwork' (noting that Pei was a protégé of Gropius). They shared a common distrust of capitalism and its effects on everyday life in the United States, with the result that their project was a conscious attempt to counter, or at least mitigate, what they saw as the pervasive negative effects of competitive corporatism. (SWTNZAA5.01/0:45:04)

According to Toomath, it was with some trepidation that they presented the project to the review panel, despite Pei's supportive direction of the project (SWTNZAA5.01/0:49:17; 1:08:37). Toomath had felt that his group had been somewhat ostracised by the other students, who worked on their projects secretly, and produced rather more conventional responses to the brief, where the shopping centre was considered as a retail machine, designed on a functional basis for consumers rather than humans (SWTNZAA5.01/0:45:047). In contrast to this, the solution developed by Toomath's group was rooted in their shared belief of the social responsibility of architecture (SWTNZAA5.01/1:03:07).<sup>76</sup>

As it turned out, he need not have feared the review panel's response, which was overwhelmingly positive despite, or more likely because of, the unconventionality of the project (SWTNZAA5.01/1:08:37). The panel consisted of other staff from Harvard's Department of Architecture, including the department chair Hugh Stubbins, Walter Bogner the acting Dean of the Graduate School of Design, and invited guests, including Dean Belluschi from the MIT Department of Architecture (Hiles, Disc 1).

As with Smith, Toomath also received offers of work experience, these opportunities arising as a direct consequence of his studies at Harvard (these experiences will be discussed in the following section). Toomath, however, would take up those opportunities during term time, which meant that his work on studio projects suffered as a result, particularly in the last two studio projects (SWTNZAA5.01/1:10:54). The final progress report provided by Harvard to Fulbright in June 1953 records no such misgivings, however, listing

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<sup>76</sup> An explanation (including illustrations) of the shopping centre project has previously been published as part of the *Antonello and the Architect* DVD set (2007) (see Hiles, "Influences: Back to Harvard", Disc 2).

Toomath as a “most desirable foreign student” with “excellent qualities throughout” (Bogner).

#### 4.4.3 ALINGTON AT UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Of the places of study selected by the four New Zealanders, Alington’s choice of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was perhaps the most unusual. The University of Illinois School of Architecture, although one of the oldest in the United States, was not as well-known or influential as Harvard or MIT, or indeed its near neighbour in Chicago, the Illinois Institute of Technology. Alington, like Smith and Toomath, chose his place of study in an attempt to be within the sphere, if not taught directly by, their personal architectural heroes (Belluschi for Smith and Gropius for Toomath). However, according to Alington, he had heard that the big names were in such high demand that they spent very little time at their home institutions, instead travelling around various other schools of architecture as guest lecturers or critics and visiting professors.<sup>77</sup> Thus, in order to get close to his own hero, Mies van der Rohe, Alington elected not to study at Illinois Institute of Technology where Mies van der Rohe was the head of the Department of Architecture, but rather at another university in the same state.<sup>78</sup>

It should be remembered too, that Alington was turned down from a number of other institutions until he had learned to frame his applications for a United States audience. Nevertheless, there are some interesting aspects of his choice to study at Illinois recorded in his Fulbright application, which were not raised during the interviews, but which help to explain many other facets of the overseas journey. In contrast to both Smith and Toomath, Alington’s

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<sup>77</sup> Alington may have heard this from Smith, who bemoaned the fact that when he was studying at MIT he did not really come into contact with Belluschi (MKSOHP3.01/0:02:34).

<sup>78</sup> Donald Wilson’s desire to study at IIT under Mies van der Rohe was thwarted by van der Rohe’s sudden retirement just before Wilson arrived in Chicago. (D Wilson 2)

application listed a desire to embark on a postgraduate study of “the theory of architectural design”, rather than pursue greater knowledge of the technical developments of contemporary architecture. More specifically, he writes that he wished to further advance his studies of the “architectural forms and spaces of the medieval period”. But Alington’s plans were not those of a historian, nor a historicist. His need to study in the United States, he argued, was not only because the necessary expertise on medieval architecture was not available in New Zealand, but also because he wanted to apply the social and historical lessons of the past to an acquired understanding of the present, including the architectural developments of a more technical nature (he cites materials and building techniques), for which the United States was the best place to study. The final sentence of his purpose of study statement clarifies the relationship between these two areas of study:

I should like to advance my studies of this [medieval] period, and together with a study of present architectural developments and social conditions endeavour to find the significant architectural forms and spaces of the present day. (Alington, "Application for Travel Grant" 2)

This is an extension of his undergraduate thesis, which is also referenced in his application. In that project he had taken the unusual step of submitting an illustrated report, entitled “Thesis on the Theory of Architectural Design”, rather than the usual design thesis. It was an attempt by Alington to define the phenomenological qualities of architectural space by conducting a survey of the social, historical, and physical qualities of pioneer-era buildings in small rural communities in New Zealand’s Northland region.<sup>79</sup> His proposed study of medieval architecture should be seen in the same light; Alington believed that by understanding the nature of the relationship between the magnificent forms

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<sup>79</sup> A detailed discussion of Alington’s undergraduate thesis can be found in my master’s thesis (see Dudding, "A Useful Exercise" Ch.3).

and spaces of the medieval cathedrals, and the social and historical conditions from which they arose, and then translating the necessary aspects of that relationship (not the actual forms and spaces) into a present day context, that the appropriate forms and spaces for the contemporary era may be achieved.

This was a bold ambition for the young graduate, but one that he appears to have embarked upon with some passion. The focussed attention on the great medieval buildings of Europe can clearly be seen as being driven by this motive, and perhaps even the time taken to visit early Georgian churches on the East Coast of the United States. It also helps to explain the suitability of the University of Illinois, where noted medievalist historian Alan K Laing was the Director of the School of Architecture (Ousterhout 5).

The master's studio at Illinois was a small class of only five students, led by Professor A Richard (Dick) Williams, an architect and educator of some note (WHAOHP3.02/0:10:18). Although the studio course did not use visiting professors in the same way as both Harvard and MIT, they did employ visiting critics. Rather than residing at the university for the duration of the studio, the visiting critics would simply attend studio every ten days or so and give their critical advice. Illinois ran three trimesters, bringing in Glen Paulsen from Eero Saarinen's practice; Walter Netsch from Skidmore Owings & Merrill; and Larry Perkins of Perkins and Wills (WHAOHP3.02/0:11:25). In addition to the studio classes, Alington studied history under Laing, architectural theory, and an elective half-point paper from the philosophy department (WHAOHP4.02/0:00:16). The architectural theory course was a particular disappointment to Alington, covering only the twentieth century, and being rather superficial even at that (WHAOHP4.02/0:08:20).

Of the visiting critics it was Paulsen who had the greatest impact for Alington. The studio project set by Paulsen was a meditation centre, for which he expected no less than three different solutions. At first Alington balked at this, on the basis that a rational analysis of the problem should lead to a single

correct solution. Despite finding the approach quite “barmy”, once he had begun designing, he recalled finding it “to be one of the most exciting things [he had] ever experienced”. That experience, including the positive way that Paulsen talked through design solutions with his students, remained an important part of Alington’s practice and teaching when he returned to New Zealand. (WHAOHP3.02/0:12:30)

Alington also gained work experience while studying toward his postgraduate qualification, with a placement during the second trimester as an architectural assistant with the local practice of Eberhart and Murphy (WHAOHP4.02/0:15:36). This came about because the Department of Architecture had not been able to fulfil the promise of a teaching assistantship for Alington when he first arrived. So as not to place Alington under too much financial strain, Laing arranged the part-time employment on Alington’s behalf (Alington, “First Report”; Zimmerman).<sup>80</sup>

Returning to the subject of Alington’s original motivations for studying at Illinois, and in particular his omission from the oral history interviews of the motivations he provided in his Fulbright application, it is interesting to note that he did sit one of Laing’s history papers, although he only mentions it in passing during the interviews, without providing any details about its scope or quality.<sup>81</sup> It is open to question whether Alington simply forgot about that original goal of forming his own architectural theory, or whether it was a decision to consciously put it aside in his narratives (especially in light of some of the reasons briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (see Section 4.2)).

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<sup>80</sup> Margaret Alington had taken up employment at the University library (WHAOHP3.02/0:32:14)

<sup>81</sup> The WH Alington Oral History Project was conducted before the Fulbright documents had been accessed. For both the Smith and Toomath oral histories, which were recorded specifically for this project, those documents were used as prompts for the discussion.

Whatever the case, the motivation that Alington provided in the interview – to be in a position to rub shoulders with Mies van der Rohe – was realised. Although a visit from the modern master to University of Illinois did not eventuate while Alington was there, Alington sought, and was granted, a private audience with him in Mies van der Rohe’s office in Chicago. Alington vividly recalls the approximately half hour meeting, even including the fixtures and fittings of Mies van der Rohe’s “sparse” office – the Brno Chair, the model on one corner of his plain desk, and the woven matt on the grey vinyl flooring. Alington describes Mies van der Rohe as being very gracious in their discussion, which focussed on Alington’s own theoretical definition of architectural space, which involved the studied social and historical contexts, and physical requirements of the clients. Although he agreed with Alington’s proposition, Mies van der Rohe countered with the pragmatic need to design a universal space that would allow for the changing needs of the building users over time (and indeed, even during the immediate timeframe of the design consultation process). Alington was intrigued by this response, and cites it as being influential in the approach he adopted when designing the Wellington High School classroom blocks. (WHAOHP3.04/0:50:03)

#### 4.4.4 TURBOTT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Turbott’s decision to study landscape architecture was driven by a professed boredom with studying architecture. He had obtained the University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarship in Architecture, and wanted to use it, but he had had enough of sitting in studios while someone told him how to design buildings (HATOHP3.01/0:53:43). He chose landscape architecture:

I don’t know how but I discovered this thing called landscape architecture. Now I had no idea what it was, but it had two of the right words in it, you see, ‘landscape’ and ‘architecture’... I’d never heard that word before, and I think that would have been what probably got me the Fulbright, in the sense there was an unusual thing to apply for...



I had no idea what [being a] landscape architect would make me do, but I was much more interested in doing something new than doing more of the old stuff.

(HATOHP3.01/0:53:43)

Similarly, Turbott suggests that he stumbled upon Harvard University as a place to study, simply because he found out that they had a landscape architecture programme. He did not remember having any prior knowledge of the reputation of Harvard's programme (HATOHP3.01/1:04:13).

Turbott was unable to recall very much about his course of study at Harvard. Aside from enjoying the richness of the campus and institution itself, little else appears to have made a significant lasting impression in the face of the memory problems he developed in later life. During the interview he reflected that he probably did not take the study too seriously, because he knew he would be returning to New Zealand, and thus found the focus on American horticulture to be largely redundant (HAT3.01/0:09:48). The second point he makes, in relation to what he was learning at Harvard, was that he found it difficult to relate to what was being taught until he had experienced the landscapes in question, a point which he also made about the study of architectural history from books and journals at the School of Architecture in Auckland: "I'd been taught about this great modern English thing [English Landscape Garden], you see, but I had no idea what it was until I'd walked through it..." (HATOHP3.01/1:20:17).

It is unfortunate that Turbott's Fulbright file could not be located, as the comments provided in the progress updates by both Turbott and academic staff at Harvard would have helped to fill some of the gaps in Turbott's memory. Whether he was taking his studies seriously or not, and he did tend to portray himself as an unexceptional drifter throughout his interview series, he

still managed to graduate with a Harvard postgraduate degree, and he did it in less than half of the usual two-year timeframe.<sup>82</sup>

#### 4.5 MODERN PRACTICE

Each of the four New Zealanders gained practical work experience in the United States as part of their overseas experience. All had professional experience in New Zealand before leaving the country, and obtaining work in a practice while overseas was a natural way to help fund both their studies and their travelling. For Turbott and Toomath, a year of practical experience was a requirement of the terms of the two-year University of New Zealand Travelling Scholarship in Architecture they had been awarded (HATOH3.01/0:05:40.9). Alington, Smith, and Toomath also supplemented their income by teaching – Alington and Toomath as studio assistants, and Smith as a teaching academic on a one year contract at Kansas State College. While Alington simply assisted in the undergraduate programme at his host institution, Toomath's work was carried out for Boston Architectural Club, across the river from Harvard, and apparently following a longstanding tradition of Harvard master's students assisting there (SWTNZAA5.01/0:19:29).<sup>83</sup>

In their work experience they each gained first-hand access to aspects of their professions that were, at that time at least, not available in New Zealand. Alington, Smith, and Toomath were able to work in emerging construction technologies, or in Toomath's case, new architectural typologies. In that sense

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<sup>82</sup> The master's programme was normally three years, but one year was waived due to his B.Arch qualification. The remaining two years were compressed into a single year by allowing Turbott to sit prerequisite papers in parallel with the papers for which they were a requirement (HATOH3.01/0:05:40).

<sup>83</sup> Founded in 1889, the Boston Architectural Club (now a degree institution known as Boston Architectural College) was, like the Architectural Centre in Wellington, set up to provide architectural education to interested people who might not have been able to access the usual university courses. Alongside the evening classes taught by practising architects and professors from other schools, the club also offered exhibitions and public lectures. (Boston Architectural College)

they were at the forefront of what being 'modern' meant – the embrace of contemporary technology to meet the needs of a transforming world.

#### 4.5.1 TURBOTT AND DAN KILEY (VERMONT)

Turbott's situation was quite different. Although there were practitioners working in New Zealand, landscape architecture was not an established profession and Turbott himself had no experience of it.<sup>84</sup> But it was more than a first exposure to the discipline for Turbott. When he went to work for Kiley in Vermont, he was entering a whole other world that had no real counterpart in New Zealand, even down to the simple experience of clearly defined seasons, something of which he had no real experience of in his native Auckland:

Vermont is unbelievably beautiful... at least half of it is covered with what they would call forests, and this is maple, ash, oak. And what was absolute revelation to two New Zealanders was spring... to suddenly see the whole forest go bright red and orange... all the leaves are coming on and the young leaves tend to be more 'reddy'... Native bush in here [New Zealand] doesn't change colour that you're aware of... And then a thing called winter came and the bloody leaves went the most amazing bright colours and then they all dropped off. And then the snow came, so around you are these sticks of things and this incredibly beautiful white stuff. (HATOH3.01/0:31:46)

What really amazed Turbott, however, was the vast wealth exhibited in the jobs that Kiley carried out. He gives the example of the first project on which he

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<sup>84</sup> For example, Swiss-American Fred Tschopp was a landscape architect who practiced in New Zealand for a short time (1929-32) (Adam and Bradbury 2). Other practitioners, while not formally trained as landscape architects, were practising in the field during the 1940s and 50s, including Odo Strewe, Mary Lysaght, and Anna Plischke (Pollock).

worked for Kiley: the plans for the landscaping of the Miller House in Columbus, Indiana. Designed by Eero Saarinen and Alexander Girard, the Miller House was a slick modernist pavilion of steel and glass, with white marble floors and interior walls, and according to Turbott, a Stradivarius violin hanging on a wall of the library as “decoration”. The Kiley-designed landscaping included hundreds of trees dividing the five hectare landscaped property into rectilinear spaces, matching the intent of Saarinen’s house plan. Turbott was amazed by the scale and grandness of the design, including the allée of honey locust trees leading up to the house, which he dutifully drew in as circles on the plans. But the real measure of excess for Turbott was that when it came to realise the design, the trees that were trucked in were all mature specimens. These can clearly be seen in the photographs accompanying the 1958 *Architectural Forum* article on the Miller House.<sup>85</sup> (HATOHP3.01/0:24:30; "A Contemporary Palladian Villa")

For Turbott the sheer cost of such a project was beyond comprehension, and so too was the effort to display the outcome of that wealth, not by the Millers themselves, who chose to withhold their ownership in the *Architectural Forum* article, but of the ‘machine’ of modern architecture itself:

They had the right architect, and they had the right landscape architect, so they had to have the right photographer. He [Ezra Stoller] came and looked at it and decided he didn’t like the furniture, so he took all the furniture out and then replaced it with the furniture he liked...

So that was a world that a Kiwi couldn’t contemplate, but didn’t mind being on the edge of it. (HATOHP3.01/0:24:30)

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<sup>85</sup> The landscape plan featured in the *Architectural Forum* article is almost certainly a copy of the plan that Turbott drew for Kiley (HATOHP3.01/0:24:30).

In fact, that world in which Turbott found himself on the edge of was, as it was for both Smith and Toomath, the very heart of American postwar modernism. Kiley, after a chance encounter with Louis Kahn when they were both working for the United States Housing Authority in the early 1940s (Birnbaum), had become the landscape architect of choice for a group of some of the most celebrated United States modern architects (HATOHP3.01/0:23:26), including, Kahn, Eero Saarinen, Marcel Breuer, Walter Netsch of Skidmore Owings and Merrill, and later IM Pei. In rubbing shoulders with people of such well known status, Turbott could not help but feel a part of it:

I remember Louis Kahn coming [to Kiley's house]... there was a knock on the door and you open the door, there's this little short guy. You say hello, like a good Kiwi, and then he says "I'm Louis Kahn"...

It was very much that feeling you were part of it, but you were a minor part of it, but you didn't feel disadvantaged by that – I didn't. (HAT3.01/0:37:05)

#### 4.5.2 SMITH AT CAPE COD

Smith's 1953 summer at Cape Cod similarly placed him as a minor part of an important milieu. Cape Cod had become a regular destination for the Chermayeff family, ever since they had taken their first summer holiday there in the early 1940s. In 1944 Chermayeff bought the small cottage that they had been renting for their holidays. The summer house, which evolved over the years according to whichever design experiment on which Chermayeff happened to be working, became the social hub for visitors such as Walter and Ise Gropius, Eero and Lily Saarinen, and Marcel and Connie Breuer. Some, like the Breuers, became enchanted by the landscape and lifestyle and soon built summer houses of their own. Before long there arose a small European émigré summer community, made up of former Bauhaus masters and their family and friends. (McMahon and Cipriani 123, 154)

Smith stayed for the first two weeks with the Kepes family in a Breuer designed house, before moving into the Chermayeff's loft bedroom for the remainder of the summer (MKSOHP3.03/0:28:21; McMahon and Cipriani 220). There he worked on several small jobs for Chermayeff, including a small building for the local plumber (MKSOHP3.03/0:28:21), and an interior design for a school building for Walter Gropius (MK Smith, "Letter to E G Budge" 1). The small buildings were variations of Chermayeff's modular panelised building system, of which his own studio at Cape Cod is the most well-known example. According to McMahon and Cipriani, who have documented this period of Cape Cod history in their book *Cape Cod Modern*, Smith also worked on drawings for the studio (220).

The final part of Smith's summer at the Cape was spent working on the construction of a geodesic dome at Woods Hill, under the supervision of Fuller.<sup>86</sup> This was Fuller's second geodesic dome, after the one built by the Ford Motor Company for their exhibition rotunda in Dearborn, Michigan, just a few months earlier (Popko 32).

The dome at Woods Hole was a much more hands-on project for Fuller and his students, with jigs being built in the MIT woodworking shops, and with the whole structure taking less than two weeks to assemble and erect on site. Commissioned by local architect Gunnar Peterson, as a restaurant for his Nautilus Motor Inn, the dome was an unpopular addition to the predominantly wood-shingled vernacular of the small community of Woods Hole. However, its lightweight structure and rapid assembly perfectly symbolised the postwar

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<sup>86</sup> McMahon and Cipriani incorrectly record this as having occurred in the following summer (220)

modernisation of American society, and especially the car-based culture that came with it.<sup>87</sup> (Woods Hole Historical Museum)

Smith describes the time that he spent at Cape Cod that summer as having been of much greater value than the alternative of staying on at MIT in preparation of his final thesis project – despite not graduating with an MIT master’s degree as a consequence of that decision (MKSOHP3.03/0:29:24). But it was not necessarily in the work that he carried out at the Cape that Smith found value. Smith’s summer was as much social as it was work experience. Along with the work there were many cocktail parties, games, and debates. For him it was the relationships that he developed with key members of the modernist émigré community there that were of the most value. While this paid off professionally by opening up opportunities that would eventually bring him back to the United States, it was the personal friendships that he developed during that time that meant the most to Smith. In particular, this included Bernard Rudofsky, Chermayeff, and especially Kepes, who Smith would remain very close to until Kepes’s death in 2001 (MKSOHP4.01/0:00:16).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The geodesic dome concept was not an aspect of architectural design that Smith took up in his own work, although he would later have some involvement with the erection of a geodesic dome at Western Springs, in Auckland, for the 1955 Auckland summer ‘Birthday Carnival’. Smith acted as a conduit between Fuller and Ivan Tarulevich, and was the main figure behind its construction. (G Smith)

<sup>88</sup> Chermayeff, who left MIT for Harvard the following year, offered Smith work helping him develop the new first year architecture programme at Harvard, and to help him with a book that he was writing. The offer came with a doctoral project under Chermayeff’s supervision – which would eventually be taken up by Christopher Alexander, who would become the first person to graduate from Harvard with a PhD in architecture. (MKSOHP4.01/0:03:56)

The book, *Community and Privacy: Toward a New Architecture of Humanism as Work*, co-authored by Alexander, was finally published in 1963.

For his part, Kepes unsuccessfully lobbied for Smith’s return to MIT. When Smith did return, after an invitation extended by Belluschi after his visit to New Zealand in 1956, he worked closely with Kepes, assisting on many of Kepes’s most well-known art installations, including the “Light Mural for KLM” – a kinetic lightwall at the headquarters of the KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (MKSOHP4.01/0:06:31, 0:30:22).

#### 4.5.3 ALINGTON AT ROBERT MATTHEW AND JOHNSON-MARSHALL (LONDON)

Alington was the only one of the four New Zealanders to work during the European stage of his overseas experience, although, as noted at the beginning of this section, he also gained work experience with the Urbana architectural practice of Eberhart and Murphy while studying in Illinois. In London he worked for the newly formed practice of Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall (RMJM). Robert Matthew had developed a respected reputation in his postwar rebuilding work, firstly as a deputy planner to Abercrombie, and thereafter as an architect for the London County Council at the beginning of that organisation's rise to prominence in the late 1940s. Before moving back to his native Scotland to take up an academic post in Edinburgh, Matthew partnered with Stirrat Johnson-Marshall. In this way Matthew could continue practicing in Edinburgh, while also maintaining a presence in London, where Johnson-Marshall led their second office. (Dictionary of Scottish Architects)

Until leaving to join Matthew in private practice, Johnson-Marshall had also been practising in the public sector, as Chief Architect for the Education Department. There he had pursued an interest in prefabricated construction systems and oversaw a highly respected school building programme. (Derbyshire)

Alington came to work for RMJM almost by accident. He did not give much attention to the letter of recommendation that he had been given by Gordon Wilson, then the New Zealand Government Architect, so did not see that this job was almost inevitable. Alington wanted to gain experience in a small private practice as a kind of complement to his Ministry of Works employment back in New Zealand. In London he and Margaret visited a friend, Dick

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Smith also received an invitation from a group of his MIT classmates (including Peter Floyd and Billy Wainwright, who were part of the Woods Hole team) to join their new practice called Geometrics Inc. Closely aligned with Fuller, Geometrics Inc. continued his experimental research and construction of geodesic domes and other structures. (MKSOHP4.01/0:18:09)



Campbell, New Zealand's Deputy High Commissioner, who, on hearing that he was looking for work in London, promptly called Johnson-Marshall and said "I've got a young man here from New Zealand who's come to work for you". Only after Alington had gone to the interview and was given the job did he realise, with surprise, that Wilson's letter was addressed to Johnson-Marshall at RMJM. (WHAOHP3.02/0:34:41)

The London office of RMJM was working on a range of projects when Alington began there, the most important of which was New Zealand House, which was to be the new location of the New Zealand High Commission in London.<sup>89</sup> Alington's role on that project was not extensive, mainly working on the tower (the building was a tower and podium design, in a similar manner to Lever House, which is likely to have been an important influence): "I remember doing a lot of work – looking at some of the proportions and things, and it all went up to Robert Matthew to be checked" (WHAOHP3.02/0:51:32).

Although the final design of the glass curtain-walled modern skyscraper – one of London's earliest modern tower blocks – was compromised by Royal Fine Arts Commission imposed requirements (with the intention of mitigating the effect of the modern intervention within the historic Haymarket streetscape)<sup>90</sup>, the finished building was considered by many to be a "yardstick" of contemporary design (Historic England).

Johnson-Marshall's reputation from his previous position, and the success of his prefabricated construction system for school buildings, meant that many

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<sup>89</sup> According to Miles Glendinning, Campbell was the instrumental person in the New Zealand House project (90). This would probably have been an important factor in Johnson-Marshall's readiness to hire Alington.

<sup>90</sup> Alington suggests that, although the building was originally to have been designed by expatriate New Zealander Basil Ward, the decision to award the design contract to RMJM was made by Gordon Wilson because he felt that a British practice would be better able to negotiate the expected difficulties of gaining planning permission for the modern design (WHAOHP3.02/0:44:09).

projects came to the RMJM London office from the Ministry of Education. Alington worked on a number of these, including Ruddington School, where he was required to design non-standardised aspects of the project, including the “caretaker’s flat” (WHAOHP4.02/0:26:17). He also worked on designs for the Perse School in Cambridge (WHAOHP3.02/0:47:28).

Alington struck up a good friendship with Johnson-Marshall. He and Margaret would often spend weekends at Johnson-Marshall’s house in Welwyn, where Johnson-Marshall and Alington would talk late into the night. The Alingtons also stayed with Johnson-Marshall on later visits to the United Kingdom (WHAOHP3.02/0:52:50). Similarly, at the conclusion of their time in the United Kingdom the Alingtons travelled to Scotland, where they stayed with Robert Matthew in the sixteenth century Scottish baronial country house, Keith Marischal House (WHAOHP3.02/1:09:00).

#### 4.5.4 ALINGTON AT EBERHART AND MURPHY (URBANA)

Later in the United States, Alington would again be working with prefabricated building systems. Eberhard and Murphy were primarily involved in the design and construction of prefabricated panelised buildings under the name Creative Buildings Inc. They also owned the factory that produced the prefabricated elements. Eberhart described the simple A-frame churches, which were the staple product of the company, as “multipurpose first units for a new congregation”, the low cost and quick assembly of which meant that the business was extremely busy with a backlog of orders in the late 1950s (Eberhart 13). Alington worked twenty hours a week at Eberhart and Murphy as a draughtsman and designer. Among the projects on which he worked was a custom design for a small church in southern Illinois (the practice carried out one-off jobs in addition to their standardised designs) (WHAOHP4.02/0:20:42).

Like Turbott, Alington found that the work experiences that he had were not really relevant to his own employment back in New Zealand. In Alington’s case

the reasons were twofold. In both the United Kingdom and the United States, major buildings, such as New Zealand House, were being constructed of steel (WHAOHP4.02/0:26:17). By contrast, when Alington returned to New Zealand and began designing significant projects for the Ministry of Works, the structural frames were all reinforced concrete.<sup>91</sup>

The second reason was one of scale. In London Alington noted the cheaper cost of building compared to New Zealand. This meant that British architects could achieve a higher level of refinement in their buildings, especially detailing, a quality that Alington often felt was slightly too “precious”. He was also frustrated at times that more time might be spent selecting fixtures and fittings than on the overall design work, because of the large range of quality options available from which to choose. These opportunities were simply not available in New Zealand. (WHAOHP3.04/0:14:51)

Issues of scale were magnified in the United States – not just in the building industry, but everyday life in general:

...[when] we’d left New Zealand, there were no such things, really, as supermarkets... we arrived in Illinois to find a supermarket there, which we thought was mindboggling... when we were told it was just a very small one – even more so. (WHAOHP3.04/0:36:07)

With the large scale came considerable opportunity. Alington gave the example of staying at a wealthy friend’s house in St Louis, where he learnt that his friend’s parents created their wealth through a business that only produced

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<sup>91</sup> It was for this reason that Toomath wanted to study developments in contemporary construction in France, where use of reinforced concrete was much more prevalent than in the United Kingdom or the United States.

the calico ends that were used to cap large rolls of newsprint paper. The prefabricated churches of Eberhart and Murphy were no different:

It pointed out to me the fact you could almost do anything in the States and make a success of it. You know, if you'd try to do a prefabricated church system in New Zealand you'd probably get about one church and that would be the end.  
(WHAOHP4.02/0:17:34)

Although Eberhart and Murphy was a relatively small architectural practice, by United States standards, Alington was also able to see inside the offices of some of the major United States architectural firms, organised as class field trips from Illinois. He recalled Eero Saarinen's office in particular, with about eighty percent of the space being devoted to model-making. During his visit the TWA Flight Center was in the process of being modelled at various scales (WHAOHP4.02/0:10:41). But it was the offices of Skidmore Owings and Merrill that really exemplified the scale of the profession in the United States:

We went to Skidmore's office in Chicago. It was in the Inland Steel Building, and it was an experience to see... they had something like fifteen-hundred architects in their office in Chicago. And I remarked to Walter Netsch that was virtually, at that stage, the whole complement of New Zealand Institute in one office. It was really quite something.  
(WHAOHP4.02/0:32:43)

#### 4.5.5 TOOMATH IN PARIS

Like Alington, Toomath also had the intention of working during the European stage of his overseas experience, although this did not come to pass.

Toomath's objectives were somewhat grander than Alington's, seeking to work for none other than Le Corbusier:

I just wanted the exposure, I wanted to see what it was like, I wanted the feeling of working in that, what was still a radical

and still a battlefield of getting modern architecture to be accepted...

So, it was still a case of battling for modern architecture, and I think I had the wish to be part of that battle.

(SWTNZAA6.01/1:10:41)

The work did not eventuate, despite Toomath meeting with Le Corbusier, because Toomath could not commit to the minimum one year that Le Corbusier required of graduate employees<sup>92</sup> (SWTNZAA6.01/1:10:41).

Although carried out as part of the New Zealand University Travelling Scholarship in Architecture (under the nominal supervision of Professor Light at the School of Architecture in Auckland), and although not actively engaged in the practice of design, Toomath's research in Paris might nonetheless be thought of as professional experience. His ultimate objective to learn about contemporary construction techniques and reinforced concrete construction was a professional inquiry, with the specific purpose of learning about new technical developments that could be applied in his own practice:

I think I saw more in, not so much in America, but in Europe, in the advanced French construction techniques – precast concrete, shell concrete, and the huge mechanisation of building with tower cranes and all of that, all of which was quite novel. And that was, certainly the expansion of precast concrete and of self-finished concrete was one thing which I did see overseas and applied here with the Teachers' College

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<sup>92</sup> Toomath reads an extract of his diary, documenting his meeting with Le Corbusier, in the *Antonello and the Architect* (Hiles Disc 2: "Influences: Meeting Le Corbusier").

and other buildings earlier than that...  
(SWTNZAA6.01/1:44:30)

During the four months he was in Paris, he visited building construction sites that had been reported in the architectural press: the library of the Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment (CSTB - Scientific and Technical Centre for Building) and the publishing offices of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*. The end result was a substantial report containing photographs and data, and a series of report summaries that he sent back to Light in Auckland. It was also, according to Toomath, an experience that was of more value to him, in terms of learning about contemporary architecture, than the master's programme at Harvard. (SWTNZAA6.01/0:28:56)

#### 4.5.6 TOOMATH AT THE ARCHITECTS COLLABORATIVE (CAMBRIDGE, MA)

In the United States Toomath, like Smith, gained work as a result of the impression that he made on faculty in his master's programme. The first instance of this occurred when two TAC architects visited Toomath at Harvard, with an invitation to join them at TAC, working with Gropius. Gropius's TAC office had need of extra staff to work on the designs of the McCormick-Deering headquarters in Chicago, a project that had been dormant for some time, but suddenly needed to be finished in six weeks. Toomath speculates that it was Pei who had recommended him to Gropius, on the basis of the quality of the work that Toomath and his group had carried out in response to the shopping centre brief that Pei had set at the beginning of the term (SWTNZAA5.01/0:58:00).<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Although Pei's later hiring of Toomath to work for him would seem to confirm Toomath's suspicions, it is also possible that it was Stubbins who recommended Toomath, on the basis of Toomath having prior experience practising as an architect. Toomath reported that, when he went to seek permission to take up the TAC offer, Stubbins was already aware of the situation (SWTNZAA5.01/0:58:00).

Toomath spent five weeks working part-time at TAC, which was not far from Harvard Yard in Cambridge and therefore allowed him to continue with his studies. At TAC he worked mostly under the direction of Arthur Myron, detailing the external envelope of the McCormick-Deering Building, which incorporated marble panels set into an aluminium grid (Petry, Tape 2 Side1 0:01:00).

Getting to know Gropius, who would spend an hour or two in the office each day, was the obvious highlight for Toomath, who enjoyed his warmth of character, attention to detail, and sense of humour (SWTNZAA3.01/1:06:10). But as for the experience of working under one of the modern masters in one of the United States' most famous architectural practices, Toomath – the presence of Gropius aside – could only report that it was much like any other practice of its size.

#### 4.5.7 TOOMATH AT WEBB AND KNAPP (NEW YORK, NY)

Toomath completed his final master's studio project while in New York, having been invited by Pei to come and work for him. In a similar occurrence to his invitation from Gropius, Stubbins once again gave Toomath leave to take up the new opportunity, simply requiring him to travel back to Cambridge for the project reviews (SWTNZAA3.01/0:00:42).

Pei's office was part of the Webb and Knapp real estate business, and was responsible for the design of Webb and Knapp's property developments. The biggest project on the boards at the time that Toomath was hired was a plan for the redevelopment of Southwest Washington, DC. Toomath, however, was hired to contribute to the final detail designs of the Roosevelt Field Shopping Mall, Long Island. At the time of completion this was the largest regional shopping centre in the United States. Toomath described the original Roosevelt scheme:

Pei's original project... that was *the* 'shopping machine'... artificial, no sunshine, no space, no community. So, this is, I

think, what struck IM [Pei] so strongly that what we had produced [the Harvard studio project with Hofer and Hejduk] had a basis in society as a whole, which was lacking from this cold and mechanical thing. (SWTNZAA5.01/1:06:04)

Roosevelt Field, when built in 1956, was very close to the principles that were worked out during Toomath's time with Pei. Rather than placing all of the functions of the mall inside a large internalised 'H'-shaped 'box', the design featured dual open-air 'streets' that led from the Macy's anchor store, maximising the frontages of the stores. Toomath came in during the later detail stages of the project, and had input into final design of the open plaza, which was intentionally designed to relate to the human scale. The design employed graphic devices, planting, water fountains, individualisation of storefronts, and diverse changes of scale to help create a more pleasant shopping experience and greater visual and spatial interest for the shoppers.<sup>94</sup> (SWTNZAA6.01/0:10:59)

Toomath was appointed by Pei as the project architect for a second regional shopping centre project. The requirements of the brief, and the site in Camden, New Jersey, were the same as Pei had set for the studio project at Harvard. The project was never built. (SWTNZAA6.01/0:25:45).

Other projects in which Toomath was involved during his time in New York with Pei included the working drawings for the paved plaza at the Denver Mile High building – one of Pei's first major projects – which was close to completion at the time (SWTNZAA3.01/0:40:47). Toomath was also given the job of redesigning the entrance lobby of the large Woolworths store on Madison Avenue, in New York (SWTNZAA6.01/0:22:27).

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<sup>94</sup> Roosevelt Mall was fully enclosed in 1964. Since then it has expanded, with the addition of larger retailers and extra floors of shopping.



## 4.6 FINDING MODERNITY

At the beginning of this chapter it was suggested that the travels to the United States represented a search for modernity for the four architects. This was a desire to see first-hand the roots of a cultural future, whether this resided in the teachings of the modern masters, through the genuine experience of their masterworks, or from exposure to the latest developments in construction technology in either the postgraduate studies of the four, or their subsequent practical experiences. If modernity was found, its manifestation was not necessarily as straightforward as might have been anticipated. In different ways for each of the men, the outcome of their search was both an affirmation and a refutation of modern architecture and the type of society it could be said to represent.

For example, when it came to considering the towns and cities of the United States, including New York, what really staggered Toomath was how “nineteenth century” these places were (SWTNZAA5.02/0:04:49). This confounded Toomath’s expectations, set as early as his teens via images of the 1939 New York World’s Fair, of a country that physically as well economically and politically represented the modern age:

There was an awareness of progress, of an advancement towards things... America represented modernism, it represented the modern changing world, the future link, which was embodied in so much of what I was interested in... (SWTNZAA1.01/0:43:34)

One of the key areas of interest according to both Smith and Toomath’s Fulbright applications, and which was also mentioned in Alington’s, was the desire to learn more about technological advances in construction techniques and materials. All three gained exposure to a range of contemporary developments by taking advantage of opportunities that were not then available in New Zealand. This includes Alington’s experience of prefabricated building systems at Eberhart and Murphy, Toomath’s work on the emerging

typology of regional shopping centres in Pei's office, and Smith's work for both Chermayeff, and especially Fuller, during his summer at Cape Cod.

For Toomath this ambition to study modern construction technology was chiefly realised during his self-directed study in Paris prior to arriving in the United States. One of the things that surprised Toomath while in the United States, was that, unlike in France, reinforced concrete was seldom used in construction (SWTNZAA2.01/1:09:42). The predominance of steel construction in the United States building industry – a point also noted by Alington with respect to both the United States and the United Kingdom – meant that the advances in construction that were being developed in major projects in both countries had little relevance in New Zealand where reinforced concrete was the norm (WHAOHP4.02/0:29:42; 4.04/0:22:20). Thus there is no simple and direct architectural outcome, in terms of developments in United States construction technology, that could be claimed to have had a meaningful impact on their subsequent career development.<sup>95</sup>

Turbott also found what he learned was largely irrelevant upon his return to New Zealand. The plants were American, the large scale of Kiley's work for the wealthy was inappropriate, and the formality of his approach did not appeal to Turbott. On top of this was the fact that there was no established profession of landscape architecture in New Zealand at the time within which Turbott could operate with his newly acquired training. Rather work in this field consisted of competing with the local horticultural society for garden commissions from "the new rich" in Auckland's expanding suburbs.

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<sup>95</sup> While Smith was involved in another geodesic dome at Western Springs, it was a one-off project driven by a former student, and not a building that sits properly within Smith's own oeuvre (see 4.7.2 above). Additionally, although nothing came of his efforts, Toomath promoted his shopping centre experience in New Zealand, lobbying local businessman Robert Archibald (who was also a sitting Wellington City Counsellor) to work together on a regional shopping centre (SWTNZAA6.01/0:20:11).

The kind of Dan Kiley thing, to me was just a strange thing that happened in USA. It was like a strange custom, you know, that you didn't have three beers at morning tea... Yes, I was with Dan Kiley, he was a great man, I did what he told me to do, but it didn't worry me because it had no relevance to me... By the time we got back I'd forgotten all that stuff – New Zealand was New Zealand, and I can't imagine anything more unlike what I ended up doing.

(HATOH5.01/0:22:51)

Perhaps an aesthetic argument for the influence of United States modernism on the future buildings of the other three architects might be put forward, but it is difficult to attribute this solely to their overseas experience when the visual impact of American architectural journals had already been so prevalent prior to their travels. This is a potential area of further study, although it should be noted that, in the interviews for this research, the subjects were very reticent about discussing direct design influences. This tendency is likely to be attributable to the upholding of modernist notions of originality, thus making it difficult to know how a building was conceived from the architect's point of view, without relying on a combination of visual comparison and speculative leaps. A good example of this reticence occurred in these interviews when Toomath cited Pei's Katonah Summerhouse as a probable formative influence on his own use of architectural expression, including the articulation of structural elements and especially the use of deep beams (SWTNZAA6.01/0:47:11). In the subsequent discussion he recants the direct influence, replacing it with a more general influence 'of the time' (SWTNZAA6.01/0:48:51). While this may in fact have been an accurate revision of his earlier statement, it nonetheless remains an interesting example of avoiding the naming of direct design influences.

The role of experiencing celebrated works of modern architecture while in the United States (and Europe) is also problematised by this phenomenon. On the

one hand these experiences allowed the architects to build up a repository of potential design influences that they could subsequently adopt in their own work in the future. In fact, despite his reluctance to reveal direct influences, Toomath explains the value of seeing these buildings in exactly that way, recalling the forty or so Wright buildings that he visited, where he claims to have developed an interest in Wright's open planning (SWTNZAA6.01/1:18:29).<sup>96</sup>

But Turbott, who perhaps had less investment in the famous works of architecture at this stage, framed it differently. He argued that the itineraries they pursued satisfied a set of expectations of what the travelling architect *should* see (see Section 3.2). In that respect the act of physically experiencing the key buildings of United States modernism can be seen as an act of 'collection' – but of physical experiences rather than physical objects (or of the remembered details of physical objects). It is highly likely that direct design influences were drawn from some of these experiences, as indicated by Toomath, but trying to pin these instances down is both difficult and ultimately not very informative. When taken as an act of collecting, however, the body of experiences can be seen as more than a series of detailed episodes, and the true value of the phenomenon as a confirmation and completion of each architect's architectural education can begin to emerge.

This is the key to understanding the value of these overseas experiences for these four architects. Toomath is quite clear about this, stating that, when taken as a totality, the overarching objective of expanding his education on modern architecture was a key outcome of his travels (SWTNZAA6.01/1:52:14). The experiences that they sought were seen as an extension of their

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<sup>96</sup> The open plan of the house that he designed for his parents in Lower Hutt in 1949, however, designed before his travel abroad, reveals that he was already well aware of those principles – whether through illustrations of Wright's work, Wright's writing on the topic, or a myriad of other potential sources.

education, noting that their modernist education in New Zealand occurred as much (perhaps more) in the books and journals of the era than it did within the curriculum of School of the Architecture in Auckland. Accepting that architecture cannot be experienced by images alone, that it must be experienced spatially and sensually, meant that regardless of the potential for direct design influences, modernity could only be known through first-hand experiences. This directly parallels the authentic experiences of history discussed in Section 3.5 of this thesis. Perhaps it is also the reason why, as Turbott observed, peers back in New Zealand would be interested in hearing about which buildings he had seen on his travels, but less interested in what he thought about those places – the education was in the experience, the essence of which could not be transmitted via other means.

But that does not mean that the experiences were entirely passive. For example, Turbott's first experience of Wright's work, at Florida Southern College, was marked more by the discovery of the failings of the design than the campus's success as a modern masterpiece (HATOH1.01/0:11:49.7). He was also critical of Gropius's work at the Harvard campus (HATOH2.01/0:37:20.1). Similarly Alington found faults in the work of Wright, yet maintained a fascination with his work (as did Turbott) (WHAOH3.04/0:57:51). Discovering that some of the timber construction detailing of the Six Moon Hill houses was less advanced than comparable work in New Zealand did not dampen Toomath's excitement for those buildings either (SWTNZAA4.01/0:20:46).

Only Turbott described a sense of disillusionment as the result of these experiences, although this could equally be attributed to his change in focus toward landscape architecture (HAT2.01/0:37:20). Seeing flaws in the work of the modern masters was, for the other architects, a more enlightening experience with two main outcomes. The first was a realisation of the power of modern photography in enhancing, and perhaps even creating, the modern aesthetic that was so evocatively portrayed in the books and journals that they

had consumed in New Zealand prior to their travels (HATOH1.01/0:11:49, 3.01/27:53.1; SWTNZAA4.01/0:29:50, 5.02/0:12:45). The second outcome of this revelation was that it helped to diminish some of the aura that was attached to that work. It was still 'masterful', but suddenly the ability to produce work of comparable quality became an attainable objective (WHAOHP4.02/0:38:55).

In the same way as buildings were collected, so too were experiences and meetings with the modern masters. In many respects, these must have helped to increase the stature of these men in the local architectural scene of New Zealand, since they came back 'touched by the presence of greatness'. The effect of this on the four architects themselves varied, but for Toomath at least, these experiences helped to make the masters more human with all their foibles, habits, pretensions and sense of humour:

You meet these people as people. I mean, they're the same size as other people, and they walk and talk like other people, but the individuality of their minds and the thing that makes them great is intangible in a way, but it is there.  
(SWTNZAA6.01/1:08:53)

Toomath's observation is important, because his new understanding of the masters as 'people' did not mean that they were no longer considered as masters. The brilliance of the masters remained, but by becoming more relatable at a personal level, the perceived gulf between their greatness and his own abilities was diminished. In essence it contributed to a growing self-confidence that served to bring Toomath himself up to, rather than bringing the masters down to his level.<sup>97</sup> Although not articulated by Smith, the same

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<sup>97</sup> In contrast to Toomath's description of these experiences, Alington's meeting with the impassive Mies van der Rohe might have served to reinforce the latter's godlike status. Similarly, Turbott places his experiences with famous architects that he met

can be observed of Smith's experiences at MIT and especially Cape Cod. Here, in living and working with these architects, he became one of their peers – which would literally become the case when he returned to teach at MIT in 1958.

Alington, Toomath, and Turbott all agreed that one of the most significant outcomes of their overseas travel, and particularly of their time in the United States, was the growing self-confidence in their own professional abilities. Each raised this aspect, unprompted, during the interviews when asked to reflect upon what they brought back to New Zealand from their overseas experiences (WHAOHP4.02/0:38:55; HATOHP3.01/1:15:43; SWTNZAA6.01/1:58:27). For example, Alington, being interviewed on location at one of his most significant projects, the Upper Hutt Civic Centre, observed in relation to the work of architects in the United States:

Well I think the confidence that one got from just seeing that these people were just ordinary architects, probably not much better trained – and certainly not better trained in many cases – than what you were, and certainly with no more imagination than you had, although they had the opportunity to work on some very imaginative buildings. So it gave one a bit of confidence to come back and tackle things like this building here in Upper Hutt. (WHAOHP4.02/0:38:55)

Turbott also describes the summation of his overseas experience in terms of the confidence that it gave him, even going as far as to label it as “arrogance” (HATOHP3.01/1:34:45). This assuredness gave him the confidence to take on landscape work, when in fact he had very little of the horticultural knowledge required in the local context, and as a result leaned heavily (but subtly), on the

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while working under Kiley as existing in another fantasy realm, of which he was only on the edges. None of it seemed ‘real’ to him.

experience of the “Remuera ladies” of the local horticultural society (HATOHP3.01/1:15:43, 4.01/1:19:07). It also gave him the confidence to take on larger projects, such as the landscaping of the Grafton Gully motorway project completed in the late 1960s (HATOHP3.01/1:15:43). The realisation of large-scale projects of this nature were instrumental in carving a place for the discipline of landscape architecture in New Zealand, allowing Turbott to start practising outside the confines of the local horticultural tradition (HATOHP3.01/1:19:15).

Toomath was more specific about the source of his developing confidence, attributing it to the acclamation of the shopping centre project that Hofer, Hedjuk, and he produced in response to Pei’s studio at Harvard. Not only did this provide a critical boost in his own self-confidence, but it also opened up a series of opportunities that made his time in the United States worthwhile:

I think Harvard was a leap forward for me in gaining confidence, and assurance that I was able to do things that met with that sort of approval. If I’d not had that, and if I’d come straight back from Europe without going through America, I probably would have been more tentative in what I tried to do... I think that experience was very important in my ‘upbringing’ as it were, or self-realisation... And it was a wonderfully exciting life! (SWTNZAA6.01/1:58:27).

As an extension of their architectural educations, this search for modernity was realised not in the postgraduate studies that they undertook while in the United States; nor was it achieved in the direct experiences that they had with the physical buildings and landscapes, the *milieux* within which they found themselves, or even the practical experience that they gained. Instead, the sought-after modernity was found in the simple realisation that they already had the tools to undertake what was needed to “get modern architecture off the ground” (WHAOHP7.04/0:37:21) in New Zealand. While the overseas experience provided many opportunities that could not have occurred in New



Zealand, the greatest and most paradoxical of these was the realisation that they need not have left the country in the first place.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

This investigation was framed by three guiding questions: what motivated these four architects to travel to the United States, what experiences did they have there, and what meanings can be assigned to both their motivations and their travel experiences? In providing answers to these questions, this research has made significant contributions to New Zealand postwar architectural history in a number of areas.

First, this research has generated a large quantity of material that documents the overseas experiences of Alington, Smith, Toomath, and Turbott, where no such record existed before. This includes experiences in the United States, Europe, and England. It is here that the research questions are addressed most directly.

Second, this research, when placed against the broader framework of New Zealand architectural history, expands the scope of that history, opening up areas for further research. In doing so, however, it also begins to hint at some of the effects on the development of New Zealand architecture in the postwar period that may, in part, be by-products of adhering to those defining narratives.

Finally, this research employed a mixed methodology that combined oral history methods of data collection with Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis methods of thematic analysis of the oral history material. This is a relatively unique approach to undertaking historical research, and proved to be of considerable benefit in the interpretation of what would otherwise simply be a memory-based documentary of the phenomenon being studied.

The remainder of this conclusion will reflect on the most significant findings within each of the three areas outlined in the research questions, before finally addressing the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

## 5.1 AN EDUCATION COMPLETED

This research has created a rich record of the overseas experiences of the four subjects of this study, both in summarised form in this thesis and more fully in the oral history recordings. As a contribution to the field of New Zealand architectural history, this material has considerable potential to play host to a wide range of future research enquiries. The themes that have been pursued in this research represent only a small (but significant) range from within the possibilities.

The key findings to emerge from this record of experiences do not relate to the facts of those experiences, however, but lie in the meanings that they held for the architects who recalled them for this study. The most significant among these findings relates to the motivations behind the decision to undertake overseas travel in the first place – a desire to complete their architectural education.<sup>98</sup>

This may seem unsurprising, given that they were all travelling on educational scholarships and intending to complete postgraduate degrees, but there is more to this than the quite specific educational objectives set out in their Fulbright applications (see Section 4.2). In fact, by all accounts the education that they received at the various universities turned out to be among the least significant aspects of their experiences. This is not to say that nothing had been gained during their time in the university programmes, because the relationships that were established and the opportunities that arose as a consequence, were of considerable value and were key to many of the opportunities that followed while in the United States.

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<sup>98</sup> Although Turbott was also effecting a change of career direction, he nonetheless discussed much of his trip as completing his architectural education (particularly his visits to celebrated sites of both historic and modern architecture).

But it is not this aspect of their education to which the subjects referred. For them the entire experience was a completion of their architectural education that helped them to make, in Turbott's words, an "amazing transformation from the paper world of books into the real world" (HATOH3.01/0:39:50). Rather than being sought in the continuance of their academic education, the education that they were completing was achieved via authentic experience of the celebrated works of both contemporary architecture and architectural history. Because these two aspects of their education were so entwined together in this 'finishing' (and both senses of that term are relevant here – as a completion and as final refinement or polish), it was necessary to address the European stages of their travels in this thesis (see Chapter 3), despite it not necessarily being predicated in the initial focussing questions.

Although it is not an absolute division, the demarcation that locates architectural history in Europe and architectural modernity in the United States is a significant finding. To all intents and purposes their European itineraries were the equivalent of a seventeenth century Grand Tour, often taking in some of the same sites of antiquity. Toomath's search for his cultural roots in western Europe (and France in particular) is very much in that vein. But to gain that same immersion in modernity, the trip to the United States had to be made.

There was a degree of ambivalence toward this manifestation of modernity in the United States that is worthy of mention here, although it was not fully explored in the body of the thesis. For a start, the modernity that the New Zealanders were seeking was distinctly inflected by European ideals, but made international by being located in the United States. It was not necessarily an architecture of the United States that was attractive to them, but architecture that happened to be *in* the United States. In Alington and Toomath's cases they were attracted to the United States by a desire to meet and/or study under one or more of the European modern masters (along with Wright, a true United States modern master).

Nevertheless, the opportunities afforded to Alington, Smith, Turbott, and Toomath during their United States experience were many and varied, and importantly, could not possibly be accessed from New Zealand. They included the opportunity to study at some of the most prestigious schools of architecture in the world; the chance to experience physically the key works of contemporary design that they could previously only access via visual reproductions in imported printed media; and the ability to meet and rub shoulders with some of the prime figures in contemporary discourse, who were actively involved in shaping postwar developments in architecture and landscape architecture. In essence they were not just being exposed to, but were being embedded into the very heart of postwar 'modernity'.<sup>99</sup>

There they discovered that they were sufficiently qualified, in all areas except self-confidence, to operate effectively at the leading edges of modern practice.<sup>100</sup> This finding is significant in the broader context of postwar New Zealand architectural history, both as new knowledge in and of itself, but also in the way that it opens up gaps within the narratives that define that discourse.

## 5.2 RECONSIDERING EXISTING NARRATIVES

Comparing these findings against the defining narrative framework of New Zealand architectural history, as set out in Chapter 1, leads to some surprising conclusions. That modernity had already reached a mature form in United States had been noted by Pascoe as early as 1947 (Pascoe and Hall 122). Similarly, most commentaries up to Walden's *Voices of Silence* in 1987 comment on the influence of United States architecture here, in one form or

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<sup>99</sup> In many respects the lack of opportunities to experience these things in New Zealand, hence the perceived need to 'finish' an education with overseas travel, still exists as an issue in contemporary architectural education.

<sup>100</sup> Turbott is again the exception here, given that he had no prior training in landscape architecture. However, he attributes his own self-confidence less to the training, and more to the variety of experiences that he had (which included attending a prestigious university).

another. Despite the two surveys by Hodgson and Shaw in the early 1990s, the collapsing of local architectural history onto the single exclusionary narrative – the search for an indigenous architecture – has obscured those earlier acknowledgements of United States influence. When it is addressed, it is usually placed within that same reductive framework, and for that reason the United States West Coast regionalism is highlighted. This occurs at the expense of the range of work that was considered significant by the subjects of this study.

This work, then, has effectively reopened an area of enquiry. While it need not replace the narratives that already exist, further exploration is needed to paint a broader picture of the range of positions that were held by architects in postwar New Zealand.

These findings also shed further insight into the effect of the dominance of existing narratives on New Zealand's architectural history. By largely reducing New Zealand postwar architectural history to a single exclusionary narrative, this being the search for the holy grail of a distinctively New Zealand architecture, the success of which has never eventuated (especially when the overseas influences of those that are upheld as having come closest to that goal are examined), New Zealand architecture can only ever be considered a failure. At best, we celebrate those, such as the members of the Architectural Group over its multiple manifestations, who came closest to meeting these ideals.

Yet the fact that our four architects had the same interests as their overseas peers, could comfortably study alongside them at some of the most prestigious schools of architecture in the world, and could hold their own in practice alongside some of the biggest names of modern architecture (and landscape architecture) indicates that, when measured by a different yardstick, they, and no doubt other architects were capable of a much higher level of work than our narratives can currently credit.

This finding also calls into question the quality of education being delivered at Auckland University College in the immediate postwar period. If its graduates were able to do so well in higher education overseas, then perhaps their education was better than they thought. While most who went through the School at this time state that they supplemented their coursework with a great deal of independent study, it might nevertheless be time to re-evaluate that programme from a point of view other than that of disaffected students.<sup>101</sup>

### 5.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

As noted in Section 2.2, citation of personal communications and interviews are common in the contemporary writing of New Zealand architectural history. Architects are normally called upon to provide information and authoritativeness to supplement more conventional archive-based historical investigations. The combination of oral history and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in the mixed methods approach used in this project has, however, provided a number of significant advantages for historical research. Most of these benefits have been discussed in Chapter 2, including the 'archivability' of formal oral history projects, the richness gained from an extended career history (compared to a targeted interview), and the ability to share control of the narratives in order to better record the narrator's voice and meanings. This last point, sharing authority, has been essential for this work. Allowing each subject to have as much control over the telling of their narratives as possible has ensured that the narrator's own meaning can emerge.

Marrying an IPA analysis to the oral history data was ultimately successful, which should not be a surprise given the similarities between the semi-

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<sup>101</sup> In fact, Christine McCarthy's contribution to Gatley's *Group Architects* (2010) provides an excellent beginning to such a re-evaluation (see McCarthy, "The Roaring Forties").

structured interview favoured by IPA researchers and oral histories.<sup>102</sup> If anything the less-focussed oral history interviews provide an increased richness (and quantity) of data, which provides more room within which to make surprising connections across the life history being told. IPA also demands an in-depth study of each case, before attempts are made to provide cross-case analysis. This is ideal for the type of rich subjectivity that is common to formal oral history projects, and again, fosters emergence of the narrator's own meaning prior to broader comparative interpretation.

Where the mixed method approach really came into its own was in the management of the vast amount of material generated across the many hours of recorded interviews, and despite the narrow focus of this thesis, the bewildering complexity of themes that emerged from the rich oral history-based data. The systematic IPA analysis brought clarity to the data, which allowed it to be treated with a good degree of rigour. Most importantly, however, it provided a way to access the unique data within the oral history recordings – data arising from the voices of the subjects, and grounded in their own interpretation of their experiences.<sup>103</sup>

The significance of this finding, although of a methodological nature, should not be underestimated. Information of this nature, as shown, has formed the key findings of this research, and could not have been generated by other

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<sup>102</sup> Although it is still quite rare, there are a number of other studies that have taken a similar mixed method approach since this research started (see, for example: Finch; Green-Flint).

<sup>103</sup> While it was expected that the existence of a significant United States influence on postwar New Zealand architectural developments would be confirmed and elucidated by this research, there was no specific hypothesis put forward at the beginning of this study. This was a conscious decision to allow the subjects' own meanings to emerge, as much as possible, from within the interpretive analysis. In that sense it was a deliberate attempt to mitigate the effects of my own preconceived knowledge, shaped by the existing historical narratives (noting also that the subjects' testimonies are also, in part, touched by those same narratives).



means, including archival sources, even had a greater range of that material been available.

#### 5.4 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There is considerable scope for further experimentation using IPA in the analysis of oral history interviews, including with existing oral histories contained within research archives. As oral history based studies continue to gain legitimacy in academia, analytical methods that provide a systematic way of managing the data and ensuring the rigour of its interpretation are likely to become more commonplace.

Archival placement of the oral history interviews recorded for this project will mean there is considerable scope for subsequent research into the career biographies of the four architects studied here, including revisiting some of the same topics addressed in this thesis. However, one of the limitations of this research is that it has taken a small number of subjects from a much larger field, which means that the findings are not necessarily generalisable. This is not necessarily a significant drawback, as greater multivalence is desirable to address some of the shortcomings in our narrowly focussed architectural history. Rather than looking to replace one set of narratives with another set of equally reductive ones in bold acts of revisionist history, there is room for a more nuanced coexistence of competing and alternative narratives.

Even in the narrow focus of this study, there are many potential avenues for broadening its significance through further research. It would be productive to compare the findings of this work with a similar study that followed the architects who travelled to the United Kingdom for postgraduate study. How did their motivations and experiences differ? Similarly, findings from a similar study of Australian architects would provide a useful comparative project.

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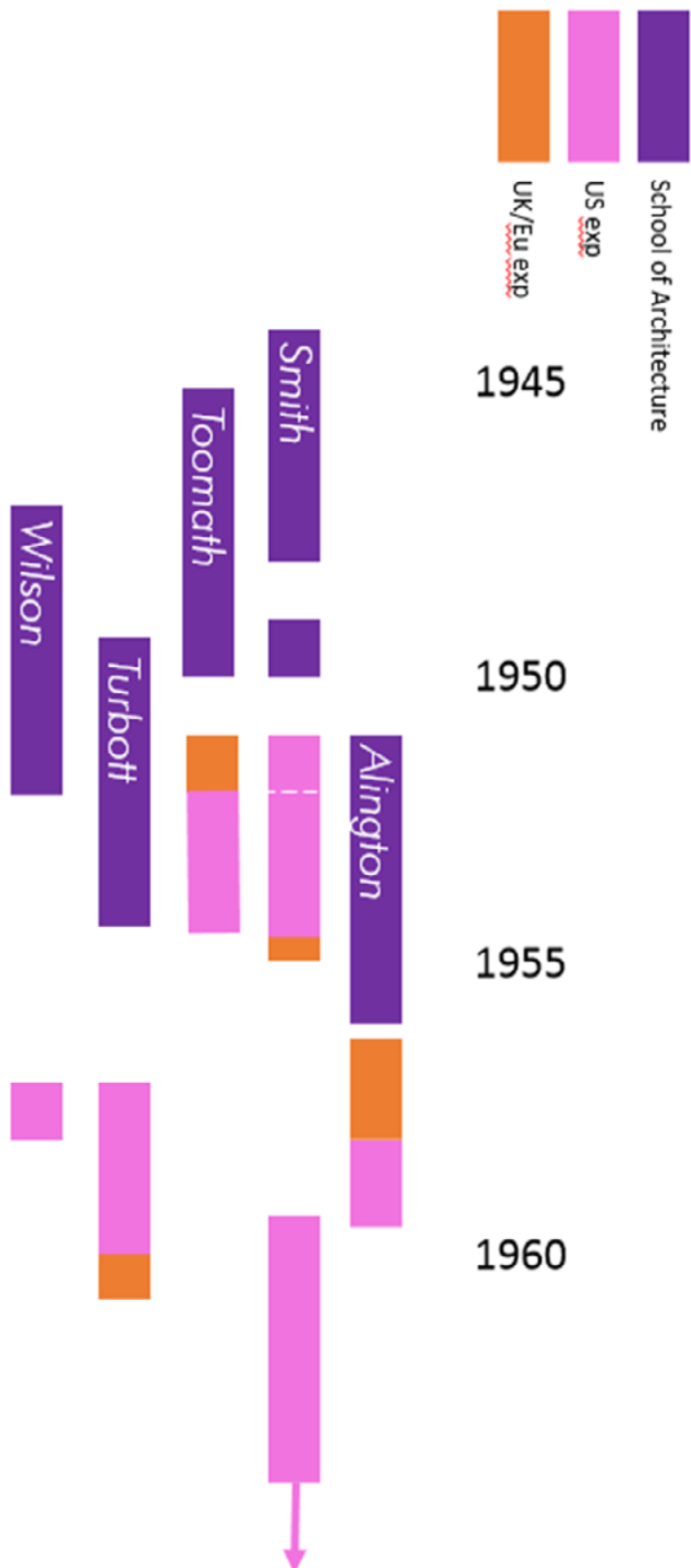
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## APPENDICES

## A) Timeline





## B) Thematic analysis – thematic clusters

## NZAA Clustering of themes

Biographical Devices
<p>Epiphany</p> <p>Formative interest/awareness in architecture/design</p> <p>Parallel with Masters</p> <p>Turning point</p> <p>Direction – decisiveness</p> <p>Direction – drifting</p> <p>Direction – predetermined</p> <p>Direction – Turning point advice</p> <p>Making a difference</p> <p>Making a difference – US</p> <p>On the spot/presence at significant event</p> <p>Outsider identification (Included here is non-conformity)</p> <p>Outsider self-taught (genius)</p> <p>Precocious talent – recognition</p> <p>Precocious talent (early) – recognition</p> <p>Significant historical events</p>
Europe
<p>Britain as 'home'</p> <p>Europe influence</p> <p>Europe influence – career development</p> <p>Europe Influence - direct design influence cited</p> <p>European influence (formative)</p> <p>European Influence – SoA staff</p> <p>Europe observations – formality</p> <p>Europe observations – higher quality of architectural design</p> <p>Europe observations – history</p> <p>Europe observations – Modern architecture</p> <p>Europe observations – Old World grandeur</p> <p>Europe observations - Opportunity</p> <p>Europe observations – scale</p> <p>Europe vs US</p>
Influential figures
<p>Architectural Group influence</p> <p>Association with influential figures</p> <p>Association with influential figures – inspiration</p> <p>Association with influential figures – milieu</p> <p>Association with influential figures – notable mentors</p> <p>Association with influential figures – sage advice</p> <p>Association with influential figures – US education</p> <p>Formative environment/community</p> <p>Meeting Masters</p> <p>Meeting Masters - at the feet of Masters</p> <p>Meeting Masters - rubbing shoulders with Masters</p> <p>NZAA cohort connection</p> <p>Other NZ influences</p>
Intellectualism
<p>Anti-intellectualism</p> <p>Intellectualism – academic achievement</p> <p>Intellectualism – early academic achievement</p> <p>Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm</p> <p>Intellectualism – philosophising</p> <p>Intellectualism – teaching</p> <p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)</p> <p>Interest beyond borders of discipline</p>
Modern Architecture
<p>Advancing Modern architecture (battle)</p> <p>Brave new world – Architecture</p> <p>Evidence of Masters worship</p> <p>Modernist values /dogma?</p> <p>Questioning the Masters</p> <p>Social concern</p> <p>Total design</p>

New Zealand
<p>NZ Architectural education - failings</p> <p>NZ Americanisation</p> <p>Colonial Cringe</p> <p>Colonial Cringe – fear</p> <p>Influence of media – books</p> <p>Influence of media – journals</p> <p>Influence of media – photography</p> <p>NZ footing it with best of Intl Modern architecture</p> <p>NZ Regionalist architecture</p>
Travel
<p>Enduring contacts</p> <p>Experiencing the 'Centre'</p> <p>Genuine Experience – buildings</p> <p>Genuine experience – profession/industry</p> <p>Genuine experience – value of experience over visual media</p> <p>Motivation</p> <p>New experiences – excitement</p> <p>New experiences – knowledge</p> <p>New experiences – life experiences</p> <p>New experiences – shock (includes experiences of Auckland)</p>
United States
<p>Anti-US sentiment</p> <p>US Experience – course content</p> <p>US Education - failings</p> <p>US influence</p> <p>US influence – (formative)</p> <p>US influence – career development</p> <p>US influence – career development – Confidence</p> <p>US influence – direct design influence cited</p> <p>US Influence – exemplars</p> <p>US Observations – artificiality of lifestyle</p> <p>US Observations – derelict/poverty</p> <p>US Observations – formulaic student work</p> <p>US Observations – Fulbright hospitality</p> <p>US Observations – hospitality</p> <p>US Observations – landscape</p> <p>US Observations - lifestyle/culture (negative)</p> <p>US Observations – luxury</p> <p>US Observations – opportunity</p> <p>US Observations – propaganda</p> <p>US Observations – scale</p> <p>US Observations – technology/technological superiority</p> <p>US vs Europe</p>
Other
<p>Japanese influence – [? Via US]</p> <p>Technology – speed of change</p>

### C) Thematic analysis – sample worksheet

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 1 – Background and Education

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington  
**Date:** Wednesday 8th September 2004  
**Recorded at:** 15 Toru Street, Lyall Bay, Wellington  
**Interviewed and Abstracted by:** Michael Dudding

<b>Track 1.01</b>		
0:01:00	Recording identification	
<b>Track 1.02</b>		
0:00:13	Homebirth in St Romans Av, <b>Waterloo, [Lower Hutt]</b> , 18th November 1929.	
0:00:35	Mother, ... <b>Hair</b> , gives details about background in <b>Helensborough, (near Glasgow) Scotland</b> , and her arrival in <b>Christchurch, New Zealand</b> in 1921, and subsequent training as a <b>Nurse</b> . Gives brief details of Mother's siblings.	<p><b>Britain as 'home'</b>  References to the Scotland as family origin (maternal) [evidence of the old country as home? Note 'unremarkableness' of narration at this point – i.e. the norm – a usual rather than unusual phenomenon etc – probably a generational motif]  Most of Mother's siblings emigrated to new world (NZ/Australia)  <b>Cultural Cringe (precedent)</b> – mother thought she would get off emigration ship at NZ by canoe.</p>
0:04:09	Parents <b>Married in St Andrew's Church, Christchurch, February 1928</b> . Father, ... <b>Alington</b> , born in 1896, <b>Methven, Canterbury, New Zealand</b> . The family moved to <b>Christchurch</b> when Grandfather, <b>George Hildebrand Alington</b> died in 1905, Grandmother, <b>Winifred</b> was unable to put ... through secondary education. Gained qualification and became <b>Chief Accountant</b> at the <b>Railways</b> . Gives brief details of family's involvement in <b>WWI</b> .	
0:04:24		
0:07:03	Family moves to <b>Birdwood Road, Waterloo</b> [1931?]. Describes house and surrounding area, and life during the <b>Depression</b> .	
0:08:00		
0:12:54	Aunt and Uncle visit <b>Scotland</b> [1932-3?], and bring back a set of very fine <b>building blocks</b> for the young Bill. Recollection of playing with blocks and evolving <b>cantilever</b> structures.	<p><b>Europe influence (formative)</b>  <b>Biographical devices – parallel with Masters</b>  References to the Scotland as family origin (maternal). Also German building blocks brought back as gift. Better quality of product from Europe [implicit], also, possibility of implicit connection with Froebel[?], given the mirrored occurrences in Alington and FLW biographies.</p>
0:14:55	Describes Sunday walks where he develops an interest in looking at <b>housing</b> .	<p><b>Biographical devices – formative interest/awareness in architecture/design</b>  Early – retrospective – formative (as described) interest in built environment – romantic, and houses surrounded by plant growth.  <b>Strong visual memory</b></p>
0:16:42	Gives details of family <b>church</b> life.	

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 1 – Background and Education

0:19:38	Briefly recalls family travels - frequent, as Father worked with Railways		
0:20:40	In 1935, new home designed for family in <b>Hinai St, Woburn [Lower Hutt]</b> by architect <b>Don Norton</b> , and built by <b>Beazley</b> . Gives brief description of house.	<b>Biographical devices – formative interest/awareness in architecture/design</b> Early awareness of role of architect – not described as formative though	
0:22:12	In 1935, attends <b>Waiwhetu School</b> . Gives childhood recollections of primary school, play activities, bedtime reading etc. Includes description of <b>building forts</b> out of scrap timber, gaining a sense of basic <b>construction and structural techniques</b> .	<b>Biographical devices – formative interest/awareness in architecture/design</b> Again, narrative shaped to retrospectively identify formative activities (making things/construction – forts, trolleys etc... - learning about construction, triangulation/bracing). No doubt tailored to 'audience' – cf Walden's [?] coverage of Roger Walker's childhood	
0:29:49	Recalls building a 1-wire telephone between bedrooms with a friend and discovering that it was broadcasting on the radio.		
0:32:54	Younger brother <b>Robert Alington</b> dies of leukaemia [1942?]. Family adopts <b>Patricia</b> at about this time.		
0:34:50	Contracts <b>peritonitis</b> not long after Robert's death and taken by ambulance to <b>Wellington Hospital</b> . Affects <b>sport</b> playing at <b>Hutt Valley High School</b> .		
0:36:50	Attends <b>Hutt Valley High School</b> , responds well to the more ordered environment of secondary schooling. Recalls enjoying <b>Mathematics, Reading, Chemistry</b> , and <b>Art</b> . Describes <b>Jim Coe</b> [?], <b>artist</b> and <b>Art teacher</b> as an encouraging figure at the High School. Describes school life, plays <b>Tenor Horn</b> in school band.	<b>Intellectualism – early academic achievement</b> Association with influential figures – notable mentors Note – interest (and implied ability) in academic courses, as well as interest in arts. Well rounded academic education Attributes shift from sports/'he-man' identity of HVH to a more cultured one via influence of Jim [James] Coe	
0:43:50	Recalls being unsure of direction after high school, goes straight to <b>Victoria University</b> to study <b>Engineering</b> intermediate.	<b>Direction - drifting</b> Drifts into engineering, but doesn't progress (why?! – note <i>pers comm</i> in thesis pg 10 – retrospective attribution of distance between mathematical solution and actual creation of spaces)	
0:44:00	Recalls <b>V.E. Day</b> or <b>V.J. Day</b> (unsure which) when he and group of friends are photographed dancing in the streets of <b>Wellington</b> , which subsequently appears in a newspaper.	<b>Significant historical events (vivid memory of)</b>	
0:45:50	At father's instigation, decides that university was merely 'frittering my time away'.		
0:46:21	Describes interest in <b>drawing house plans</b> , while at college and university. Develops this interest in a <b>vacation job</b> at the Head Design Office at the Railways. Learns <b>drawing and presentation techniques</b> , and introduced to the <b>Architectural Forum</b> magazine by Railways architect <b>Ivan Clarkson</b> [?].	<b>Influence of media</b> <b>US influence – (formative)</b> <b>Biographical devices – Epiphany</b> US journal as introduction to world of architectural design "simply blown away by [them]" "I remember being intrigued by these houses and buildings". "That awakened my thinking" (epiphany)	
0:49:08	Explains decision to leave university to pursue career in <b>architecture</b> . Recalls taking his house plans to <b>Maurice Patience</b> , then president of <b>The Architectural Centre</b> , and working for the <b>Ministry of Works</b> in the <b>Town planning</b> department. <b>Patience</b> encourages him to apply for work at the <b>Ministry of Works</b> as a <b>draughting cadet</b> , and to join <b>The Architectural Centre</b> .	<b>Biographical devices – Turning point</b> Association with influential figures – sage advice Association with influential figures – milieu <b>Direction – Turning point advice</b> • <b>MoW</b>	

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 1 – Background and Education

0:50:41	Follows advice and gains <b>cadetship</b> at <b>Ministry of Works</b> , and joins <b>Architectural Centre</b> . Describes <b>MoW</b> environment, and influence of working and learning under <b>Jim Beard</b> , who became somewhat of a <b>mentor</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Architectural Centre</li> </ul> <p>Precocious talent (early) - recognition</p> <p>Exposure to 'names' within MoW and AC as epiphany/turning point in realisation of future direction ("strengths"). Connection with known historically significant intellectual/architectural context, in which subsequent narrative becomes embedded.</p> <p>NZAA cohort connection</p> <p>Association with influential figures – notable mentors.</p>
0:53:06	Describes relationship with <b>Gordon Wilson</b> , then <b>Assistant Government Architect</b> , and recalls various incidents of carrying out specific jobs for Wilson.	<p>Association with influential figures – notable mentors</p> <p>Precocious talent (early) - recognition</p> <p>Importance of Gordon Wilson 'he was very good for me' – positive memories and development of rapport [someone looked up to and valued engagement with]... [closeness to local 'Master'] [cf Wilson's own US experiences]</p>
1:00:23	Describes process of applying to study at <b>Auckland University's School of Architecture</b> on an <b>Education Department scholarship</b> .	<p>Outsider identification – non-conformity</p> <p>'Modernist' outsider – 'proto' in Alington's developmental sense. [Theme picked up again in thesis year.]</p>
1:01:49	Describes student life in <b>Auckland</b> , friends with <b>Malcolm Smith</b> , who introduces him to the University <b>Student Christian Movement</b> . Reference: Mt Eden, Auckland.	Formative environment/community
1:03:08	Designs housing as student project (in Le Corbusier manner) – learns from 'crit' [critique] process. Describes. Mentions – Enjoys, and does well at his studies. Reference: Whatman (paper)	<p>Evidence of Masters worship</p> <p>Influence of European Masters</p>
1:05:07	Mentions – owned set of LE Corbusier's <i>Oeuvres Completes</i> – after advice from Beard. Mentions – approach to design quite open at the School at that time.	<p>Evidence of Masters worship</p> <p>Influence of media - books</p>
1:05:20	Able to collect all Modern architectural books due to limited numbers published. Outlines. Reference: Philip Johnson: <i>Mies van der Rohe</i> ; Parson's Books; Technical Publications; [Richard] Neutra; [Walter] Gropius; Hutt Valley High School; Jim Coe	<p>Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm</p> <p>Influence of media – books</p> <p>Personal Library collection – evidence of intellectualism?? Easy to do due to lack of publications.</p>
1:06:17	Discusses architecture with friends, including Reg Uren. Outlines. Reference: Hutt Valley High School; Jim Coe; Villa Savoye.	<p>Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm</p> <p>Shared availability of books meant common ground for discussion to begin from</p>
1:07:40	Describes impact of <b>The Group Architects</b> . Recalls seeing <b>Bill Toomath's house</b> being built in the <b>Hutt</b> .	<p>Architectural Group influence (brief mention)</p> <p>NZAA cohort connection – influence of Toomath house</p>
1:08:58	Recalls other students who were influential, including <b>Vince Terreni</b> , <b>Stan Bellingher</b> [?], <b>Colin Cameron</b> , <b>Michael Fowler</b> , <b>John Goldwater</b> , <b>Guy Sellars</b> , <b>Eddie Wong</b> .	<p>Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm</p>

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 1 – Background and Education

1:10:28	Recalls presence of <b>Vernon Brown, Dr Toy, and A.R.D. Fairburn</b> about campus, and describes incident of rejecting an illustration by <b>Colin McCahon</b> for a magazine cover.	Intellectualism – as extra-curricular discussion with other students [note – WHA suggests this is the norm, but not backed-up of other NZAA cohort]  Formative environment/community Association with influential figures – milieu
1:11:44	<i>[Recording paused for 10 minute break - microphones are repositioned, W H A's being poorly placed and subsequent rubbing of the microphone can be heard periodically throughout the remainder of the recording]</i> Explains <b>MoW</b> 's system of payment for students on scholarship.	
1:12:53	Describes general <b>student life</b> , and perceptions of living in <b>Auckland</b> .	New experiences – shock Auckland “quite a shock to the system”. Enjoyed being there, but able to be critical of it – <b>being on the back foot sharpens ability to analyse</b> . [cf with US experiences later?]
1:14:43	As top student in class, wins <b>Senior Scholarship Prize in Architecture</b> in third year of study. Purchases architecture books with the award money.	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Precocious talent - recognition Intellectualism – academic achievement Interest beyond borders of discipline Senior Scholarship – intellectual achievement. Bought Saarinen's book on the city [and Gibberd's book on the <i>Town Design</i> ] with prize money...
1:16:31	Studio format of School encouraged camaraderie. Explains. Mentions – given encouragement by studio tutor, Bolland[?]. Reference: ‘Daddy’ [Arthur] Marshall.	Formative environment/community Precocious talent - recognition
1:19:48	Mentions – as first year student, gets on well with, and learns from 3 <sup>rd</sup> year students	Formative environment/community
1:20:04	Mentions – John Goldwater designed a museum using Villa Savoye as model for 3 <sup>rd</sup> year student project.	Evidence of Masters worship
1:20:39	Mentions – studio tuition was one-on-one discussion of drawings on the board.	
1:21:04	Learned a lot from others’ presentations. Outlines.	Formative environment/community
1:21:44	Mentions – courses in the curriculum included: Design; Structures; Sanitation and Hygiene; Professional Practice; Mathematics; Architectural Theory and History.	
1:22:24	Recalls <b>Imi Porsolt's</b> history course - enthusiastic and enlightening.	Europe influence Association with influential figures – inspiration Exposure to European modern buildings from Imi Porsolt – conveyed excitement of buildings
1:23:45	Recalls <b>Professor Light's</b> theory course - diffident, and unable to convey ideas, especially with regards to the <b>modern movement</b> .	An unfortunate appointment, very diffident about Modern architecture
1:24:55	<b>Modernist theories</b> gained through discussion with other students, and through reading the likes of <b>Geoffrey Scott, Le Corbusier, Phillip Johnson, and [Henry-Russell] Hitchcock</b> , and journals including <i>The Architectural Record, The</i>	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Influence of media – journals Influence of media – books

# W H Alington Oral History Project

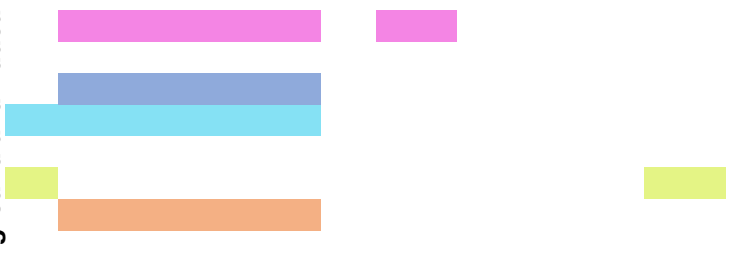
## Session 1 – Background and Education

1:26:51	<p><b>Architectural Forum</b>, and especially <i>The Architectural Review</i>. Other sources include discussions about <b>modern art</b>, and also of recent houses by <b>Dick Toy</b>, and <b>Vernon Brown</b>.</p> <p>Describes winning a class <b>design competition</b> for a park in <b>Howick, Auckland</b>, which was later built.</p>	<p>Interest beyond borders of discipline Association with influential figures – inspiration Collection of various influences for theory [again of Journals and Books papers]</p> <p>Precocious talent – recognition Achievement – early promise/success</p>
1:29:00	Describes <b>Student Christian Movement</b> , young radical thinkers that questioned the basic fundamental questions across academic disciplines. Members and presenters included <b>musicians, philosophers, historians</b> , etc. Mentions <b>Karl Popper</b> .	<p>Intellectualism – philosophising Formative environment/community Intellectualism – cross disciplinary and engaged... Radical questioning pursued</p>
1:32:09	Explains ideas of 'Architectural Space' developed while studying - a space built up of the totality of perceptions.	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)
1:33:46	Intended to follow studies with further <b>Town Planning</b> studies, but never eventuated.	<p>Interest beyond borders of discipline – Looking beyond borders of discipline (although, a fairly common trait in Modernist architectural thinking at this time) [cf looking beyond local discourse boundaries? Also Jim Beard Town Planning and JB and DT – Landscape]</p> <p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Outsider identification – Criticism of stylistic understanding borne from studying image (endorsement of 'experience' – unable to be achieved in overseas journals) Influence of media – photography Questioning the Masters – Le Corbusier as painter/formalist, compared with FLW</p>
1:34:02	Returns to explanation of <b>Architectural Space</b> , against the more <b>formalist</b> approach that was then current in architecture. Mentions the influence of <b>black &amp; white photography</b> on <b>architectural formalism</b> .	
1:39:50	Briefly talks about ' <b>Dick Toy's</b> ideas regarding ' <b>space</b> ', and his teaching at <b>Architecture School</b> . Toy was very passionate, and could excite you about the subject, even if it were <b>Sanitation and Hygiene</b> . Recalls visiting Dick many years later.	<p>Association with influential figures – inspiration – Toy on space, close relationship developed Colonial cringe? – European/Irish PhD in architecture [although kind of reversed given Toy's lack of apparent status at the School?]</p>
1:43:58	Describes <b>Vernon Brown's</b> provocative role at the school.	
1:49:12	Explains lack of rigorous intellectual and philosophical debate and study of proper architectural theory as being the main weakness of the architecture course.	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Intellectualism – criticises lack of 'theory' and philosophical discipline in teaching and critique.
1:51:32	Left university with ideas about the <b>rationality</b> of architecture, explains that if feelings are sufficiently rationalised out, then a sense of <b>architectural quality</b> could be achieved.	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Continues from above
1:54:05	Recalls important international buildings of the era, including <b>Le Corbusier's Ronchamp Chapel</b> , [ <b>Mies van der Rohe's</b> ] <b>IIT campus buildings</b> and <b>Farnsworth House</b> , but explains <b>The Group Architects'</b> buildings in <b>New Zealand</b> were more	<p>Brave new world – Architecture Architectural Group influence - Caught up in the Group rather than necessarily overseas examples such as IIT or Farnsworth – i.e. small timber</p>



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 1 – Background and Education



	influential - the basic <b>timber construction</b> that could 'transform the whole thinking of architecture', and the 'clean' plans.	construction. [perhaps some contradiction between intellectual desire for more theoretical grounding and pragmatics of the Group?]
1:57:34	Explains that a <b>New Zealand Architectural identity</b> was not being sought at that time, the thinking was more in terms of getting <b>modern architecture</b> 'off the ground'.	<p>Brave new world – Architecture</p> <p>NZ Regionalist architecture</p> <p>Europe Influence</p> <p>US influence</p> <p>Advancing Modern architecture (battle)</p> <p>Influences taken from all over the place – mainly Europe and US. Arch Centre book failed because there is no NZ style – difficult and irrelevant – too hooked to Europe [does that include US – given the home of European masters? – i.e. US architecture seen as European because of this?]</p> <p>Mentions Toomath's book and identification of shared built forms with US.</p>
2:01:34	Describes meeting of future wife, <b>Margaret Broadhead</b> , introduced through <b>Norville [?] Smith</b> .	
2:05:30	<b>Graduated in 1955</b> , and returned to work in Wellington at <b>MoW</b> in the <b>Hydro-Design</b> office under <b>Chris Vallenduuk</b> . Reference: Alec [?] McDonald	[possible link to US via TWA at this point??]
2:06:53	Recalls first job at <b>Hydro Design Office</b> , designing a <b>standard water tower</b> , of which the first was erected at <b>Bulls</b> , two were erected at <b>Burnham Camp</b> , and two also at <b>Linton Military Camp</b> , and one at <b>Massey University</b> .	
2:07:27	Recalls designing <b>power-house</b> for the <b>Whakapapa [Waipapa?] Power Scheme</b> . Describes difficulties of scale in the design of domestic scale offices etc. against enormous engineering scale of the actual dams, and explains the solution he arrived at.	
2:09:30	Recounts a war-time story told by Chris Vallenduuk. Briefly describes Vallenduuk's influence.	Association with influential figures – notable mentors Vallenduuk gets Alington "thinking" which is what he needed. [intellectual engagement?]
2:12:15	Describes experience of the <b>Centennial Exhibition</b> of 1940.	
2:15:40	[Interview ends]	

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 2 – The MoW Years

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington  
**Date:** Wednesday 15th September 2004  
**Recorded at:** Meteorological Service of New Zealand,  
 30 Salamanca Road, Kelburn, Wellington  
**Interviewed and Abstracted by:** Michael Dudding

Track 2.01		
0:00:00	[Recording identification]	
Track 2.02		
0:00:09	Began <b>Cadetship</b> at <b>Ministry of Works</b> (MoW), in 1949. Describes ' <b>Tomato House</b> ' the nickname given to the building in which the department was housed.	Association with influential figures – milieu – MoW
0:02:08	Recalls first day as cadet - <b>Jim Beard</b> looked after cadets, 3 at that stage, the other two being <b>Ben Brenton</b> [?], and <b>Vince Torrini</b> [?]. Describes skills learnt under Beard.	Association with influential figures – notable mentors NZAA cohort connection FNZAA cohort connection
0:03:50	Recalls being excited about working for MoW.	New experiences – excitement Excited – felt as if starting something “very committed to” [further emphasis on turning point] Turning Point – starting something that he felt “very very committed to”
0:04:12	Joins <b>The Architectural Centre</b> where he is tutored in <b>Testimony of Study</b> exercises, submitted to <b>NZIA</b> qualification. Describes first Testimony exercise, which was failed.	Outsider identification 'Modernist' outsider – ‘proto’ in Alington’s developmental sense. [Theme picked up again in thesis year.] – yet felt part of [wgtn?] avant garde at the same time.
0:05:52	Encouraged to study architecture at <b>Auckland University</b> . Uses <b>Education Department Bursary</b> to study in Auckland, in order to avoid the <b>5 year bond</b> of employment that was required by a MoW sponsored bursary.	
0:06:49	Describes benefits of training in MoW and his own initial career intentions as an architect for MoW	Association with influential figures – milieu “Radical” intellectual environment at AC, connected with staff at MoW, especially Gordon Wilson...
0:08:58	Describes <b>Gordon Wilson</b> as <b>Government Architect</b> .	Association with influential figures – notable mentors Precocious talent – recognition
0:10:06	Recalls designing furniture for <b>Waihou</b> [?] <b>Hotel</b> project - was fooled into designing ' <b>Po Cabinet</b> ' by <b>Tony Treadwell</b> .	Favoured by GW [appointed? Recalling GW as both head of MoW (later), and as founder of AC... figurehead]

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 2 – The MoW Years

0:12:19	Recalls being asked to draw up a lot of <b>perspective sketches</b> for various projects.	Precocious talent – recognition	
0:12:28	Reflects on <b>office camaraderie</b> , and describes office <b>Christmas Parties</b> .	Camaraderie	
0:13:33	Recalls <b>The Architectural Centre's Demonstration House</b> project, <b>Gordon Wilson</b> very much involved, and sent cadets to help work on the project as part of their training.	Association with influential figures – milieu Further evidence of AC/MoW milieu, and GW as figurehead	
0:14:12	Describes <b>Jim Beard's</b> influence, uses teachings of <b>colour psychology</b> , and <b>golden mean proportions</b> as specific examples. <b>Beard's</b> influences included the <b>Bauhaus</b> , <b>Le Corbusier</b> , and <b>Gropius</b> .	NZAA cohort connection Association with influential figures – notable mentors Evidence of Masters worship Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm JB's European Modernist influences + Valorised as "radical thinker".	
0:16:25	Impressed by <b>Gordon Wilson's</b> approachability. Further describes Wilson as a good critic.	Association with influential figures – notable mentors	
0:18:19	Recalls other colleagues within the department.		
0:18:45	Recalls <b>Stuart [?] Mitchinson</b> , and working under him as <b>assistant editor</b> for the <b>NZIA Journal</b> .		
0:20:00	Describes <b>Town Planning Ministry</b> under <b>John Cox</b> . Recalls influence of this department on architects of the time, and how many, including <b>Maurice Patience</b> , <b>Al Gabites</b> , and <b>Jim Beard</b> , went on to gain a Town Planning qualification.	Interest beyond borders of discipline Association with influential figures – milieu – Gabites, Einhorn, and others in Town Planning dept.	
0:21:05	Recalls <b>The Architectural Centre</b> as being the most unifying factor in <b>Wellington architecture</b> , especially with regard to the crossover between town planning and architecture.	Looking beyond borders of discipline, total design Interest beyond borders of discipline Association with influential figures – milieu Looking beyond borders of discipline, total design	
0:21:56	Recalls some of the projects worked on as a cadet.		
0:23:14	<i>[The recording is interrupted at this point for a 15-minute break, which included a tour of the Meteorological Service building.]</i>		
Track 2.03			
0:00:01	Recalls European immigrants working within the MoW.	Europe Influence European Modernist influence at MoW	
0:00:52	Describes contrasts between <b>Wellington</b> and <b>Auckland</b> from impressions gained while studying at <b>Auckland University</b> .	New experiences – shock Large size, greater affluence, and clearly identifiable areas of rich and poor when compared with Wellington	
0:03:44	Recalls student life at <b>Auckland University</b> , especially older students, and the influence of <b>The Group Architects</b> .	Association with influential figures – milieu Architectural Influence – Group influence Mentions fellow student's names, including HT (FNZAA cohort connection). Ability to see other student's "exciting" work via pin-ups. So few good buildings going up, that work such as the Group's etc were known and visited. Many Group members visited the School, taking part in reviews etc.	

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 2 – The MoW Years

0:06:07	Describes 5th year of study, which consisted of a <b>special thesis</b> , examining 'architectural space', in four <b>North Auckland</b> communities.	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Outsider identification Outsider (intellectual?) – in submitting written thesis rather than design.
0:08:04	Leaves University and returns to the MoW in the Hydro Design Office. Describes the head designer Chris Vallenduuk.	Association with influential figures – inspiration High regard for Vallenduuk – “cultured” act (intellectual?)
0:10:47	Describes the good relationship between the Engineers and the Hydro design Office, started by Fred Newman, and carried on by Vallenduuk.	Total design, Gropius’s teamwork? [Note Wilson’s visit to Gropius during 1950s]
0:11:14	Describes project for <b>Water Tower</b> .	
0:12:00	Describes <b>Lake Tekapo Community Hall</b> project, which used the same joinery and techniques as a <b>state house</b> . Enjoys working with the high quality state house detailing. Wonders whether his plans for this weren't adapted and reused in the <b>Makara Community Hall</b> .	
0:14:41	Recalls working on the <b>Waipapa Power House</b> project. Contrasts this project with <b>Fred Newman's Maretai</b> [?] <b>Power House</b> project.	
0:16:57	Describes relationship with <b>Chris Vallenduuk</b> , and discusses similarities and differences between the <b>Meteorological Office</b> building, and the <b>Upper Hutt Civic Centre</b> project. Vallenduuk recommends introducing <b>rhythms</b> into the design of the proportions - similar to <b>baroque music</b> . Describes evolution of projects from <b>Met. Office</b> to the <b>Waipa District Council Office</b> .	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Interest beyond borders of discipline Association with influential figures – inspiration
0:22:11	Discusses subsequent <b>alterations</b> to <b>built projects</b> that are not in keeping with the original design intention of the building. Uses <b>War Memorial Museum</b> by <b>Miles Warren</b> , with the extension by <b>Pepper &amp; Dixon</b> as a case in point.	
0:23:04	Discusses idea of moving from one project to the next, keeping aspects that work, and evolving solutions for less successful aspects. Describes how the MoW did not operate in this matter.	
0:24:43	Describes the 'subtlety of looking at things' as being a sensitivity that was gained from time spent in the <b>Hydro Design Office</b> under <b>Chris Vallenduuk</b> .	Association with influential figures – inspiration Europe Influence Colonial Cringe
0:26:19	Describes returning to work for the Ministry after working and studying abroad [1959]. Recalls new people who had come into the office from overseas, especially <b>England</b> , and describes their impressions, and their contribution to the office. Reference: Ted Hill; Reg Stapleton; John Wilcox; George Cruickshank.	Return to NZ – a different place at MoW with major staff changes (growth of private practice drawing former colleagues). Immigrants from England worked in office – certain sense of superiority, with less progress and different concerns (e.g. detailing), but frustrated by limited palette of fittings and materials available in New Zealand. [New world versus old world...?]
0:29:55	Recalls the building boom that began in the 1960's, and how many <b>private practices</b> began siphoning out the talent from the Ministry office.	

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 2 – The MoW Years

0:30:11	Describes <b>management policy</b> changes under <b>F Fergus Sheppard</b> that prompted his decision to <b>leave the ministry for private practice</b> .	
0:32:01	Leaves <b>MoW</b> to work for <b>Gabites and Beard</b> .	
0:33:40	Describes how the <b>stud book</b> affected relationships in the office when he returned from overseas at a higher position in the book than the new English workers. Recalls specific examples.	
0:35:49	<b>Gordon Wilson</b> dies. Briefly describes <b>John Blake-Kelly</b> who became <b>Assistant Government Architect</b> .	
0:36:48	Recalls being assigned the <b>Gisborne Courthouse</b> by <b>Blake-Kelly</b> to improve job satisfaction. This became a <b>Standard Courthouse</b> and was built also in <b>New Plymouth</b> , and <b>Lower Hutt</b> , and possibly elsewhere. Provides some details about the project.	US influence – direct design influence cited Influence of US experience on design – standard US building typology (“two-a-penny”)
0:39:27	Describes <b>Nuclear Science building</b> project in <b>Gracefield</b> , <b>Lower Hutt</b> .	
0:40:22	Assists on <b>Canterbury University Science School</b> project, and assists on schemes for <b>Massey</b> and <b>Auckland Universities</b> also.	
0:41:20	In the evenings, helps <b>Jim Beard</b> (then of <b>Gabites and Beard</b> ) prepare a <b>Wellington Precinct Planning Scheme</b> . Describes scheme.	Interest beyond borders of discipline - Town planning, total design NZAA cohort connection Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Precocious talent – recognition
0:44:12	<i>[The recording is stopped at this point for a 10 minute break, which included a walk around the exterior of the Meteorological Service building.]</i>	
<b>Track 2.04</b>	<i>[Recording identification]</i>	
0:00:01		
<b>Track 2.05</b>		
0:00:03	Describes <b>T.V. Avalon Studio</b> project, and the events that led to his scheme not being built.	Technology – speed of change Technological change – speed of over duration of one project. Found interesting
0:02:33	Describes influences on <b>Gisborne Courthouse</b> project, especially <b>American architecture</b> , including <b>Walter Neich</b> [?] of <b>Skidmore Owings &amp; Merrill</b> . Further describes project, and discusses <b>proportions</b> used. Reference: Barry Marshall.	US influence – direct design influence cited Detailing of precast concrete panels, tight-skin details, cantilever stairs... Association with influential figures – notable mentors – Walter Neich US influence, Suggests typology not found in UK at the time
0:08:04	Describes Meteorological Office project, specifically proportions used, and detailing.	Evidence of Masters worship US influence – direct design influence cited [both from student project and USA] Cites influence of Mies, Lakeshore Apartments, on proportions of Met Office. Influence of Masters

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 2 – The MoW Years

0:10:10	Recalls evolving a Schedule of Finishes for doors, windows etc., which was subsequently adopted as a New Zealand Standard. Describes schedule system.	
0:13:19	Describes Meteorological Office project, specifically how the final cantilevered form of the building was arrived at, the aspects of the project that were carried over from the Gisborne Courthouse, and the concrete fins on the exterior of the Met. Office.	
0:20:48	Describes influence of concrete detailing in projects produced by the Hydro Design Office in relation to the exposed concrete of the Met. Office.	
0:21:56	Expresses enduring satisfaction with the Meteorological Office as a piece of architecture.	NZAA cohort connection Cites Gabities and Beard, Toomath and Wilson, and others as good practices at the time. Other practices (e.g. large Australian ones), took many ex-MoW architects. Cites high-rise buildings on Terrace as influence, names Shell House
0:25:19	Provides brief details of significant private practices and projects of the time.	
0:28:14	Recalls Beehive project under Jim Leyburn[?].	
0:29:15	Provides brief details of significant private practices and projects of the time in Auckland and Christchurch. Recalls critiquing office building project John Trengrove and Keith Marshall. Reference: Warren and Mahoney, Peter Beaven	
0:32:58	Describes philosophy (or lack of) and design criteria within the MoW. Suggests a more ideological approach might have come about had Gordon Wilson lived longer.	Further valorisation (speculative) of GW
0:35:41	Describes changes within the MoW over the time he spent in the office, and the loss of the 'corporate memory' with the demise of the Ministry.	
0:38:26	Recalls that being in the MoW did not add professional prestige to an architect. Describes some of the benefits in terms of contacts made while working within the Ministry.	
0:41:03	Describes impact of MoW on New Zealand architecture, as being inappropriate in places, especially in relation to standard buildings, and in particular, schools.	
0:44:43	Describes positive impact of MoW on New Zealand in terms of improvement of quality and technical standards.	
0:45:39	Describes gaining awareness of the need for hard work, many drawings, and a concentration on detailing, as the main career lessons learnt while at the Ministry.	
0:47:47	Inherits training of new draughting cadets upon return from the overseas experience. Recalls evolving training exercises.	Intellectualism – teaching
0:49:41	[Interview ends]	



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 3 – London and Illinois Part 1

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington  
**Date:** Wednesday 22nd September 2004  
**Recorded at:** Alington House,  
 60 Homewood Grove, Karori, Wellington  
**Interviewed and Abstracted by:** Michael Dudding

Track 3.01 0:00:00	[Recording identification]	
Track 3.02		
0:00:07	Describes relationship with <b>Ernst Plishke</b> . Recalls discussions about architecture. Describes <b>Plishke's</b> impact on the local architectural scene.	Association with influential figures Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm <b>Europe Influence / Colonial Cringe</b> - Quite a feather in our cap to have an internationally published architect in Wgtn - Talking architecture – Intellectualism. – Quite a boost that this man was amongst (although did not necessarily follow him). Critical of trying to achieve European masonry forms in timber construction.
0:05:36	Explains origin of <b>Fulbright Scholarship</b> , and how he came to apply for the scheme, following successful scholarships by <b>Bill Toomath</b> , and <b>Harry Turbott</b> .	<b>NZAA cohort connection</b> . First knew of scheme when Toomath and Turbott went to US on Fulbright expected it. <b>Colonial Cringe</b> - Common NZ trait of not writing oneself up enough – but US University choice dictated by aiming to be close to <b>European master</b> (influence). Wrote to various institutes but “didn’t want to go to one with a named head” because he was told that those people were rarely available at their home institutions – mostly touring around the country.
0:08:18	Describes being declined by various universities until he was advised by <b>Eric Budge</b> to 'write himself up' - gets accepted at <b>Illinois [University]</b> .	<b>Colonial Cringe</b> – felt that Americans thought NZ was a “third world country” First NZer at Illinois SoA – felt that they were suspicious of his academic background (third world)
0:09:49	Describes how he was received in <b>Illinois</b> as a New Zealand student.	Association with influential figures – inspiration
0:10:18	Recalls studying design under <b>Professor Dick Williams</b> , in small class of 5 students.	Association with influential figures – US education - Influence of access to named architects from famous US offices. <b>US Observations – opportunity</b> - Implied financial expansiveness not present in NZ[?] ( <b>Colonial Cringe</b> )
0:11:25	Gives details about <b>visiting critics</b> , including <b>Glen Paulsen</b> from <b>Saارين's office</b> , <b>Walter Netsch</b> , from <b>Skidmore Owings &amp; Merrill</b> , and <b>Larry Perkins</b> of <b>Perkins &amp; Willis</b> .	Biographical devices – Epiphany Association with influential figures – US education <b>US influence – direct design influence cited</b>
0:12:30	Explains <b>multiple design</b> process learnt from <b>Glen Paulsen</b> in a student project for a <b>meditation centre</b> .	



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 3 – London and Illinois Part 1

		Specific design influence affecting subsequent design approach. One of most exciting things experienced [epiphany, turning point]. Still remembers process of “discussion” to forward the design. <b>Vivid remembering.</b> “Wonderful experience” description of the design process for meditation centre.
0:18:25	Gives details of <b>presentation techniques</b> learnt in <b>meditation centre</b> project.	<b>Association with influential figures – US education</b> <b>US influence – direct design influence cited</b> - Other specific techniques picked up influence. “Very satisfactory way” work that you could be proud of.. Access to good scale models
≈0:20:00	<i>[Some background noise as Margaret Alington enters and leaves the room]</i>	
≈0:21:20	<i>[Background noise of clock chiming]</i>	
0:22:36	Describes scale of <b>[Illinois] University</b> .	<b>US Observations – scale</b> - University as a town itself – self sustained. <b>New experiences – Life Experience</b> “never had before” <b>Colonial Cringe – fear</b> <b>US Observations – luxury</b> <b>US Observations – derelict/poverty</b> <b>US Observations – Fulbright hospitality</b> Apprehension about getting off ship at NY, heard stories... Relieved by woman sent to help. Surprised by stainless steel train – spotless... Had to stop at station before main station – “run down affair”, “no-hopers”, “blacks”
0:24:00	Describes <b>sailing</b> on a Cunard Line ship into <b>New York Harbour</b> upon arrival from England, and then travelling by <b>train</b> to <b>Urbana</b> in <b>Illinois</b> .	<b>US Observations – landscape</b> <b>US Observations – YMCA hospitality</b> – met on train and then put up for a night in the Urbana Lincoln Hotel due to apartment not being available. Got off train – flat for miles ( <b>vivid memory</b> ) <b>New experiences – shock</b> <b>US Observations – luxury</b> - Very well appointed accommodation – first class equipment - amazing
0:28:07	Describes arrival in <b>Urbana</b> , being met by secretary of <b>YMCA, John Price</b> .	
0:29:31	Gives details of <b>university accommodation</b> .	
0:30:45	Recalls <b>university registration day</b> , gives details of <b>financial assistance of Fulbright Scholarship</b>	
0:32:14	Gives details of <b>Margaret Alington’s job as librarian</b> at the university library.	<b>Europe vs US</b> - Mentions Volkswagen Microbus (European design) in contrast with large US cars.
0:33:30	Recalls the <b>friendliness</b> of people in <b>Urbana</b> .	<b>US Observations – hospitality</b> – extraordinarily friendly and went out of way to make everything easy for Alingtons
0:34:41	Describes getting work in <b>London</b> with <b>Robert Matthew &amp; Johnson-Marshall</b> . Johnson-Marshall formerly worked for Ministry of Education, and Matthew for LCC (mentions that Matthew worked on Roehampton project).	<b>On the spot – presence at formation of RMJM</b> <b>Association with influential figures</b> - RMJM
0:37:04	Gives background details of the <b>Robert Matthew &amp; Johnson-Marshall [RM&amp;JM]</b> partnership.	<b>Association with influential figures</b>

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 3 – London and Illinois Part 1

0:37:43	Describes <b>job interview</b> with <b>Stirrat Johnson-Marshall</b> and <b>Peter Newnham</b> .	<b>Europe vs US</b> Europe observations – formality (versus US Observations – hospitality?) Interesting description of ‘mannered’ situation – contrast with friendliness of US? – both personal and the atmosphere and architecture of the office
0:40:11	Describes other workers in the office, <b>Pat Bullivant</b> [?], and <b>Barbara Thompson</b> [?], also a New Zealander.	
0:41:00	Recalls buying <b>furniture</b> to help set up new office. Describes <b>office layout</b> . Gives details of <b>Johnson-Marshall's</b> role as the <b>Head Architect</b> for the <b>Education Department</b>	<b>Colonial Cringe</b> Association with influential figures
0:43:07	Mentions: <b>Roger Kleins</b> [?], <b>Tim Sturgis</b> [?], <b>Peter Newnham</b> , <b>Maurice Lee</b>	Wore a jersey when others wore suits – “wild colonials”
0:43:34	Describes <b>Michael Ventris</b> .	Association with influential figures
0:44:09	Recalls projects worked on while in <b>RM&amp;JM</b> , including <b>Ruddington School</b> . Describes <b>New Zealand House</b> , and the local opposition to the project.	On the spot – presence in design of significant New Zealand House project in London
0:47:05	Having already gained employment with <b>RM&amp;JM</b> in London, discovers <b>letter of introduction</b> to RM&JM that <b>Gordon Wilson</b> had written for him while still in New Zealand	Association with influential figures
0:47:28	Enjoys experience at <b>RM&amp;JM</b> , recalls various incidents.	
0:51:32	Gives brief details of working on <b>New Zealand House</b> in <b>London</b> .	On the spot – presence in design of significant New Zealand House project in London
0:52:03	Describes <b>Robert Matthew</b> who was then head of the <b>School of Architecture</b> in <b>Edinburgh</b> , and President of the <b>Commonwealth Association of Architects</b> .	Association with influential figures - Enduring contacts Explicitly reflects on value of interesting contacts made – e.g. Robert Matthew came to lunch in Kelburn after WA's return to NZ, Alingtons stayed with Johnson-Marshall in subsequent years.
0:52:50	Describes the homes of <b>Johnson-Marshall</b> . Recalls discussing architecture with <b>Stirrat Johnson-Marshall</b> .	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Talking architecture?
0:55:55	<i>[Recording temporarily interrupted by telephone]</i>	
0:56:35	Describes touring <b>Europe</b> with <b>Margaret</b> , on a Vespa motor scooter. Visits large <b>medieval buildings</b> , and <b>early Christian churches</b> , as well as several of <b>Le Corbusier's</b> buildings. Lists some of buildings visited.	Europe Observations – history Europe Observations – Modern architecture (Evidence of Masters Worship) New experiences – shock Genuine Experience – buildings - Breathtaking experiences. Chiefly Medieval cathedrals and Le Corbusier.
1:03:30	Describes interest in <b>medieval</b> buildings, in their <b>structural</b> and <b>spatial</b> characteristics.	Europe Observations – history Genuine Experience – buildings New experiences – shock Sense of history – achievements of the past (in architecture) – “mind-boggled me”
1:09:00	Describes being entertained at <b>Robert Matthew's</b> home in near <b>Edinburgh</b> .	Europe Observations – Old World Grandeur Describes grandness of RM's ex-Baronial Home

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 3 – London and Illinois Part 1

1:10:00 Track 3.03 0:00:00 Track 3.04	[Recording stopped for ten minute break] [Recording identification]		
0:00:00	Recalls travelling in <b>Scotland</b> .	Britain as 'home' - Mentions Scottish background in his and Margaret's family background Colonial Cringe – fear On the spot – attends Suez debate at British Parliament. Real fears of nuclear attack – Suez situation, and also mistakes London fog with holocaust	
0:02:032	Describes <b>flat</b> and <b>lifestyle</b> while living in <b>London</b> . Recalls political events of the time (1956), especially the <b>Suez Canal Crisis</b> . Recalls fearing <b>nuclear attack</b> .		
0:07:25	Leaves England on a <b>Cunard Liner</b> for the <b>United States</b> .	Europe observations – formality Recalls personal relationships with colleagues with fondness. Strangeness of colleague inheriting title (Lordship)	
0:08:08	Recalls colleagues at <b>RM&amp;JM</b> , including <b>Tim Sturgis</b> ?, <b>Roger Klein</b> ?, <b>Pat Bullivant</b> , <b>Phillip Pank</b> , and <b>Roger Cunliffe</b> ?		
0:12:05	Explains differences between working in New Zealand, and <b>RM&amp;JM</b> in London.	Association with influential figures – milieu Connections back to LCC and especially Education dept – Influence?	
0:14:00	Describes influence of <b>Education Department</b> architects.	Europe influence – career development Europe Observations – scale (of choice) (Colonial Cringe) Plethora of material to choose from – different to NZ situation. Commissioning of fittings, pre-empts growth of designer fittings.	
0:14:51	Describes how working for <b>RM&amp;JM</b> contributed to <b>career development</b> , especially, the <b>professionalism</b> , and the <b>attention to detail</b> .	Europe Observations – scale Europe Observations – higher quality of architectural design (Colonial Cringe) - Scale of economies meant higher quality of work. Frustration of working in established environment	
0:15:12	Explains differences between <b>English</b> , and <b>New Zealand architectural practice</b> .	Europe observations – formality - English manners – contrast with NZ	
0:18:41	Recalls incident aboard ship returning to <b>New Zealand</b> from the <b>United States</b> .	Evidence of Masters worship Genuine Experience – buildings Interesting visit - seeking Miesien experience in absence of his work in UK – but was disappointed	
0:20:59	Recalls visiting the <b>Smithsons</b> ' [Alison and Peter] <b>Hunstanton School</b> , and the effect this building created as a first ' <b>Miesian</b> ' experience. Was not drawn to the <b>Smithsons'</b> architectural theories.	Association with influential figures – milieu	
0:23:02	Recalls importance of <b>Basil Spence</b> , <b>Frederick Gibberd</b> , and <b>Erno Goldfinger</b> .	Colonial Cringe Europe Observations – higher quality of architectural design Genuine Experience - First-hand experience of Old-world fussiness in detailing, but did not take much else in terms of design theory (cf Pevsner/Toomath debate) – "wild colonial"	
0:27:07	Describes finding <b>English architectural scene</b> 'a bit precious' at times.		
0:28:45	Recalls influence of <b>Gordon Cullen's 'Townscape'</b> on <b>RM&amp;JM</b> , and explains their rejection of the crudeness of ' <b>New Brutalism</b> '.		

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 3 – London and Illinois Part 1

0:31:09	Describes own response to the 'brutal' aesthetic, especially the Le Corbusier's recent buildings. Reference: Ronchamp.	Genuine Experience – buildings Questioning the Masters – Corb's 'primitive approach' [brut], Ronchamp - Spectacular place to be at, but...
0:32:14	Describes seeing Le Corbusier's Unite d'habitation in Marseille.	Genuine Experience – buildings Questioning the Masters - Very impressive, but a theory on Corbusier's part (unsuccessful) – gives examples. Admits that one shouldn't criticise Corbusier out loud
0:36:07	Describes shock at scale of life in Illinois.	US Observations – scale / New experiences – shock / US Observations – luxury - e.g. mindboggling supermarket size. Everything supplied – very well-equipped etc everything mindboggling
0:37:30	Recalls buying a Volkswagen Microbus.	New experiences – life experiences New experiences – shock Surprised by ease of obtaining money for car. Purchase of car a bit bamboozling – first major purchase [life experiences]
0:40:51	Describes touring the East Coast of America, recalls buildings visited.	Genuine Experience – buildings Evidence of Masters worship New experiences – excitement Saarinen and Aalto at MIT, Seagram Building, Lever House "superb" "very impressive" + early Georgian churches etc...
0:43:40	Recalls visiting New York in 1980, and going to the top of the World Trade Centre.	Colonial Cringe – fear New experiences – shock
0:45:10	Continues describing places visited on East Coast. Recalls visiting Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago. Describes the expression of materials in comparison to the earlier white architecture of the International Style at Weissenhof. Compares with actual concrete construction at Berhampore Flats.	Genuine Experience – buildings Evidence of Masters worship Genuine Experience – buildings European Influence – Weissenhof to IIT campus
0:50:03	Describes meeting with Mies van der Rohe, gives details of conversation.	Evidence of Masters worship Meeting Masters Influence of ideas of "universal space" . Talking architecture. Vivid recall of office space. Suggests actual impact of meeting discussion with Mies, influencing approach taken at WHS (universal space). [Not a convincing case for direct design influence though]
0:57:01	Recalls missing out on meeting Frank Lloyd- at Taliesin West. Visits various Frank Lloyd-Wright's buildings, including Taliesin East, First Unitarian Meeting House, and Unity Chapel [Unity Temple].	Evidence of Masters worship Meeting Masters New experiences – excitement

W H Alington Oral History Project  
Session 3 – London and Illinois Part 1

Evidence of Masters worship also Questioning Masters, with some aspects of FLW work criticised.

Genuine Experience – buildings, surprised by actual scale of FLW buildings Road-trip with Professors and class, plus other solo visits. “Exciting to be there and look at”

On the spot ? – arrived at Taliesin before hearing the news of FLW’s death

1:02:23

[Interview Ends]

W H Alington Oral History Project  
Session 4 – London and Illinois Part 2 and the 1960s

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington  
**Date:** Tuesday 12th October 2004  
**Recorded at:** Upper Hutt City Council Administration  
Building, 840 Fergusson Drive, Upper Hutt  
**Interviewed and Abstracted by:** Michael Dudding

Track 4.01  
0:00:00  
Track 4.02

[Recording identification]

Describes Masters program undertaken at **Illinois University**. Recalls Prof. [Louis R?] Gottschalk's **Philosophy** course, **Theory of Design**, and **History** courses. Mentions: [Roger] Fry

Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm – did course on Study of Aesthetics in Philosophy dept [continuing philosophical pursuit from his thesis] – only Arch student in the class **Outsider identification**  
US Experience – course content (Masters program studio-based)  
US Observations/Education - Notes the “confidence” of the US students, speaking to texts they had not wholly read.

Recalls **tutoring** design in the Undergraduate School at Illinois - and the pre-classification of students in to 'A' or 'B' Students. Recalls incident with colour-blind student.

Intellectualism – teaching  
US Education – failings – students grades prejudged irrespective of work

Remembers being disappointed with **Theory of Design** course. Gives brief details.

US Experience – course content  
US Education – failings – Theory course only looked at **20<sup>th</sup> century** and not enough investigation of that.  
Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond the norm – Wanted to see a wider range of historical theory. Superficial – looked at FLW, Mies, Saarinen, SOM, etc

Recalls **openness** of course instructors to different **styles**.

US Experience – course content  
US Experience - exemplars  
“SOM influence very strong at that stage” also Saarinen.

Talks about **Saarinen** as an '**explorer of form**', and about **model making** in Saarinen's office.

US Experience - exemplars  
US Experience – career development  
Genuine experience – profession/industry  
Meeting Masters - Discovered centrality of model-making at Saarinen and Mies's offices

Describes the studio and office of **Mies van der Rohe**. Gives brief details of conversation.

Meeting Masters / Evidence of Masters worship  
Genuine experience – profession/industry  
Association with influential figures – sage advice  
Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)

# W H Alington Oral History Project Session 4 – London and Illinois Part 2 and the 1960s

0:15:36	Describes working for <b>Eberhart &amp; Murphy</b> in <b>Urbana</b> , a practice that specialised in <b>prefabricated churches</b> .	Genuine experience – profession/industry US Observations – technology US Observations – opportunity US Observations – scale “Interesting idea – demountable prefabricated churches – showed that you could almost do/specialise in anything in the US, and make a success of it.” ...Couldn’t do such a thing in NZ
0:17:34	Contrasts <b>scale of industry</b> in the <b>United States</b> with the situation in <b>New Zealand</b> .	US Observations – opportunity US Observations – scale
0:20:41	Works as <b>designer</b> and <b>draughtsman</b> for E&M, recalls various incidents.	Genuine experience – profession/industry Colonial Cringe – fear (police chase) So different as an experience that did not really inform subsequent career
0:26:17	Contrasts working in <b>Illinois</b> with working in <b>London</b> . Reference: Michael Ventris; Ruddington Comprehensive School.	Europe vs US Europe observations – formality Much more gentlemanly in England. Influence of Education Dept standardised systems
0:28:18	Describes <b>New Zealand House</b> project, worked on while in <b>London</b> with <b>Robert Marshall</b> . Recalls original design being similar to <b>Aalto</b> ’s work, but this being overruled by the <b>Fine Arts Commission</b> .	Genuine experience – profession/industry
0:29:42	Contrasts <b>building industry practices</b> of the <b>United States</b> with that of <b>United Kingdom</b> .	Europe vs US Genuine experience – profession/industry Small mostly steel construction, rather than reinforced concrete Architects had high standing, and human relationships prioritised more in UK versus US
0:32:43	Remembers scale of <b>Skidmore Owings &amp; Merrill</b> ’s office in <b>Chicago</b> . Gives brief details of some of SOM’ <b>s</b> jobs.	Europe observations – formality Europe influence – career development Europe vs US US Observations – <b>scale</b> - much larger than NZ, cites work on SOM boards for large Saudi projects US Observations – technology US Observations – artificiality of lifestyle Most profound impact of time overseas: England – client relationships, and respect for the profession, gentlemanly. US, hard to get the measure of. Colonial Cringe - SOM office had 1500 architect (compares with entire size of NZ profession). Mechanised, technological life – little contact with outside world.
0:38:55	Having returned to New Zealand, describes <b>confidence</b> gained as being the most significant result of <b>overseas experience</b> .	US influence – career development Association with influential figures – milieu US/ Europe observations – opportunity Seeing stars as ordinary architects, not necessarily better trained or more imaginative – but given better opportunities. Self-confidence

# W H Alington Oral History Project Session 4 – London and Illinois Part 2 and the 1960s

0:38:40	US experience instilled self-confidence in professional abilities for return to NZ.	US influence / US observations – opportunity – career development – Confidence [unprompted]. Able to see that US architects (including the bigger ones), had no more ability or imagination than himself, but much greater opportunity.
0:39:33	Gives background details to <b>Upper Hutt Civic Centre</b> project.	US/Europe influence – career development – Confidence
0:41:08	Joins as <b>junior partner</b> with the firm of <b>Gabites &amp; Beard</b> . <b>Derek Edmonson</b> also joins as junior partner, as a specialist <b>town planner</b> .	Total design on Gabites and Beard. Edmonson – Town Planning, Beard - Landscape
0:42:40	Describes evolving <b>project management</b> processes. Gives details of <b>office procedures</b> , and the development toward the use of <b>computers</b> in the early 1970's ( <b>PDP11</b> )	
0:48:24	Describes evolving a system for comprehensive <b>detailing</b> on separate A4 sheets while at <b>Ministry of Works</b> .	US Influence - direct design influence cited - Contracting documentation system emerged from approach taken during student work in the US
0:51:57	Describes project supervision. Mentions: <b>Ian Jack</b> , <b>Massey University</b> project, <b>Shannon Library</b>	
0:56:42	Designs <b>Stokes Valley Methodist Church</b> as a private job while employed at <b>MoW</b> . Gives details of church. Mentions being assigned private jobs by, then Govt. Architect, Robert Patterson.	
1:04:03	<i>Recording stopped for 5 minute break</i>	
Track 4.03	<i>[Recording identification]</i>	
0:00:00		
Track 4.04		
0:00:13	Joins <b>Gabites &amp; Beard</b> [1964]. Discusses reasons for leaving <b>MoW</b> , and recalls friendship with <b>Jim Beard</b> .	NZAA cohort connection Association with influential figures – notable mentors – JB and WA a lot in common – enjoyed each other's attitude. JB as a creative thinker, admired by WA
0:04:15	Briefly describes <b>All[ot] Gabites</b> .	Good critic, gentlemanly
0:05:01	Describes being given <b>autonomy</b> under <b>Beard</b> . Provides details of working environment.	
0:07:44	Discusses <b>Jim Beard's</b> work, and also working on the <b>Civil Aviation Store</b> [Kilbirnie, Wellington].	
0:09:21	Recalls working with <b>Beard</b> on <b>Predict Planning for Wellington</b> project prior to joining Gabites & Beard	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm NZAA cohort connection
0:11:11	Describes <b>Alington House</b> .	
0:16:04	Describes designing walls in <b>Alington House</b> so that <b>materials</b> express their own nature.	
0:16:49	Describes attraction to <b>solid masonry construction</b> , and use of <b>concrete block</b> . Discusses use of materials in early <b>modern movement</b> buildings.	Europe influence – direct design influence cited Questioning of Masters – dishonest use of structural materials in early modernist work (Weissenhof)



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 4 – London and Illinois Part 2 and the 1960s

0:19:50	Recalls being impressed with early <b>Warren &amp; Mahoney</b> concrete block buildings.	Attraction to masonry – ‘honesty’ potentially from European travels
1:20:19	Describes using <b>concrete blocks</b> in rebuilding a cottage on <b>Banks Peninsula</b> .	
0:22:20	Discusses use of <b>reinforced concrete construction</b> as being ideal for New Zealand. Expresses doubts regarding <b>steel frame construction</b> .	NZ Regionalist architecture
0:23:59	Describes strong <b>forms</b> in architecture, and where this might be appropriate.	
0:25:22	Mentions: <b>Gehry, Frank Lloyd-Wright, and Palladio</b> . Describes current <b>student work</b> as lacking in <b>process</b> .	
0:27:50	Describes <b>design process</b> using <b>Upper Hutt City Council Administration Building</b> as an example. Discusses importance of thinking from the <b>building users’</b> point of view, and of the importance of <b>drawing</b> .	
0:34:28	Discusses using <b>campus planning</b> of buildings, such as those at <b>UHCC</b> , and the reasons for choosing this over a single block building.	Enjoyed working with <b>larger campus scale</b> skills learned from John Blake-Kelly while at MoW, and then used in subsequent projects such as UHCC.
0:38:54	Describes designing <b>unity</b> into the different types of buildings within the <b>UHCC Civic Centre</b> campus.	
0:41:43	Describes original <b>flat roof</b> on <b>UHCC</b> project, and the reason for changing to <b>hipped roof</b> , which subsequently become characteristic of his work.	
0:44:20	Describes <b>dominance</b> of <b>New Zealand bush</b> , which <b>concrete</b> as a construction material can stand up next to.	NZ Regionalist architecture Discussion of need for solidity of concrete versus steel in NZ – as opposed to inland US. Mies would do the same here... (Evidence of Masters worship)
0:45:52	Discusses the need for <b>permanence</b> in architecture.	
0:46:58	Briefly discusses the <b>reinforced concrete</b> buildings as built in <b>Japan</b> during the 1960’s. Contrasts with his own work in which he strives ‘to be good’, not original (quoted <b>Mies van der Rohe</b> ).	Evidence of Masters worship (regular citing of Mies’s saying) Didn’t understand Japanese architecture of the time.
0:48:30	Describes the <b>Massey University Halls of Residence</b> project.	
0:52:08	Describes building process of <b>roofing</b> for <b>Massey University</b> project. Describes how this system of <b>roofing</b> became a <b>symbol</b> for their work. Recalls other projects using the same system, and of travelling in <b>India</b> and seeing the <b>traditional houses</b> that used very similar <b>roof forms</b> . Feels that had redesigned the <b>traditional bungalow</b> from first principles.	
0:55:54	Discusses choice of <b>courtyard</b> arrangement for the <b>Massey University Halls of Residence</b> , and also the <b>Helen Lowry Halls of Residence</b> later.	
0:57:15	Discusses <b>Shannon County Office</b> and <b>Public Library</b> project.	
0:58:41	Discusses <b>Todd Motors project</b> on <b>Kent Terrace</b> in <b>Wellington</b> .	
1:00:20	Recalls types of projects undertaken by <b>Gabites &amp; Beard</b> , not large scale <b>high-rise</b> , but more toward servicing <b>local authorities</b>	
1:01:44	Discusses <b>Waipa County Council</b> project, relating it to the <b>Meteorological Office</b> , and the <b>UHCC</b> project.	

*W H Alington Oral History Project*  
*Session 4 – London and Illinois Part 2 and the 1960s*

1:03:02 Briefly describes dissatisfaction with changes to **Waipa** project carried out  
subsequent to completion.

1:05:09 *[Interview Ends]*



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 5 – The 1970s

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington

**Date:** Tuesday 19th October 2004

**Recorded at:** Victoria University School of Architecture  
Vivian Street, Wellington.

**Interviewed and Abstracted by:** Michael Dudding

Track 5.01	0:00:00	[Recording Identification]	
Track 5.02			
0:00:17		Discusses the international architectural scene during the 1970's, which he didn't follow at the time due to its <b>undisciplined</b> nature. Mentions <b>James Stirling</b> , <b>Norman Foster</b> , and <b>Robert Mathew &amp; Johnson-Marshall's Hillingdon Civic Centre</b> project. Also discusses differences in <b>scale</b> of projects compared to the local scene. Briefly discusses the ' <b>high-tech movement</b> ', and the transitory nature of 'post-modern' movements.	
0:05:06		Explains personal reaction to <b>post-modern architecture</b> in <b>New Zealand</b> ; interest and fascination, without needing to emulate - " <b>it didn't change one's basic philosophy</b> ". Discusses <b>Roger Walker's Park Mews</b> project.	
0:06:33		Lists some of the projects undertaken in the 1970's.	
0:07:50		Talks about the merger of <b>Gabites &amp; Beard</b> with <b>Toomath &amp; Wilson</b> , to become <b>Gabites Toomath Beard Wilson &amp; Partners</b> . Also discusses working with <b>engineers</b> ; <b>John Hollings</b> , and <b>Colin Strachan</b> . Describes problems with large firm, and the decision to 'un-merge'.	Formative environment/Community / NZAA Cohort connection - Describes the partners as all being friends who had grown up together in the Architectural Centre
0:09:16		Details the <b>NZ Chancery</b> project in <b>New Delhi</b> , the scheme, the reasons for it being shelved, and losing the job to <b>Warren &amp; Mahoney</b> .	
0:13:27		Mentions: <b>Robert Muldoon</b>	
0:22:52		Describes <b>Gabites Porter &amp; Partners</b> , and the decision to leave and set up <b>Alington Group Architects</b> .	
0:25:21		Describes co-operative set up of <b>Alington Group Architects (AGA)</b> .	
0:26:45		Recalls disbanding <b>AGA</b> , and carrying on alone, working under the same name.	
0:28:57		Discusses winning <b>NZIA awards</b> for <b>Upper Hutt Civic Centre</b> , with <b>Bill Toomath</b> also winning in the same year with the <b>Wellington Teachers College</b> .	Intellectualism – teaching

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 5 – The 1970s

0:30:32	Discusses 'family resemblance' between his work, <b>James Beard's</b> , and <b>Bill Toomath's</b> as being a product of similar career developments, common belief in the importance of <b>function</b> , <b>structural integrity</b> , and <b>honesty of materials</b> .	Formative environment/Community / NZAA Cohort – Similarities in built work borne from growing up together in AC (no mention of US experiences). Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Modernist values – shared across partners
0:31:39	Recalls discussions at <b>Architectural Centre</b> , and the change and move away from serious discussion when newer members, including <b>Ian Athfield</b> , and <b>Roger Walker</b> joined the Centre.	
0:33:38	Recalls time as <b>president</b> of the <b>Architectural Centre</b> . Gives details the Centre's involvement with the extension of <b>Wellington's container wharf</b> .	
0:37:46	Gives brief details of <b>Kihikihi Town Hall</b> project. Explains how many architectural projects came to the practice from <b>local councils</b> that had worked with <b>Al Gabites</b> in the <b>town planning</b> side of the firm.	
0:38:57	Describes the <b>Upper Hutt Pedestrian Mall</b> , the first example of such a development in New Zealand.	US influence [Following US town planning movements in the 1960s i.e. not from actual experience – most likely from media (itself looking to European precedents)]
0:44:44	Describes the <b>Wellington High School</b> project. Discusses <b>flat slab construction</b> and <b>exterior lifts/stairs</b> to allow <b>flexibility</b> of internal arrangement, as well as designing for <b>robustness</b> .	
0:52:01	Briefly discusses differences between <b>Wellington High School</b> and <b>Bill Toomath's Wellington Teachers College</b> .	NZAA cohort connection
0:53:20	Discusses using established formal <b>vocabulary</b> for <b>WHS</b> project.	
0:55:29	Recalls <b>Jeeves Construction's</b> liquidation causing <b>WHS</b> project to be halted. Describes developing system of <b>project managing</b> by <b>direct contracting</b> tradespeople to the client. This system was also employed for the <b>Wellington Planetarium</b> , with significant savings for the client. [Recording stopped for 15 minute break]	
1:05:05 Track 5.03 0:00:00 Track 5.04 0:00:22 0:01:57	[Recording identification]  Recalls being interested in the work of <b>Sri Lankan</b> architect <b>Bawa</b> . Explains dual interest in on one hand a <b>romantic</b> buildings, and on the other hand more <b>structurally oriented</b> buildings.  Describes interest in the some of the work of <b>Miles Warren</b> . Discusses contribution of John Hollings on structural design, earthquake design etc.	Influence – not from UK or US at this time Cf Toomath/Lutyens  Other NZ influences - Influenced by early Warren buildings –strong structural expression and functionality. Typical of 'Christchurch School', Lucking etc....
0:02:49		
0:07:31	Discusses passing of the ' <b>modern masters</b> '. Explains how <b>Frank Lloyd-Wright</b> and <b>Mies van der Rohe</b> were the poles that he found himself working within.	Modernist Values – Projected / speculative Mies influence. Frank Lloyd-Wright and Mies van der Rohe were the poles that he found himself working within. Believes Mies would have worked in a similar way in an NZ context (self-legitimation) Evidence of Masters worship
0:09:59	Explains lack of interest in following trends, being a " <b>form maker</b> ", or in being a " <b>high flyer</b> ".	Felt self-confident – didn't seek recognition for work

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 5 – The 1970s

0:15:37	Gives brief details of projects <b>architectural competitions</b> in <b>Dunedin</b> , and <b>Christchurch</b> .	
0:16:57	Describes winning scheme for <b>Christchurch competition</b> , a <b>hotel</b> by <b>Warren &amp; Mahoney</b> , which did not fit in with the <b>context</b> of the site - which was their own <b>Christchurch Town Hall</b> . Discusses importance of designing with respect for context. Gives examples of own projects including various extensions on important <b>historic churches</b> , exhibiting " <b>a sensitivity for what is already there</b> ".	
0:22:34	Talks about good design in <b>Christchurch</b> during the 70's that kept within <b>context</b> . Discusses various <b>Warren &amp; Mahoney</b> projects that were or were not successful in that sense.	
0:26:36	Describes house designed for parents in <b>Friend Street [Karori]</b> , employing <b>domestic forms</b> to maintain <b>contextual</b> links, including their "symbol" " <b>broken hipped roof</b> " [Dutch Gable/Gablet].	
0:28:22	Explains importance of designing <b>low maintenance housing</b> .	
0:31:00	Describes <b>Helen Lowry Halls</b> project.	
0:33:45	Explains fundamental ideas about architecture, including conceiving space to be lived in rather than designing simple or fantastic volumes, "seriousness over capriciousness".	Genuine experience – buildings Europe observations – history Evidence of Masters Worship – cites Crown Hall as being large open space that felt "comfortable" Overwhelming seeing European cathedrals – how well put together, and how function / ritual were so integrated with architecture
0:39:14	Gives further brief details regarding <b>Helen Lowry Halls</b> .	
0:40:42	Explains role of <b>memory</b> in <b>experiencing architecture</b> .	
0:42:59	Compares <b>Helen Lowry Halls</b> and <b>Massey University Halls of Residence</b> projects.	
0:49:15	Describes <b>Johnsonville Union Church Centre</b> .	
0:56:08	Describes <b>Wellington Chinese Anglican Mission</b> .	
1:04:07	Describes impact of new <b>Wellington School of Architecture</b> [1974]. Contrasts strengths in <b>building science</b> of Wellington graduates over their <b>Auckland</b> counterparts.	
1:07:50	[Interview Ends]	



# **W H Alington Oral History Project** **Session 6 – The 1980s and 1990s**

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington

**Date:** Tuesday 20th October 2004

**Recorded at:** Victoria University School of Architecture  
 Vivian Street, Wellington.

**Interviewed and Abstracted by:** Michael Dudding

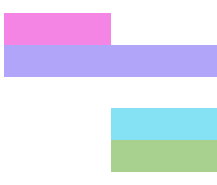
<b>Track 6.01</b>		
0:00:00	<i>[Disk 1 Recording identification]</i>	
<b>Track 6.02</b>		
0:00:11	Recalls work colleagues at <b>Alington Group Architects (AGA)</b> , including <b>Crispin Kay, David Pawson, Francis Robinson, Albert [?]</b> , and <b>Jan O'Neil</b> .	
0:04:18	Briefly describes how the office of <b>AGA</b> functioned.	
0:05:31	Describes <b>New Delhi Chancery</b> project. Gives details of <b>climatic</b> concerns.	
0:13:13	Recalls using <b>Computer Aided Draughting</b> for the <b>New Delhi</b> project - the first time they had used it in their office for a large scale project.	
0:14:09	Explains how the <b>New Delhi Chancery</b> project was dropped, and the subsequent difficulties regarding obtaining payment from the <b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which</b> eventually went to court.	
0:21:02	Describes the use of <b>computers</b> in the office, beginning in the 1970's, and the computerised <b>specification</b> and <b>certification systems</b> developed within the office.	
0:26:54	Describes the practice of hand-drawing all <b>details</b> , explains benefits of comprehensive detail drawings. Recalls <b>site-visits</b> where he earned the name ' <b>Hawk-eye</b> '.	
0:30:29	Describes <b>Victoria University School of Music</b> project. Explains requirements for <b>domestic scale</b> , and <b>soundproofing</b> .	
0:44:22	Describes the <b>Wai-te-ata Bridge</b> project at <b>Victoria University</b> .	
0:44:41	Describes the <b>formal vocabulary</b> in <b>timber</b> , as employed on the <b>School of Music</b> buildings, and further housing projects, including <b>Chisholm House</b> .	
0:47:50	Describes pattern of <b>house alterations</b> developed with the <b>Beaglehole House Alterations</b> where salient features of existing house were picked up in a separate but <b>linked pavilion</b> . <b>Caldwell House</b> in <b>Wadestown</b> , employs a similar pattern. The idea is that " <b>you can't tell there has been an alteration</b> ".	



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 6 – The 1980s and 1990s

0:54:59	Describes <b>Haiselden Apartment</b> project, and the <b>Hall House</b> project; both of which consisted of a <b>pavilion</b> type house similar to <b>Alington House</b> , built over a lower level of concrete block garages.	
0:57:33	Discusses <b>pure planning of Alington House</b> , and how rarely suitable this is for regular clients.	
1:00:51	<i>[Recording stopped for 15 minute break]</i>	
<b>Track 6.03</b>	<i>[Disk 2 Recording identification]</i>	
0:00:00		
<b>Track 6.04</b>		
0:00:00	Discusses <b>church design</b> , and vision of churches as <b>social centres</b> .	
0:06:03	Describes <b>Matawhero Church</b> project.	
0:07:22	Recalls acting as <b>advisor</b> to various <b>church</b> projects, including <b>St Margaret's Church</b> in <b>Taihape</b> , and <b>All Saints Church</b> in <b>Ngaio</b> .	
0:09:20	Describes <b>Waidradra Church Project</b> in <b>Fiji</b> . Enjoyed simplicity of project that relied on " <b>good proportions, very simple forms, and good clear structure...</b> "	
0:10:36	Describes <b>St Mary's Church</b> project, <b>New Plymouth</b> , designed so that the extension could be removed, bringing the building back to its original state. Compares to <b>medieval structures</b> .	
0:14:16	Discusses <b>contemporary additions to historic buildings</b> . Recalls working at <b>Mow</b> when <b>Beehive</b> was put forward as extension to <b>Parliament Buildings</b> - explains argument of contemporary addition vs completion of the building in its original form, and how his views have now changed.	
0:16:17	Describes <b>Karori Baptist Church</b> project. Describes <b>domestic scale</b> , and <b>tilted truss</b> roof structure, which necessitated absolute accuracy in design drawings for the steel members, which could only be achieved through <b>computer-aided draughting</b> .	
0:21:37	Explains difficulty in designing spaces for <b>spiritual meditation</b> . Believes churches require " <b>a presence of its own, it has integrity in all its parts</b> ".	
0:25:18	Describes <b>St Lukes Church Sanctuary</b> project in <b>Wadestown</b> .	Genuine experience – buildings US influence – direct design influence cited Describes modulated spaces of MIT chapel (Saarinen), influence on Marsden Chapel. Direct reference
0:29:00	Describes <b>Marsden Collegiate School Chapel</b> , in <b>Karori</b> . Explains <b>internal structure</b> created to provide smaller more <b>intimate spaces within a large space</b> .	Genuine experience – buildings Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Evidence of Masters worship
0:33:17	Explains idea of <b>memory</b> in relation to <b>experiencing buildings</b> . Contrasts with <b>experiencing sculpture</b> . Explains importance of designing for <b>movement</b> , and <b>sensory perception</b> . Describes how <b>Le Corbusier</b> successfully captured these aspects at <b>Ronchamp</b> .	Describes sensory experience at Ronchamp etc
0:37:50	Recalls travelling overseas in 1980, gives details of travels in <b>India</b> .	



W H Alington Oral History Project  
Session 6 – The 1980s and 1990s

0:40:19	Discusses role as <b>Architecture School Design Tutor</b> , and the excitement of learning while helping students resolve design problems. Relates recent example. Finds teaching exiting: " <b>you really learn more than probably the students do</b> ".	Intellectualism – teaching
0:44:17	Explains interest in <b>teaching history</b> as a nice time to reflect, in contrast to design problem solving. Describes <b>informing</b> , and <b>humbling</b> role that history fulfils.	Intellectualism – teaching
0:51:11	Describes various <b>cluster housing</b> projects.	
0:56:34	[Interview Ends]	



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington

**Date:** Date: Wednesday 8th December 2004

**Recorded at:** Victoria University School of Architecture  
Vivian Street, Wellington.

**Interviewed by:** Michael Dudding

### Track 7.01

[Disk 1 Recording identification]

### Track 7.02

0:00:00	...[starts partway through a discussion] describes <b>Professor Light's</b> view of his thesis.	<b>Outsider identification</b> – older student, having worked in practice already Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)
0:01:07	Morning and afternoon tea discussions at the <b>MoW</b> on “what is beauty” and so forth	Association with influential figures – milieu Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Talking architecture
0:01:51	Discusses <b>Jim Beard's</b> training and working with him at <b>MoW</b> . Reading books at <b>Roy Parsons</b> in his lunch break. Describes monthly meetings at the <b>Architectural Centre</b> . His interest in semi-philosophical issues including those in the <b>Presbyterian Church</b> .	NZAA cohort connection Europe Influence - influence of Bauhaus from Jim Beard. Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm – personal library collection Association with influential figures – notable mentors Intellectualism – philosophising - linked to Presbyterian exploration of ideas Association with influential figures – milieu Discussion and reading – Intellectualism, talking architecture
0:06:00	Comments on pushing through new ideas and attitudes with the likes of <b>Jim Beard</b> . These ideas were <b>Bauhaus</b> in origin. Discusses <b>balance</b> and <b>golden mean</b> .	NZAA cohort connection Europe Influence - Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Association with influential figures – notable mentors Brave new world – Architecture – architecture as a great cause Precocious talent – recognition
0:07:58	Describes discussions over dinners at University with students such as <b>Reg Uren</b> , and <b>Eddie Wong</b> . Comments on the lack of airing of views of his today's students	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Talking architecture
0:09:13	Discusses <b>Dick Toy's Hunua</b> community group project. Interviewing the residents and then creating a <b>community</b> scheme. Explains his realisation of buildings being <b>related</b> and <b>social needs</b> .	<b>Social concern</b> – community focus of project led by Dick Toy
0:12:42	Describes philosophical discussions around “what is beauty?”	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

0:13:09	Discusses his concerns with <b>philosophy</b> and <b>consistency</b> . How not having a philosophy is easier, but unsatisfying.	Intellectualism – philosophising
0:14:22	Describes <b>socialist</b> and <b>Bauhaus</b> philosophy.	Social concern Modernist values
0:15:07	Comments on <b>Christianity</b> and concern for the <b>environment</b> . Talks about wanting to “get to the root [of issues]” Discusses his admiration for Jesus of Nazareth and the lesser significance of ‘The Jesus Christ’ that the Church has evolved.	Intellectualism – philosophising
0:16:30	Describes <b>theological outlook</b> and importance of going to the roots, of it and of architecture.	Intellectualism – philosophising
0:19:27	Mentions an interest in the <b>Medieval period</b> and looking at structures from then in Europe. And how the slides taken then (in 1950s) are still relevant. Mentions <b>Medieval Gothic</b> course currently taking. Discusses the understanding the medieval mason had of his building materials.	Europe observations – History Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm (interest in history)
0:22:06	Defines and discusses <b>Beauty</b> .	Intellectualism – philosophising
0:23:03	Discusses rationale for submitting a written thesis rather than a drawn one and <b>Toy’s</b> influence on choosing <b>communities</b> and not feeling competent to choose contemporary buildings.	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Intellectualism – relationship between philosophical background, as described above.
0:26:57	Discusses being seconded to the <b>Power Design Office</b> while working for the <b>MoW</b> with <b>Chris Vallenduuk</b> and <b>Alec McDonald</b> .	Intellectualism – philosophising Association with influential figures – milieu Genuine experience – buildings and communities Europe vs US - Note that ideas being developed during thesis – community/land/etc; were more readily applied to US context than English. I.e. closeness of a NZ-borne personal architectural philosophy to an American rather than English context.
0:27:51	Going to villages in <b>Yorkshire</b> in <b>Britain</b> . Comparing it to raw land in <b>America</b> . Design work at <b>Illinois</b> under <b>Professor Dick Williams</b> and the idea of coming together of all of the perceptions.	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) US Experience – course content Precocious talent – recognition Association with influential figures – US education
0:30:07	Studying <b>aesthetics</b> under <b>Gottschalk</b> in the <b>philosophy department</b> . Using <b>Kant’s ‘Critique of Judgement’</b> . Discusses an <b>aesthetic experience</b> . Relating this to <b>beauty</b> and to <b>architecture</b> . Mentioning this in an address at the <b>[NZIA]</b> Institute’s annual branch meeting.	Intellectualism – philosophising Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) US Experience – course content
0:32:24	Discusses influences in his ideas of <b>actual space</b> . <b>Dick Toy</b> . Young architects taking the <b>Modern</b> movement seriously and <b>social concern</b> .	Social concern Association with influential figures – milieu
0:34:06	Talks about making an <b>income out of architecture</b> . Big firms being able to do big projects such as hospitals, a lot of practices being sustained on domestic jobs.	

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

0:35:02	Being satisfied by being able to do projects such as libraries and fire stations through contact with local authorities (out of town planning role of practice). Not making money, but doing <b>public service</b> . Mentions <b>Upper Hutt Civic Building</b> .	<b>Social concern</b> – public service – associated with Modernism
0:37:56	Discusses people commissioning them to do houses and confirming the way they designed houses or client should go to someone such as <b>Bill Toomath</b> . Being picky with their jobs.	
0:38:29	Discussing ideas with <b>Plishke, small rural communities</b> . Thinking about quality of <b>Frank Lloyd Wright's</b> work. <b>Plishke</b> saying it was <b>atavistic</b> and going back to those sorts of <b>roots</b> .	<b>Social concern?</b> NZ Regionalist architecture Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Evidence of Masters worship Association with influential figures
0:39:57	Keeping a <b>balance, consistency and integrity</b> in one's work.	
0:40:50	Finishing final year in <b>Auckland [University]</b> and going back to do <b>honours</b> and not getting it.	<b>Outsider identification</b> – <b>Intellectualism?</b>
0:41:13	Recalls criticising <b>Vernon Brown</b> for lack of integrity in the radical sense, discussions with him and his bold statements.	Association with influential figures – recalls socialising with Vernon Brown
0:43:17	<b>Dick Toy</b> , who had <b>Ed Laurie</b> along with him, encouraging discussion. Dick Toy having broader thoughts on <b>space</b> from <b>memories</b> .	
0:44:24	Describes <b>memories, background and travel</b> playing a role in beliefs on <b>space</b> . Mentions <b>Jim Beard</b> and <b>Tony</b> .	<b>Genuine experience / Cultural Cringe</b> – value of experience over visual media <b>Influential figures</b> – Formative environment/community at SoA - Overseas "memories" made instructors more impressive – e.g Toy had travelled overseas whereas Beard, Treadwell, and others hadn't. (value of travel over reading). "Able to bring more to it"
0:45:52	Discusses <b>Toy's</b> response to his thoughts on perception/experience of space.	
0:46:23	And discussions in <b>America</b> with <b>Dick Williams</b> (and <b>Williams</b> later writing a book on it)	
0:47:07	Talks about trying to codify the <b>acoustics of space</b> . Mentions <b>Stan Ballinger's</b> aluminium-clad house in Dunedin.	
0:48:49	Recalls being encouraged by the people like the <b>Group</b> and impressed by the <b>integrity</b> of the things in their houses although they had a different agenda.	<b>Modernist values</b> <b>Architectural Group influence</b> – specifies that the Group had a different agenda than he.
0:50:18	Describes discussions with <b>American students</b> about ideas of space. They were formulaic. Mentions <b>Plato</b> .	<b>US Observations</b> – formulaic student work <b>Cultural cringe</b> US students worked to a formula for design. New ideas/materials assimilated much more quickly versus limited palette of WA. Didn't seem radical – lack of talking architecture
0:52:16	Discusses <b>Architectural Centre</b> in relation to advancing the <b>Modern</b> .	<b>Brave new world</b> – Architecture

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

0:53:30	Explains how he developed his definition of beauty for his thesis, mentions <b>Dick Toy, Professor Light</b> .	<p>Advancing Modern architecture (battle)</p> <p>Modernist values</p> <p>Shared desire to advance modernism, but not confident that his personal philosophy was shared by other NZAA cohort connections</p> <p>Outsider identification</p> <p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)</p> <p>Developed ideas independently (outsider)</p>
0:54:16	Mentions the acceptance of his <b>thesis</b> , and passing.	<p>Outsider identification</p> <p>Intellectualism – philosophising</p>
0:55:25	Discusses his views on doing a written <b>thesis</b> and how it “set him up”. Discusses how ‘ <b>fashion</b> ’ doesn’t relate to architecture and the <b>Modern movement</b> . Mentions the <b>Architectural Review</b> journal. <b>Modernism as unfinished business</b> .	<p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)</p> <p>Advancing Modern architecture (battle) – still ongoing</p> <p>Modernist values – Social concern</p> <p>Thesis sets “sense of direction... something to think against”. Mentions aim to <b>advance</b> architecture further rather than indulging one’s self</p>
0:59:48	Talks about the conscious use of <b>materials</b> , and how long they last. Mentions <b>Europe</b> and places of history.	<p>Europe observations – history</p> <p>Cultural cringe - Sense of history in European buildings – not much for an elegant reminder of our civilisation here.</p>
1:01:46	Defines ‘ <b>human spirit</b> ’. Mentions <b>creative process/spirit, constancy</b> and <b>consistency, creative energy</b> , an astronomer from <b>Carter Observatory</b> talking on the <b>Kim Hill</b> show, <b>immensities of space</b> [recalls taking a grandson to <b>Carter Observatory</b> and looking through the telescope].	<p>Intellectualism – philosophising</p> <p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)</p>
1:07:42	Describes examples of <b>harmony/balance</b> – <b>Upper Hutt Civic Centre, Met Office</b> .	<p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)</p> <p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) - Talking architecture – with Reg Uren. <b>Discussions of this nature didn’t occur in studio</b>.</p>
1:10:14	Discusses views on <b>proportional harmony</b> of buildings. The part that <b>culture</b> plays in it, mentions <b>Asia</b> and <b>India</b> , and <b>New Zealand</b> being <b>colonial</b> . Mentions <b>Roger Klein</b> , the <b>Barcelona Pavilion</b> , <b>Reg Uren</b> , <b>Len</b> [?] and important conversations.	<p>Genuine experience – value of experience over visual media</p> <p>Colonial Cringe – inability to experience significant buildings</p> <p>Influence of media – photography</p> <p>Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm</p> <p>European Observations - Patina of culture different in NZ – contrasts with UK experience of living amongst historic buildings.</p>
1:15:37	Explains <b>physical considerations</b> – <b>movement and memory</b> and where they came from, <b>scale</b> . Believes that <b>Calatrava’s Milwaukee sculpture</b> doesn’t represent <b>architectural spaces</b> . Distinction between <b>sculpture</b> and <b>architecture</b> .	<p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)</p>
1:17:57	Talks about <b>form</b> and <b>function</b> , and examples of <b>movement</b> and <b>memory</b> . Mentions <b>Margaret Alington’s</b> work on <b>Frederick Thatcher</b> . Mentions <b>Gaudi</b> . Discusses it as a physical consideration, not an intellectual one. Discusses <b>memory’s</b> place in <b>Modernism</b> ... mentions <b>Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Schinkel</b> [?], <b>Berlage, Smithson’s chair. Furniture</b> as an example of background creating the space. Mentions <b>Interior Architecture</b> in the [Victoria University] <b>School of Design, Mies’</b>	<p>Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)</p> <p>Evidence of Masters worship</p> <p>Total design (1:32) – in modernism, versus today (specialist courses etc)</p>

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

	dining room for the Riehl's[?]. Discusses symbols, uses doors as an example. <b>Mentions</b> Dick Toy's house, Dachau, Plischke, Fritz Farrar, Helmut Einhorn. Defines good and bad memory	
1:42:33	Critiques <b>post-modern houses</b> in the <b>1970s</b> . Mentions <b>Venturi</b> and <b>Phillip Johnson</b> . Discusses his development of <b>roof forms</b> . Mentions <b>Upper Hutt Civic Administration building</b> , <b>Thomas flat</b> , <b>Met Office</b> , <b>Gisborne Courthouse</b> . Perceived idea of <b>shelter</b> . Comments on <b>Farnsworth house</b> and <b>Mies</b> , <b>Phillip Johnson</b> . <i>End of track</i>	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Evidence of <b>Masters worship</b> – justifying Farnsworth House
1:44:38		
1:56:09		
Track 7.03	<i>[Recording identification]</i>	
Track 7.04		
0:00:49	Discusses <b>materials</b> (and techniques of using them), which was under intellectual considerations in his thesis. Mentions: <b>Le Corbusier</b> , <b>Gropius</b> , <b>Mies</b> , <b>Illinois Institute of Technology</b> , <b>Japanese architecture</b> , <b>Bauhaus</b> , <b>Berhampore Flats</b> , <b>Dixon Street Flats</b> . Discusses use of materials throughout his career. Mentions <b>Helen Lowry</b> , <b>Mow</b> , <b>Waikato</b> , <b>Massey</b> . Talks of robustness using example of <b>Waipu Church</b> . Mentions <b>Illinois IIT</b> .	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Evidence of <b>Masters worship</b> Modernist values Japanese Architecture
0:10:37	Discusses <b>motives of intention</b> as in the summary of his thesis. Mentions <b>Waipu</b> . Explains what a <b>satisfactory volume</b> is. And <b>satisfactory space</b> in terms of <b>volume</b> . Mentions <b>School of Music</b> , <b>Auckland School of Architect's anechoic chamber</b> . Recalls visit to top of <b>Mt Ruapehu</b> . Recalls visiting his <b>Grandmother</b> in <b>Christchurch</b> . Mentions <b>Ronchamp</b> .	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Evidence of <b>Masters worship</b>
0:13:56		
0:21:09	Describes relevance of his <b>thesis</b> to him today.	
0:23:03	Talks about <b>Roger Fry</b> in relation to <b>philosophy</b> . Mentions <b>Karl Popper</b> and <b>Croche</b> [?] and <b>Plato</b> . Talks about reading <b>Roger Fry</b> after his thesis and his role in giving him confidence his views were valid.	Intellectualism – philosophising Finding <b>Self-confidence</b> via development of personal aesthetic philosophy [important aspect of early career]
0:26:14	Discusses how his trip to <b>the States</b> modified his thesis. Explains need to do more than one <b>analysis</b> to come to the <b>conclusion</b> and a desire to do such an exercise with his 212 [2 <sup>nd</sup> year] <b>students</b> next year. Reflects on how his experience in <b>the States</b> allowed him to look at multiple analyses.	US influence – career development. Lists the multiple solution design process, then aesthetic philosophy course as being significant aspects of US experience, then being able to experience actual buildings. Genuine experience – value of experience over visual media Repetition here (and earlier interview) – <b>strongest direct 'take-away'</b> of US Experience. Beauty of travel "seeing buildings in context" – without photographic "manipulation"
0:28:54	Defines the meaning <b>Modernism</b> has to him. What it was in New Zealand in the late 1940s – early 1950s and what it was like overseas. <b>Mentions LCC developments</b> , <b>Gordon Wilson Flats</b> , <b>Bowen State Building</b> , <b>Jock Beere</b> [?], <b>earthquake resistance</b> , <b>Aitken Street building</b> , <b>Defence building</b> .	Brave new world – Architecture Advancing Modern architecture (battle) Modernist values



# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

0:37:21	Elaborates on an earlier comment “trying to get architecture of the ground in New Zealand”. Mentions <b>Gordon Wilson, Pevsner functionalism.</b>	<p>Europe Observations – Modern Architecture - Cites LCC as leaders in the Modern Movement at the time when he first became part of it himself in the late 1940s.</p> <p>NZ footing it with best of Intl Modern architecture - NZ very rapidly caught up – Gordon Wilson Flats, Bowen State Building etc, and in fact led structural developments after a time. Felt that NZ used advantages of reinforced concrete more readily and honestly than Britain. Felt that NZ was part of an international movement – an exciting period of life to be in.</p> <p>Advancing Modern architecture (battle)</p> <p>NZ footing it with best of Intl Modern architecture</p> <p>Modernist values</p> <p>An awareness of what was happening overseas, and a desire to <b>catch up</b> with developments</p> <p>Colonial Cringe</p>
0:39:55	Further describes <b>functionalism</b> . Mentions <b>Government Archive Building, Aitken Street;</b>	Modernist values
0:43:40	Discusses the behaviour of <b>steel in earthquakes</b> . Mentions new wing of <b>Auckland hospital.</b>	
0:45:00	Talks about the <b>symbolic/expressive potential of Modern</b> architecture. Mentions <b>Upper Hutt Administration building, Met Office, Beard’s PSIS building, Wellington High School, the Hannah Playhouse, Jim Dawson (King &amp; Dawson)</b>	Modernist values
0:54:07	Talks about buildings he would have liked to have designed, (mentions desire to have had a go at Te Papa), Plishke’s Massey House, Hannah Playhouse, 2nd PSIS building, Christchurch College (Miles Warren), Mies’ Lake Shore Drive, Illinois Institute of Technology, Faye Jones’ (as an admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright) chapels, Farnsworth house, Louis Kahn’s work (Art Gallery at Yale) and Frank Lloyd Wright, Usonian House and one in desert.	<p>Evidence of Masters worship</p> <p>US Influence – exemplars</p> <p>List of works – international examples all from the US. [US gaze]</p>
1:00:00	Discusses post-Modernist criticism of Modernists about the acceptance of universal truths. Mentions old wooden Government building, Inland Steel Building, University of Illinois Students Union Building.	<p>US Observations – luxury</p> <p>US examples – maintenance of buildings to a high standard over time [US gaze?]. Recalls US experience of damage to building and furniture being immediately rectified.</p>
1:05:54	Comments architecture that is ‘typically’ New Zealand. Mentions a quote from <b>Looking for the Local</b> regarding <b>Alan Wild, Bill Toomath</b> and friends search for a New Zealand Brand of architecture. Mentions <b>the Group</b> , Bill’s training at <b>Harvard, Gropius</b> , Bill’s parent’s place, <b>Sherwood house</b> , Bill’s own houses, <b>Christchurch</b> . Mentions <b>Vernon Brown, Imi Porsolt</b> and <b>Dick Toy</b> as ‘settlers.’ Mentions <b>government-designed housing, America and Canada, pattern books, leaky building syndrome, Master Builders and the Institute of Architecture</b>	<p>NZAA cohort connection</p> <p>NZ Regionalist architecture – impossible and overwrought as a concept – rationalism due to local limitations on funds and building industry, but style imported from overseas. Overall NZ architects too individualistic for a local style to emerge.</p> <p>European Influence – SoA staff</p> <p><b>**Toomath as Gropius/Harvard influenced rather than regional – moved away from Group influence**</b></p> <p>NZ modernism a concern for rationalism and pragmatism, referring to international ‘forms’.</p>

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

1:19:18	Discusses the lack of money for architects in domestic houses	
1:20:20	Talks of his lack of interest in trying to capture any sort of New Zealand indigenous expression. Mentions <b>Jim Beard's house</b> , <b>Japanese influence</b> , <b>Miesian influence</b> .	Japanese influence – [? Via US (not acknowledged)] Evidence of Masters worship Miesian and Japanese influence on own house – no desire to achieve indigenous architecture
1:22:39	Comments on <b>Vernon Brown's</b> work epitomising the shed not being done so on purpose, by just trying to provide a liveable environment.	
1:23:22	Compares the New Zealand buildings of the 1960s and 1970s with those of international standards. Mentions <b>Chicago</b> , <b>Premium Steel</b> , <b>Louis Sullivan</b> , <b>America</b> , <b>Australia</b> , <b>Upper Hutt [Civic Centre]</b> , <b>Museum Hotel</b> .	US Observations – luxury Colonial Cringe - Comparison of NZ commercial buildings versus US. Lack of quality and social context taken into account here – due to high costs?
1:26:48	Discusses how he'd do if he were just starting out designing as a graduate now. Mentions the <b>[Wellington] Railway Station</b> , <b>Turnbull house</b> . Discusses <b>[National Museum]</b> .	
1:30:50	Talks of critical career moments. Mentions <b>Dick Toy</b> , joining the <b>MoW</b> , <b>Jim Beard</b> , <b>Chris Vallenduik</b> , <b>Robert Matthew and Johnson Marshall</b> , <b>America</b> with <b>Dick Williams</b> and <b>Glenn Paulsen</b> .	Biographical devices – Epiphany Biographical devices – Turning point - US as career turning point (among others) New experiences – shock.
1:31:48	Talks about his trip to <b>America</b> , mentions <b>Honda Civic</b> , <b>Ford</b> , <b>Chevrolet</b> .	US Observations – technology Colonial Cringe - Before US trip things were so different between NZ and US – after return, NZ had 'caught up'
1:34:19	Describes working with <b>Jim Beard</b> . Compares with <b>Miles Warren</b> . Mentions <b>Maurice Mahoney</b> .	NZAA cohort connection
1:35:55	Comments on the concept of architects <b>guaranteeing buildings</b> .	
1:39:04	Discusses himself as a <b>Modernist</b> . Mentions 'boo-boos', talks of roofs of <b>Massey Sports Centre</b> and <b>Adam's Performing Hall</b> in the <b>School of Music</b> . Talks about quality work at moderate cost, travel and architecture as a profession.	Modernist values Advancing Modern architecture (battle)
1:44:44	Defines what <b>architecture</b> means to him. Mentions his <b>father-in-law</b> , <b>Sir George Currie</b> , <b>Henry Dam-Broadhead</b> , a family that owns a big sheep station at <b>Geraldine</b> he met at <b>Historic Places</b> luncheon. Talks about his <b>cousin</b> married to a big landowner in <b>Scotland</b> , <b>Lord Hume</b> .	
1:48:33	Describes favourite periods of his career being starting out with <b>Gabites &amp; Beard</b> , <b>[MoW]</b> and starting his own practice.	
1:49:20	Choose his own <b>[Alington] house</b> as one building to represent his whole career. Mentions <b>[Alington Senior house]</b> and the <b>Upper Hutt Civic Centre</b> .	Biographical devices – high points and turning points
1:52:19	Describes the <b>Chinese Anglican Mission</b> as high point. And the extension to <b>St Mary's Church</b> in <b>New Plymouth</b> . The extension to the <b>St Michael's Church</b> in	Social concern

# W H Alington Oral History Project

## Session 7 – Reflections

	<b>Kelburn</b> , mentions <b>David Keen</b> , the vicar. Mentions <b>Thatcher</b> , <b>Lew Martin</b> extending <b>St Mary's Church Karori</b> , <b>F. de Jersey Clere</b>	
1:55:33	Explains how his own <b>[Alington] house</b> is representative of his career, developing ideas from <b>Jim Beard's house</b> , being able to go on living in it.	NZAA cohort connection
1:57:18	Discusses <b>discipline</b> (in regards to <b>Upper Hutt</b> )	
1:57:58	Talks about rhythm of proportion. Mentions <b>Palladio</b> , <b>Garche House by Le Corbusier</b> , <b>Palladio's minor and major bays</b> used in his house.	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm
1:59:22	Discusses quote about <b>Goldfinger</b> and <b>Goldfinger office</b> .	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)
2:01:17	Talks about <b>Perret's</b> work. Mentions <b>John Hollings</b> .	
2:03:56	Discusses a second <b>Goldfinger</b> quote. Compares the scale of <b>Goldfinger's</b> work with his own. Discusses difference between <b>scale</b> and <b>monumentality</b> . Mentions <b>Upper Hutt</b> and <b>Miet Office</b> , <b>Wellington High School</b> , <b>Gisborne Courthouse</b> , <b>Steiner School in Havelock North</b> and <b>Belmont</b> .	
2:11:22	Talks about comparing <b>Smithson</b> quote on <b>Mies' Lake Shore Building</b> with his <b>Upper Hutt</b> 'being autonomous structure dissolving the skin'. Mentions the <b>National Gallery in Berlin</b> .	Evidence of <b>Masters worship</b> - Influence of <b>Mies [US gaze?]</b> - rationalism
2:16:52	Discusses the lack of a <b>common philosophy or language for architecture</b> .	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural)
2:23:46	Describes the extent to which his <b>thesis</b> has been a basis of his <b>philosophy</b> guiding his career. Mentions taking the <b>Aesthetic course in Illinois [University]</b>	Intellectualism – theorising (architectural) Motivation - Written thesis inspired desire to take Masters course in US – desire to learn more – i.e. to take further study to find out more.
2:27:50	Compliments <b>Michael [Dudding]</b> on his information gathering and ability to probe.	
2:28:17	Acknowledges the support of his wife, <b>Margaret [Alington]</b> .	
2:30:13	<i>[Interview ends]</i>	

**Postwar architectural journals**  
*Alington Interview*

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008

**Recorded at:** Victoria University School of Architecture  
24 Wigan Street, Wellington.

**Interviewed by:** Michael Dudding

0:00:00	<i>Track identification</i>	
0:00:46	Eagerly “devoured” [Architectural] Forum, while working in draughting room at [NZ] Railways. Outlines. Reference: Ivor Clarkson;	US influence – (formative) – initially attracted (before architectural training), to the pictorial ‘glossies’, which he identifies AF as being – rather than the more fulsome AR. Influence of media – journals
0:01:26	Mentions – AF as “glossies” – with mostly visual material.	US influence – (formative) Influence of media – journals Influence of media – photography
0:01:51	Became exposed to broader design concerns through Architectural Review [AR], at MoW – where they were circulated around staff. Details. Mentions AR influenced by Scandinavian publications. Reference: Auckland University School of Architecture; Pugin.	Europe influence – suggests AR, followed Scandinavian work at this time (which he mentions in the same breath as Arts and Crafts?) Influence of media – journals
0:03:36	AR contained very good articles correspondents. Details. Reference: Pugin, [?]Brown, Gordon Cullen	Europe influence Influence of media – journals
0:04:04	Learnt drawing skills from Gordon Cullen in AR. Explains. Reference: Townscape.	Europe influence Influence of media – journals
0:04:53	British journal Architectural Design [AD] gave different emphasis – lacked the “learned papers”. Outlines.	Europe influence Influence of media – journals
0:05:46	Mentions – Japan Architect [JA], similar to AF.	Japanese influence Influence of media – journals Influence of media – photography
0:06:08	Mentions – AR remained the “main” journal.	Europe influence Influence of media – journals
0:06:17	L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui [AA] and Domus available at School [of Architecture], and at MoW. Outlines.	Europe influence Influence of media – journals

# Postwar architectural journals

Alington Interview

0:06:55	Ideas of Modernism coming into Architecture school from Le Corbusier's publications, collected by the students. Outlines.	Modernist values Evidence of Masters worship Influence of media – books
0:07:37	Ideas of Modernism disseminated via journals chiefly through AR. Outlines. Mentions – also articles on Victoriana and other material balanced emphasis on Modern architecture.	Modernist values Europe influence Influence of media – journals
0:08:34	US journal <i>Architectural Record</i> (ARec) – better articles than AF. Outlines.	US influence Influence of media – journals
0:09:14	<i>Architectural Journal</i> very informative – concentrated on the construction of Modern buildings. Outlines. Mentions did not read <i>Pencil Points</i> , which seemed too “trad”itional.	Europe influence Influence of media – journals
0:10:23	Spent evenings with older architecture student friends, discussing architecture. Outlines. Reference: Eddie Wong; Reg Uren.	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm
0:11:19	Early Architectural Centre monthly meetings featured robust architectural debate. Explains.	Association with influential figures – milieu Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm
0:12:40	Mentions – that there was some discussion of ideas from AR between students, but many students were not interested.	Intellectualism – interest/engagement beyond norm Important to note in relation to main interview discussion of student milieu – it appears to have been a select group that Alington was amongst.
0:12:59	Citing knowledge from AR was never used as a form of ‘one-upmanship’ between students. Explains.	
0:14:49	MoW library made journal titles available to staff. Explains.	Influence of media – journals
0:15:38	Looked forward to receiving AR (and perhaps AA), on his desk. Outlines.	Influence of media – journals Europe influence
0:16:22	Mentions – plethora of journals available today, and that AR seems to have “lost its way”.	
0:16:37	Mentions – <i>Architectural Association</i> (AAAssoc), was another journal of the time.	Influence of media – journals Europe influence
0:17:03	Gordon Wilson [MoW] liked to see the journals first – often left journals at home, to the annoyance of the staff. Outlines.	Influence of media – journals
0:17:56	Mentions – held subscription to AR for a long time, and <i>RIBA Journal</i> (through RIBA membership) for a while.	Influence of media – journals Europe influence
0:19:15	<i>Recording ends.</i>	

# Early Architectural Centre oral history project (OHColl-0773)

Interview with **Bill Alington**

**Subject:** William (Bill) Hildebrand Alington

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> July 2000

Interviewed by: **Leslie Ann Salinger**

## Tape 1 Side1

(OHC-014526)

20.0	Bill Wilson lectured at Architectural Centre on Friday nights.	Association with influential figures – inspiration Association with influential figures – milieu
29.0	Architectural Centre as leader for a “brave new world” – “like a religious passion”	Brave new world – Architecture “brave new world” – “like a religious passion”

## Tape 1 Side2

2.0	Mentions – London, RM&J-M, NZ House, US, Fulbright.	Biographical devices – Turning point Association with influential figures – milieu US Experience figures in interviews on other topics (i.e. this Arch Centre interview of Toomath, Beard)
6.0	Tells Paulsen story.	Biographical devices – Epiphany Association with influential figures – sage advice NB - US experience figures in interviews on other topics (i.e. this Arch Centre interview of Toomath, Beard)
12.2	Paulsen’s “positive, productive process of criticism” – very stimulating, used ever since.	Biographical devices – Epiphany Association with influential figures – sage advice Direct citing of impact of US experience in subsequent practice.
14.0	Retaining design development drawings – lesson learned from Saarinen’s office.	US influence – direct design influence cited Direct citing of impact of US experience in subsequent practice.

## Tape 2 Side1

(OHC-014527)

0.0	Architectural Centre fostered ideals and aspirations for better [modernist] world. Mentions – shift of influence from Europe to US. Reference: Mies van der Rohe; Frank Lloyd Wright; Le Corbusier; <i>Architectural Review</i> ; <i>Architectural Forum</i> ; <i>Architectural Record</i> .	Influence of media – journals Brave new world – Architecture Evidence of Masters worship Europe vs US Europe influence US influence - shift of influence from Europe to US.
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Early Architectural Centre oral history project

Interview with Bill Alington

3.0	Modern masters as "The Giants" – met Mies van der Rohe and almost Frank Lloyd Wright. Mentions – Beard and Toomath met Gropius[?]	Evidence of Masters worship Meeting Masters	
5.4	European influence from émigrés and returned servicemen – Gabites/AA and Patience/Liverpool.	Europe influence Association with influential figures – milieu	
7.4	Sense of optimism – felt part of a world-wide movement able to effect change.	Brave new world – Architecture - Post war optimism/brave new world	
27.4	Architectural Centre as an intimate group of great visionaries.	Association with influential figures – milieu	

