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NO PLACE LIKE HOME:

NEW ZEALAND LITERATURE AND THE 1930S.

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

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of

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ABSTRACT.

This thesis seeks to re-evaluate the New Zealand literature of the 1930s. It does so in the belief that the decade's writing has been subjected to a variety of critical processes that have resulted in an image of the period which is erroneous. This misreading affects not just the 1930s, but also applies to the wider context of New Zealand literature, as the decade occupies such a pivotal point in the history of that literature.

The method of the thesis is an exploration of the decade's writing by an opening chapter discussing the period in general, and then a series of author-centred chapters. While each author-centred chapter concentrates on one or two principal figures, the contents of each chapter attempt to display a discursive nature, relating each writer to a wider context.

The thesis aims to show that the New Zealand literature of the 1930s is a far more flexible and complex body of writing than has hitherto been admitted. The canonisation of the decade as an era of nationalist expression imposes a narrow range of critical attitudes which fail to deal with the full multiplicities of the writing. In order to overcome these limitations, the thesis explores the literature not only in the context of this reductive criticism (attempting to explain the philosophies behind the nationalist rigidities) but also juxtaposes it with international writing from the same period. The codes and structures of literature from Europe (particularly England), the Americas and Australia all inform the New Zealand writing of the 1930s. An

analysis of the New Zealand material in this light offers new conclusions on the literature's significance.

These conclusions are defined by useful complexities. The decade's writing is seen to be far less streamlined than subsequent literary histories portray. Instead, the literature displays a multiplicity of expression; influences and origins blend in expositions characterised by their mobility. Recognition of this mobility challenges the orthodox canonisation of the 1930s. Writers such as Frank Sargeson and A.R.D. Fairburn, who are perceived to express the nationalist tone of the decade, are seen to reflect less of the period's diversity than Robin Hyde, a writer traditionally peripheralised in the nationalist depiction of the era. The thesis promotes the conclusion that writers such as Hyde and Allen Curnow, seeking to address the complexities of the 1930s in a complex expression of their own, come closest to a mode of writing that reflects the turbulent nature of the decade.

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INTRODUCTION.

Reviewing the 1991 publication of The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English (edited by Terry Sturm), Alex Calder comments on the role of the literary historian in New Zealand. Noting that the majority of critical writing has centred on a relatively small canon of authors, Calder ruminates on the job of those critics who seek to explore previous New Zealand writing:

> In attempting a correction, in enlarging our sense of what's there, it is not to be expected that forgotton writers will be restored to their true place in the pantheon. The point of an inclusive history is quite different from that: it is a way of redefining what can be said about New Zealand writing, even - or especially - the writing of the canonical few.[1]

This thesis also aims for a 'way of redefining what can be said about New Zealand writing', in this case the writing of the 1930s. It deals with a number of writers, R.A.K Mason, A.R.D. Fairburn, Frank Sargeson, Robin Hyde, John Mulgan and Allen Curnow, who are canonical figures in New Zealand literature, as well as three writers, Ursula Bethell, Eileen Duggan and D'Arcy Cresswell, who might be argued to be peripheral to that main canon. It does this with a belief similar to that expressed by Calder, that a re-evaluation of previous New Zealand literature is necessary in order to increase an understanding of the literature as a whole.

The thesis adopts certain boundaries which need to be explained. 'The 1930s' is no readily available critical unit, a portable chunk of literary output that can be hefted around in a handy form. Indeed, much of the argument in this thesis seeks to eradicate such critical narrowness, a narrowness that has dominated the structures of New Zealand for too long. The label 'the 1930s' is mainly one of convenience, a point of focus for the discussion which follows. The thesis does not ignore material which lies either side of the decade. Indeed it uses a discursive method to show how the writing of that period exists in relation to both literature in New Zealand and abroad. This relationship interweaves material from both before and after the decade.

The individual chapters which explore this material centre on one or two authors. Other methods did present themselves, notably some form of division based along generic lines, but finally the author-centred approach, complete with all its restrictions, appeared to offer the best structure. The selection of the writers to be studied may seem a little final, and the arguments are strong for similar concentration on figures like Denis Glover, Charles Brasch, Ruth Dallas and G.B. Lancaster, but the contents of each chapter are more fluid, and invoke a wider context, than the 'solidity' of their titles imply. The analysis seeks to engage with the complexities and multiplicities of the decade, and the seeming disparity between a mobility of this kind and the necessary singularities of chapter headings is only an illusion. The concept of a 'literary period' is one laden with uncertainties, but this analysis seeks to show the constructive potential of these uncertainties.

The decade itself was chosen because it occupies an unique position not just in New Zealand literature, but in literature

worldwide. In New Zealand, the 1930s have been canonised as the decade of the nationalist revolution, the period in which a distinct 'New Zealand literature' emerged. More generally, the 1930s saw a fusion between literature and politics, with all the ramifications that entails, which is unequalled in twentieth-century writing. Both these events have become heavily mythologised, reduced to collective texts for the purposes of speedy assimilation. The result in New Zealand is that the decade has lapsed into a form of slumber, seemingly understood but seldom explored. Those critics who herald the writing of the decade for its part in a nationalistic 'birth' and those who dismiss it for a perceived collective misogyny do it equal disservices.

In actuality this analysis demonstrates that the 1930s writing in New Zealand reflects an enormous diversity. The destabilising events in international economics and politics, the depression of the early 1930s and the regional conflicts which led to the 1939-45 war, produced a literature that is defined by its complexity and varied nature. This thesis aims to explore the diversity, and to comment on the processes of mythologising which have subjected the decade to a simplistic criticism. New Zealand criticism has for too long thought of the 1930s writers in group terms, particularly as nationalists or anti-nationalists. This kind of duality is reductive, and it is far more fruitful to explore the work of individual writers and to see how that work meshes with the larger contexts of the period. There was, in fact, no real sense of a writing 'community' in New Zealand in the 1930s. Though some authors knew each other well, for example Sargeson and Fairburn, there was no feeling that they wrote looking over each other's shoulder. Fairburn himself, as well as

Hyde and Cresswell, spent over a year of the decade in England, while Mulgan left New Zealand in 1933 and did not return. This kind of fracturing is indicative of the literary climate. Thus, although the chapters interweave with each other, they can also be read as individual essays.

One of the important aspects of the diversity of the decade's writing comes with the recognition that the discourses, whether nationalist or socialist, which have been used to describe it are themselves only part of a wider context. The New Zealand literature of the period is a force field that is, at heart, international, and it is a mistake to close off avenues of comparitive exploration simply because they may seem to complicate the critical process. Such complications are useful. This analysis sees them as yardsticks of definition in the New Zealand writing of the 1930s, offering new critical parameters for a study of the period.

The international scope juxtaposes New Zealand literature of the period with literature from other areas of the world. Wherever possible, I have tried to be exact with my terminology. Whenever 'English literature' is mentioned, it is intended to refer to writing specifically in England, not in Britain as a whole. Writing in other parts of the British Isles, notably Scotland and Ireland, displays marked differences from the bulk of the English writing of the decade (indeed, a comparison between this writing and that of New Zealand would be a highly profitable exercise, offering new conclusions about the relationships between differing manifestations of post-colonial literatures).

Essentially, the purpose of this international juxtaposition is to display and emphasise the fact that New Zealand writing

during the 1930s belongs in an international context, that the wider realm of literatures in English moves over national boundaries. This approach is as much about the critical texts of the 1930s as it is about the fiction, poetry and drama produced in the decade. It is only by admitting to the fluidity of the period, the overlaps and the tensions which characterise it, that the literature gains the kind of evaluation it needs.

This thesis is the product of two-and-a-half years in New Zealand. The fact that it is written by a non-New Zealander raises questions of perspective. It is wise to be cautious about this however, since any claims of 'objectivity' are undoubtedly over-deterministic. There is no real sense in which I feel as if I have been an objective critic when dealing with this material. The essential mobility of literature means there is a constantly shifting relationship between the writing and the critic. The rules of engagement do not allow for positions of lofty authority. Nevertheless, a sense of distance from the structures of both creative and critical writing has been an advantage. Any gaps in my knowledge of the literary heritage (particularly in a nation where literary criticism shows such marks of entrenchment) may well provide a flexibility which is both illuminating and profitable.

As Robin Hyde noted in her dealings with her male contemporaries during the 1930s, the obligation to view matters with a 'perpetual crick in the neck' can produce beneficial results.

1. THE 1930s: CONFUSION AND COMPROMISE.

The cultural nationalism which governed much of the literary and intellectual activity in New Zealand during the 1930s was a force both connected to, and distanced from, the forms of nationalism which had developed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe. The view that the essential, fundamental and spiritual life of the people exists and is expressed in their culture spread from eighteenth-century Germany to be embraced by the wider movement of Romanticism. The concept of 'geist', the mystical, indefinable sense of a popular spirit, provided the backbone for a variety of worldwide nationalist movements which sought to emerge from the restrictive codes and structures of a colonising culture.

In New Zealand many of the writers of the 1930s sought to provide a literature that would supply a national self-awareness and a sense of a distinctive identity. In this, they display connections to similar movements that occured in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, notably in Ireland, Scotland and Australia, as well as the diversity of cultural nationalism that has characterised other post-colonial societies within the last fifty years. The specific complexities of New Zealand's varient of this cultural nationalism stem from a unique historical and social mix that produces intellectual structures which create a particular form of nationalist self-expression. Foremost among the historical factors is the status of New Zealand as a settler colony. This provides a fundamental variation to the development of the 'classic' literature of

decolonisation, as defined by Edward Said. Said recognises the deceptive nature of much nationalist thought, seeing nationalism as a 'deeply problematic ideological, as well as socio-political enterprise.' He also notes the layering and interpenetration of coloniser and colonised which is such an important relationship in New Zealand culture during the 1930s. Said talks of 'a sort of dependence between the two sides of the contest, since after all many of the nationalist struggles were led by bourgeoisies that were partly formed and to some degree provided by the colonial power'[1], and goes on to note that 'the cultural horizons of nationalism are fatally limited by the common history of colonizer and colonized assumed by the nationalist movement itself.'[2] 'Fatally' is perhaps a little strong in this context. All nationalist movements contain large elements of cultural and political mixing, and Said's evocation of the 'death blow' points to his own desire for a purity within the resulting post-colonial structures.

Said's terminology locates the kind of nationalism with which he is dealing. He is concerned primarily with the cultural decolonisations which accompany moves to political independence, and his quoted examples include nations in South America and Africa, as well as Palestine and Ireland. His analysis deals with those nations whose nationalism looked back to a revitalisation of indigenous forms, a process he sees centred around geographic and linguistic discourses. The 'primacy of the geographical' becomes vital to the expression of anti-imperialism, and carries with it the beginnings of new mythic structures:

> A great deal of myth-making went into these retrospective decolonizations, by which the land was seen again, revised so to speak, in a state that antedated its alienation by imperialism... The search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than

> that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes, myths and religions, these too are enabled by the land. And along with these nationalistic adumbrations of the decolonized identity, there goes an almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical re-development of the native language.[3]

This thesis raises specific questions when placed in a New Zealand context. In literary terms, the kind of decolonisation described by Said belongs both to the 1930s, where the writers displayed a heavy geographical obsession and Frank Sargeson sought to reflect the particularities of New Zealand English, but also to the 1970s, which saw the increasing publication of Maori writing and a focusing on the issues affecting Maoridom. New Zealand's status as a settler colony creates a schizophrenic version of Said's argument, and the resulting complexities mean that the nationalism of the 1930s occupies a specific place, a peculiarly local manifestation of an international phenomenon.

In New Zealand during the 1930s the impetus behind the drive for self-definition came from writers who were descended from European immigrants. They were excluded from a full re-evaluation of New Zealand's indigenous culture by their own histories, (indeed, of all the writers of the decade only Roderick Finlayson - and to a lesser extent, Robin Hyde - sought any exploration of Maoridom as a possible source for the decolonising process) and were forced to assert their difference from a European 'home' in the language of the coloniser. In this position, the New Zealand nationalists were connected to the Australian movement of the 1890s, but distanced from the Celtic revivals from which, in part, both Australian and New Zealand nationalism drew inspiration.

Ireland and Scotland both possessed a heritage of myths, legends, songs, ballads and stories in a language other than

English. The members of the Irish Literary Revival, though they aimed to supply a sense of national identity in English or Anglo-Irish (arguably a separate language, or - in the terms of Caribbean poet E.K. Brathwaite - a 'nation language'), drew on the translations of Gaelic that proliferated during the nineteenth century. In contrast Douglas Hyde, creator of the Gaelic League, sought the de-Anglicisation of Irish culture and a return to the use of Gaelic as a primary, living language. Though different, both forms of nationalism drew heavily on a shared cultural heritage. The Celtic heritage also informed the Scottish nationalism that flourished in the first decades of the twentieth century. The Gaelic poems of Sorley MacLean (collected in his 1943 publication Dain Do Eimher, and written over the previous decade) parallel nationalist developments in New Zealand, displaying a common link of decolonised expression that characterised the period. The prodigious output of Hugh MacDiarmid was at the forefront of a Scottish nationalism, expressed in both English and Scots, that drew on the tradition of the ballads and of Burns, and projected a firm sense of cultural difference. The Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s debated the issues inherent in nationalism in poetry, prose and drama, as well as literary essays and scholarly study.

The legacy and influence of these Celtic nationalisms, particularly that of Ireland, are important to an understanding of New Zealand nationalism of the 1930s. Eileen Duggan utilised the Anglo-Irish ballad in a New Zealand context, seeking to evoke a local sense of the 'geist' that was vital to this period of nationalist expression. Allen Curnow, the figure who above all others provided a robustness and a rigour of vision to national self-definition, developed a rhetorical stance and position as a

public mentor that is descended from Yeats. In a more general sense, the pastoral romanticism which underlies much of New Zealand's 1930s nationalism - the mythic, laconic male figures who populate the literature both as characters and creators - embodies the view of the people as an entity that owes much to the developments of Celtic nationalism.

New Zealand's nationalist self-expression was peculiarly literary. It lacked the additions of a greater philology, the development of linguistic and historical study, that characterised the Celtic Revivals. In New Zealand, cultural nationalism found expression in a variety of literary essays and reviews, small outlets that were distanced from a wider political agenda. Lacking the indigenous heritage utilised by figures such as Thomas Davis, Samuel Ferguson and J.J. Callanan in Ireland, New Zealand writing adopted the forms and structures of a wider Western literature, particularly as it manifested itself in Europe in the 1930s. The result is a unique hybridisation, where the public face of nationalistic expression mirrors the concerns of decolonisation and anti-imperialism, whilst the private concerns of craft reflect a heritage of Western literature with the significant modifications of twentieth-century Georgianism and modernism. It is as a result of such a hybridisation that Curnow's poetry of the late 1930s often reflects thoughts descended from Yeats in language descended from Auden.

These complexities leave the literature in a position which is multi-layered. This layering may, in part, be responsible for the caution and nervousness discernable in the nationalism of the period. There is no New Zealand equivalent of Standish O'Grady, whose writings on the Irish Revival display an enthusiasm and buoyancy 'that suggests an enraptured discovery of something

primal, enthralling in its strangeness.'[4] Instead, in keeping with the tone of Alexander and Currie's 1906 Treasury of New Zealand Verse and other anthologies such as Quentin Pope's 1930 Kowhai Gold and O.N. Gillespie's New Zealand Short Stories of the same year,[5] the writings of nationalists like M.H. Holcroft and E.H. McCormick contain assertions veiled in apologies.

Holcroft and McCormick were two among the many commentators on New Zealand literature during the 1930s. One of the problems in seeking definitions with which to encompass the decade is the amorphous nature of much of its nationalist content. Until Curnow's 1945 Caxton anthology of New Zealand poetry, much of the nationalism in New Zealand lacked a sense of form. Holcroft's essay The Deepening Stream, published in 1940, was an initial explication of a cultural nationalism that continued with his following essays The Waiting Hills (1943) and Encircling Seas (1946). Holcroft's analysis of New Zealand culture portrays a society dwarfed by the geography that surrounds it and lacking a history or sense of tradition with which to combat that lack. In its anti-industrial romanticism, Holcroft's nationalism is a sensual, idiosyncratic expression that is also reflected in the esoteric philosophies of D'Arcy Cresswell and the pastoralism of Sargeson's short fiction. It is not until Holcroft's essays combine with the solidity of Curnow's doctrines, and the functional literary criticism of McCormick (outlined in his 1940 Letters and Art in New Zealand and more fully developed in the 1959 New Zealand Literature: A Survey) that the decade begins to develop a look of orthodoxy.

It is vital to stress that, while Curnow, Holcroft and McCormick are all contemporary critics of the 1930s cultural debate, it is not until the twenty years following the decade's

end that the period achieves a full measure of critical definition. This process of historicisation is important, for within it lies the base for many of the mythic structures that have developed to dominate subsequent discourses concerning the merits of the period's writing. Both Curnow and McCormick in particular employ critical criteria which prioritise the nationalist content of 1930s literature, creating a selective canon of predominantly male writers dealing with concerns which are essentially provincial. For both critics, Sargeson (the 'forger of tradition' as McCormick calls him, one of the writers who 'created the nucleus of a literature where there had existed before only isolated achievement'[6]) epitomises a desired nationalism, a focus upon the local which is an essential part of cultural decolonisation.

The result of a generation of such critical hegemony is that the image of the 1930s as a decade of a gruff, nationalist and masculine literature has become received wisdom. Epitomised in the short stories of Sargeson, the poetry of Denis Glover and A.R.D. Fairburn, and both the poetics and criticism of Curnow, this image has, over time, solidified into a firm orthodoxy. The orthodoxy informs discussions of New Zealand literature to this day. Like the nationalism from which it developed, the seemingly concrete nature of its critical position has never received a full articulation or explication. Instead it appears to float, an amorphous concept that is understood and quoted by all, yet lacks the definitives that allow it to be pinned down.

The closest the orthodoxy comes to a definition is in the critical writings of Allen Curnow. Beginning with his introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45 (1945, with a second revised edition in 1951), Curnow articulated a framework

for the discussion of a specifically 'New Zealand' literature. The basic premise of this, an 'uncompromising fidelity to experience... an unqualified responsibility to the truths of themselves, in this place, at that time'[7] is developed most notably in Curnow's introduction to The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (1960), 'New Zealand Literature: the Case for a Working Definition' (1964) and 'Distraction and Definition: Centripetal Directions in New Zealand Poetry' (1970). In all of these essays Curnow extends the 'common line of development' or 'centripetal' forces about New Zealand literature that he believes first arose in the 1930s. As late as 1983, in an interview with the New Zealand Listener, Curnow acknowledged his debt to that 'Phoenix generation' of the early 1930s: 'I do sometimes get the feeling that, in some ways, I am writing for them. They've dropped out and I'm still here'.[8]

Curnow's idea of the 'common line of development' has kept the structures of nationalism to the fore of New Zealand literary criticism. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that his essays were not statements in a critical vacuum. In almost all cases they were part of an ongoing critical debate that challenged the view of literature that had developed from the 1930s. The 1950s saw Louis Johnson's New Zealand Poetry Yearbook, and new journals such as Arachne (Wellington) and Here & Now (Auckland) in which Johnson and James K. Baxter questioned the theories and conclusions of the 1930s generation. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the debates on 'open form' and the relationship between modernism and post-modernism which were crucial to the subsequent direction of New Zealand poetry. Even into the 1980s, the appearance of Leigh Davis's journal And owed much of its

effectiveness to the position it adopted with respect to Curnow's writings.

The arguments and counter-arguments on the issues of nationalism have always been intense. Peter Simpson has talked of 'the tortuous complexities of this debate and the slippery imprecision of the terminology in which it was conducted'.[9] What is of interest is that it is not the complexities of the debate that have become its defining motif. Instead, a view of the 1930s with the benefit of sixty years hindsight still reveals the doctrinaire attitudes that characterised the decade's first criticism, a criticism that developed from the reviews of the 1930s to solidify into the orthodoxy during the 1940s and 1950s. Curnow's poetic 're-emergence' with his 1972 collection Trees, Effigies, Moving Objects, his increasing status as a poet of international reputation (at the expense of Baxter), has also elevated his criticism to a dominant position. The 1987 publication of his critical writings in Look Back Harder solidified this position, firmly establishing both him and his critical opinions with an impressive authority. Other important volumes have contributed to this authority. Wystan Curnow's 1973 collection Essays on New Zealand Literature and C.K. Stead's 1981 In the Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature both pay homage to Curnow's nationalism, and even the qualifications expressed in both texts fail to detract from an acknowledgement of this nationalism's validity.

The effect of this movement towards homogeneity is that the argument has become so one-sided that it appears at times to be no argument at all. Instead of a literature based on a working dialectic, the orthodoxy can be characterised as a series of pronouncements. The tussle of opposing opinions is subsumed by

statements that appear incontrovertible. Even the briefest period of study reveals that this is not the case, but the constant misinformation concerning the 1930s, the narrowness of vision and selectivity of critical comment, display a lethargy in the critical process that is ascribable to the seeming certainties provided by nationalism.

The result is a decade that is typecast. The typecasting works to provide a necessary base for the indigenous post-colonial literature that follows. The establishment of every 'national' literature requires a mythic sense of 'birth', of legitimisation, of creation. In New Zealand the 1930s occupy that role, and it is a role that shapes unavoidably the development of future writing. The 1985 Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse, edited by Ian Wedde and Harvey MacQueen, pronounces firmly from its back cover 'We are not anywhere, but somewhere', an anxiety over location (both cultural and geographical) that stems directly from the nationalism of the 1930s. It is evidence that Curnow's 'common line of development' still occupies the middle ground. Nationalism's internal logic continues to dominate the critical milieu, despite a belief, articulated by Robert Chapman as early as 1953, that the 'very success of the generation of the 'thirties... has enabled poets here to feel so at ease in their environment that they can simply assume it and find themselves freed to deal directly with the concerns of poetry everywhere'.[10] The subject matter may have received more than its fair share of critical attention, but as Curnow noted in his introduction to his 1982 Selected Poems: 'There is indeed a claptrap of the subject, we have heard enough of 'national identity', but this doesn't mean that it will go away.'[11]

The received view of the 1930s not only privileges certain writers, it excludes others. The orthodoxy presents a central core of figures - Curnow, Sargeson, Fairburn, Glover, John Mulgan - who produced nationalist works. It peripheralises other groups and writers who worked along differing lines or sought a different portrayal of New Zealand. The writing published in Phoenix and Tomorrow also belongs in the context of C.A. Marris's New Zealand Best Poems series, produced throughout the 1930s. Marris published the work of Robin Hyde, Ursula Bethell and Eileen Duggan both in New Zealand Best Poems and Art In New Zealand, the latter described by Curnow as a 'watery quarterly' because of its neo-Georgian content. It is interesting that Curnow's objections to Marris's publications lay in their use of a 'quasi-dead' language and a dated 'New Zealandism'. Writing in the Christchurch Press in January 1939, Curnow stated: 'If there is a quality in poetry which can be called New Zealandness, something of more than geographical significance, it should be found in a collection of New Zealand Best Poems'.[12] For Curnow, Marris produced a false nationalism, an unreal picture. This comment is symptomatic of the way the orthodoxy worked to exclude writers who offered alternatives to the codes and structures of the emerging nationalism.

The other important group suffering exclusion were those who continued to look to England if not as 'home', then as a centre of literary and cultural sophistication. Ian Milner, Geoffrey Cox, Jack Bennett and James Bertram formed a New Zealand clique at Oxford that mirrored the W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Cecil Day Lewis era a few years before. The 'Oxford Group' complicates the critical process, since it also includes Charles Brasch and John Mulgan, both of whom have been recruited into the

nationalist canon. The ambivalence of the position of these two in New Zealand literature (as well as Bertram, whose critical writings of the period often utilise the masculinist prose of nationalism) is indicative of the true complexities of the period. The relationship of the specificities of New Zealand to the wider traditions of Western literature, and the differing natures of those local specificities, produced writing that slides between influences. The hybrid nature of the period is denied by the orthodox view of the decade. It is essential to examine and uncover both the connections with European literature and the non-nationalist material produced within New Zealand, and to juxtapose this with a re-examination of the work of Sargeson, Fairburn, Curnow and the other nationalists of the period. Only with an admission of the decade's complexities will a true evaluation of its literature be possible.

The concerns of literature in the 1930s were international concerns. Politics, social issues, the role of the artist and even the definition of a period of civilisation whirled in a vortex that moved beyond national boundaries. In the same manner that the decade has acquired a tone of its own, a tone that works to relegate the merit of individual authors in favour of themes and symbols (the writers in England are often referred to as the 'Auden generation', elevating a common perspective above individual output), the issues confronted in the period moved between languages and traditions. The movement of the world towards armed conflict, the impending collapse of capitalism - evidenced in the depressions in the Western democracies - and the rise of fascism both in Europe and elsewhere prompted an international reaction. Auden and Spender's poetry about Spain is matched by that of Pablo Neruda or Paul Claudel, or even by

Greville Texidor's story 'Home Front' that appeared in the first issue of New Zealand New Writing in December 1942. In order to understand the rise of nationalism in the 1930s (an event not confined to New Zealand) it is necessary to understand the international context in which literature found itself. In order to come to terms with the full implications of New Zealand writing during the period, it is necessary to examine the range of influences on the literature. Writing in Europe, and particularly England, must be addressed if the complexities of New Zealand's relationship with the decade are to be grasped in totality.

The concerns of the writers in England in the 1930s, writers for whom fascism was not simply a theoretical concept but an actuality that appeared to be spreading to dominate continental Europe, appear largely political. The orthodox view of the decade fixes this as a central point: the politicisation of literature largely around a select number of writers - Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, Christopher Isherwood, George Orwell - who struggled to use literature both to avoid war and to bring down the social system that appeared to be in crisis all around them.

For these writers - the Auden generation, as Samuel Hynes terms them - the experience of the 1914-18 war was vital in determining their attitudes. That war wiped out a generation, leaving behind the elderly who were deemed responsible for it and the young, with their ambivalent feelings of both a hatred for its waste and a sense of guilt at having been too young to take part. Isherwood's first two novels, All The Conspirators (1928) and The Memorial (1932) both portray social worlds fractured by the war, leaving the younger characters in both novels lost in a chaos of values. In each case the blame is clearly laid with the

elder generation, who inhabit environments of staid conservatism and appear unaware of the nature of the public world that forces itself into the narrative.

The impending collapse of civilisation appeared as a tangible threat as the decade progressed. The 1914-18 war was seen to be the shattering conclusion to an era of Imperial capitalism, leaving nationalism and fascism to develop in the ruins of post-war society. In literary terms the dominant themes were fragmentation and discord. The impersonal analytic poetry of T.S. Eliot was echoed by other modernists. James Joyce, W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf all pursued a dislocated subjectivism that commented on the state of post-war culture. These writers were the dominant influence upon the Auden generation. They stood for modernity and revolution. But whilst the philosophy of The Waste Land (1922) marked a definitive portrayal, it was the portrayal of an end, not of a beginning. The writers of the 1930s felt that it was their job to build upon the modernism of the 1920s, and despite the view of the earlier decade as one that was largely apolitical there was, in figures such as Osbert Sitwell, Siegfried Sasson, Robert Graves and Wilfred Owen, an underlying history of left-wing views that stretched back to the Fabian Society. There was no such orthodoxy of the Right among the writers of the older generation. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis may all have appeared reactionaries to figures such as Auden and Spender, but theirs was not a strictly dogmatic political philosophy that rooted itself in the issues of present day society. To the Auden generation, with their boyhood memories of war, present day society appeared to be constantly thrusting itself into their consciousness. The traditionally private and insular world of the bourgeois writer

was invaded by the pressure of public events. In a time of rising fascism, any statement which was not anti-fascist appeared to be covertly supporting the new Right. This key concept to the critical debate of the 1930s, that in a time of public chaos art becomes a mode of action, developed through the undergraduate magazines at Oxford and Cambridge under the editorial control of Auden and Day Lewis.

In Britain in the early 1930s the manifestations of a political literature began to appear. The 1931 collection New Signatures and the following 1933 New Country have been canonised as manifestos of the emerging generation. These works were accompanied by more overtly political pieces, such as John Strachey's popularisation of Marx, The Coming Struggle For Power. Discussing the decade in his cynical and resentful commentary, The Thirties: A Dream Revolved, Julian Symons says that such works:

> helped to create a whole climate of opinion, a climate in which certain assumptions were almost automatic. It was assumed, for example, that there was some inherent virtue in the working class, a virtue quite independent of the ignorance and prejudice shown by its individual members.[13]

Writing in 1960, Symons' view of the leftist decade is coloured by the Cold War, but his analysis of the problematical nature of a literature dominated by an ideology is valid. The writers of the 1930s were upper middle-class bourgeois, members of a tradition had dominated literature for as long as they could remember. The sudden juxtaposition of a private craft with a strict political dogma created a situation that was problematic. The work of Cecil Day Lewis is an example. By nature a lyrical poet, Day Lewis embraced the communist cause wholeheartedly, joining the party early in the decade. His 1932 essay 'The Poet

and Revolution' is full of a propaganda that calls for literature to embrace the class struggle. His own creative works of the period, Transitional Poem (1929) and From Feathers To Iron (1931) both have titles that suggest the necessity of rejecting a subjective literature in favour of political action. The result is a curious mixture of pastoralism and propaganda, and overall failure. The second lyric of From Feathers To Iron begins 'Let's leave this town' and by the third he has gone 'back to the countryside.' Yet there later follows an epilogue (dedicated to Auden) which contains frequent images of an industrial landscape, the sort of stock building blocks which made up the 'Auden Country' and dominated much of the early poetry of the decade. When Day Lewis combines his two impulses, as in Poem XV, the results indicate a conflict that the literature cannot resolve:

> I have come so far upon my journey.
> This is the frontier, this is where I change,
> And wait between two worlds to take refreshment.
> I see the mating plover at play
> Blowing themselves about over the green wheat,
> And in a bank I catch
> The shy scent of the primrose that prevails
> Strangely upon the heart.[14]

The juxtaposition of the frontier and the primrose strikes right to the heart of the problem for Day Lewis and other English writers in the 1930s. Proclamations of unity with the working class, of solidarity in the struggle for revolution, occupy an uneasy position with the traditional bourgeois status of imaginative literature. The Auden generation, the figures now seen to dominate the decade's literary culture, lacked the commitment of writers and analysts such as John Cornford, Christopher Caudwell, Tom Wintringham, Ralph Fox and Julian Bell. All these were to die in Spain, the conflict embodying the clear cut divisions between fascism and anti-fascism. For them the

revolution was real, but the political outlook of Auden, Spender, MacNeice and Isherwood was far less dogmatic. Auden's work during the decade was basically parabolic. It was a literature that sought to clarify and to bear messages but not to instruct in a propagandist sense. In his study of the English literature of the period, The Auden Generation. Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s (1976), Samuel Hynes points to similar conclusions in his discussion of Spender:

> He based his argument on the conviction - which he held throughout the 'thirties - that there is a deeper sense of political, beyond party politics, which is simply the truth about historic public issues, and which it is the artist's responsibility to reveal.[15]

In the same way that the generation adopted a mythic approach to the events of 1914-18, their attitude to the politics of the 1930s is similarly tangential, despite the strength of their public actions (Spender actually was a member of the Communist Party for a short time in 1937, although he was heavily criticised by party members from the moment he joined for a lack of real commitment). Hynes is particularly observant when he notes:

> Faith that an extreme change will come without human agency is not a political belief, but a religious one, and there is a good deal that one could call religious in the Myth of Revolution.[16]

While Cornford and Caudwell put their beliefs into physical action, the dominant impression in the writings of Auden and Spender is of the desire for a leader to emerge. Thus their political opinions are directly tied to their imaginative output. Contemporary politics blend with the English literary heritage of both imaginative and political writing, and the literature which emerges is one full of overlaps and tensions between an adherence

to a strict political agenda and the traditional creative solitude of the artist. In Reading The Thirties (1978) Bernard Bergonzi details this with an excellent analysis of Auden's early poetry, noting how the creative possibilities of these literary and political tensions were eschewed in favour of systems that sought to clarify complexities:

> These features are functions of Auden's imaginative universe, which regarded reality as actually or politically known and intelligible, without mysteries or uncertainty. Experience could be reduced to classifiable elements, as a necessary preliminary to diagnosis and prescription. It is in terms of this predisposition that Auden's early allegiance to Marxism and psychoanalysis can best be understood; both were attractive as techniques of explanation.[17]

Like Day Lewis, Auden ultimately refused to let content dictate form. Certainly for both these writers, Montagu Slater's basic formula that 'Life... equals the class struggle' was too rigid a literary prescription. Politics was one way of analysing an individual's relationship with society. Later Auden would find in religion another such explanatory construct.

The exploding of the orthodox image of the decade, that of a homogeneous, political literature, allows the recognition of further parallels between writing in England and New Zealand literature during the same period. What emerges are closer relationships than have been so far documented. This does not necessarily mean that New Zealand authors were directly inspired by those in Britain (though this did occur), but they shared a similar tradition and a position as bourgeois analysts of their surrounding culture. Sargeson's prose reveals the combination of pastoral and modern observed in Day Lewis; Hyde displays both the typical modernist subjectivity earlier associated with Katherine

Mansfield as well as a feminism and socialism, tinged with romanticism, that is central to the decade's complexities. In New Zealand as well as in Britain the necessity of responding to the period's troubled development produced writing that moved between the influences of political, social and literary concerns, often seeking a central formula that would define the act of writing in a time of crisis. The resulting literature is scarred with the specifics of this struggle.

In both literatures the hangover of the Georgians and 1920s Bloomsbury is important. Even in the images of 'Auden Country' - railway lines, electricity pylons, disused factories - there is a very real element of the pastoral. The 'Myth of England' which developed around these images was, as Hynes shows, one that consciously connected this minutiae with the greater tradition of past literature:

> Like the Myth of Revolution, the Myth of England is essentially literary. It affirms, in its conventional pastoral images, that Shakespeare's England still exists, and that it still sustains lyric poets; but it embraces also a contrary set of images which carry the sense of England's crises, the problems that must be solved through action before the lyric vision will be valid once more.[18]

This basic organicism lies behind much of the leftist literature of the decade, an organicism inherited from the portrayal and development of, among others, D.H. Lawrence's work during the 1920s. It may seem odd to find Lawrence as a heroic figure for the politically conscious writers of the 1930s. His ideas of the absolute Leader and strong association with a traditional past had made him attractive to the political Right, but in a time of social chaos and disorder Lawrence appeared to offer an alternative to a dying capitalism. As Hynes says:

> His influence as a writer was not great in the 'thirties, But Lawrence the Ideologue was as influential as Eliot, and 'the hour that Lawrence died' (on 2nd March 1930) has its place among the beginnings of the 'thirties generation.'[19]

This flirtation with a pastoral nationalism that is ultimately a cornerstone of fascism is revealing. It enables an understanding of the manifestation of politics in the literature of the decade. There is a similar ambivalence in Auden's 1932 set of diagnostic parables The Orators, which in August 1931 he described as 'my memorial to Lawrence'[20]. Book II, 'The Journal of an Airman', contains a central character quintessentially Audenesque. He is paranoid, neurotic and a homosexual - a comment on leaderless times. His chief preoccupation is in preparing for an attack against the 'Enemy', a generalised portrayal of middle-class conservatism. The important point about the Airman is the ambiguity of his political allegiances. In the mixture of poetry and quasi-scientific langauge, lists and diagrams, Auden's airman reveals an esoteric philosopher preparing for action, yet the idiosyncratic nature of this philosophy places it outside traditional political alignments. The Airman could be interpreted as either a communist or a fascist, a point Auden himself realised shortly after the book was published[21]. The obscurity of The Orators, its tangential approach to politics, reveals Auden's distance from the kind of committed literature demanded by the editors of the Left Review. This obscurity serves to emphasise the flexibility of Auden's commitment to the Left. The Orators is a record of social sickness, but it refuses to condone a purely dogmatic cure.

For the writers of Auden's generation the heroes were those creating answers to the growing crisis. Communism and the Left

offered readily available solutions, but the interpenetration of ideology and creative writing posed a problem of rhetorical stance. The tradition of imaginative literature, the safe boundaries of the canon, provided a similar framework to that of a political alignment. It was within such a framework that E.M. Forster worked, and the comforts that it created were responsible for the celebration of his apolitical liberal humanism as the decade approached its end. A writer who could make sense of the world, who could place the individual in the larger social context (as Lawrence and Forster appeared to do) offered an alternative to outright aggression, which at times seemed the only answer to the rising tide of fascism. This is why so many of the central protagonists of the decade's literature are like Auden's Airman - middle-class neurotics in search of meaning.

This portrayal of what Hynes terms the 'Truly Weak Man' has illuminating parallels with the masculine ideology dominating New Zealand literature during the same period, where as Kai Jensen has pointed out, Sargeson, Fairburn, Glover and Dan Davin created a mythology of sufficiency which was a direct extension of the male body itself.[22] As a homosexual Sargeson shared many of the attitudes of the English writers, but his short stories during the decade revolve largely around figures who are often 'Truly Strong'. The differing manifestations of the decade's tensions reveal the inherent problem in attempting to channel multiplicities into a rigid, prescriptive format. Sargeson's canonisation obscures the relationship between his work and that of his English contemporaries. The canonisation also presents a false picture of local specificities. The polarisation between the 'Truly Weak' and the 'Truly Strong' negates the common ground from which the two positions stem.

Literature in New Zealand during the 1930s was as influenced by organicism as that in Britain. Sargeson's work constantly reveals the struggle between personal sexuality and a sense of 'natural order' that is so characteristic of Lawrence. Similarly, John A. Lee's Children of the Poor (1934) attempts a socialism that is, in fact, nearly pure pastoralism. In New Zealand, the twin tenets of pastoralism and nationalism coincide over an obsession with the land. The desire to concentrate on the actualities of time and place inherits and blends with the long line of English writing that has sought to root 'meaning' in the very soil of the nation. The emergence of the 'Truly Strong Man', the concept that is missing in English literature, has its origins in the myth of New Zealand history. The capable pioneer, the founding of the nation itself, produce a variable that is lacking in the English writing of the period. Due to the perceived specifics of the historical situation, the status of the pioneer age as an uniquely New Zealand 'fact', this variable assumes a position of exaggerated importance. It deserves attention in any study of New Zealand literature of the 1930s, but it is vital to set it in the proper context.

The doctrinaire systems that influenced literature in the 1930s, whether nationalism, socialism, social credit or the Anglicanism embraced by Eliot, presented the possibility of order amongst chaos. All, in their own way, offered the comfort of a point of focus. All were united by a central theme, namely the interrelationship between the private and the public. The role of the artist in a time of social upheaval was a pivotal concern for writers during the decade. In English prose it was Isherwood who came closest to discussing and presenting the matter with success. His two novels set in Germany, Mr. Norris Changes Trains

(1935) and Goodbye to Berlin (1939), both present English middle-class narrators in Germany as Hitler climbs to power. Both were reviewed as being a commentary on the rise of fascism and discussed as social portrayals, novels consciously addressing political concerns. In actuality Isherwood presents private worlds where political events force themselves infrequently into the action, demanding responses. The subtlety of the handling is mirrored by a flat, unobtrusive style, yet this is not documentary or 'pure fact' reportage. They are works which manage to deal with the crisis in terms that are not overtly dogmatic while also succeeding to provide the structures we demand of the novel as a piece of fiction.

Isherwood succeeded because he recognised the place for the writer in any portrayal of social crisis. The rise of documentary writing aimed to move beyond such stylistic considerations and to achieve the perfectly objective standpoint. It sought to provide an answer to the problem of a bourgeois writer addressing working-class issues. In documentary writing origins were to be forgotten. The formation of Fact in April 1937, a magazine influenced by the French Encyclopaedists, seeking to effect social action by the simple presentation of information, was the product of this philosophy. In the fourth issue of Fact an essay by Storm Jameson appeared entitled 'Documents' which sought to establish the documentary in literary terms. Jameson contended that all previous attempts to create a literature which would aid the struggle for a socialist future had failed because they suffered constantly from authorial imposition and regularly descended into neo-romanticism. In calling for an unemotional, hard approach, Jameson was essentially proposing a non-literary literature, although one that still placed value on the written

word. The problem lay in implementation. The principle examples of documentary writing in the decade were certain titles published by the Left Book Club - including Orwell's Road To Wigan Pier (1937) - and the Mass-Observation movement, an undertaking to document the everyday aspects of contemporary life. All these were conceived as literary efforts, and here lay the difficulties for their acceptance as documents. In Road To Wigan Pier Orwell is unable to shake off his bourgeois viewpoint in his analysis of the working class, and engages in sentiment and nostalgia that renders his socialism not so much a political philosophy as a personal mythic perception. (This kind of myth and nostalgia is also apparent in his 1939 novel Coming Up For Air, again a continuation of the organicist tradition). Mass-Observation collapsed due to squabbles concerning the exact relationship of its literary and ideological content.

The failure of documentary literature emphasises the difficulties in adapting propaganda into the literary format. It represented the most extreme attempt at streamlining during the decade, the reduction of the period's complexities to a perceived concrete singularity. In this respect it mirrors the rigidity of the Marxist approach, which called for a literature rooted in the working class and provided exact guidelines for its implementation. There are also echoes here of Curnow's demand for an adherence to the 'fidelity' of New Zealand experience.

The question of the role of the writer in politics, and particularly the concept of a specifically proletarian literature, was discussed by William Empson in his 1935 publication Some Versions Of Pastoral. Empson ranges over a variety of texts, but his opening chapter devotes itself to a discussion of political and urban literature in terms which are

traditional and even conservative. The idea of treating writing about the working class as if it were a form of pastoralism is ingenious, and whilst the study is undoubtedly idiosyncratic and humorous, it is a humour which is basically serious. Empson even finds support for his theory in the 1934 All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, quoting Maxim Gorky's definition of 'social realism':

> To invent means to extract from the totality of real existence its basic idea and to incarnate this in an image; thus we obtain realism. But if to the idea extracted from the real is added the desirable, the potential, and the image is supplemented by this, we obtain that romanticism which lies at the basis of myth and is highly useful in that it facilitates the arousing of a revolutionary attitude towards reality, an attitude of practically changing the world.[23]

For a Soviet writer to deem romanticism 'useful' in the revolutionary struggle certainly appears to validate, and possibly explain, its presence in the political writing of the decade. The implied socialist Utopia that is in the background of Gorky's comment is an obvious place for the combination of neo-pastoralism and strict political correctness. Empson sees a clear interrelationship of the two:

> My own difficulty about proletarian literature is that when it comes off I find I am taking it as pastoral literature; I read into it, or find that the author has secretly put into it, these more subtle, more far-reaching, and I think more permanent, ideas.[24]

Like Auden and Spender, Empson is defending the right of the individual in the writing process. By defining much of the work of the 1930s in terms of past literature, he is also replacing it within the context of the great tradition of English literature. Nowhere more than in Some Versions Of Pastoral is the political content of the decade's writing reduced to such literary

concepts, and despite the individual style of Empson's analysis there is often a great clarity to the parallels he draws:

> The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feeling (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way). From seeing the two sorts of people compared like this you thought better of both; the best parts of both were used.[25]

Empson's analysis applies to a variety of 1930s writers, from Day Lewis to Orwell and the majority of those who contributed to the countless publications of the Left Book Club. Malcolm Lowry's Ultramarine (1933) presents a portrayal of seafaring life that utilises the structures of pastoralism in an attempt to celebrate the 'reality' of working-class life. Lowry's novel, particularly in its obsession with the physical nature of labour, provides a model that recurs throughout the decade, in New Zealand as well as Britain. In the New Zealand writing of the period, Sargeson's short stories and the portrayal of Johnson in John Mulgan's Man Alone (1939) are the most overt manifestations of Empson's thesis, but the theme infiltrates the work of writers as diverse as A.R.D. Fairburn and Robin Hyde. Mulgan's novel combines many of the themes that dominated much of literature in English over the period. Johnson's activities within farming communities demonstrates Empson's analysis, but Mulgan's portrayal of such a strong individualist also illustrates the intrusion of the public into the private highlighted by Hynes. Both in the Queen Street riots and his ultimate actions in Spain, Johnson is a character to whom things happen, rather than one who plays a large hand in his own fate. Finally, in his trek from Stenning's farm across Mt. Ruapehu and into the Kaimanawa Forest,

there are echoes of many of the fables of the decade that concerned themselves with mountains and frontiers - prose such as Ruthven Todd's Over The Mountain (1939) and Rex Warner's The Wild Goose Chase (1937) and the two verse dramas written by Auden and Isherwood, The Ascent Of F6 (1936) and On The Frontier (1938).

In 1940 Virginia Woolf gave a public lecture, entitled 'The Leaning Tower', which serves as the obituary of the Auden generation. The decade, she claimed, had produced little great literature:

> Trapped by their education, pinned down by their capital they remained on top of their leaning tower, and their state of mind as we see it reflected in their poems and plays and novels is full of discord and bitterness, full of confusion and compromise.[26]

The 'confusion and compromise' had led to an uncertainty reflected in the work of the generation. Alongside this was the continuing output of the modernist figures from the previous decade. Joyce's Finnegans Wake (1939), Eliot's Four Quartets (1935-42) and Woolf's own two novels The Waves (1931) and The Years (1937) seemed far more substantial than the bizarre drama of Auden and Isherwood and heavily political poetry of figures such as Charles Madge. With such an obvious crisis in society, a crisis that appeared to place insurmountable problems on any writer aiming to come to terms with it, it is perhaps not so surprising that pastoralism often offered solutions. Nostalgia for a pre-industrial age is understandable when the conclusion to industrialism appeared to be the break up of civilisation itself.

In their 1986 introduction to Robin Hyde's novel Nor The Years Condemn (originally published in 1938) Phillida Bunkle, Linda Hardy and Jacqueline Matthews note how the orthodox view of

New Zealand writing in the 1930s eschews parallels with the politicised atmosphere of Europe during the same period:

> In evaluating literature for its contribution to a distinctive national culture established critics have depoliticised New Zealand writing, especially the literature of the 1930s. Middle-class male writers have defined the problems encountered by writers in this society as the distance from metropolitan culture and the absence of a New Zealand 'past'.[27]

In going on to define Hyde's 'central problem' with colonial society as one that was 'racial, sexual, and economic conflict in a society whose very foundations were the expropriation and the exploitation of land'[28] Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews are submitting new parameters for the study of the period. This desire for flexibility stems from the narrowness of the orthodox position, and it is a narrowness that applies to writing both in Britain and New Zealand. John Lucas's comment on 1930s literature in Britain, that 'too many accounts of it which either wear or are thought to wear a look of officialdom turn out to be partial, partisan, or exercises in special pleading'[29] is also applicable to New Zealand. The work of Lucas and others has demonstrated how the views of English literature produced during the decade have been prescriptive. Instead of a heavily politicised literature dominated by a relatively small group of writers, we now admit to a body of writing full of useful tensions and complexities, where definitions are unstable and 'meaning' moves between possibilities.

The same is true of New Zealand, but to explore the nature of the literature is to work against the legacy of orthodoxies in both hemispheres. The deliberate definition of a nationalist, regionalist, apolitical literature in New Zealand seeks to work against the orthodox portrayal of European writing in the 1930s.

The polarisation of the two attempts to emphasise 'difference', the breaking of ties between the new and the old, the legitimising of the decolonising process. Numerous critical volumes support this view. Ian Reid's Fiction and the Great Depression: Australia and New Zealand 1930-1950 (1979) counterpoints the political content of Australian prose writing with the perceived lack of any overt social commentary in the New Zealand work of the same period. In doing so Reid supports his views with numerous quotes from the writers themselves, particularly Sargeson. Bruce King's study The New English Literatures - Cultural Nationalism in a Changing World (1980) works similarly, basing the entire dendritic diffusion of New Zealand literature in the last sixty years on the nationalism of Sargeson's 1930s prose. These works operate at an intriguing distance from the material on which they aim to comment, accepting partial readings and stereotypes not just of New Zealand writing, but (by extension) of the English structures from which the rebellion and decolonising is perceived to seek distance.

The recognition of the limitations of both orthodoxies breaks down this process of polarisation. It opens the way for analyses that admit to crossovers and margins, but also offer a more enlightening picture of the true nature of local specificities. What emerges is a view of New Zealand literature that possesses many points of interaction with writing abroad, and, in its own multiplicities, mirrors the international concerns of the decade.

Rachel Barrowman's A Popular Vision: The Arts and the Left in New Zealand, 1930-1950 (1991) is the most comprehensive re-evaluation of the period's literary climate in New Zealand.

Barrowman's analysis centres upon the role of the Left, particularly during the pre-war period. Her detailing of the cultural infrastructure of the 1930s, the book societies and publishing companies, illustrates a vibrant section of literary life in New Zealand that has been all but obscured by the perceived domination of cultural nationalism.

Barrowman's essential concern is to note how the leftist organisations in New Zealand mirrored international issues. The Left Book Club, The Cooperative Book Movement, The Progressive Publishing Society and the varying manifestations of Left Theatre during the decade were all based upon philosophies and structures inherited from Europe and America. Similarly Tomorrow - the most important literary periodical in New Zealand during the 1930s - was originally modelled on Orage's The New Age.[30]

Barrowman's concentration on Tomorrow reveals useful complexities. The magazine has been canonised as a focal point for the emerging nationalism, publishing the poetry of Curnow, Glover and Fairburn, and most notably, the early short fiction of Sargeson. Yet as Barrowman's survey shows, despite a proclamation of political neutrality, Tomorrow became the main outlet for leftist thought in New Zealand. Under the control of H. Winston Rhodes, the magazine reflected a humanist Marxism that sought to provide a forum for the discussion of international concerns. Rhodes's socialism, and its manifestations in the pages of Tomorrow, is a vital component in the literary culture of the 1930s. Despite a relatively small readership (Rhodes estimated a subscription that grew from 300 to 1000 as the decade progressed) Tomorrow dealt scrupulously with the explicit social and cultural changes in the international arena - the perceived collapse of capitalism, the rise of fascism, the conflict in Spain. Rhodes'

editorials covered political and cultural links with America, Europe and Australia. He wrote on Soviet attitudes to culture and the possibilities of creating similar structures in New Zealand.

Rhodes's socialism put Tomorrow in the vanguard of a substantial movement within New Zealand. The periodical articulated views expressed by a variety of other leftist organisations. The Communist Party of New Zealand and the Friends of the Soviet Union, through their publications The People's Voice and Soviet News, expounded the Comintern doctrine to the New Zealand public. The Communist party-affiliated Working Woman (later to become the weekly Woman Today) promoted a socialism and feminism aimed directly at New Zealand women. The cooperative nature of book and publishing societies aimed to bring international writing, social and cultural, to as wide an audience as possible. The arguments of socialism permeated all the structures of the literary culture. On the surface level the aggressive proclamation of a Popular Front places New Zealand within the internationalist tone of the decade worldwide. It is a powerful movement that the nationalist criticism of subsequent years has excluded from literary histories.

However, as Barrowman notes, there was no simple duality between an international socialism and an apolitical nationalism. The two movements shared a variety of common ideologies and points of publication, resulting in a body of literature in which boundaries become blurred. Barrowman sees both nationalism and socialism responding to specific cultural issues:

> [T]he dominant literary movement which emerged at this time in New Zealand was an expression of cultural dissent, in the broadest sense, and was not significantly influenced by political radicalism.[31]

Sargeson's short stories, rooted in the specifics of New Zealand language and customs, are a reaction to a heritage of puritanism which is shared by Rhodes's socialism. Both work against a perceived image of a restrictive, limiting, materialistic culture. Both nationalism and socialism called for a 'new' set of attitudes, both stressed 'vigour', 'life' and 'vitality.' Rhodes believed that capitalism had divorced New Zealand from an idea of its 'true' context and that only radical change could secure an honest appraisal of society. In broad terms, this is a view shared by Curnow, Fairburn, Sargeson and Glover, whose satirical work of the 1930s was not only directed at the politics of figures like Alan Mulgan, C.A. Marris and Hector Bolitho[32], but also the economic and social consequences of such politics. The similarities between the two movements is not only seen in the pages of Tomorrow, where Curnow's fledgling nationalism sits beside Rhodes's editorial socialism, but also in the control of Phoenix. The magazine installed in the nationalist canon is that edited by James Bertram, but R.A.K. Mason's role as editor, and the Marxist content of the two issues under his control, points not to a violent duality in the life of the magazine, but rather to the similarities between all the issues. Both Bertram and Mason promote rebellion against a general cultural malaise. The difference between a 'national consciousness' and a 'socialist culture' is a fine one. Both doctrines work towards different Utopias, but the mechanics of the process share many points of interaction.

The result is a literary culture full of tensions. The manifestations of the varying leftist groups were more in the cultural infrastructure than in creative writing itself. There is little evidence of a specific documentary or proletarian

literature, or any of the other directly political expressions central to the English orthodoxy of the 1930s. Instead socialism in New Zealand fostered revolution in publishing, in book production and distribution. In many cases it was the nationalist figures who benefited most from this, and the orthodox portrayal of Sargeson excludes the weak, semi-polemical verse he published in Soviet News. For a proper evaluation of New Zealand literature in the 1930s, it is vital to recognise the role of the Left in cultural change, a role that connects directly to literary cultures outside New Zealand. However, it is also vital to recognise that this same socialism took place in a national context, and to note how the left-wing cultural activity was channelled into a literary nationalism.[33]

Concluding her study, Barrowman recognises that, despite the attempt to follow streamlined doctrines, the failure to establish a socialist Utopia lay in the problematical multiplicities of New Zealand during the decade. These were multiplicities which faced not just socialism, but nationalism as well, and help explain the interaction of the two:

> The cultural nationalist movement of this period, like the left-wing cultural theory expounded by Winston Rhodes, reveals a theoretical confusion in its self-consciousness about the role of the artist... and the act of creating a national culture, while appealing to a shared, national cultural consciousness.[34]

While many of his opinions derived from the strict regulations laid down by the Soviet Union, Rhodes's model of culture was essentially organic. Barrowman points perceptively to the pastoral metaphors that suffuse Rhodes's writing, noting their juxtaposition with a rough, masculinist discourse that 'indicates a male-sexual model of creativity which is a central idea of

Romantic cultural theory.'[35] This link with romanticism strikes to the heart of a philosophy and theory that underlies the period's literary orthodoxies in both England and New Zealand. It displays a symphonic pattern of influence, political and apolitical writings that work off each other and contemporary events, as well as utilising a whole tradition of literary thought.

In October 1938, Charles Brasch stood in front of Pablo Picasso's 'Guernica', on show at the New Burlington Galleries in London. The painting was on display under the auspices of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. Brasch was in a city that was rapidly heading towards war, and the painting struck a deep chord. He wrote to Ursula Bethell that Picasso's work:

> has made me wonder whether art can do anything except expose our plight, whether anything else is real. The feeling is justifiable here, but not so, perhaps in New Zealand. It is difficult to see that any good can be hoped for or that any privation is worthwhile; the state is a monster yet the individual is an illusion. Only the autumn days sometimes are still and bright and peaceful, and there are those other things, if that's what they are, music and poetry. Perhaps I shouldn't inflict all this on you, but at least it will show you why I find it hard to write letters.[36]

Brasch offers a powerful portrayal of pre-war England, where pessimism appears to permeate every level of society:

> Censorship is slowly descending all around, like a blight. Politicians, even scientists, talk about 'moral rearmament' and 'spiritual rearmament' - the filthiest cant, put out by the dupes of vested interest to make people defend what is slowly crushing their liberties - such as their liberties are. There is no health in us.[37]

There is little obvious connection between a London facing catastrophe and the quiet confines of Bethell's home in

Christchurch, yet despite Brasch's reverence for England (he describes the nation as being 'holy', adding 'there's no sense of the impossible in England, no strain; one is fulfilled; perfection is here.'[38]), he recognises that the crisis of the 1930s is an international one. Writing in 1940, following the outbreak of war, Brasch tells Bethell that he envies her knowledge of the previous war, since she possesses a capacity for endurance unknown to those 'of my generation who have never known a stable world and were always subjected to the flux of our time.'[39] Brasch speaks of an international generation, one that cuts across national boundaries.

Picasso created 'Guernica' in a single month, between May and June 1937, as a response to the German bombardment of the Basque town of Guernica in April of that same year. The work stands as a complex metaphor for many of the issues that dominated the 1930s. Born out of the struggle between Left and Right, it reflects the chaotic nature of the period's politics. On one level the work is a spontaneous outburst, a reaction to a crisis that is determinedly local. Yet, within the immediacy of the nightmare portrayed, Picasso invokes many of the motifs that stemmed from his work both in the early 1930s and before. The painting is both specific and its own palimpsest, a display of breakdown and of terror that not only reflects the events of a few months in Spain in 1937, but also draws upon history and tradition. In this sense it parallels much of the literary output of the 1930s worldwide. As with the fabular tales of the English intellectuals and the heightened vernacular of Sargeson's stories, 'Guernica' is local and international. Brasch's response to the work is not simply that of a seasoned traveller, aware of the breakdown within European society. He is also viewing an

object that he knows has relevance to New Zealand, and in discussing his reaction to the painting with Bethell, he is displaying the kind of interplay that truly characterises the 1930s. Picasso's fractured, tortured portrayal is a point of focus for much of the period's thought. It is a graphic presentation of human suffering, as well as a complex understanding of the multiplicities that underly that suffering.

On an orthodox level the link between Picasso and Bethell, between an egocentic, esoteric modernism and a refined, religious Georgianism, seems absurd. But the link exists. It is more than a connection of simple correspondence, or of a general cultural diversity. Through Brasch, the New Zealand expatriate, it connects the South Pacific to Europe, and highlights the nature of cross-cultural influence. It serves to remind that the innovation of the 1930s was no revolution in a vacuum, that an integral part of that innovation was the heritage of previous artistic and cultural discourses. It points out the weakness of nationalism as an explanatory doctrine for the decade's writing, emphasising diversity and diffusion instead of a narrow conformity. And it provides a starting position, one from which to begin an assessment of the literary output of the 1930s in New Zealand.

2. D'ARCY CRESSWELL AND R.A.K. MASON: DOUBTFUL PATERNITY.

In his introduction to the 1990 volume of essays, Nation and Narration, Homi K. Bhabha points out the necessity of coming to terms with the ambivalence of both the concept of 'the nation' and with nationalism:

> If the ambivalent figure of the nation is a problem of its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, its wavering between vocabularies, then what effect does this have on narratives and discourses that signify a sense of 'nationness'.[1]

This recognition, that 'the 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it'[2] is useful when analysing New Zealand literature in the 1930s. The supposed overnight transformation from what Denis Glover once termed the 'feminine-mimsy' school of writing to the hard edges of a new masculine nationalism simplifies the multiplicities of New Zealand at the time. Bhabha's demand that we should 'explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation'[3] is a necessary one. It invites the admission of constructive complications and flexibilities, 'where meanings may be partial because they are in medias res.'[4]

This notion of 'partial meanings' informs a discussion of the importance of both D'Arcy Cresswell and R.A.K. Mason in the development of New Zealand literature. As Allen Curnow noted in 1945: 'Two poets could hardly be less alike than Mason and Cresswell, whether in their verse or in the kind of New Zealand

life they know'.[5] Cresswell is the eccentric of the period. The orthodoxy characterises him as a hangover from a Wordsworthian past, a vehement anti-modernist and 'peddler' of archaic sonnets that cling to the 'grand tradition' of English literature. In contrast, Mason is normally portrayed as a proto-nationalist, a figure who '[took] poetry seriously' and helped to mark 'the end of the undisputed reign of whimsy in New Zealand verse'.[6] Curnow claims that Mason's 1924 volume The Beggar displayed the emergence of the 'country's first wholly original, unmistakably gifted poet.'[7]

The critical disparity between the two writers is, on one level, obvious to explain. Cresswell divided his time between Britain and New Zealand, rejected most of the philosophies and ideologies of the twentieth century and was as devoted to a pseudo-romantic image of the poet as he was to the craft itself. Mason spent the majority of his life in Auckland, and as the 1920s turned into the 1930s, became an increasingly political figure who turned to the writing of anti-fascist theatre as the decade neared its end. Yet, in relation to the concept of literary nationalism in New Zealand in the 1930s, the orthodox portrayal serves another function. As Timothy Brennan has noted, the division between 'exile' and 'nationalist' (and this is a division which, in general terms, describes the standard view of New Zealand literature in the 1920s and 1930s) hides an agenda that is vital to the establishment of nationalism as a powerful ideology:

> Exile and nationalism are conflicting poles of feeling that correspond to more traditional aethestic conflicts: artistic iconoclasm and communal assent, the unique vision and the collective truth. In fact, many words in the exile family divide themselves between an archaic or literary sense and a modern, political one: for

> example, banishment vs. deportation; emigre vs. immigrant; wanderer vs. refugee; exodus vs. flight. The division between exile and nationalism, therefore, presents itself as one not only between individual and group, but between loser and winner, between a mood of rejection and a mood of celebration.[8]

The division between 'archaic' and 'political' ('political' used in its broadest sense) articulated here fits the nationalist canonisation of Cresswell and Mason. Cresswell is the 'loser', his The Poet's Progress appears the same year (1930) as Quentin Pope's Kowhai Gold anthology, the pinnacle of 'whimsical' verse. Cresswell's main value to the orthodoxy lies in comparisons between his work and such post-Phoenix texts as Frank Sargeson's Conversation with my Uncle and other sketches (1935) and Curnow's Island and Time (1941). Although in his introduction to Caxton's 1945 A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45 Curnow comments that 'acceptance or rejection of New Zealand' was '[Cresswell's] main impulse to write'[8] (a highly contentious point), his analysis of Cresswell's Lyttelton Harbour (1936) indicates his response to the poet's work as a whole:

> [I]t contains stumbling-blocks; its meanings lie by no means all at one level, and the levels are in places confused: so that few New Zealanders, and perhaps none who are not New Zealanders, may grasp its whole significance as a poet's testament.[9]

Curnow resists what Bhabha terms the 'process of hybridity'[10]. He allocates Cresswell a place within the canon, one defined by the structures of nationalism. As Patrick Evans has noted, Curnow's conception of nationalism during the 1930s depends upon his 'finding origin', or 'inventing a source of authority from which he might derive his own powers'. This patrilineal fixation applies to both the critic and the poet in Curnow. Evans points out that 'Curnow seems to need to elevate Cresswell to the

position of a private innovator or ancestor... [I]n his anthology [A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45] Curnow is unable to discuss Mason or, later, Fairburn without associating them with Cresswell'[11]. A similar process lies behind Curnow's definition of Mason as a poet producing 'none of the familiar hazy compromise and pretence of 'colonial' verse, but a new poetic voice, answering the demands of original form, the traditions of poetry, and the poet's personal vision and situation'.[12] Both figures are denied a critical flexibility which recognises nationalism as only one of the forces operating within New Zealand during the 1930s. The machinations of the nationalist critique fix both Cresswell and Mason into a rigid framework. What is needed is an analysis which breaks down these rigidities. Cresswell's work cannot be dismissed because of perceptions of his idiosyncracies. The complexities surrounding his 1930s output show him to be as engaged with the decade's difficulties as any writer in New Zealand. Similarly, an analysis of Mason in the context of the period as a whole displays more than a writer who paved the way for a a nationalist literature. In his wrought poetic and his overtly political writing, Mason illustrates the search for a point of focus which was a characteristic of writing worldwide during the 1930s.

Cresswell's perceived dual role as disposable eccentric and 'founding father' indicates his position within New Zealand literature is a complex one. In his memoirs Indirections (1980), Charles Brasch talks of finding Cresswell's work 'trivial and uninformed, and profoundly depressing' and goes on to say 'I saw the image of a wasted life... with certain gifts and faculties useless for lack of development.'[13] Certainly Cresswell's poetry deserves the charge of triviality. A.R.D. Fairburn felt that, as

a poet, Cresswell deserved to be taken no more seriously than 'a piece of very good imitation period furniture'[14] and MacDonald Jackson, writing in 1991, characterises his poetic style as one concocted out of 'miscellaneous archaisms.'[15] Cresswell's sonnets, based on the philosophies of the 'Ancients' and rooted within his own Luddite vision and hatred of the Copernican universe, prompt only cursory interest. In the second volume of his autobiography, Present Without Leave (1939), he admits to their limitations, yet shudders at the suggestion that he is anything other than a poet. A search for 'meaning' in Cresswell's poetry yields the recognition that his poetic lies buried within a convoluted personal ideology. It is this ideology, rather than the token surface pleasures of the verse, which warrants analysis. It provides fresh insight into the complexities of New Zealand nationalism during the decade and points to surprising parallels with the more orthodox 'political' concerns of 1930s English literature.

Cresswell's career, like that of John Mulgan, shows that the nationalist/exile, centre/colony, home/abroad theorem is not the duality it appears to be. Returning to New Zealand in January 1932, Cresswell stated in an interview to the Christchurch Press:

> The base of my blood is in New Zealand; I feel that when I have been in London too long. But the base of my taste is in London; and I feel that if I am in New Zealand too long. It seems that this is a dilemma for any Colonial artist. Consequently a slump in the state of the world, the threat which it makes to one's lines of communication, and the amount of means one needs to live as it were in two worlds are causing me as much concern as the farmer.[16]

This 'impossible dilemma of reconciling his blood and his taste'[17] points to an ambivalence which saturates the literature of New Zealand during the 1930s, one that the heavy hand of

nationalism seeks to eradicate. In Cresswell's case, this ambivalence leaves the two volumes of his autobiography, The Poet's Progress (1930) and Present Without Leave (1939), as intriguing texts which help us to understand Bhabha's idea of a 'Janus-faced discourse.' Both volumes display the qualities that have caused Cresswell to be labelled a 'curiosity' - the metaphysical debates on the nature of 'Truth' and 'Art', the Wordsworthian belief in the 'power of recollection'[18] prompted by the landscape and memories of childhood, and the contemptuous dismissal of modernism. Yet contained within each text are concerns which display affinities with more 'mainstream' figures such as Sargeson and Fairburn, as well as reactions to the international questions that so occupied the decade's English writers.

The Poet's Progress employs a tone and a prose that reads like a cross between the Bible and Wordsworth's introduction to the 1805 Lyrical Ballads. The first dozen pages contain a plethora of certainties, definitions and opinions on Art, Poetry, Beauty and Man. Cresswell's idea of a concrete 'life' existing before the poem, and the poet as 'transmitter' of this betrays his adoption of cultural romanticism. True art necessitates not just the mind but the soul, which is the 'more lasting pain that comes from seeing between this world and the next.'[19] Yet this conventional romantic view mixes and overlaps with other concerns. When Cresswell talks of wanting 'to concentrate all I felt and heard and saw on some personal point'[20] his subsequent friendship with a miner recalls not only Sargeson's similar relationships, but also the fixation with the 'reality' of working-class life that obsessed bourgeois writers in England. Cresswell's miner quotes Milton and Shakespeare. He seems the

perfect embodiment of the cultured socialist that the orthodoxy sought to produce.

This association with the working class, often destitute, man appears as a constant throughout Cresswell's life. It reflects both sexuality and ideology, as well as a literary inheritance, and cuts across the perceived division between nationalism and internationalism. Cresswell's friendship with a young German student parallels Christopher Isherwood's account of his time in Berlin with W.H. Auden, detailed first in Lions and Shadows (1938) and then more fully in Christopher and His Kind (1977). Isherwood stresses that the homosexuality of the relationship was underscored by a rejection of the middle-class, Oxbridge system of values with which he had been raised. In the forcibly politicised atmosphere of the 1930s literary scene, the homosexuality of writers like Auden and Isherwood took on a social dimension. Particularly in Berlin, it became an anti-fascist statement. The attraction of the 'common man' (and indeed the attempts to educate such figures) was part of a left-wing ideal.

In contrast, Sargeson's preference for the company of working-class men forms part of the backbone for the nationalist mythology that surrounds both him and his work. He inherited the values of 'mateship' that developed in Australia in the nineteenth century and found expression in the nationalist writings of the 1890s. Henry Lawson and 'Steele Rudd' used the mateship ethic as a metaphor for solidarity, a recognition of difference that stressed the distance between a native Australian literature and its colonial background. Sargeson's sense of this tradition, developed from the earlier New Zealand writings of Frank Anthony, differs from the overtly romantic heritage of

Cresswell. Whilst both views share similarities, it is Sargeson's depiction of the working-class labourer that is canonised in the nationalist mythology. The constant emphasis placed on Sargeson's ability to utilise the working-class strains of New Zealand English speech matches discussions of Phoenix in the clamour to pinpoint the birth of New Zealand nationalism. Throughout nearly all of Sargeson's writing during the 1930s, from the short sketches originally published in Tomorrow to the novella That Summer (1946), the laconic and inarticulate male characters reflect an attempt to portray the apolitical world of (mainly) New Zealand rural life. The subtle homosexual sub-currents of many of these stories were largely ignored by initial criticism that worked to enlarge upon their nationalist content.

Cresswell displays a further variation on this theme, illustrating (in both his similarities to, and distance from, Isherwood and Sargeson) the essential mobility of the decade's writings and their structures. His homosexual relationships blend into his idiosyncratic ideology, which on this point appears largely Miltonic:

> To Poets, Conquerors and Kings it is the love and admiration of men alone that matters, and men have no such deep and lasting love for women as for heroes and poets, but only appear to in times when heroes and poets no longer exist. For love is like lightning, that for lack of a steeple will strike a tree. Women love men, men love heroes and poets, and these love the Gods; and this upward current is the cause of all glorious periods of faith and power on earth.[21]

This eccentricity (to be polite) reinforces the conclusion that the attraction to the 'common man' found a variety of ideological justifications during the period. A reading of the 1930s which denies this variety hides the proximity of Cresswell to both the New Zealand and English orthodoxies of the decade. His devotion

to the tradition of Western literature was tempered by a nationalistic loyalty to the land of his birth. Like two other poets who began to write in the 1920s, Geoffrey de Montalk and Fairburn, Cresswell conceived of a literature written in New Zealand that would employ and stem from English literature, but utilise the 'purity' of 'new' lands such as New Zealand to combat the decadence of twentieth-century modernism. Cresswell was convinced that 'no poetry was written in England now'[22] and that the 'untouched' nature of the New Zealand landscape offered a chance for a poetical rebirth.

It is because of this loyalty to New Zealand that Curnow seizes upon Cresswell as one of the necessary precursors required for a nationalist literature. As with the sexual/ideological selectivity surrounding the 'common man', here nationalism displays a flexibility enabling it to achieve definitions based on partial information. Particularly in his introduction to the 1945 Caxton poetry anthology, Curnow manoeuvres Cresswell into a very specific place in the canon of New Zealand poetry, emphasising his maturity of outlook and fidelity to place. This manoeuvring deliberately excludes much of the rhetorical expansiveness found in The Poet's Progress. It also raises revealing parallels with those writers of the decade perceived to follow on from Cresswell's fledgling nationalism. Sargeson was subjected to many of the same critical processes as Cresswell in order to emphasise the nationalist content of his work, and the parallels between Cresswell and Sargeson - the blend of a literary pastoralism and a romantic nationalism - are strong. Yet the critical orthodoxy dismisses one and celebrates another, further complicating the layers of perception which characterise the decade.

The Poet's Progress earned Cresswell a small reputation in the literary circles of London. It details his itinerant wanderings through Britain, selling his poems from door to door and continually reaffirming his pledge to embrace the necessary solitude and sufferings poetry requires. This continues a tradition that runs from the Romantics through the Georgians and clearly influenced the writers of New Zealand in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Both Sargeson and Fairburn tramped through continental Europe during this time, and Cresswell's trip to Spain and Portugal[23], as well as his walks within Britain, are in the same vein. These journeys have a clear philosophical and ideological base. By the time Sargeson wrote his three-volume autobiography in the 1970s, his consolidated position as a modernist (and nationalist) innovator restricted him from detailing this sojourn. Yet immediately on his return in 1929, he wrote up his travels in the form of a journal entitled 'A New Tramp Abroad'. The journal, which predates Sargeson's self-proclaimed 'discovery' of the form developed from 'Conversation with my Uncle', contains the same kind of pseudo-romantic descriptions which dominate much of The Poet's Progress[24]. Like Sargeson and Fairburn, Cresswell deliberately adopts the romantic or metaphysical role of the aesthete (although subsequent criticism all but eradicated this consideration of both Sargeson and Fairburn). The landscape offers the opportunity to be 'at peace with one's self'[25], and this 'peace' is the catalyst for poetic expression. In this context, it is important to note that both Cresswell and Sargeson describe their reading of Keats as an epiphanic moment in the development of their own work.

In the late 1920s Cresswell and Sargeson shared a view of the New Zealand landscape that inherits a romantic ideology but

also harbours a proto-nationalism. In the 1930s, Cresswell's self-sufficiency during his time in his Castor Bay bach parallels Sargeson's existence as gardener/author in Takapuna. As with their European travels, both writers here again embrace a Wordsworthian ideal. Despite his subsequent canonisation as the father of nationalist, masculine realism, Sargeson's fiction and autobiography constantly display hangovers from this romanticism which parallel much of Cresswell's ideology in The Poet's Progress. Cresswell himself was conscious that the emerging New Zealand nationalism was not the explosion of the national psyche that it may have appeared to be. Talking of Phoenix and Tomorrow he states dismissively:

> These movements showed a knowledege of new ideas overseas but nothing like an indigenous growth with its roots in the country.[26]

This certainty indicates a blurring of terms. The well-delineated frontiers between nationalist and colonialist are seen to crumble when placed under pressure. Nationalism, the decade's dominant literary ideology in New Zealand, engages in a variety of movements that allow for a seamless interweaving with the other defining influences of the period. Late Bloomsbury elitism, 1920s modernism - the alienation of Prufrock and The Waste Land (1922) - and the rise of post-depression literary socialism are all partially adapted to fit the nationalist rubric. The singularity then presented is thus charged with tensions operating beneath a seemingly smooth surface. The process of polarisation that seeks to distance Sargeson from Cresswell operates on a selective mythology. Cresswell's position within the canon of 1930s New Zealand literature is founded on ground far less secure than previously detailed. The complexities of his 1930s output point to a difficult sense of location. Torn between

allegiances to both New Zealand and England, Cresswell's work seeks a point of focus that allows self-definition and a valid voice. His attraction to the sonnet (the poem form that makes up most of his 1920s production, Cresswell also includes sonnets at the end of The Poet's Progress, and uses them throughout Lyttelton Harbour) displays this desire to cling to a tangible singularity, a point from which he can make sense of his world. Thus, even the stilted and archaic nature of his sonnets shows Cresswell to be involved in the complications of a literature of decolonisation.

Present Without Leave documents Cresswell's entry into the English literati following the success of The Poet's Progress. His reception in England - friendships with Edward Marsh and Lady Ottoline Morrell, the rounds of late Bloomsbury dinner parties - contrasts with a growing dissatisfaction with the New Zealand he was forced to return to in 1931. At one point he refers to it as '[that] Antipodean Hades of darkness where I was born'.[27] The schizophrenic tension that informs much of The Poet's Progress continues into this second volume. Cresswell's assimilation into the English literary culture is reflected in a variety of parallels with the orthodoxy of the decade, again pointing to the mixing and interweaving of the literature during the decade.

Present Without Leave details Cresswell's continuing obsession with the working classes. The memoir tells how he obtained a passage to Britain aboard a tramp steamer, as he 'had long wanted a closer acquaintance with seafaring life'.[28] In making this decision Cresswell joins what Mark Williams has termed 'that line of protest that we find in English cultural history which opposes the mechanical nature of modern life from the standpoint of organicist conservatism'.[29] Williams is

discussing the work of Malcolm Lowry and other English bourgeois artists of the 1930s who chose to reject their families and middle-class situation, but his detailing of their romanticisation of the proletariat highlights a trend that also applies to Cresswell. Like Lowry, Cresswell also '[blamed] the commercial class for the present condition of England.'[30] His description of the sea journey that begins Present Without Leave is comparable to Lowry's 1933 novel Ultramarine, in which Dana Hilliott, the distinctly bourgeois protagonist, leaves the domestic comforts of his family to embrace the working-class 'reality' aboard the tramp steamer Oedipus Tyrannus. Lowry's use of the neurotic, over-sensitive middle-class hero and his obsession with nautical vocabulary are typical of the attempts by English writers of the 1930s to assauge their guilt over their own securities.

A comparison between Cresswell and Lowry highlights the kind of cultural confusion which characterises the decade and cuts though the boundaries that seek to establish free-standing separate traditions in New Zealand and England. Cresswell's portrayal of the 'harsh food and long hours and too little sleep'[31] on his journey to Britain, his growing discomfort with the 'foulness' of his room mate 'Mick Silver' and constant emphasis on manual labour could easily belong to the pages of Ultramarine. The overtly romantic treatment by both writers illustrates Williams's point that '[f]rom William Cobbett to Raymond Williams, the virtues English cultural critics have managed to find in, or foist on, the working class, have been those of the peasantry'.[32] Although Williams here specifically mentions criticism, his broader claim is that such criticism

solidifies into the orthodoxy. Both Lowry and Cresswell respond to it.

There are however, interesting differences. Lowry delights in the mechanics of the voyage. The constant references to derricks and winches remind us of Lowry's desire to link the verbal with the actual. His celebration of the power of the Oedipus Tyrannus's engine seeks to portray a world free from the prevailing sterility of bourgeois life. As with the Futurists some twenty years previously, mechanics supply, for Lowry, a possibility for the future, a future that is real and concrete rather than abstract and rhetorical. These kind of physical associations (Auden's slag heaps, Stephen Spender's pylons) are again seminal to an orthodoxy that seizes the materials of modern life yet invests them with values and associations inherited from previous centuries (despite Lowry's obsessions with the mechanical nature of the ship, his essential celebration is of the self-enclosed world of ships and sailing, a world that is centuries old. The 1930s emphasis on technology is often the mask for an organicist nostalgia). In contrast, Cresswell rebels against everything technical on his voyage, claiming 'that machines are merely the embodiment of mutinous or disharmonized reason, the Copernican Universe, that was framed to make room for machines, being itself an illusion of reason and entirely evil'.[33] Whilst his view of the working class shares an ideological base with Lowry, it does not expand from this to a celebration of mass production. Even more than the majority of alienated 1930s intellectuals, Cresswell confuses the proletariat with the peasantry. He wants the seamen of his trip to stand for a medieval simplicity which reinforces his role as the poet who communicates the essence of their existence.

On a philosophical level there seems to be little connection between Cresswell's archaic sonnets and Lowry's window on the language of the boiler room (the kind of prose that influenced the attempted move towards a literature of 'pure fact' by the end of the decade). Yet Present Without Leave - in its mixture of the ancient and the modern, and its concentration on both England and New Zealand - is a clear statement that such hybridity existed. This hybridity displays itself in other analogies with the decade's literary structures in England. As with many of his English literary contemporaries during the period, Cresswell displays an admiration for both D.H. and T.E. Lawrence, describing the former as 'an original artist' who 'well knew the fatal darkness we are in, and was more sensitive to error and blindness than any artist of his time.'[34] Cresswell was as conscious as any of his English counterparts that the 1930s was a decade in which civilisation appeared to be gathering pace in a rush towards destruction. Like Auden, he seized upon both Lawrences as examples of how the intellectual could conduct himself in a time of crisis. Present Without Leave even contains Cresswell's own discussion, in his highly obscure prose, of the private/public debate that Samuel Hynes has identified as one of the key concerns of the period's literature.[35] Cresswell's proximity to the decade's orthodoxy explains this parity, one notably absent from The Poet's Progress published some nine years earlier. By the end of the 1930s Cresswell was working on his play The Forest which, though it remained unpublished until 1952, displays clear affinities with the Auden/Isherwood verse dramas produced during the 1930s. The sense of Lawrentian heroism, so vital to a reading of The Ascent of F6 (1936), echoes throughout Cresswell's play.

Cresswell's failure (and it would also be Fairburn's failure) is that he was unable fully to articulate the complexities of his position. His decision to confine himself to the demands of a strict rhythm and form, and an equally strict ideology concerning the nature of poetry, is a narrowing process that seeks to produce a singularity amidst the chaos of the period. Viewed in this way, Cresswell displays more similarities with Sargeson, who also developed a literature that depended upon a policy of exclusion. Sargeson was more successful because he was more adept at manufacturing his position, more conscious of his place within the specificities of the time. Cresswell found himself in societies (in Britain - particularly the literary milieu - and New Zealand) that he had to accept and yet tried to ignore. His failure to capitalise on the success of The Poet's Progress (despite a number of offers - Edward Marsh was unsuccessful in his attempts to ensure Cresswell completed an anthology of verse which Cresswell had earlier been commissioned to edit) reveals an impotence that is directly applicable to his cultural and geographical schizophrenia. Other writers in both countries found their own methods of achieving a focus amidst the turbulence. Auden created a private poetic world, based on an esoteric mythology and a deliberately honed obscurity. Edward Upward retreated into a largely conventional Marxist position. In New Zealand, nationalism became the most obvious single point of reference, and the decision to embrace it gives Sargeson and Curnow a streamlined look that is fundamentally a mirage. Cresswell was unprepared to commit himself to any of the prevailing dogmas. His lack of a single voice combined with his inability to synthesise the various voices around him, and the

result was a confusion (and from the critical standpoint, a complexity) that is full of overlaps and contradictory pressures.

This sense of overlapping or hybridity is central to the decade's literature. In the nature of his 1930s output Cresswell displays his proximity to other New Zealand writers of the period who sought to create meaningful statements amidst the confusion of the time. The interweaving of literary heritages that manifests itself in Cresswell's work was mirrored by the decade's social and political complications, and in the cultural nationalisms and socialisms this produced. It is in the margins of an internationalism of the Left and a self-proclaimed apolitical nationalism, as well as the demands of the alienated individual, that an evaluation of R.A.K. Mason belongs.

Mason's 1920s poetry works to create what C.K. Stead has termed a 'meaningful ambiguity'[36]. The best of the poems deliberately promote a theological, philosophical and personal uncertainty and irony. This juxtaposition of (often) opposing and conflicting elements deserves close attention. In poems like 'Body of John', 'Tribute' and 'The Spark's Farewell to its Clay' Mason details his early desire to 'believe nothing and understand everything'[37]. This 1920s tone - 'sceptical and ironic'[38] - imparts a tension to Mason's 1924 collection The Beggar, a tension based upon his distrust of creeds and their associated dogma. The poems embrace complexity and puzzlement, which makes the characterisation of the early Mason as a 'nationalist-in-waiting'[39] (to use Patrick Evans's term) all the more surprising. Evans pinpoints the thought processes that elevate a figure striving for a form of poetic neutrality to the position of a national 'father':

> Mason is truly a poet of his time and place in the mediation of the large forces that were part of the New Zealand experience of his generation and particularly, until the abrupt ending of his writing thirty years before his death, of the tensions of its sexual puritanism. But the same Calvinist guilt that could make him look like a poet fighting to emerge from a dominant parent could make him look like a poet fighting to emerge from a dominant parent culture.[40]

The historicisation of Mason in Curnow's various poetry anthologies and essays is, in fact, a process often characterised by negatives. Mason is lauded because of what he is NOT. The individualism of his verse stresses its distance from the 'feminine' tone that the nationalists felt dominated pre-1930s literature in New Zealand. Mason's poetry was also seen to eschew parallels with the English poetry of the period. Commenting on New Zealand poetry in the Auckland Sun in December 1928, Arthur Donnelly called Mason 'one of the most original minds in the young New Zealand literary movement' and remarked that '[h]e is not influenced in any marked way by English contemporary poetry, having struck out for himself... yielding no allegiance to his contemporaries.'[41] For Curnow such idiosyncracies mark Mason as a native, with a window into the collective unconscious of the community. In this doctrinaire approach, Mason's philosophical, theological and secular debates become a personal enactment of their national equivalents. The deliberate multiplicities of the poetry offer opportunities for nationalism's selected readings.

There is even evidence that Mason was influenced by the label he found attached to himself. In a short preface to his 1934 collection No New Thing, he stated: 'Some of these poems were intended to appear in a vast medley of prose and poetry, a sort of Odyssey expressing the whole history of New Zealand', yet an earlier version of the preface (one that was subsequently

deleted) lacks this sense of a national epic. Instead it claims that '[t]he truth is that the work here printed was intended to fit into a sort of vast Human Comedy, mingled prose and verse, which I long ago designed.'[42]

The subtle difference is illuminating. It illustrates the influence of changing critical perceptions as the 1920s turned into the 1930s. In the new climate of decolonisation a poem such as 'Sonnet of Brotherhood' acquires nationalist overtones that overshadow its more general portrayal of alienation (and possible socialist connotations). The poem's 'little fort' is seen to refer explicitly to New Zealand. Uncharacteristically for a champion of nationalism, Stead notes that the poem 'is not primarily concerned with a national brotherhood... [n]or, however, is it primarily concerned with an international brotherhood, socially or politically conceived. The poem is a statement of the human identity beseiged by its foreknown doom.'[43] Even in making a choice, Stead acknowledges the poem's flexibility. Yet in his discussion of 'Be Swift O Sun' he reverts to displaying the forced ideological conclusions that pulled Mason into the nationalist canon. The poem, Stead states, 'encompasses a number of opposites which incidentally define Mason's New Zealand locus more precisely than might be expected'[44]. This quote echoes Curnow's discussion of Mason's 'personal vision and situation'. The very critical language itself is ambiguous. It allows for definitions that do not deny the range of forces operating within the poetry, yet manage to place all others behind a concentration on a fidelity to time and place.

'Wayfarers', from The Beggar, demonstrates how Mason's poetic method lies open to such selectivity:

That I go out alone to them it seems
because they see none with me in the way
ignorant that the fabrics of my dreams
are less tangible to me than they

Ignorant that I have heard and seen Christ break
the bondage of his tongue-tied sightlessness
have walked with firm-faithed Mary to the stake
and kissed the hem of martyred Flora's dress

And I in Lichfield frequently have been
Chatterton's accessory in suicide
have Gaius Marius in Minturnae seen
for many hours by Waitemata's tide

Burnt Dian's temple down at Otahuhu
and slain Herostratus at Papatoe
and here in Penrose brought Aeneas through
to calm Ausonian lands from bloody Troy.[45]

The poem offers a nationalist/existentialist antithesis. For Charles Doyle, the 'relating of the local environment with [Mason's] own Classical and literary preoccupations does carry a kind of conviction, but it is only a subjective one'.[46] The lack of adjectives for the local references proves, to Doyle, the poem's concentration on the individual's contemplation of Time. Yet elsewhere in his study Doyle responds to Curnow's canonisation, stating that '[t]he melancholy, puritanism and narrowness commonly read into [Mason's] work by his own countrymen are, as much as anything, his instinctive response to the communal life'.[47] In the light of this statement, 'Wayfarers' appears as a deliberate attempt to locate both religion and the Western literary tradition within the concrete locality of Mason's Auckland. Yet it is obvious that this nationalist 'reduction' can also be read as an internationalist 'expansion', Mason reaching out from a geographical singularity to embrace that which destroys boundaries. The strength of the poem lies in the power of this paradox. The attempts to simplify Mason's complexities result in prescriptions that limit evaluation of his work.

A consequence of this criticism is that definitions of Mason as a poet span a range of styles and ideologies. For Curnow he is the nationalist innovator, but many New Zealand critics following Curnow's anthologies react against the canonisation. Writing in the 1960s Alistair Campbell notes: 'I'd been led to believe that Mason's poetry was a New Zealand phenomenon that owed nothing to outside forces. But there he was with the lesser Georgians... and he was perfectly at home in their company.'[48] James K Baxter also saw Mason as a Georgian, employing 'a well worn poetic diction' and commented that, in the poetry 'the furniture of the Nineties has been brought out of the lumber room, dusted a little, and displayed as if it were new.'[49] In their studies, Weir and Doyle manage to portray Mason as a nationalist, romantic, Marxist, Georgian and modernist (as opposed to seeing these categories as threads which weave through the work). In his analysis of the 'poetry of transition' in New Zealand during the early twentieth century, Baxter shrewdly perceives how Mason's work has been open to theorisation:

> One obstacle to a clear evaluation of the poetry of transition has been the literary canonisation of R.A.K. Mason. One can see reasons which may have made this tribal ceremony seem obligatory. For example, the transitional poets were most of them favourably minded towards Marxism, but Mason alone formally embraced that dialectic. Among the uncommitted he earned the special respect due to the committed man... Thus with Mason the transitional poets acquired a prophet and a father figure... One has to make allowance for Curnow's bias towards a kind of tribal piety. From his description (in the introduction to the Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse) one would gain the impression that Mason's verse had an innovating force comparable, let us say, with that of Dylan Thomas in England.[50]

These impressions and counterimpressions reflect the nature of Mason's work at the beginning of the 1930s. Certainly the

parallels with English literature did exist. In 1924 Mason sent copies of The Beggar to Harold Monro in London. Monro, the founder of the Poetry Bookshop and one of the central figures of Georgianism, replied enthusiastically, talking of 'a strong affinity between us' and a 'kindred mentality'.[51] Despite his avowed hatred of the English, Mason's poetry displays the echoes of A.E. Housman and D.H. Lawrence as well as Tacitus, Lucretius and Catullus. In 1930 he was working on the draft of a novel tentatively titled 'Dreams Come True' in which a reporter who is a cynical social critic metamorphoses into an active communist, a narrative similar to that employed by Edward Upward in his 1938 novel Journey to the Border. What is revealing for the purposes of this study is to see how these analogies developed during the 1930s, and how this then reflects back upon a nationalism itself engaged in a flexible relationship with the English writing of the period.

For Mason the 1930s was the decade in which he 'wanted to bring [his] artistic feelings into line with [his] intellectual knowledge.'[52] His adoption of Marxism, in 1926, came earlier than the majority of his English counterparts. It received its first full articulation following Mason's succession to James Bertram as editor of Phoenix in 1932. In the two issues under his control the literary nature of the magazine was replaced by an aggressive Marxist polemicism, with articles not only on New Zealand, but also on international politics and Soviet cinema. Mason's Phoenix was not the same playing with leftist ideas evident in the early 1930s in England. It was intense and vitriolic, lacking the mythic element that would appear in his later political theatre. It reflected the extent to which Mason's thought had been dominated by Marxist ideas in the late 1920s. The subsequent

mythic treatment of Phoenix, its place at the 'foundation' of a national literature, fails to recognise adequately the nature of the magazine under Mason's editorship. His editorials constitute possibly the clearest articulation of his Marxist beliefs in the 1930s, since they lack the complications which accompanied his creative work. The nationalist canonisation of the magazine ignores the clarity of this political statement. Yet even at his most dogmatic Mason displays the multiplicities which characterise him during the decade. The second edition of Phoenix under his control, published in June 1933, continued the polemics of the first, yet also contained Mason's own 'Be Swift O Sun'. The poem owes its origin to the poetics of The Beggar, not the crusading politics of Phoenix. The irony of the juxtaposition is characteristic of Mason's poetry of the period, collected in No New Thing, where politics blend with both his existing poetic style and the constant presence of the European tradition.

Although published in 1934, most of the work written for No New Thing had been produced in the late 1920s. The collection is not overtly 'political'. The best poems - 'Judas Iscariot', 'On The Swag' and 'Be Swift O Sun' - reveal the same obsession with the paradoxical that characterised The Beggar. Four poems however, 'Wise at Last', 'The Just Statesman Dies', 'Stoic Overthrow' and 'In Manus Tuas Domine' do stem from left-wing convictions. 'Wise at Last' displays the simplicity and obscurity (and the tendency towards the downright bizarre) which would later be a keynote of the decade's poetry in England, particularly that of Auden:

> I don't doubt it's a gaby
> that's Lord of the Press
> and the brains of a baby
> rule business:
>
> Still doubtless a noodle

is the land's greatest teacher
and a spaniel-crossed poodle
its most reverenced preacher:

Still the wise and stout
of heart and good
and strong are cast out
to want of food.[53]

In the poem's naivity and recourse to a child-like diction there are clear parallels with the English literature which would attempt to promote revolution and destabilise the middle classes with fabular tales of ice hockey and cycling, and poems that metaphorically charted the demise of Public School cricket elevens. The wrestling tension of The Beggar has vanished here. The ineffectiveness of 'Wise at Last' points to the problem Mason would have in creating a political poetry, a problem that would also dominate much of the decade's literary debate internationally. In an early manuscript note from the 1920s Mason had commented: 'Poetry usually dies in agony if it gets so much as a whiff of politics'[54] and both 'Wise at Last' and 'The Just Statesman Dies' employ a political message with which Mason's poetry is not fully at home. Both poems detail a socialism that ends, not in a classic Utopia, but in mediocrity. 'Wise at Last' concludes with the statement that 'negation is best', while 'The Just Stateman Dies' moves to a romanticism that celebrates a walk 'on misty hills/ all night vague and cold'[55] in the face of a lifetime of fruitless social struggle.

The pessimism is revealing. As early as the late 1920s Mason was aware of the implicit difficulties in the mixing of art and propaganda. This articulation of the private/public dilemma not only predates similar questions in England, it also displays the work of a mature intellect capable of visualising the forces that would eventuate in the 'low, dishonest decade'. Mason's

commitment to Marxism never removed his doubts about a propagandist sense of literature, and his decision to replace poetry with drama points to a knowledge that the poetic compromise presented the possibility of irreconcilable variables. Theatre was not only more public, its very structure was more suited to the socialist cause.

The five poems of End of Day (1936) strike a tone similar to No New Thing. The classical allusions in the opening poem 'Prelude' are offset by the description of the 'drab blade' which though it 'lacks lustre' still 'can stab'[56]. There is a hint of the 1930s orthodoxy here, the movement to the spare, aggressive style that attempts to contain the decade's political and artistic forces. It can only be a hint in Mason's poetry however, where success depends upon juxtaposition and contrast. The socialist 'drab blade' is most evident in 'New Life' and 'Youth At The Dance', both of which promote a redemptive view of Marxism. This idea of Marxist philosophy has been succintly stated by F.W. Dillistone who points out that it:

> [t]akes up and carries on one of the great eschatological myths... namely the redemptive part to be played by the Just... whose sufferings are invoked to change the ontological status of the world... Marx has enriched this venerable myth with a truly messianic Judeo-Christian ideology; on the one hand, by the prophetic and soteriological function he ascribes to the proletariat; and on the other, by the final struggle between Good and Evil, which may be compared with the apocalyptic conflict between Christ and anti-Christ, ending in the decisive victory of the former.[57]

For Mason, who claimed that the only conclusion he could draw from his theologising was either the certainty of God or the certainty of God's absence, the religious elements of Marxism provide a structure wherein the certainties of dogma and the

inevitability of doubt can coexist. Certainly this idea is behind 'Youth At The Dance' and 'New Life'. The machine-guns of the former are matched by the figure of the latter who has 'stripped for the fight', but the same figure then tells us 'I shall not strip again' and talks of 'dark cynic blood veins'[58]. However, the disparate elements of these poems fail to achieve the synthesis which characterises the best work in No New Thing.

No New Thing and End of Day reveal Mason's inability to marry his poetic sensibility with his political beliefs. In part, this explains the nature of his canonisation. Curnow seized upon the 1920s Mason not simply because it fitted his chronological need for a nationalist 'father'. The 1920s work, free from the difficulties of reconciling the art with the growing Marxist convictions, displays a more consistent sense of 'quality'. This sense serves the nationalist desire to elevate Mason as the individual orator of the national milieu. The inconsistencies of the Marxist verse (Weir claims that 'it simplifies both the problems that beset us and their solutions'[59]) disrupt the clean-edged image that a nationalist mythology creates.

All commentaries on Mason are united by their lack of attention to the dramatic pieces he wrote in the late 1930s. The main reason for this is that Mason's work with the People's Theatre and the New Theatre Group in Auckland is explicitly Marxist. An analysis of the sketches and plays he produced reveals a politicised and international element to the decade's culture that threatens the received wisdom of nationalism's dominance. In the same fashion that the orthodoxy ignores Cresswell's parallels with other 1930s figures, Mason's rejection of lyric poetry to concentrate on a propagandist theatre stands at odds with the way he has been historicised. Stead's assessment

of this rejection, that Mason's 'silence since about 1940' was 'the failure of a gift'[60] explicitly encapsulates the perception of the orthodoxy. As Rachel Barrowman notes: 'It reveals a prejudice against rationality, a conception of literature as drawing from instinct and expressive of essential, universal values. And it is unwilling to accept the conscious decision made by Mason.'[61]

Between 1936 and 1939 Mason worked extensively with the Auckland People's Theatre. This period saw a revision of his conception of poetry and in particular its relationship with drama. Writing in 1962, Mason articulated his 1930s conclusion that poetry should adapt its traditional introspective format and become both more public and more political:

> There are, of course, those who insist on judging all forms of expression in verse by principles applicable to poetry intended for printing only and who fail to consider that any such expression may be intended for any other purpose... For my own part, I cannot agree with this, nor, indeed tolerate those Jeremiahs of poetry who, often with protestations of regret, prophesy a continual narrowing in theme and purpose until ultimately nothing shall be left save a wisp to blow away with the wind... On the contrary, I still consider that poetry should break the charmed circle to seek its ancient allies of music, drama and oratory.[62]

while the preface to his 1943 verse drama script China argues again for a Yeatsian synthesis of poetry and drama to achieve political ends:

> If our poets studied dramatic needs, then not only would art perhaps benefit, but also it might act as a cross-fertilising agent on poetry: which... could profit by a little rhetoric with its resulting comprehensibility.[63]

The People's Theatre was formed with the explicit intent of creating a working-class theatre, with a variety of labour

affiliations, that had a genuine popular appeal. It was also clearly a response to the development of both British and American leftist theatre as the decade progressed. Thus it deliberately aimed to be a local manifestation of an international movement, in line with the official policies of the Communist Party of New Zealand. While over half the productions of the theatre were taken from Britain and America (the obligatory Waiting For Lefty and a variety of agitprop material) Mason was to provide all but one of the pieces written in New Zealand. This high percentage of locally written drama made the theatre unique among the number of others that sprang up in response to the international situation. It fitted Mason's demands that the theatre should not only serve as a showcase for international developments, but also be 'a recipient and source of social stimulus'.[64]

Six sketches written by Mason were performed in 1939. None of these contain the paradoxes and tensions of his poetry, despite the fact that many of the pieces are monologues and oratorical chants that lack any real dramatic tension. The sketches dealt with the Marxist concerns of the Popular Front - Spain, the rise of fascism, the Soviet Union and the possible onset of war. They thus provide examples of the very few New Zealand works that refer explicitly to international issues. 'Squire Speaks' was published by the Caxton Press and performed by the People's Theatre in December 1939, though the exact date of its composition remains unclear.[65] One of the more substantial of Mason's political pieces, nevertheless it is typical of many of them. The monologue is delivered by an English squire forced to kill his faithful butler who attempts a socialist rebellion. In a final twist, the squire is then turned upon by a group of

villagers he assumes is coming to save him. The individual event is seen to be the start of a much larger revolution. The language of the piece is interesting. In common with many of the English writers of the period, the story is only told from the point of view of the upper classes. Nowhere in the dramatisation is there any characterisation of the revolutionaries or discussion of the structures which will be set in place at the end of the successful revolutionary process. 'Squire Speaks' is the actual moment of rebellion, but a moment that is peculiarly middle-class. An almost perverse pleasure in the Squire's final recognition of his demise is used to cover the lack of an articulated political alternative. As with the novels of Isherwood, Upward and George Orwell, Mason's sketch depicts one bourgeois figure talking to another.

The fabular nature of the piece emphasises this self-consciousness, whilst the use of cliche - 'look the old fool had a bit of red flannel stuck on his barricade thing/ old Perkins gone socialist' - reinforces a distance between Mason and the nature of his subject matter. The English setting, from a theatre and a playwright pledged to the development of an indigenous drama, is also incongruous.[66] The propagandist power of the message sits uneasily with the comic overtones and language of the master/butler relationship:

> phew what a nasty thing to happen in a man's own house
> just shows you just shows you
> I've noticed quite a bit of surliness about lately
> what I've always said
> working-classes all the same every one of them
> and the Government panders to them
> Manchester Guardian sort of stuff[67]

Barrowman talks of this 'generalised and romanticised conception of 'the people'' being 'characteristic of Mason's verse dramas'.[68] The tone is similar to the early propaganda

poetry of Cecil Day Lewis, or Auden's attempts to ridicule the ruling classes in The Orators (1932):

> As for our upper class:
> Let's be frank for a moment, fellows - they won't pass
> Majors, Vicars, Lawyers, Doctors, Advertisers, Maiden Aunts
> They're all in a funk but they daren't do a bunk,
> Either ruffles or mousers, they haven't a chance.[69]

As with 'Squire Speaks', this only pretends to play at politics. Undoubtedly Mason was far more committed to the left-wing cause than Auden, yet the similarities in their verse drama point to stumbling blocks that appear both technical and ideological. The romanticism of the piece is directly in keeping with not only the English orthodoxy, but also the structures of New Zealand literary nationalism. Such nationalism also utilised a stylised form of language; the gruff, laconic utterances of the Kiwi male used to express a perceived social realism.

Mason's other theatrical sketches suffer from the same problems as 'Squire Speaks', although the shorter pieces possess the immediate power of their directness. 'Skull On Silence' was performed by the People's Theatre in November 1939 and published by the People's Voice a few weeks later (in which it is called a poem). The 'Skull' is the symbolic mouthpiece of the dead of the 1914-18 war, which exhorts the listeners to learn the lesson of the previous conflict:

> No more, no more:
> no more shall we rot in vain like
> beasts
> We shall rise up in freedom -
> workers of the world, down with war,
> destroy the poison plan of evil
> and all its accursed roots.
> Workers of the world, lead to the
> world of peace -
> Smash down the hell of war and lift
> up the world of peace.[70]

Poetic playfulness is eschewed for the sake of propaganda, and according to a reviewer in the People's Voice the audience

'listened with close attention throughout and their deep silence indicated their appreciation of [the piece's] significance and high dramatic quality'.[71] The direct nature of 'Skull On Silence' was matched by Mason's 'International Brigade' - concerning the volunteers in Spain - and the mass chant 'This Dark Will Lighten', which is the most revolutionary of the three, with its portrayal of capitalist oppression:

> Year after year dull in mill, wharf, truck, ship, factory -
> on the picket-line, hunger-march, strike, demo clash with
> scabs skirmish with specials
>
> ...
> holy water cannot wash away
> what is burnt into the living bone.[72]

The propagandist nature of these pieces mean that they lack New Zealand references. Only two of the sketches performed by the People's Theatre - 'BMA' and 'Refugee' - are locally set. This internationalism is consistent with a strict Marxism that offsets the nationalist view of Mason. Even the pieces set in New Zealand (and a number of unpublished and unproduced dramatic sketches set in a local environment exist in Mason's papers) offer a different concept of the nation to that of Curnow, Sargeson and Glover. Instead of a nationalism based upon geography, Mason moves towards a view of the people as a socialist brotherhood, a group within the larger context of a classless world.

Mason's sense of brotherhood and community parallels the uneasy definitions of socialism around which the English orthodoxy worked. With the notable exception of figures like Christopher Caudwell, Julian Bell and John Cornford, many English writers of the decade refrained from direct political commitment. Instead their left-wing beliefs were mediated into an image of male bonding that reflected their bourgeois origins. This thinking is behind Rex Warner's call to revolution in 'Hymn':

> Come then, companions. This is the spring of blood,
> heart's hey-day, movement of masses, beginning of good.[73]

The same philosophy is fully articulated in Michael Roberts's introduction to the influential 1933 collection of poetry, New Country:

> And by social communism I do not mean any diminution or mystical loss of personal identity or any vague sentiment of universal brotherhood: I mean that extension of personality and consciousness which comes sometimes to a group of men when they are working together for some common purpose.[74]

Mason's didacticism works along similar lines. As Barrowman has noted, behind his political sketches there is 'a conception of a New Zealand working-class culture'.[75] This conception is, significantly, as visionary as either Curnow's nationalism or the characterisation of English poetry attempted by Roberts in New Country. In a programme note to 'BMA', Mason talked of 'the embodiment of the New Zealand working class' as being 'tall, rangy, quiet, unemotional, direct'.[76] Barrowman goes on to point out:

> This is of course a familiar characterisation. It bears a close resemblance to the solitary, male anti-hero who populates the poetry of Denis Glover, the stories of Frank Sargeson and Mulgan's Man Alone. It is a characterisation that has become an enduring stereotype, and to some extent a defining motif for the 'nationalist' literature of this period. It also represents a limited perception of an increasingly urban New Zealand working class, one which excludes marginal groups such as Maori and working class women... And as such it represents, arguably, an inappropiate basis for the development of a genuinely popular New Zealand literature.[77]

Barrowman's observation is backed up by the fact that New Zealand's left-wing institutions failed to establish and maintain socialist structures beyond the early 1940s. The Auckland People's Theatre was wound up in mid-1940, due to financial

difficulties created by a general apathy. Mason's work had not created a bedrock of popular support for socialist or communist policies.

Important distinctions must be made in any attempt to quantify Mason's dramatic output. The first point is the distance between his position within the historical canon of New Zealand literature and the reality of his political convictions. Mason's adoption of Marxism not only challenges the nationalist definitions of his own work, it also opens up an entirely different view of the decade. Instead of a literature preoccupied with a construction of a national self, we are presented with writers who sought to respond to the international crises of the period.

However, the dogmatic nature of Marxism did not produce a stable platform on which propagandist art could be produced. Mason's work, like that of his English contemporaries, displays the complexities inherent in the period. Discussing the poetry of the 1930s in England Robin Skelton has noted:

> Mere social commentary is not the heart of the poets' attitude, although a sociological credo may be at the heart of the expressed convictions of the period. The blurred borderlands between real and unreal, boyhood and manhood, game and ritual, vision and fantasy, fable and history, are the territories in which the poets of the thirties live.[78]

For the writer in New Zealand, the divisions between 'exile' and 'nationalist' noted earlier by Brennan can be added to this list. Skelton's comment, written in 1964, pre-empts the demands Bhabha makes. An analysis of Mason's drama belongs within these terms. His political commitment matches what Skelton has described as 'a movement of the passionate conscience' as opposed to 'a purely socialist movement'[79]. The politics are constantly juxtaposed

with a mythic element that forcibly lessens their impact. The creation of myth is a vital point to note, for it is one factor that unites both nationalist and socialist and informs the literary orthodoxies of Britain and New Zealand. Mason's use of myth is not the self-conscious deployment found in Curnow and Sargeson. Between 1936 and 1939 his strongest parallels lie with the English writing of the same period. The complications in the adoption of a public stance result in a recourse to myth or fable as a means of coping with the difficulties of history.

Cresswell and Mason's work and historicisation illustrate a situation that is fundamentally post-colonial, one that pre-empts the concerns of later writers dealing with the complexities of language, history and traditions. The Guyanese novelist Wilson Harris, commenting on post-colonial texts, has stated that what might be termed 'native' archetypes 'are all overlaid by European skeletons and archetypes as well. You will never activate them unless you activate the so-called European 'skeletons' as well. They are locked together and there is no way around that.'[80] This sense of 'interlocking', a blending of traditions, of nationalism and internationalism, usefully explains Cresswell and Mason's work during the 1930s. When Alan Riach says that, for Harris:

> new literatures are not merely the branches of a host trunk growing at different speeds into mature traditions in their own right, but rather complex and rich totalities continually made up of conflicting elements in tension.[81]

we see these tensions reflected in Mason's move from the paradoxical to the dogmatic and in the hints of the 1930s orthodoxy discernable in Cresswell's medieval philosophising. What has elsewhere been termed 'creative schizophrenia' by

Michael Gilkes destroys the exclusivity of nationalism and internationalism as secure categories. The differing ideological positions adopted by Cresswell and Mason were rendered equally insecure by the dynamics in New Zealand during the 1930s. The margins where the traditions of Western literature and thought encounter the history of a settler/colonised environment produce complexities and difficulties that a simplified dogma fails to embrace.

It is wise not to be over-deterministic in drawing these analogies, but Mason's use of irony and ambiguity in his poetry, the mixing of Greece and New Zealand shown in 'Wayfarers', points to a conception of literature similar to that articulated by Harris. The desire to seek expression out of multiplicity and ambiguity pre-figures a major movement in post-colonial literature. Yet the 1930s lacked a true perception of the possibilities of this hybridity. Cresswell's self-imposed limitations most fully display the rejection of this idea of bonding, whilst Mason's attempt to work with an orthodox Marxism prioritises direct political action as opposed to the linked dynamics of New Zealand and Europe. The work of both writers displays the palimpsest of European literature working on the New Zealand situation, yet (as with their local contemporaries, with the possible exception of Curnow) neither managed to synthesise these forces into literature <u>conscious</u> of the tensions at work within it.

Unlocking Harris's archetypes and skeletons is a process evaded by the nationalist criticism of the period. The orthodoxy of New Zealand critical writing maintains the polarisation of Cresswell and Mason because it depends upon the linear tradition of canonisation to achieve the clear definitions of a 'national'

literature. This tradition (interestingly one inherited from the notion of 'English Literature') masks the connections between Cresswell and Mason, as well as the true and deep diversities that render their legacies usefully problematic.

3. URSULA BETHELL AND EILEEN DUGGAN: HINTERLANDS.

Ursula Bethell's position within the New Zealand literature of the 1930s is one that warrants close attention. Her status as an elder stateswoman of New Zealand poetry, and the detail of that status, displays the same elements of hybridity and interweaving that characterise the roles of D'Arcy Cresswell and R.A.K. Mason in the period's writing.

The specifics of this complexity are illustrated in a correspondence between Bethell and Allen Curnow in the mid-1940s. In a series of letters written between March and May 1944, Curnow both requested a number of Bethell's poems for his 1945 Caxton anthology of New Zealand verse and tried to persuade her to bring out a collected edition of her work. Curnow offered to do the compiling and editing, calling the proposed volume 'so obvious and necessary that I am almost ashamed it hasn't been thought of before.'[1] The letters reflect Curnow's enthusiasm for the project:

> It's an essential work, and better seen to now than left to posterity, whose taste we are entitled to suspect... [N]ow I have read them together, and with one purpose in view, I see the progression - far more and profound than the pattern of seasons in Time and Place - from the Garden to Day and Night... The work can't suffer from a complete presentation.[2]

Curnow is eager not only to secure Bethell's consent, but also to engage in a dialogue with a figure he believes clearly to be pre-eminent in New Zealand poetry. The letters include a variety of questions and opinions about form and poetics, as well as comments on his own poetry and the forthcoming anthology - 'I'm

sure there will be massive broadsides from some quarters when the anthology appears, but it will outlast them.'[3] Curnow's tone is both confessional and demanding. He talks of the 'rhythmic secrets' he discerns in Bethell's work, techniques which 'defeat me whenever I try a formulation and it is this way that I feel so laboured and constricting in my own verse.'[4]

This politeness may be the wise approach of a would-be editor, but underlying all of Curnow's correspondence is a clear respect and admiration for Bethell's achievements. The letters point to Bethell as a poet at the end of a substantial career, one who commands respect in later generations of creative artists.

In the public prose of his anthology introductions and essays, Curnow appears less sure in his opinion of Bethell. In the introduction to the Caxton anthology of 1945 he confesses to being 'puzzled' by the contents of Bethell's first collection From a Garden in the Antipodes (1929):

> [A]s statements they remained somehow private, gestures which might be significant among a few where much else was taken for granted. They read almost like a published correspondence, though the poet was constantly escaping the role of confidante and intimate chronicler, addressing herself to a larger audience; because poetry will not remain private speech, while it aims towards perfection.[5]

This is Curnow on more familiar territory. 'Private' poetry is to be distrusted because it refuses to deal with the public concerns of a young country. For Curnow, Bethell's merits lie in her manipulation of form:

> The highly-contrived verbal structures, alike in the more and in the less successful poems, arise - like the conceits of the metaphysical poets - from a tension between her strong and original sense of form and rhythm, and her eagerness to penetrate behind phenomena, unable to rest upon any image.[6]

He quotes with approval Cresswell's definition of Bethell as a poet who, 'if not the first and most finished of our poets, is the most original, and the most significant.'[7] Fifteen years later, in the 1960 introduction to The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse, Curnow has moved to an appreciation of Bethell's ability to portray the Canterbury environment - 'I can think of few poets who establish quite the same visual authority over such a region' - and goes on to state:

> Bethell's hillside suburban garden of the twenties and thirties... served her as an eminence from which to confront, and in terms of which to explain to herself, the realities of time and place.[8]

By 1963 the transformation is complete, and in 'New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition' Bethell is the only woman included in the group of writers who form the backbone of the nationalist canon, those who 'as New Zealanders, accepted the the disciplines of uncompromising fidelity to experience, of an unqualified responsibility to the truths of themselves, in this place, at that time.'[9] Clearly the puzzlement is over.

Curnow's critical progression indicates a problematical response to the work of Bethell. Her religion and Georgianism place her outside the orthodoxy of the decade, seemingly aligning her with the 'occasional' verse of Quentin Pope's Kowhai Gold (1930), yet Patrick Evans notes in Curnow a tendency to mythologise Bethell into a 'Woman Alone' figure, struggling with the specificities of the local Canterbury landscape. Bethell, Evans claims, was 'so much more congenial to Curnow than any of the other women [writers]'[10], the one best able to be manipulated into the nationalist canon. There is a duality here, revolving around the key issues of the 1930s mythologies; the sense of a

nationalistic literary 'birth' and the relationship of writers to it. Both Bethell and Eileen Duggan illustrate an illuminating interplay with this mythology. Both were writers who began to publish in the 1920s and carried over into the subsequent decade, attaining a degree of status that complicates their relationship with the generation which succeeded them, one dominated by male authors. Both figures proved that it was possible to earn the title 'poet' in New Zealand, and for that title to carry weight beyond immediate shores (Duggan was the most recognised New Zealand writer abroad in the 1930s, publishing volumes in both Britain and the United States, gaining an O.B.E. in 1937 and being offered an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Society of Literature in 1943). For the writers of the 'Phoenix generation' they provided role models which prompted both admiration and rejection.

The tensions implicit within Curnow's approach illustrate his problematical positioning of Bethell within the literary canon, a difficulty common to the nationalist perspective. In 1959, in E.H. McCormick's New Zealand Literature: A Survey, Bethell is added to a tradition perceived to originate with Mason, A.R.D. Fairburn, Denis Glover and Curnow. McCormick's comment that Bethell attempted to 'express in living words the New Zealand, and especially the Canterbury, landscape'[11] is a fair summary of the orthodox view of Bethell stipulated in the early historicising of New Zealand literature. In the words of Lawrence Baigent: 'Her poetry is a truly pioneer poetry; it explores, it clears, it cultivates and plants a new country.'[12] In nationalist terms, Bethell's work is valuable because it locates itself firmly in the actualities of her Canterbury surroundings - the garden of her house, Rise Cottage, in From a

Garden in the Antipodes (1929) and the plains, mountains and hills in Time and Place (1936) and Day and Night (1939). It is this aspect of her poetry that Cresswell (despite his reverence for the archaic, a figure committed to his own concept of 'New Zealand literature') responded to in his oft-quoted observation:

> [S]he was the first to tell the New Zealanders to pull down the blind, to shut out the view, the immensity, the distance, the isolation... New Zealand wasn't truly discovered, in fact, until Ursula Bethell, 'very earnestly digging', raised her head to look at the mountains.[13]

As with others in New Zealand in the 1930s, Bethell becomes a victim of nationalism's internal logic, its penchant for a selective criticism that elevates certain particulars at the expense of others. As Evans hints when he complains of Curnow's portrayal of her as 'Woman Alone', Bethell (like Mason) fulfills a necessary role in the nationalist canon. For Curnow, M.H. Holcroft and the others engaged in documenting 1930s nationalism, Bethell provides the link between the colonial/Victorian era of New Zealand poetry, the work of William Pember Reeves, Blanche Baughan and Alfred Domett, and the 'new' nationalist poetry of the 1930s. She fits the model of organic development, of the country growing into its location, that is a dominant mythology of early post-colonial literatures. When, in The Deepening Stream (1940), Holcroft talks of the necessity of 'an essential relation between the anatomy of the land and the values of human experience' in poetry, he moves immediately to detail Bethell's contribution to this 'sense of the anatomy of the country.'[14] Bethell's age (she was born in 1874, twenty-two years before Cresswell and thirty-one years before Mason) renders her immensely valuable to a literary tradition that functions in linear terms. She becomes a limited mentor, a figure fit to hand

on the baton of poetry (newly cleansed of most of its constrictive Victorianisms) to a younger generation capable of carrying the art closer to a perceived goal of national consciousness.

McCormick and Curnow's juxtaposition of Bethell with Fairburn and Mason and Glover restricts the opportunities to develop her role within alternative contexts. In his monograph on Bethell, Holcroft notes her physical isolation from other creative writers of the period. He then goes on to say:

> But she was not isolated in vision or discovery. She came to the Cashmere Hills when a new awareness of the country was beginning to enter our writing. In one way only, in her search for meaning or identity across the plains and the hills, could she be said to resemble the best of the younger poets.[15]

This is deceptively complicated. It admits to the peripheral nature of Bethell's proximity to the nationalist canon, but it stresses nevertheless the importance of this link at the expense of others. Holcroft fails to consider the possibility of Bethell's position in relation to other 1930s figures - Duggan, Robin Hyde, and survivors from an earlier period of writing, such as Blanche Baughan.[16] Holcroft also ascribes a cohesion to those he terms the 'younger poets' which is too rigid. The problematical position of Bethell within the New Zealand literature of the period does more than point to the complexities of her own work. It also reflects the fractured nature of the decade's writing as a whole. Her correspondence with Curnow, Glover, Cresswell and Charles Brasch does not reflect a uniformity of vision and thought. Instead it points to divisions and difference, strengthening Bethell's role within the decade to a degree neglected by subsequent histories.

Between 1938 and 1941 Brasch wrote twenty-four letters to Bethell. Brasch himself produced his best poetry after the 1930s were over, but he remains an interesting marginal figure in the decade's history. Elements of his poetry reinforced the geographic obsessions of the nationalists, and it is easy to place him in the long line of male writers seen to belong to the 'Phoenix generation.' However, his Jewishness and his wealth set him apart from many other New Zealand writers, and while he engaged in the debates that dominated the literary culture of the 1930s, his was a voice often heard from a distance. Like James Bertram and John Mulgan, he was part of the New Zealand clique at Oxford in the early years of the decade, and the scope of his travels gave Brasch an internationalism that is unrivalled by the majority of his literary counterparts. Ironically for a figure drawn into the nationalist canon of the 1930s, much of his correspondence during the period dwells on the distance he feels from New Zealand.

After an initial meeting in Christchurch, Brasch and Bethell engaged in a period of correspondence that continued until her death. Several of Brasch's letters, written as he travelled between New Zealand and Britain, ran to many thousands of words. In his 1980 memoir, Indirections, Brasch's account of this relationship is one tempered by time. He remembers Bethell's physical appearance and sees her as being: 'Very English. Very Anglican. But somewhat modified by New Zealand, and by being a poet.'[17] The letters of the late 1930s point to a different kind of liaison. Like Curnow, clearly Brasch views Bethell as a poetic elder. He writes to her as a pupil to a mentor, confessing or seeking advice, constantly accepting her judgement. In August 1940, writing from a London under German attack, Brasch details

the kind of role Bethell fulfilled for him and others in New Zealand:

> How your young friends must lean on you now, and how often I wish I could come to Webb St to talk things over with you. It is so hard to see straight, to put first things first; and you are so much better equipped than most of us.[18]

Though he reacts coolly to Day and Night, feeling that 'Time and Place made a more satisfying whole and remains my choice of your three'[19], Brasch feels that Bethell's work, 'with some passages of Fairburn's Dominion [is] the finest poetry - or should I say the only poetry - that has yet been written about New Zealand.'[20] Brasch's comments go some way to exploding an orthodox view of the decade. Despite the appearance of Phoenix and Tomorrow, the 1930s poetry of Curnow and Glover (by 1941 Curnow had produced five volumes of verse and Glover two, and both had also contributed to Caxton's 1941 Recent Poems), the neo-Georgian work of figures like Bethell received a wide variety of critical acclaim. Glover himself engaged in a lively debate with Bethell over Caxton's production of Time and Place and Day and Night. In a series of letters mainly detailing the minutiae of printing, Glover is bullying, sarcastic, respectful and grudgingly complimentary. The struggle evident within this correspondence (Glover suggested a variety of changes and occasionally took a free hand to the work's punctuation) illustrates that Bethell was no marginal figure within the decade's literay milieu. Though Bethell goaded him by assuring him that he would not like the contents of Day and Night, Glover responded that he found the poems 'very good' and 'almost wholly admirable.'[21]

As the testimonials to her in the December 1948 edition of Landfall indicate, Bethell gathered around her an eclectic group of artists and cultural commentators. Her work invites a number of responses which have complicated the role of the literary historian. A variety of pigeon-holes appear capable of containing Bethell. As Curnow has canonised her, she is the proto-nationalist helping to assemble the building blocks for a literature concentrating on the local. To John Summers, she was primarily a religious poet, seeking the fusion of religion, art and nature.[22] Evans characterises her work as one where the 'method is a Georgianism made over to personal ends.'[23] In an article entitled 'New Zealand Authoresses', (written in the Mirror in February 1938) Robin Hyde places Bethell within the context of women's writing in New Zealand, classifying her, along with Jane Mander, as a 'modern' in comparison to Jessie Mackay, Isabel M. Cluett and Elsie K. Morton.[24] Bethell is the modernist and the Georgian, the nationalist and the religious poet.

Any appreciation of Bethell's poetry has to take into account these inherent tensions, and recognise their value. Responding to a criticism from McCormick that her work prioritised events and objects characteristically English, Bethell replied 'You musn't take me as an example of a Country (England) or a Class! I wouldn't be a good specimen - I am too variegated... That's one of the sad things about me! - I don't belong anywhere in particular - I've dodged to and fro - my friends are of all sorts of classes and countries - I'm not a fair sample - I have not been able to settle, always there was some event, some frustration.'[25] The garden metaphor works well here. Bethell manages at the same time to suggest something rooted and specific, while also admitting to the diversity

contained within. Her response not only explicitly rejects the dogmatic approach of a selective literary history, it also offers a technique for exploring the poetry itself.

In contrast to the prescriptions of the nationalist rubric, Bethell's work becomes less specific as the three volumes progress. The observations of From a Garden in the Antipodes give way to a more complex poetry in Time and Place and Night and Day, where questions of ontology and epistomology are couched increasingly within a religious perspective. Bethell's garden poems are determinedly local, concentrating on a limited scope that occasionally hints at the high modernism of the 1920s. 'Detail' contains the kind of modernistic edge which runs through much of the collection:

> My garage is a structure of excessive plainness,
> It springs from a dry bank in the back garden,
> It is made of corrugated iron,
> And painted all over with brick-red.
>
> But beside it I have planted a green Bay-tree,
> - A sweet Bay, an Olive, and a Turkey Fig,
> - A Fig, an Olive, and a Bay.[26]

The trees reflect symbolic functions that point to European traditions and, as Vincent O'Sullivan has noted, Bethell's Whitmanesque cataloguing and use of irregular lines also subvert the traditional expectations of a neo-Georgian pastoral picture.[27] Indeed, in 'Alpines' the poet explicitly rejects the 'plausible rhymes, that come to me unbidden' in favour of the 'Halting, pausing footsteps' which 'suffice for my needs.'[28] Bethell seeks contrast and change, much as the garden is seen to be the recipient of the contrasting forces of nature. The poetry displays linguistic and rhythmic shifts, creating tensions. These tensions may be the comparison between England and New Zealand

displayed in 'Response', or the more subtle wait for the seasons in 'Soothsayer':

> I walked about the garden in the evening,
> And thought: How Autumn lingers -
> Still a few gold chrysanthemums -
> Still one late rose -
> The old blackbird still has voice.
>
> I walked back down the pathway,
> The evening light lay gently on the orchard;
> Then I saw a redness on the peach boughs,
> And bulb-spears pushing upwards,
> And heard the old blackbird whistle
> 'Get ready. Get ready. Get ready.
> Quick. Quick. Spring.'
>
> So I cut down the last chrysanthemums,
> Pulled up their stakes and piled them in the shed,
> At hand to serve me soon for young delphiniums.[29]

This is the kind of work which Holcroft describes as 'happy poems, rooted in the good earth, and never far from the kitchen door, the smell of cooking food, and a sound of voices.'[30] It is more subtle than this. The sense of comfort is real, but the open-ended nature of so many of the poems points clearly to a wider perspective. The traditional Georgian themes - the pastoral twilight walk of 'Soothsayer' - are juxtaposed and, to a degree, subverted by the modernistic edge of those poems that recognise complexities beyond the garden. MacDonald Jackson makes an astute point when he notes:

> It is a small domestic world that Bethell shares with us, but her garden, as she busies herself over digging, planting, weeding, and pruning, comes to stand for all fields of fond human endeavour, and for all that we make and tend, and watch develop and mature; and the rugged and vast landscape and seascape that she surveys from her small cultivated space is a constant reminder of human impermanence.[31]

The garden is thus flexible. It is both of England and New Zealand, recognising (in O'Sullivan's terms) 'the need of some personalities to be fed by two sources at once.'[32] The poems

enact this flexibility. 'Controversy' even promotes Bethell's own discussion of the private/public debate that is such a motif of English literature of the 1930s, as she admits 'There is a perpetual contention/ Between the guardians of the dwelling house and the demesne' and goes on to ask 'Shall the garden be a paradise,/ And the inside of the cottage a shambles?// Or contrariwise, the garden a wilderness,/ While we preserve the image of a Dutch interior?'[33]

The most revealing manifestation of this flexibility is the recognition of the geological processes that frame and shape the garden. Bethell's lifting of the head to 'look at the mountains' in 'Pause' places her own 'small cultivated space' in context. It is this aspect of her poetry that is appealing to the nationalists. As Holcroft notes:

> She could not see the landscape without seeing what had made it, the act of creation translated into slow geological process or travail of craters.[34]

The nationalist view of Bethell concentrates on this fixation, seeing within it a portrayal of a process that belongs specifically to New Zealand. This fundamental process is then focused upon Bethell's own garden where the act of planting ('Planned. Planted. Established.' as it is described in 'Time'[35]) personifies the landscape, establishing the roots of humanity who belong to 'this place' and 'that time.' To a degree this is a valid reading. Bethell's garden does detail a form of nationalism. But it achieves more than this. The movement in Bethell's poetry is from a sense of prehistory to the abstract, from geological formation to theological contemplation. There is a sense of the lack of a 'middle ground.' Bethell is not interested in the history of New Zealand's colonising (in the

same way that Curnow is) so much as the natural phenomena that arise from history. As Holcroft observes: 'Ursula liked to keep humanity at a distance, studying the effects of man's presence rather than man himself.'[36] The journey of colonisation is part of a far greater 'journey', a spiritual progression through life.

This is a complicated and subtle portrayal. Bethell generalises humanity in many of the garden poems. It is 'Man' who is perceived to be the antagonist to the natural world, so the specifics of 'owning' the landscape, of colonialism and its consequences, fall outside the scope of the poetry. This does not diminish the strength of the 'local' in her poetry. Indeed, it begins to open up possibilities for a more flexible concept of nationalism (a flexibility which is also supported by an analysis of Duggan's work). To concentrate solely on Bethell as a proto-nationalist begins a process of misreading that excludes systematically the other threads that weave through her work. Such a concentration results in conclusions such as those put forward by Lawrence Baigent in his 1951 essay on Bethell. For Baigent, Bethell's poetry is not one that utilises landscape but is actually prompted by it, a prompt that leads her to a viewpoint that seems more familiar from the orthodox portrayal of Frank Sargeson:

> It would seem that Ursula Bethell's poetry was directly called into being by her response to a landscape at once familiar from childhood and strange after years of absence... It must be evident to the reader of her poetry that Ursula Bethell was, before all, a realist; that her poetry is concerned with fact, not fantasy; that it is objective rather than subjective, reflective rather than imaginative.[37]

Baigent develops his theme to the point where, searching for a metaphor to describe the best of Bethell's work, he claims that

'[a] poem like 'The Long Harbour' has the natural, unsurprising beauty of a hill or a tree.'[38] Baigent becomes confused when trying to reconcile this vision of Bethell as a social realist with the obvious transcendental nature of her later work. His whole critique displays the perils of a selective reading. His version of Bethell may fit the romantic, landscape based literature that Holcroft demands in The Deepening Stream, but it is wholly inadequate as an analysis of her work.

From A Garden in the Antipodes holds a variety of themes in a careful equilibrium. The traces of previous literature, the regularity of rhythm and rhyme, do not lead on to the more modernistic, nationalistic poems. Both are held in a whole, and each facet works off the other. An analysis of Bethell's two remaining volumes of poetry illustrates a movement towards contemplation, reinforcing the suggestion that Bethell's use of landscape is not an end in itself, but serves as a basis for further forays into abstraction. It is a subtle point, since Curnow's nationalism also moves and diverges from such a starting point, and his work reflects a preoccupation with language that is missing from Bethell. In crude terms, it is the difference between geology and geography, between Bethell's observations of the effects of natural phenomena and Curnow's recognition of the media that transform these effects into human expression. The poetry of Time and Place moves from the local, often starting with specifics of the Canterbury landscape and then broadening to incorporate wider philosophical and ontological concerns.

Although published in 1936, much of the poetry in Time and Place was written at the same period as the garden poems. Nevertheless the later collection offers a series of departures from the concerns of Rise Cottage. Jackson is right to single out

'Trance' as a bridge between the two volumes. Bethell's recognition of the garden as a 'spectral vision of a work accomplished, done with'[39] signals a movement 'where the uninsistent rhythms, conversational tone, and straightforward syntax of the garden pieces give way to a more complex, oratorical poetic style in which Bethell grapples with the fundamentals of religious faith.'[40] As Curnow noted in his letter to Bethell in May 1944, it is this movement towards complexities that is the collection's dominant feature, more so than the arrangement of the poems by season or the nationalist implications of the volume's title. 'Drive to North Canterbury' displays the new technique. The first of the five octaves displays the sense of the local familiar from the garden poems:

> The January sun had veiled
> His burning gaze of yesterday,
> And his bright glances of the morn
> With drooping mists, ere we had hailed
> The northern hills; a curtain grey
> Was hung about our rural way,
> But painted on its shadowy fold
> Were, spiral green and level gold,
> The willow-trees and fields of corn.

This is familiar commentary. As O'Sullivan has noted,[41] Time and Place makes its debts to traditional forms and images more obvious than the work in From a Garden in the Antipodes. It is the most explicitly Georgian and Victorian of Bethell's three collections. However, the poem departs from this observation of landscape in the final octave:

> Be thankful, travellers, who greet
> The tawney harvest-fields unrolled,
> That bread for body's need is given
> And likewise spiritual meat:
> For, 'tis the lustre on the gold,
> The grace wherewith in green is stoled,
> Mid solitude of misty grey,
> The careless willow by the way,
> That lure the soul from earth to heaven.[42]

Here, the Canterbury landscape has become a base for religious contemplation, a springboard for a movement into abstract thought. Similarly, 'The delicate lines of the hills of this country' in 'Levavi Oculos' prompt a variety of Christian associations which result in 'freedom' and 'mind-liberty again!', and in 'The Long Harbour' the local history and scenery of Akaroa serve as 'a summing-up of and benediction on the whole colonial adventure.'[43] 'The Long Harbour' is one of the few poems in which Bethell addresses the colonial experience, but the history of Akaroa is cited primarily for theological reasons, establishing colonialism within a broader, religious framework. More typical of the collection is the movement towards the recognition of the 'universe' as a 'many-faceted gem', as she puts it in 'May Night.' The language seeks a dexterity capable of expressing these complexities. It is in Time and Place that Bethell's debt to Gerard Manley Hopkins becomes firmly evident. The 'soft susurration of small leaves in dessication, a rustling' of 'Showers of Leaves' indicates the kind of poetry which dominates much of Day and Night.

In the words of Jackson, Day and Night 'inverts natural word order, compresses imagery into numerous hyphenated compounds, increases the proportion of polysyllables, and shapes [Bethell's] stanzas by means of a repetition and parallelism that owe much to the Bible and prayerbook.'[44] Bethell's knowledge and use of the Bible and liturgy stresses the distance between her later poetry and the Sargesonesque concentration on the vernacular. As O'Sullivan notes, she was 'unmoved by the assumption made by many poets that the success of a poem is bound to how accurately it preserves the rhythms and vocabulary of 'ordinary life''[45] Bethell's concentration on these religious forms is more than a

demonstration of linguistic playfulness. It goes straight to the heart of one of the key concerns for literature during the 1930s, the role of the artist in a time of public crisis.

Like her counterparts in both New Zealand and Europe, Bethell was faced with the need to address the social disintegration of the decade. At a time when others adopted a range of stances from committed Marxism to strict isolationism, Bethell sought to renew her Christian faith. In a correspondence with Blanche Baughan that lasted from 1932 to 1940, each writer sought spiritual support from the other. Baughan's letters to Bethell in the late 1930s exhort her to trust in her beliefs.[46] Much of the poetry in Day and Night reflects this struggle to maintain a firm commitment. The power of the Word has to be asserted constantly, as it is in the final lines of 'Southerly Sunday' - 'This sparkling day is the Lord's day. Let us be glad and rejoice in it/ for he cometh, he cometh to judge and redeem his beautiful universe,/ and holds in his hands all worlds, all men, the quick and the dead.'[47]

Bethell's response to the crisis of the 1930s parallels that of T.S.Eliot and others in Europe. It serves as a reminder that religion belongs alongside nationalism, Marxism and fascism as a method of dealing with the fractures and difficulties of the decade. It also identifies the contents of Time and Place and Day and Night as poetry of the 1930s, rooted in the complexities of the individual location. Bethell's later religious work is 'of' New Zealand as much as Fairburn's Dominion (1938) or Curnow's Not In Narrow Seas (1939). As Jackson says, though there is 'nothing about it to suggest its country of origin', it 'represents a remarkable enrichment of New Zealand poetry and a considerable extension of its range of effects.'[48]

It is important to stress that Bethell's later work does not peripheralise her from the key concerns of the New Zealand literature of the period. Her religious verse is the product of a personal examination, an inward gaze which, though it lacks the strident proclamations of the nationalists, reflects a valid picture of the culture of the time. It is the presentation of an area of New Zealand society which orthodox nationalism works to deny. This is both ironic and complicated, for within Bethell's portrayal of New Zealand (and the portrayal is similar, though modified, in certain works of Cresswell, Duggan and Robin Hyde) there is a strong sense of national identity. Recognition of this leads to a recognition of the grey areas, the areas of overlap, the cultural margins, that are, in fact, one of the dominant manifestations of New Zealand literature during the 1930s.

Eileen Duggan's poetry moves many of these complications into a strong point of focus. Her work exhibits a greater debt to Georgian and Victorian models than that of Bethell, and the force of her Catholicism matches that of Bethell's Anglicanism. Duggan is the most represented figure in Quentin Pope's 1930 anthology Kowhai Gold, the collection so despised by Curnow and Glover, and was a regular contributor to C.A. Marris' annual Best Poems series. Her work epitomises the 'reign of whimsy in New Zealand verse' that Curnow sought to eradicate. Writing in 1991, MacDonald Jackson summed up prevalent literary feelings about Duggan when he claimed that her poetry 'is marred by sentimentality, on the one hand, and a partiality for similes which are merely ornamental and for far-fetched conceits, on the other.'[49] Yet, as with Bethell, Duggan displays a sense of national identity which is not only the product of a personal perspective, but also belongs to a tradition developed through

the late nineteenth century, a tradition which challenges the superiority of orthodox nationalism and points to a flexibility within the critique as a whole.

Duggan is the true 1930s heir to the work of William Pember Reeves and Jessie Mackay. It was within Mackay's preface to her 1889 The Spirit of the Rangatira that McCormick discerned 'the first clear signs of national self-awareness'[50], and it is Duggan's work that shares Mackay's socio-political background and mirrors the stock themes of the nationalism of the 1880s and 1890s. Duggan's Celtic background, her detailing of New Zealand history, landscape and Maori mythology (elements of which also recur in Hyde's work, notably the 1936 novel Check to your King), illustrates a form of nationalism that has its roots in the colonial era of New Zealand history and was epitomised in the work of Reeves and Mackay. This nationalism stands in contrast to, but also interacts with, the 1930s nationalism, founded on a blend of history and the modernism of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats. Duggan's poetry, despite its excesses of a neo-Georgian sentimentality, points to the complicated series of layered influences that result in the specificities of the New Zealand literature of the 1930s.

Duggan's 1921 Poems is a collection dominated by Irish themes which stem from her personal and family history. As Frank McKay notes in his study of Duggan's work, the colonial preference for Irish history in turn-of-the-century New Zealand makes the volume peculiarly local, establishing Duggan as 'more, not less, a New Zealander of her time.'[51] McKay goes on to detail how Duggan's mystic, Yeatsian Ireland interplays with the nationalism which found expression in New Zealand:

> This Irish background makes Eileen Duggan's New Zealand nationalism distinctive. There is

> nothing in her writing of that nostalgia for 'Home' which is a commonplace in our early literature. Nor has she any of that form of restlessness which drove Katherine Mansfield, Rewi Alley, Robin Hyde, and so many others abroad. Her sense of exile was vicarious, motivated by compassion.[52]

As with John Mulgan, Duggan's relationship with the Ireland of her past is more than a simple duality between 'home' and 'exile.' Her knowledge of an Ireland ravaged by famine and poor government meant that country could not be elevated as a centre of cultural sophistication in the same manner in which some New Zealanders looked to England. McKay is even more specific on this theme when he links Duggan with the nationalists of the 1930s:

> Eileen Duggan has no Utopian homeland overseas for which she yearns. For her the restlessness of exile, experienced through identification with the dispossessed Irish, could be resolved not in an oppressed Ireland, but only here in New Zealand. This is the basis of her search for that national identity that was later to preoccupy the poets of the thirties, and to which she made a notable early contribution.[53]

McKay is illuminating a complex position here. Duggan was never a political or polemic writer. The pro-Republican pieces of her 1921 Poems are treated lyrically rather than dogmatically, and throughout her poetic career her work is couched in comfortable rhythms which are quintessentially Georgian. However, Duggan's poetry illustrates an interaction between Georgianism and nationalism, as well as the complicated heritage of the Anglo-Irish tradition. Her 1929 New Zealand Bird Songs reflects this interplay. On one level it is an ephemeral collection, a series of occasional rhymes motivated by a typically romantic interest in childhood. Yet, while the volume does not pretend to be taken seriously as 'literature', it displays Duggan's desire to deal explicitly with national themes. Like Bethell's

documentation of the Canterbury landscape, Duggan is deliberately choosing to focus upon her 'adopted' country. It is a prescriptive choice, and it is only the chosen form and the admission of outside influences that make the choice different to that of the male nationalists. During her correspondence with Nettie Palmer in the 1920s, Duggan was often explicit about this decision:

> At present the cry is 'Empire.' The children have it week in, week out... I feel as if I want to stop every child in the street and say - 'This is your country - You can see it - touch it - love it. What do you know of Empire?[54]

This is the tone of a committed artist. In 1926 Duggan turned down the opportunity to return to Ireland and wrote in explanation to Palmer:

> I refused the chance to go to Ireland though the berth was pencilled in. New Zealand comes first. I am only a grandchild of Ireland. It has taken me some time to get my bearings but that offer did it for me.[55]

These various layers channel into Duggan's work of the 1930s. Her relationship with Ireland was informed by her reading of the authors of the Celtic Renaissance, and the rhythms, nationalism and folklore of late nineteenth-century Irish writing modify her orthodox Victorian English inheritance. This blending of cultures and literatures is married to her recognition of her position within New Zealand, and her Catholic faith. Duggan realised that she was both too late, and in the wrong place, to retell the Irish legends to a new audience, and by her 1937 Poems the Irish themes have vanished. The Celtic romanticism however, remains and Duggan's Irish passion suffuses her work of the decade, modifying the Georgian content.

Duggan's identification with the marginalised and the isolated may also stem from this Celtic inheritance. It enabled her to recognise the problematical relationship between New Zealand literature and wider literary traditions. (As she put it in 'Heralds', 'We are but stumblers in the hinterlands,/ Too few for linking hands'[56]). In her 1937 collection Duggan transfers her 'compassionate' sense of exile from Ireland to New Zealand, seeing similarities in the positions of the two nations. The resulting poetry seeks to blend traditions, usually within strict pentameters. 'New Zealand' attempts to portray the nation as a Georgian dream, the bounty of a sophisticated Europe and benevolent nature:

> But farther down an alp-line, calm and cold,
> Looks southward to the mountains of the pole
> That lean like gods with comets in their slings
> Lancing auroras in the whistling air.
> And we have birds, Atlantic birds and ours,
> So that at once from out the self-same tree
> Can come an anthem and a karakia.[57]

Jackson's charges of 'ornamentation' are apt here. The poetry displays the worst flaws of Georgianism. The language and the imagery are contrived while the varying influences within the poem are simply cobbled together, juxtaposed with little to be gained from their attempted marriage.

These flaws run throughout the 1937 Poems. Attempts to reconcile the universal with the local, as with 'A New Zealand Christmas', fail to achieve a synthesis. As a whole the collection deserves Curnow's label of an 'emotional cliche.' However, qualitative judgements obscure the parallels with other New Zealand writers of the period. Despite its excesses, 'New Zealand' displays an attention to geography and history that Duggan was to develop in New Zealand Poems (1940). In addition, the collection contains several ballads ('The Blacksmith's Wife',

'The Bushfeller', 'The Milker') which, in their attention to the specifics of working-class life, mirror the 1930s obsession with such themes, whether portrayed in Georgian or modernistic language. Writing in an American journal in 1938, Duggan outlined the nationalist base of such pieces:

> The ballad, personal, emotional, local even is the natural approach to national expression. Already there are words in our ordinary speech which are peculiarly our own... It is from her paddocks that individuality will come, for a country's peasantry writes its literature.[58]

This comment (particularly the last sentence) reflects a pastoral nationalism which is not only distinctly Yeatsian, but also has clear parallels with the writings of Sargeson and Holcroft. Viewed in this sense, Duggan's work helps to illuminate and emphasise the points of contact and blending in the decade's writing. As McKay notes[59] the assumption made by Walter De la Mare (who wrote an introduction to the 1937 Poems) that 'the lovely in life is the familiar' pervades Duggan's work during the 1930s. It is an assumption common in the poetics of De la Mare and his fellow Georgians, but the ambiguity of 'the familiar' creates strange analogies with the nationalism and even the documentary writing of the period. In all cases a specific point of focus is suggested, and Duggan's rural ballads share a common ancestry with Sargeson's working men and the whole range of working-class protagonists evident in English literature of the period.

These crossovers are even more explicit in New Zealand Poems. As with Curnow's Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time (1941), the collection centres on issues raised by the 1940 centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (Curnow's latter collection was also prompted by the tercentenary of

Tasman's visit). Duggan was aware of the nascent nationalism from which, in part, Curnow's poems stem. In her 1937 Poems she wrote in 'Nationality':

> Oh you with frontiered hearts,
> Conceive it if you can -
> It was not life alone He Gave
> But country up for man.[60]

Like Bethell, Duggan's response to the crisis of the 1930s is an affirmation of faith. The result in New Zealand Poems is a nationalism combined with a strong sense of religious fervour. As war approaches Duggan portrays a mystic New Zealand. The nation's physical and social isolation leads to a spiritual contemplation that suggests a range of positive possibilities for the future. This outlook places Duggan alongside Cresswell and Fairburn, viewing New Zealand as a point for new departures while Europe disintegrates. Duggan's Edenic view of New Zealand receives full expression in 'Ode':

> O mighty utterance, O word made land,
> The sole articulation of a zone,
> Redemptive syllables, your islands stand,
> A pledge, a ransom, and a dare in one.
> If all the ocean's cumulative brine
> Uplifted in one crested, crouching tide
> And fell upon the range that is your chine
> You would confront that toppling hemisphere,
> Secure in aim and innocent of fear
> That what you stood for shall not still abide...[61]

The poem expresses an allegiance to the land, which is a mixture of geography, Polynesian myth and European history, and to the God who created it. In the words of McKay the work reveals a poet 'rooted in these islands.'[62]

This 'rooting', a sense of the nation as a centre, prompts a series of parallels with Curnow's work of the same period. In 'Centenary Ode' and 'The Charting' Duggan details scenes of discovery and history, complete with the metaphors of maps and voyages, that are also vital to Curnow's seminal poems 'The

Unhistoric Story' and 'Landfall in Unknown Seas.' 'Centenary Ode' talks of 'Tasman by Holland sent/ And Cook of the steadfast mouth/ Who charted our wilful coast'[63], while 'The Charting' makes the links even more explicit. Duggan describes a New Zealand defined by its geographical and historical heritage:

> One arm near the tropics and a dropped sandal,
> Stewart Island, in sooth, near the Antarctic!
> In the north and south how many convolutions
> Where the sea winds, as air in an ear-shell!
> Two islands he charted, and - the end of a dream.
> See, from the north there near Maria van Diemen,
> Tasman drew the first chart and for more than a century
> A line it was, two curves and a headland,
> Such as an urchin might scrawl on a pavement.
> To make that line an enclosure
> Dalrymple dreamed; and Byron and Wallis
> Bore with the weevil, the heat and the scurvey.
> But it was Cook who completed the line,
> Sailing his bark out and in, in and out,
> On the long survey that gave us New Zealand -[64]

No other poetry of the 1930s comes as close to Curnow's nationalist mix of history and geography (though Brasch presents similar themes in some of his 1930s material, notably 'The Islands'). Indeed, in one sense Duggan goes further than Curnow. 'Centenary Ode' takes history back to the original Polynesian settlers, and Maori myths and legends are juxtaposed with Tasman and Cook, while 'The Charting' recognises that Cook mapped 'Only New Zealand and not the lost continent.' In both poems Duggan recognises aspects of the nation that lie outside the realm of European 'discovery' and philosophy. However, it must be stated that Duggan's treatment of the Maori never reveals any real insight. Her method is to superimpose her European forms of literature and worship on the culture rather than to explore it, but the vision of 'Centenary Ode' is broader than a version of New Zealand which begins with 'The Dutchman.' In his study, McKay is explicit in linking Duggan's poetry to Curnow's definition of nationalism:

> Eileen Duggan's work illustrates Curnow's theory of New Zealand poetry at many points. Her nationalism was a natural growth and is neither forced nor jingoistic. It shows in her choice of themes, in images and turn of speech.[65]

Again this promotes ironies and complexities. Duggan rejected a place in Curnow's 1923-45 Caxton anthology of New Zealand verse, explaining to W.F. Alexander 'Their New Zealand is not mine.'[66] As 'Tribute to Jessie Mackay' demonstrates, Duggan's feelings for her nation are framed in a Christian liberalism. Her nationalism comes close to what James K. Baxter referred to as a 'complex spiritual identity.'[67] Her rejection of Curnow's offer has its base in this outlook, distrusting his modernistic unifying principles[68]. This does not mean that Duggan was antipathetic to all modern poetry. Writing to Alexander she commented that she believed Auden's poetry 'comes near genius'[69], but she viewed the bulk of the modernist movement as an 'undemocratic' assault on the principles of great art - 'They don't catch the breath. The difference between cleverness and magic.'[70]

Nevertheless, despite her rejection of his theorising, the parallels between the late 1930s poetry of Duggan and Curnow must be admitted. They may not be parallels of form or philosophy, and Duggan's work lacks the range and depth of Curnow's exploration of language, but the analogies point to a far greater interaction in the work of the decade than subsequent literary histories have thus far documented. On one level the struggle between New Zealand's 'last Georgian' and the leader of the 'new nationalism' is a real one, and when McKay notes how Curnow's A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45 'finally drove from the field the mob of versifiers who wrote with derivitive ease'[71], Duggan is among

those who suffered most. Curnow's comment in his introduction to the Caxton anthology, that Duggan's poetry 'is most often a means of gentle evasion or confusing of the problem, as if she were trying to substitute it for something prettier, more easily borne'[72] is a form of coup de grace. Despite the praise generated by her 1951 More Poems, there is little doubt that after 1945 Curnow's criticism had removed Duggan from the literary mainstream.

But this public display of critical power has to sit beside the image of Curnow portrayed in his letters to Bethell in the early 1940s. The contemporary documentation reveals a literary climate where both Bethell and Duggan had achieved an ascendancy which commanded respect. The interplay between the work of Curnow and Duggan reflects this in a creative arena, promoting useful complexities.

The nationalism of New Zealand Poems extends beyond the cartographic parallels with Curnow. As with Bethell, Duggan moves to accentuate regions as the specifics of a national identity. 'Pezant's Well' and 'Cloudy Bay' display the same kind of attention to the local as that achieved by Bethell in 'The Long Harbour.' 'Cloudy Bay' blends geography and history into a personal point of focus, using Duggan's own background to locate the landscape:

> Once a great aurora played to the southward -
> And, fetlocks burning, foal after foal -
> Clodding the icefloes as a colt the paddocks,
> Rushed up, uncalkined, from the silver Pole.
>
> Where the horseshoe opened in came the morning,
> There to the eastward lay the hidden sea,
> The same footlose mountains that taunted Magellan,
> Massive and flying and nothing to me.[73]

Duggan's method here is as successful as at any point in her work of the decade. The poem shares, with Bethell's portrayals of

Canterbury, a form of nationalism both similar to and removed from that of Curnow. The 'reality' prior to the poem is acknowledged, but the poetic expression follows differing lines to those of Curnow. The poem's religious conclusion:

> Love is around me like that hidden ocean
> And I, inland, forget I have a shore.
> It needs the breakers of your anger to remind me
> That I am yours and yours forevermore.[74]

again moves it within Duggan's dominant frame, reminding the reader that, for her, these questions go beyond the debates of colonialism.

New Zealand Poems contains the same linguistic flaws as the Poems of 1937, but the restrictions of Georgianism do not detract from the way in which the volume interacts with the diverse literary climate of the period. The series of ballads, begun in 1937, extends to the 1940 collection, and poems like 'The Drayman', 'The Bushwoman' and 'Ballad of the Bushmen' display Georgian attempts to depict the very building blocks of national identity. The firm sense of location in these poems stresses their relation to a tradition which normally works to exclude women writers. Duggan's 'The Bushwoman' is strikingly similar in theme and tone to Bruce Dawe's 'The Drifters' (1968), but the orthodoxy that allows a trans-Tasman linear movement of masculine writers from Henry Lawson, through Sargeson and others, to Dawe (like Duggan, a Catholic) has no place for a writer perceived to belong to a tradition of feminine Georgianism. Ultimately, these questions of association, of observing the symphonic nature of influence within and through literary periods, are more useful than an adherence to a strict qualitative judgement based on an established rubric of perceived merit.

It is ironic that, for a poet who wanted to stress her attachment to New Zealand, Duggan's work won an international reputation for its 'universal' content. This review of the 1937 Poems, from the Times Literary Supplement of February 1938, is typical:

> Miss Duggan is a real poet because her words are always her own and at her best she has an absolute control of them... It is good that such a new voice should sound from a new country. But while a few of her verses reflect their New Zealand origin, their newness is essentially not of place but of an imagination that sees the world anew and rediscovers the worth and the wonder of it.[75]

while the Yale literary critic William Lyon Phelps, commenting on a second edition of Poems (published in the United States in 1939), observed:

> It is profoundly original... This woman in New Zealand writes poetry that is just as accurate in this respect to people living in New York, or Berlin, or Tokyo, as it is to people in her own country.[76]

Patrick Evans attributes this praise to Duggan's 'regional vagueness', believing that her 'familiarity' of language created a body of work malleable for overseas audiences.[77] This is perceptive, since the undoubted tensions between Duggan's Georgianism and her sense of the 'local' do result in an identity that can be problematical. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the validity of Duggan's reputation, and the image of New Zealand poetry that she projected abroad. In addition to this, Duggan herself was a victim of certain expectations generated by perceptions of her position during the 1930s. This is a subtle point noted by Ian Wedde:

> Clearly Eileen Duggan had to combat the anachronistic expectations of 'cultural' conventions in addition to those of a saccharine variety of literary Georgianism, among them assumptions about the kind of verse 'properly' composed by women,

> particularly women with sincere religious convictions.[78]

These gender expectations imposed a set of restrictions similar to those engendered by the nationalism debate. As with the issue of politics in the English literature of the 1930s, writers were forced to adopt positions with respect to current literary trends, and even a refusal to do so led to a form of categorisation. Duggan's refusal to subscribe to Curnow's nationalist adumbrations put her outside the emerging orthodoxy, but her position as a religious, female writer imposed its own kind of straitjacket. It is this kind of restriction, of limitation, which has a bearing on the international reception of Duggan's work.

Duggan's international reputation parallels Brasch's letters to Bethell from the late 1930s and early 1940s. Both serve as reminders that the subsequent orthodoxy denies the extent to which Duggan and Bethell functioned within the decade. In many respects (and despite the biographical details which appear to point to lives withdrawn from society) their work is not that of isolated individuals. Their work is not only the product of their personal circumstances but is also representative of a section of the New Zealand literary climate. The technical, thematic and philosophical hangovers of an earlier age are very much part of the 1930s literary scene worldwide, despite the decade's reputation for innovation. Duggan and Bethell's work is the most acknowledged poetry in a tradition to which many in New Zealand belonged. The resurgence, in the 1950s, of a less nationalist, more neo-romantic poetry in New Zealand, points to the lingering strength of this tradition. (In her ecstatic resonse to the

landscape of the South Island, and the terms in which she couched it, Bethell anticipates the poetry of James K. Baxter).

As writers reaching the end, rather than the beginning, of their careers in the 1930s Duggan and Bethell illustrate another important point. Their poetry stresses the connections between the decade and the writing of the previous fifty years within New Zealand. The ability of their work to display relevance both to nineteenth-century colonial forms of expression and the modernist nationalism of the 1930s implicitly rejects the model of New Zealand literature that springs to life with the arrival of Phoenix in 1932. As with others during the decade, Bethell and Duggan highlight the period's essential flexibility, and thus the inaccuracies of subsequent canonisations. Both writers reinforce the inherent complexities of literatures in post-colonial countries, and serve to remind us that these complexities are more valuable than the systems which move to simplify the relationship between nations and cultures.

4. A.R.D. FAIRBURN: STRANGLING SELVES.

The two most recent surveys of New Zealand literature, Patrick Evans's The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature (1990) and The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English (1991) edited by Terry Sturm, offer chances for a reassessment of the poetry of the 1930s. Both volumes contain commentaries that readjust the canon and present alternatives to the ground-breaking surveys Allen Curnow produced in the 1945 A Book of New Zealand Verse, published by Caxton, and the 1960 Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse. They also present differing views as to the value of A.R.D. Fairburn; as a poet in his own right, and as a key figure in the mythology of the decade. Fairburn was the poet who best seemed to fit the myth of capability the period engendered, the view of the 'all round man' that is equally important to a discussion of John Mulgan. It is an outlook that still finds expression in MacDonald Jackson's essay in the Oxford volume:

> Fairburn, a fourth-generation New Zealander of many talents and interests and with a personality compounded of exuberance and Angst, lived out a local twentieth century version of the ancient Greek ideal of the well-rounded man, restless in his quest for a view of life and a mode of being that would sustain him with a sense of meaning and purpose, but that grew naturally out of secular New Zealand experience. His poetry, the record of this lifelong 'search for meaning' by a man at odds with his society, was the product of a wide-ranging modern mind, a romantic temperament, an aesthetic sensibility and a vigorous physique.[1]

Such comments are the latest in a tradition that has characterised Fairburn as 'some figure of Greek or Polynesian

legend'[2], a legend not only to the commentators and critics of New Zealand literature but to his contemporaries as well. R.A.K. Mason wrote:

> He was able in so many ways, not only in poetry, at which he excelled, but in paintings, music, fabric-design and physical pursuits. In all my life I never knew but the one man who could do as I knew him to do in young manhood - play a round of golf after breakfast, have lunch, complete a poem and swim the Auckland Harbour in the afternoon, and then go courting in the evening.[3]

Mason's characterisation is significant. It includes not only intellectual and sporting abilities, but also a positive display of sexuality. All are seen as facets of the whole, and for Jackson the idea of 'wholeness' is also one that applies to Fairburn's poetry. Discussing Fairburn's first volume He Shall Not Rise (1930) he credits the work with a range and expansiveness usually reserved for the life:

> All Fairburn's themes and techniques are foreshadowed in this volume, which ranges from diffuse lyricism to epigrammatic wit, and from rhymed quatrains to fluid free verse[4]

For Jackson, Fairburn's verse in this first collection is 'extraordinarily good of its kind'[5] and carries echoes of Walter De la Mare, W.B. Yeats and Ernest Dowson. The strength of the later poetry lies 'in the faultless organisation by which each detail or a situation or scene receives attention at the appropriate point'[6] and Jackson goes on to claim that 'few later New Zealand poets have risked such fullness of sentiment'[7].

In contrast to Jackson, Patrick Evans views Fairburn as a minor poet, the importance of whom lies in the manner in which he was conscripted to fit the nationalist mythology of the decade. Evans does not share Jackson's view of the 'achievements' of He Shall Not Rise. Instead he couples Fairburn with Mason as poets

who 'gave out a sense of early futility and directionlessness, a condition made more poignant by their general isolation'[8] and claims that their poetry 'involved suppressing both a strong lyrical impulse within themselves and a tendency to Georgian imagery and cadences'[9]. If Jackson praises the lyrical qualities of Fairburn's work during the 1930s, then Evans sees that lyricism constantly being compromised. By the 1940s and 1950s Evans characterises Fairburn as a figure reduced to the production of a 'stream of the usual irreverencies'[10] for the magazine Here and Now and one increasingly isolated as the new generation - Bill Pearson, Maurice Duggan and David Ballantyne - sent material for publication from overseas. Evans's view is not an uncommon one among those who sought to redefine the canon in the 1980s. In their Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (1985) Ian Wedde and Harvey McQueen include eleven of Fairburn's poems, but their selection simply replicates the material anthologised before and Wedde's introduction refers disparagingly to Fairburn's 'sentimental lyricism'[11].

Both Jackson and Evans are operating around standard definitions of New Zealand literature. Whilst Jackson is never explicit about Fairburn's place in the mythology of the decade, his commentary nevertheless reinforces an image that is built on selective information. The 'latter-day romantic' with a view of a 'private Arcady'[12] on the Mahurangi peninsula is a figure who embraces and combines the centuries, crafting a poetry that 'lives in its rhythms, in the rich particularity of a northern littoral, in the ebb and flow of feeling'[13]. Possibly Jackson would agree with Denis Glover and Kendrick Smithyman's definition of Fairburn as a preacher or prophet (in A Way Of Saying Smithyman describes Fairburn 'at his priestly tasks'[14]). Even if

this view of Fairburn as 'seer' seems to lack the adherence to time and place that Curnow demanded of any 'new' literature, the notion of the poet's capability still places him firmly within the orthodox view of the decade. Evans, on the other hand, marginalises Fairburn because of his place within the orthodoxy. For Evans, the writers in this orthodoxy seized 'control of much of New Zealand writing, and [used] that control to make a myth of their own importance'[15]. Both critics reflect a polarity that hinders a full evaluation of the period and its writers. Such a polarity denies the restless energies which characterise Fairburn's work. His 1930s output, struggling to deal with the necessities of decolonisation and the complexities of the decade, is fundamentally a collage, where fragments of literary forms and local referents from a variety of national and international sources blend together. There is no real unifying principle behind this collage, with the possible exception of an ill-defined and uncertain sense of a mystical 'self.' Neither Jackson nor Evans provides a criticism adequate to explore this flexibility.

There are numerous publications that support the view of the 'Arcadian' Fairburn. James and Helen McNeish's Rex Fairburn: Walking On My Feet (1983) professes to be 'A Kind of Biography', a guise it utilises to present a panegyric. To James McNeish Fairburn is 'an Elizabethan figure'[16] and the subsequent prose builds a portrayal of Fairburn that stems directly from his physique. Constant references to the fact that Fairburn 'stood 6ft 3ins and weighed 14 and a half stones'[17] reinforce the frontier ethic, while also providing an image of rugged masculinity that can serve to balance the career of the lyrical poet. Denys Trussell's Fairburn (1984) is a more substantial

work, a full critical biography that provides the most comprehensive discussion of life and work to date. It is in Trussell's study that the complexities of Fairburn's position in the canon of New Zealand literature, and the relationship of that literature to other literatures, come to the surface. It is also in this study that the mythic portrayal of Fairburn receives its most detailed exposition.

Trussell traces Fairburn's heritage from 1819 when William Thomas Fairburn was the first of the family to arrive in the country. The prose poetically charts the Fairburns through the nineteenth century, an ancestral line that binds the poet not only to New Zealand and its particular landscapes, but also to a time before colonisation:

> [T]he earth presence persisted, imparting its singular quality to the work of the poet; a living force that gave scale to his vision, enabling him to reach, in epochs before human habitation, the titanic world of geological impulse.[18]

In Trussell's prose, Fairburn is the heir to a past that fuses all the elements of New Zealand history. Pre-Maori geology combines with the traditions of English literature, and in the emerging urban development of Auckland Fairburn is presented as an inchoate mind possessing the sensitivity of the rural dweller but also the sophistication of the city. This view of Fairburn as a 'composite' figure is illuminating, for in many ways he saw New Zealand literature, not as an exercise in nationalism, but as an extension and development of English literature. Because of its youth and isolation Fairburn felt New Zealand offered the opportunity to revitalise the English canon, which he saw as being corrupted by the decadence of modernism. Fairburn's lyricism, his continual reference to the values and styles of the

seventeenth century and his distrust of any kind of political or religious dogma, all point to a figure who felt that the forces governing poetry and prose had taken a wrong turn in the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century Fairburn saw poetry providing an adornment to life but also fundamentally concerned with the fabric of life itself. Eighteenth-century poetry was 'less intense in feeling' and by the nineteenth century it had been 'accepted as a substitute for feeling'. In the period preceding the First World War it was purely 'escapist'. It was only the cataclysm of 1914-18 that made it 'evident that for a long time past poetry had ceased to have any positive and fruitful connection with the general life of society'[19].

The problem at the heart of the Fairburn myth, and Fairburn's own problem in his literary output, is the attempt to hold the parts of the whole together. His celebrated 'variety of talents' more often betray, not a hangover from a Grecian ideal, but an essentially humanist figure in search of a uniting ideology. His failure to find it should lead to insights both about his poetic method and New Zealand literature during the period, insights into the fluidity of the decade's writing. Too often it provides either a fabricated 'whole' or variety of fragments that are easily seized and developed out of context.

Fairburn's position as a nationalist is one of these fragments. In 1928 he contacted Pat Lawlor, the editor of the New Zealand Artists' Annual, with a view to starting a new literary weekly entitled 'Upper Storey' where 'the tone will be kept as high as possible, and New Zealand literature encouraged as much as possible'[20]. Yet as Trussell goes on to say:

> [T]he rather lofty literary nationalism that Rex expressed... was to disappear from his

> life as surely as the plans for the magazine. A more subtle sense of place was to pervade his work after he had shaken off some of the enthusiasms of de Montalk, who expounded a rather naive poetic nationalism at this time.[21]

Fairburn himself recognised the limitations of the nationalist outlook. Reviewing the fourth volume of the New Zealand Poetry Yearbook, edited by Louis Johnson, he wrote in 1954:

> [S]elf-conscious attempts to mould oneself according to some verbal formula (whether it be 'urban', 'rural' or 'New Zealand') are likely to be misleading.[22]

Such a commentary makes Allen Curnow's discussion of Fairburn all the more revealing. For Curnow, Fairburn is 'engaged on a poetic strategy to defeat an essential isolation'[23], but such a comment is clearly ambiguous, carrying connotations of both Georgian lyricism and modernist nationalism. Curnow is forced to admit to Fairburn's 'isolated' lyricism but qualifies this view by asserting that the true value of the poetry lies in it speaking 'uniquely, and for his countrymen'[24]. The nationalist context is always invoked as the final appraisal. Curnow can thus draw Fairburn back into the tradition, in spite of other evidence, and move on to reinforce the standard myth, talking of 'a poet quite as large as life' whose 'apprenticeship included Rugby football, tournament golf, and a Byronic delight in sea swimming'[25]. Curnow's machinations, always revealing, are particularly so in the case of Fairburn. The difficulty of finding a place in the canon for a poet who so strongly resisted such doctrinaire boundaries and prescriptions is reflected in the juggling Curnow is forced to attempt[26]. It is in his earliest general survey, the 1945 introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45, published by Caxton, that Curnow is most explicit

about the nature of Fairburn's lyricism. The nature of the nation, it is implied, demands that such impulses are redirected:

> It is the more remarkable that Fairburn, who in a recent poem 'A Farewell', touches a world remote from any regional anxieties, should have turned with all his strength to the theme of land and people in Dominion. But New Zealand offers little shelter for the kind of lyric impulse displayed in his earlier poems, collected in his first book, He Shall Not Rise. If it is not to be extinguished or wither into triviality it must transform itself; and it is no use crying over any milk of kindness or sweetness spilt in that process.[27]

The language here is harsh. It betrays the firm hold Curnow had in defining the directions of the decade. It leaves little room for the kind of doubt that is, in fact, a hallmark of much of Fairburn's work. It is debatable whether Dominion (1938) is a poem of such 'strength' and it is in stripping away the notions of such strength that we may come closer to an evaluation of Fairburn. As C.K.Stead says of the poems 'it is time to look at them at least without being required to keep in mind that their author (like anyone else) was capable of spending his energies profitably on other-than-literary pursuits'[28]. Curnow's quote reflects a critical rigidity that explains and defines the later portrayal by James and Helen McNeish. The rigidity requires explosion.

Fairburn's first collection of verse, He Shall Not Rise, was published in London in 1930. He had left New Zealand on the 'Esperance Bay' on August 25th of that year after 'getting sick to death of this damned country'[29]. The move was prompted by a boredom inflamed by the correspondence from Geoffrey de Montalk, who was in London at the time, and wrote letters full of European culture. De Montalk was also influential in having He Shall Not Rise published. It was important for Fairburn that the volume

should be published in London. Mason's 1924 collection The Beggar had demonstrated the problems verse encountered when offered to the New Zealand market alone. As Trussell says, although 'New Zealand did not escape the agony of the Waste Land in the twenties' there was still an antipathy to literature that attempted to refashion old formulae:

> Literary culture in New Zealand was a kind of soiree culture; a mode of social intercourse that produced no work capable of expressing the emergency of the time. In this environment the poet was an acceptable figure so long as he ornamented the social ritual, so long as he did not disturb. Art was for enjoyment, but should never be a force for change.[30]

It is debatable as to the degree Fairburn wanted to 'disturb', but he was convinced that the parameters of New Zealand society in the late 1920s were too rigid to contain the poetry he wished to write. The publication of the collection in London also is fitting in that it places Fairburn within the tradition which had shaped the majority of his thinking about literature.[31] Undoubtedly his poetry had been affected by his association with Mason, but as Trussell says:

> As a poet Rex was initially more influenced by his reading than by his experience. The roots of his language were in England. Visually and physically New Zealand had shaped him, but mentally his life was connected with England by that linguistic tie.[32]

It is understandable that a restless New Zealander might have been captured by the pessimism of A.E. Houseman or the notions of adventure expressed in the work of James Elroy Flecker. These two, along with Rupert Brooke, were the poets most admired by Fairburn in the 1920s. His first piece of literary journalism was an article praising Brooke in the Weekly News published in April 1925. Flecker's 'The Golden Journey to

Samarkand' contains the same ideas of 'beauty' and a rejection of romanticism that Fairburn would display in He Shall Not Rise. The short satirical piece 'Winds' is an example of this:

> The night we lay together
> upon a moonlit hill,
> the boisterous god of weather
> was reverently still.
>
> The little breeze that nightly
> guards lovers' hearts till dawn
> seems sometimes, most politely,
> to hide a gentle yawn.
>
> But now that love lies bleeding,
> soon gloriously to die,
> the winds, with perfect breeding,
> most exquisitely sigh.[33]

Fairburn chose satire while Flecker chose to base his work on the theories of the French Parnassians, but undoubtedly the New Zealander would have respected Flecker's impulse in writing. In the preface to the volume The Golden Journey to Samarkand Flecker states that the collection had been composed 'with the single intention of creating beauty'[34], and his Eastern mysticism displays an obsession with the ethereal that also has its place in Fairburn's genesis as a poet. When, in the Quarterly Review of October 1916, Arthur Waugh wrote of Flecker '[He] had little to connect him with rebellious modernity... His passion was chiefly for the old - old ships, old buildings, old legends and old loyalties; and he sang their praise in haunting melodies which recalled the immemorial music of the old, unchangeable sea'[35], we see a sentiment not out of place in a discussion of Fairburn. In the era of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, of William Carlos Williams and Hugh MacDiarmid, Fairburn's poetics - if not always his subject matter - seem equally concerned with the 'old'. Whatever his later technical experimentation and desire for modernity, the

classical notion of 'beauty' (Pound himself would call it 'Aht') remains a constant in his work.

With such a heritage, an appreciation of the seventeenth century modified by the influence of his immediate Georgian predecessors, it is not surprising that the first reviews of He Shall Not Rise found little of New Zealand in the collection. A short piece in The Times from March 5th 1931 states 'All these poems, we are told, were written in New Zealand, but except for an occasional reference to local trees or flowers they might have been written in England'[36]. In the Fairburn mythology the value of He Shall Not Rise lies in its rejection. The focus is upon the strangling of 'that pale lily-white lad' in the last poem in the volume, 'Rhyme of the Dead Self'. Trussell claims that it would take a number of years and the experience of the depression before 'the rhythm of Northern New Zealand would take over his pen'[37]. The Fairburn mythology admits to the 'English' aspects of his verse, but only to reject this cross-cultural interplay in favour of a nationalism that reinforces the orthodoxy of the 1930s (Sargeson details the influence of Keats on his early work in exactly the same manner. The value of reading Keats lies, for Sargeson, in the subsequent rejection of an 'English' mode of writing for a nationalist discourse).

In his commentary on Fairburn, C.K. Stead claims that 'it is doubtful whether Fairburn ever surpassed the quality of his best verse in He Shall Not Rise'[38]. Stead's analysis is free from the reiteration of legend which characterises so much Fairburn criticism. Indeed in his juxtaposition of Fairburn with Curnow's historical surveys, Stead succintly expresses a point vital to the evaluation of not only Fairburn, but other writers of the decade as well:

> If there are, as Mr Curnow believes, particular 'New Zealand' anxieties (about, for example, the precise relation between our actual and our literary experience) then they are anxieties we all share and will go on sharing. The writers we value will be those who surmount them and make use of them. If Fairburn was the poet Mr Curnow believes he was, he needs the historical no more than the personal myth to make this plain. If he was not such a poet, neither myth will protect him for long.[39]

Stead, speaking of He Shall Not Rise, claims 'the whole of Fairburn is in this book'[40]. Such a stress on the embryonic nature of the collection does not fit with the image of 'the dead pale youth' who 'shall not trouble me again'[41].

He Shall Not Rise reflects typically Georgian themes. The majority of the poems are concerned with love or loss, and if contemporary life found its way into the collection it was usually set in the context of classical notions of Utopia. The triteness of 'After' displays much of the volume's sentiment:

> There are no bumping buses
> that busy to and fro,
> no corporation tramways
> in Paradise, I know.
>
> But there is peace from clamour
> and rest from jars and dins,
> and silence that is sweeter
> than crying violins.[42]

Here, as with many of the other poems, the words fail to transcend the metre. It is only rarely, in a poem such as 'Byways of Love', that there is a glimpse of a talent capable of moving beyond a formula that is strictly Georgian. The poem, structured in three parts, occasionally produces a phrase that reflects an individual conception of generic themes:

> I am a seeker: how then should I love you?
> Finding my treasure, how should I seek again,
> whose treasure lies in seeking, not in finding?
> I'll leave the sweets of love to other men.
>
> But I have need of some sure talisman,
> some luck-piece that, worn like a soldier's bible

over my heart, may turn a casual bullet
and guard the flesh, but leave the soul a rebel.

Therefore I say your spirit shall be mine,
my fair sweet prisoner till this world shall fade,
and over all its pomp, its brittle glory,
a handful of ironic dust be laid.[43]

Fairburn is better at handling his metaphysical legacy here, and in combining it with his anti-romanticism and chosen verse form. However, it is exactly a sprinkling of 'ironic dust' that the volume as a whole lacks. Irony and its useful complications are more often rejected for a sickly and melodramatic sentimentalism, or a cheap satire, such as that of 'Choice':

If flowers grew in the sky,
and I were seven,
I think I'd like to die,
and walk in Heaven.

For man, until he sighs
for love of woman,
is denizen of skies
and nothing human.

But since I'm prisoned, shut,
and twenty-three,
I'd rather bed the slut
Mortality.[44]

As satire, this does little to proceed beyond the final line. It is more limerick than wit. (Indeed most of Fairburn's poetic satire derives its effect from the short sharp punch, and it was in his journalism that he was more able to develop and expand his satire of society. His attempt at Swiftian satire in the prose piece 'My Imaginary Journey' is a flat failure). Certainly 'Choice' is anti-romantic, a factor which again stresses Fairburn's similarities with the Georgians, but it is hardly the kind of hard, dry sophistication called for by T.E.Hulme, one of the strongest opponents of romantic humanism. When Hulme claimed that romanticism was responsible for 'the state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live' and that the pseudo-romantic

poetry of the period was 'like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table'[45], the new poetry he had in mind was the hard edges of Imagism and Vorticism. For Hulme, the contents of He Shall Not Rise (particularly with a publication date as late as 1930) would still have seemed like the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'.

Nevertheless, Fairburn was not a New Zealand Wordsworth. Both his poetry and politics have parallels with the more Centrist Georgian poets, who, as A.M.Clark put it in The Realistic Revolt, wanted to:

> [T]ransfuse into poetry new blood from the romance of actuality and nature, but at the same time... try never to to forget its high and noble traditions inherited from the great ones of the past.[46]

This kind of poetry, that of Flecker, Brooke, Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley and John Masefield, sought a medium that disposed of the neo-Tennyson lyrics of the late nineteenth century and was 'true to life'. However, they also rejected the work of more militant figures such as Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Fillipo Marinetti. Essentially they wished to adapt pre-romantic poetics and fashion a new twentieth-century verse. Writing in Rhythm in 1913, D.H.Lawrence saw the Georgian age as a time of opportunity after the pessimism of the fin de siecle writers:

> We are waking up after a night of oppressive dreams. The nihilists, the intellectual, hopeless people - Ibsen, Flaubert, Thomas Hardy - represent the dream we are waking from. It was a dream of demolition. Nothing was, but was nothing. Everything was taken from us. And now our lungs are full of new air, and our eyes see it is morning, but we have not forgotten the terror of the night. We dreamed we were falling through space into nothingness, and the anguish of it leaves us rather eager.[47]

This youthful excitement is akin to parts of He Shall Not Rise, but what is more interesting is the parallels between Lawrence's views and Fairburn's relationship to the modernism of the 1920s. In 1931 Fairburn had written to Guy Mountain that 'Lawrence is the big man of the century as far as we are concerned'[48] whereas T.S.Eliot was the 'presiding genius' of the 'blight that has fallen over this literary age in Britain'[49]. For Fairburn, Eliot was too insistently scholarly and deliberately obscure, the philosophy of The Waste Land (1922) was (to use Lawrence's term) also 'a dream of demolition.' Lawrence was acceptable because of his iconoclasm and mysticism, but Fairburn's reaction to Eliot, James Joyce and Pound was identical to that of the Georgians who castigated the fin de siecle writers. The postwar chaos of the 1920s produced, for Fairburn, work which was wholly negative. Like the Georgians before him, he was seeking a breath of fresh air.[50]

Summing up the literary merit of He Shall Not Rise, Stead claims that 'the talent on display is aesthetic'[51] but Fairburn's ties to his Georgian predecessors rely on more than simple notions of 'beauty'. The political and social outlook of many English poets in the first two decades of the century displays a similarity to the 1930s that actually works to break down the strict division between 'Georgian' and 'modern'. In his general survey of the Georgian period, Robert H. Ross states: 'Most of the young poets came down from the Universities around the turn of the decade enthusiastically pledged to Fabian Socialism' and that 'the profession of Socialism had become almost de rigeur in Edwardian literary circles by about 1910'[52]. In a similar vein, the Times Literary Supplement, reviewing a decade of poetry in November 1920, commented:

> [I]t was the happy fashion of clever undergraduates, 'deadly serious' but 'disreputably young', to profess an epigrammatic ardour for the tenets of Socialism; and where twenty years previously it would have been proper to play the aesthete, treasure a chaste copy of 'Les Fleurs du Mal' as your bedside literature... public taste [now] decreed that you should attend Fabian summer schools with vegetarians and suffragettes, and sit at the feet of Nietzsche, Ibsen and Mr Bernard Shaw.[53]

The analogy between the poets of the Georgian period and the 1930s not only informs an analysis of Fairburn, who on returning to New Zealand from Norfolk Island at the beginning of the depression described himself as 'a sentimental communist and vaguely a radical'[54], it also helps redefine the politicised atmosphere of the decade's poetry as a whole. It demonstrates a flexibility which enables us to view Fairburn as a figure under a variety of influences, to see how the mixture of metaphysical, Georgian and modern, as well as the twin forces of Britain and New Zealand, produced a poetic attempting to come to terms with the multiplicity of its parts. The overlapping boundaries and definitions of poetry in the first three decades of the century are demonstrated by Michael Hamburger. Hamburger, generalising about high modernism, defines a poetic also shared by figures as diverse as Brooke, Flecker and Fairburn:

> There is no complete agreement as to what the imaginations of the differing poets of the period wanted to conserve; but all looked to the past, all were preoccupied with tradition as something alive and precious, more alive and more precious than the paraphernalia of contemporary civilisation.[55]

This is as true of Fairburn in <u>He Shall Not Rise</u> as it was of Eliot in <u>The Waste Land</u>. The parity explains how the author of pastoral love poems in the late 1920s could, less than a decade later, produce a poem such as <u>Dominion</u>. However, it also explains

part of the problem with Dominion. Eliot's The Waste Land, Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (1920) and MacDiarmid's A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926) all draw on a variety of sources from both high and popular culture that are vital to the notion of tradition. Dominion, attempting to root itself in New Zealand history, mimics the form but lacks that depth of tradition. For Fairburn, New Zealand literature was to be placed within the more general tradition of English literature but in Dominion, the attempt at the marriage is beyond the poet.

These useful complexities are more helpful than the conventional Fairburn mythology which promotes a political and nationalised figure following the choking of the 'dead pale youth'. The redundancy of this latter reading can be proved by an analysis of the poems Fairburn wrote whilst he lived in the Wiltshire village of Wootton Rivers during 1931 and 1932. These poems (which in the Collected Poems Glover groups under the heading 'Country Pleasures') continue to move towards a more individual mode of expression and refine the anti-romantic strain, but a poem such as 'Winter Night' displays an adherence to both the metre and sentiment of much of Fairburn's early verse:

> The candles gutter and burn out,
> and warm and snug we take our ease,
> and faintly comes the wind's great shout
> as he assails the frozen trees.
>
> The vague walls of this little room
> contract and close upon the soul;
> deep silence hangs amid the gloom;
> no sound but the small voice of the coal.
>
> Here in this sheltered firelit place
> we know not wind nor shivering tree;
> we two alone inhabit space,
> locked in our small infinity.
>
> This is our world, where love enfolds
> all images of joy, all strife
> resolves in peace: this moment holds

within its span the sum of life.[56]

Fairburn's time at Wootton Rivers appears as an attempt to create a stability that would result in some form of concrete ideology. His horticultural self-sufficiency (in principle similar to the retreat Sargeson would later talk of creating in Northland) was less an attempt to consciously manufacture a Wordsworthian idyll than a prolonged exploration (and ultimate affirmation) of the idea of the 'self'. Fairburn's letters from this period display a movement away from any strict notion of dogma and towards a further celebration of the individual and iconoclast. In August 1931 he wrote to Mason of the village:

> [T]here is enough permanent and rock-like sordidness... to make one realise that the only escape is inwards - into the mind. Social reform by all means: but the structures of the imagination are the only ones which, fortified by the spirit, can resist all the assaults of a kaleidoscope world of matter.[57]

and in December of the same year he wrote again to the friend who had been so influential in determining the political outlook of his youth:

> I really am an anarchist I fear. I suspected it for a long time, and rationalised it with various revolutionary theories such as communism. But what I would really like would be the complete breakdown of human society, so that the individual would (perhaps) be freed from all restraint.[58]

The first of these two quotes draws its philosophy directly from the Lyrical Ballads, but Fairburn's position at the time contained complexities which could not be articulated within a simple pastoralism. In rejecting the metanarratives of Church, Marx and Freud he was aware nevertheless of the necessity to confront the political nature of the period. Fairburn had read Marx 'solidly and entusiastically'[59] from 1930 onwards but could

not believe in a system which saw Man as an end in itself. Instead, his affirmation of religion (in the deepest sense of the word) had forced him away from the literary life in London, a city he believed full of decadence and homosexuality[60]. In wrestling with the seminal problem of the relationship between the 'private' world of the artist and the 'public' sphere of social events, Fairburn clung to a notion of 'wholeness' which had its roots in liberal humanism, but which he attempted to adapt to the necessities of the contemporary crisis.

In the early 1930s, Fairburn began to read the German philosopher Oswald Spengler. Spengler expressed an iconoclastic viewpoint which emphasised the worth of the individual and sought to place the troubles of the period into a broader historical context. For Fairburn, Spengler offered a way through the minefield of his varying, and often contradictory, ideologies. In such texts as The Decline of the West (2 Volumes, 1918 and 1922, with a one volume edition published in London in 1932) and The Hour of Decision (1933) Fairburn found a creed that based philosophy on intuition rather than logic, and was non-materialistic without being overtly dogmatic. Spengler posited a view of history that blended politics and culture, and sought to marginalise the worth of economics:

> The revolution of more than a century in duration has fundamentally nothing to do with economics. It is a long disintegration period in the life of the culture as a whole, considered as a living body. The inward form of the life falls to pieces, and with it goes the power to give it outward expression through the creative works which collectively form the history of states, religions and arts, after that power has matured to its extreme limits. The individual man with his private existence follows the trend of the whole. His doings, his attitude, intention, thought, experience, inevitably form an element, however small, in this development. If he confuses this with purely economic

> questions, it is already a sign of the decay that is going forward within himself too, whether he feels and knows it or not.[61]

Within such rhetoric, Fairburn married his metaphysical ideas of the 'inner life' with the machinations of modern politics. Spengler gave voice to the anarchic element that Fairburn believed he possessed within him:

> What we recognise as 'order' today, and express in 'Liberal' constitutions, is nothing but anarchy become a habit. We call it parliamenterianism, national self government, but in fact it is the mere non-existence of a conscious responsible authority in government - that is, a true state.[62]

However, Spengler does more than produce a litany of the period's ills; he also suggests answers. It is in these answers that it is possible to develop a further link between Fairburn and the English literary culture with which he was developing an ambivalent relationship. Spengler cites simplistic reasons for the crisis of the early 1930s: 'This whole crushing Depression is purely and simply the result of the decline of State power'[63]. This undermining of autocracy is perceived to be undertaken by democrats who:

> [H]ave no intention of 'serving the people'; they intend to make the people serve them in their more or less sordid aims, of which the gratification of vanity is the least harmful. They oppose the forces of tradition in order to set themselves up in its place.[64]

The idea of the 'forces of tradition' is illuminating. It is exactly the sort of phrase that De Montalk or D'Arcy Cresswell would have contemplated using. It displays that to a degree, Fairburn's conception of 'tradition' and the values of the seventeenth century were based upon an appreciation of autocracy that, in the 1930s, could easily lend itself to fascism. Fairburn was more aware than most of the steel behind the antics of Hitler

in the early years of the decade. By 1932 he had realised that German fascism was more than the simplistic rantings of a minority who would remain marginalised. Yet in Spengler he discovered an outlook that classified democracy as 'not form but formlessness in every sense'[65] and 'anarchic intermezzo'[66], and spoke disturbingly of a return to an autocracy containing a prescribed view of history:

> There are already signs, in the dictatorial tendencies of our time, of this Caesarism, which is destined to assume the unlimited mastery over the ruins of historical tradition.[67]

For Spengler the Caesar is clearly German, a recreation of Bismark who will restore Prussian pre-eminence. Fairburn would have been attracted to the social criticism of Spengler, his anti-industrialism, distrust of dogma, hatred of nineteenth-century romanticism; but it is impossible not to recognise the vision of the future he offered in its place. Such flirtation with fascism matchs that of the English writers of the period. W.H Auden and Stephen Spender made constant references to the idea of the 'benevolent despot' who would offer respite from troubled times. Much of Auden's work of the late 1920s and early 1930s, particularly Paid On Both Sides (1928) and The Orators (1932), portrays characters who express politics that are ambiguous, embodying a possible communism or fascism. As Fairburn began to marry his appreciation of Spengler with his growing appreciation of the social credit system of Hugh Douglas, he called for the return of some kind of authoritarianism. Writing in A.R. Orage's New English Weekly in 1932, he pronounced:

> Whatever happens, I believe that Social Credit can be born only in crisis, and ushered in by a dictatorship.[68]

In believing in the necessity of some form of purgation process (a process not dissimilar to Sargeson and Curnow's belief in the 'pain' of the decolonising method), Fairburn is aligning himself not only with Auden and many writers under his influence, but also with more radical figures such as Ezra Pound. Pound too was a strong advocate of social credit during the 1930s, claiming it could 'make democracy safe for the individual'[69] and that Douglas had discovered the 'great defect'[70] of capitalism. In the early 1930s, Fairburn's nebulous definitions of politics and economics parallel those of Pound. Both sought to maintain a mystical element in their social programming and both initially seized upon the Douglas system as a social panacea. Under the guidance of Orage, the New English Weekly became a vehicle for the promotion of social credit. Fairburn's involvement with the periodical, however peripheral in nature, points to a position within the flux of the English literary debate.

Fairburn believed he was defining his politics in terms of the spiritual and the individual, thereby avoiding the trap that lay within devotion to a politically dogmatic cause. Such belief is the root of his approval for Spengler. It is also the base for his admiration of the Russian 'anarchist' philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev, who according to Trussell formulated a view of history and the contemporary crisis 'in words that could have virtually been the poet's own in 1935'[71]. Despite his support for the monetary principles of social credit, Fairburn felt that any form of politics was ultimately insignificant in confronting questions of eschatology. Even the looming prospect of war failed to remove this obsession with the need for spiritual, as opposed to social, change. Berdyaev had been a prominent revolutionary in 1917, but rejected the subsequent overt politics of the Soviet Union to

define a personal vision which was far more mystical. Fairburn could only approve of a man who would later write: 'Social movements have never been able to claim my wholehearted allegiance. I have always been a spiritual anarchist and individualist'[72]. Berdyaev also dealt with the 'inner life' that rejected the inquisitions of science:

> The origin of man is only partially susceptible to rationalisation. No one can fully comprehend the mystery and unique character of personality. Man's personality is infinitely more mysterious than the world in which he lives, for it is, indeed, a whole world to itself. Man is a microcosmos and contains all things within himself.[73]

Such philosophy attempts to render political and social events peripheral to a concept of 'self'. Fairburn saw in Berdyaev an articulation of which he was, as yet, incapable. However, as with Spengler, Berdyaev's writing in the 1930s contain notions of autocracy that again invoke the idea of the 'benign dictator'. The Origin of Russian Communism, written in 1937, contains statements which reflect the semi-mythical elements prevalent in German fascism:

> I am a supporter of the aristocratic principle as a qualitative principle in human society, but a personal qualitative principle, not one which depends upon class or property; that is to say, I am a supporter of spiritual aristocracy. Class inequality ought to be overcome in human society, but personal inequality would come out all the stronger for that. Man should be distinguished from man by his personal quality not by his social position, his class or his property. The qualitative, that is to say, the personal aristocratic principle, cannot disappear from human society. On the contrary, it will become all the clearer in a classless society, when classes no longer exist, for classes mask and conceal personal qualitative differences among men and make them symbolic, not real.[74]

Attempting to be apolitical, Berdyaev seeks to create a society founded upon the merits of the individual. Such writing is, in fact, barely skirting one of the central tenets of fascism since, by extension, it involves questions of race and history. In seeking a Left or Centre-Left position in the early 1930s, Fairburn was typical of writers the world over. In subsequently rejecting the dogma of such a position, and in attempting to create a more personal response to the crisis, he shared the dilemma of writers who found that the 'private' position of the literary creator often seemed allied to the politics of the Right.

These thoughts and problems coincided with the run up to the 1935 election in New Zealand. (Fairburn had returned to Auckland in October 1932). Despite his doubts, this was the most political period of Fairburn's life. Publicly, he attended meetings and gave speeches. Poetically, he began work on Dominion. As Stead has noted[75], Dominion stems as much from Fairburn's views on literature as on society. The poem which the nationalist myth elevated to the status of a social document is, in part, a response both to the poetics of He Shall Not Rise and the increasing world influence of modernism. In its structure - the division into seven parts - and in its subject matter, Dominion is clearly indebted to Eliot's The Waste Land. (In its attempt to channel the spirit of the nation into a single piece the poem also resembles Hart Crane's The Bridge (1930), a work Fairburn admired). Fairburn had once written of Eliot 'That man is too damn sophisticated'[76], but as the 1930s progressed he came under increasing pressure to incorporate into his work the poetic revolution which Eliot appeared to head. As early as 1933, when his public resistance to modernism was still strong, he

experimented with the rhythms and tone of Eliot. The poem 'The Sea' (which also ends with a clearly Freudian longing for the womb) contains passages heavily indebted to Prufrock:

> And I have stood on a tall cliff and looked down
> on the vast waters washing the the edge of the world
> and have not been afraid.[77]

Dominion is an extension of Fairburn's desire to be 'modern'. It seeks to deal with contemporary events in a contemporary fashion. The neo-Georgian of He Shall Not Rise here attempts to burst out in the guise of modernity, as a vigorous, hard, capable figure (aspects which also fit the myth of nationalism, and may explain such a reading not only of the poem but of the poet as well). There are clear parallels here with Cecil Day Lewis's two long poems of the period, Transitional Poem (1929) and From Feathers To Iron (1931), where an essentially lyric poet felt compelled to submerge that lyricism in an attempt to deal with a perceived 'reality'. Fairburn's answer to the world crisis of the decade is to create a localised version of international problems, but with his competing ideologies and uncertainty over the position of his own poetry, a piece of such commitment fragments into a mixture of public rant and semi-mystical visions. Despite his involvement in practical, local politics during the period (and beyond, he would be a social campaigner all his life), Fairburn is an unlikely figure to write a poem like Dominion. Glover, with his more orthodox Marxist position in the mid-1930s, would have been a more understandable author.

As Stead notes, the result is that Dominion is a poem that 'fails to achieve poetry because it fabricates the 'reality' it pretends to reveal and denounce'[78]. The following passage from the opening section 'Utopia' is a clear case in point:

> Within the gates the retinue of evil,
> the instruments of the governors:
> scabs picked from the body of the enslaved,
> well-paid captains and corporals
> in the army of privilege
> taking the bread of tyranny, wearing
> the livery of extortion; and those who keep
> the records of decay,
> statisticians and archivists,
> turning the leaves with cold hands, computing
> our ruin on scented cuffs.
> For the enslaved, the treadmill;
> the office and adoration
> of the grindstone god;
> the apotheosis of the means,
> the defiling of the end;
> the debasement of the host
> of the living; the celebration
> of the black mass that casts
> the shadow of a red mass.
>
> Backblock camps for the outcasts, the superfluous
> reading back-date magazines, rolling cheap cigarettes,
> not mated;
> witnesses to the constriction of life essential
> to the maintenance of the rate of profit
> as distinct from the gross increment of wealth.[79]

Trussell claims that 'Utopia' is 'white-hot in anger'[80], but here the poetry reads less like a description of depression New Zealand, with its capitalist exploiters and relief gangs, than the fabular creations of English writing of the decade. The image of 'statisticians and archivists', the idea of the 'grindstone god', comes closer to the 'other worlds' peculiarly common to English prose of the period. The New Zealand displayed in 'Utopia', with its 'army of the unliving', appears more than anything to be a creation.

This fabrication of social and historical factors was noted by M.H. Holcroft in his 1940 essay The Deepening Stream. It is illuminating that a work which is a virtual manifesto of the nationalist myth should describe Dominion as a poem that 'implies a strictly limited conception of humanity'[81]. Holcroft criticises Dominion because it lacks specific references. Despite the obviously contemporary setting there is no clear indication that

the poem is set in New Zealand. The succession of images presented in 'Album Leaves', attempting to provide a cross section of society within a series of snap portraits, creates characters and analogies which lack power. For Holcroft, this results from a misreading of history:

> It is true that New Zealanders struggle under a burden of debt and that the brave new world of the south is shadowed by the narrow doors of Threadneedle street; but it is also true that most of the debt has been shouldered with an easy optimism by politicians who imagined themselves to be free agents setting up the foundations of propriety. There was no compact with financial oligarchs, no evil compounding with the sons of Mammon, no conscious spinning of a web that later generations could name The System. To visualise the deliberate exploitation of posterity, is to overlook the nature of history.[82]

Dominion does lack the rigid specificities of time and place that the orthodoxy of the 1930s demanded. Although Holcroft's protestations would be subsequently forgotten as Curnow's anthologising drew Fairburn into the canon, it is vital to note that the fragmentation of the poem was discerned by the nationalist criticism of the early 1940s.

More revealing than Holcroft's problematic response to 'The System' in Dominion is the opportunity to set this notion of fabrication within the context of the English literature of the period. The visualisation of the oppressive forces within the country clearly shows affinities with English prose during the decade, but the structure and poetic also display relations with English poetry. Trussell explains that the fragmentation of the poem is based upon the mixture of emotions raised by the depression as well as Fairburn's personal situation. However, the structure is based clearly not only upon the work of Eliot, but also that of other major English poets writing during the 1930s.

The 'Dialogue' section of Dominion parallels Louis MacNeice's 1933 poem 'An Eclogue For Christmas' (and such a dialectic would also feature in Auden and Isherwood's 1936 verse drama The Ascent Of F6). The tone and syntax of the two pieces are almost identical. MacNeice's poem begins:

A. I meet you in an evil time.
B. The evil bells
Put out of our heads, I think, thoughts of everything else.
A. The jaded calender revolves,
Its nuts need oil, carbon chokes the valves,
The excess sugar of a diabetic culture
Rotting the nerve of life and literature;
Therefore when we bring out the old tinsel and frills
To announce that Christ is born among the barbarous hills
I turn to you who a morose routine
Saves from the mad vertigo of being what has been.
B. Analogue of me, you are wrong to turn to me,
My country will not yield you any sanctuary,
There is no pinpoint in any of the ordnance maps
To save you when your towns and town-bred thoughts collapse,
It is better to die in situ as I shall,
One place is as bad as another. Go back where your instincts call
And listen to the crying of the town cats and the taxis again,
Or wind your gramophone and eavesdrop on great men.[83]

The language and imagery here are Audenesque, reflecting the influential status of Auden in the early years of the decade, but in the image of 'an evil time' and the general sense of decay, the poem prefigures much of the subject matter of Dominion. Fairburn's 'Dialogue' begins thus:

A. Our acts and torments are made meaningless.
B. They have cheated us even of tragedy.
A. Yet we have known
the limits of the mind's recessions; have had
strange doors opened to us. We have seen lights
beyond these walls' engrossments. We have seen
terror, and a light shining in the darkness.
B. Better
to turn our faces to the world and batter
doors of wood and iron, tangible evil.
A. If that become our task let's do it gladly
and in good conscience; call it our debt to Nature;
for we are natural men, and owe a tithe
of energy to disruption. But to oppose
iron with iron gives victory to steel:
and who shall hold the sword? under what sign
shall he conquer? by what law rule? Action unties
the knot of power, and does it up again:

> but who shall set the pattern of that knot,
> bowline or running noose? (Beware the reef-knot
> that with a subtle twist is made a noose).
> What hand shall loop it up? and shall it curb
> the evil in man's heart, and give him power
> to seal the will of God? Or bind the fasces?[84]

The difference is a matter of subtlety. MacNeice's urban and 'modern' imagery is far more effective than Fairburn's metaphorical 'knot of power'. The remainder of 'An Eclogue For Christmas' contains an ambiguity and sense of slippage - a movement of both language and thought - that conveys the complexities of the 1930s in a manner that Dominion never reaches. In part, this is a question of language. Fairburn's attempt to borrow MacNeice's rhetorical stance leads to a sense of posturing, a basic umfamiliarity caused by his schizophrenic geographical and cultural location. He cannot be 'at home' within the language, utilising its form and structures, with the same conviction as MacNeice. Fairburn's 'Dialogue' follows certain conventions of the decade. The characters and language are quasi-heroic and, in their sterility, look towards a more prosperous future: 'Life will grow from our dead thoughts, from the seed/ hidden in the husk of darkness'[85]. However, Fairburn imposes a nebulous 'faith' to resolve the dialogue, a resolution that is not social or political but mystical. Such a conclusion undermines the section, turning it into an exercise in propaganda, a propaganda that is lacking from MacNeice's poem. For Fairburn, the crisis of the age will resolve itself in a naturalistic and spiritual manner:

> We shall arise at morning, and clothe ourselves,
> and walk in green fields.
> And we shall have dominion over the earth
> and the forms of matter.
> In us the Word endures, a seed in rock:
> tomorrow, or next spring, or when our sons are dead,
> the stone will split in some earth-rending shock;
> or a seed lodged in a cranny, lying in silt,
> will take root, and shatter the rock.[86]

This mix of Christianity and Arthurian legend sits uneasily with the arguably Marxist (Fairburn himself later would claim them to be Hegelian) elements of 'Utopia' and 'Album Leaves'. In 'Dialogue' Fairburn borrows the form from MacNeice, and the language from the Audenesque tone of the decade. This structure is then used to convey the convoluted ideology he developed as the decade progressed. The tension and fragmentation that results is a question of distance and literary inheritance. In both subject matter and style Dominion documents the difficulties of writing in New Zealand in the 1930s. The unease of the poetic is attributable to the mobility of the decade's writing, the tensions and overlapping inherent in a literature working with multiple and varied stimuli.

'Dialogue' is not the only section of the poem that is indebted to MacNeice. The structure of 'Album Leaves', with its attempt to portray a vista of society, comes close to Philip Larkin's later description of MacNeice as a poet 'of shop-windows, traffic policemen, ice cream soda, lawn mowers, and an uneasy awareness of what the newsboys were shouting'[87]. In a similar vein, Curnow describes MacNeice's 'genius' as one that 'observes minutely, vividly and sympathetically the present and past of the men of this age and generation'[88], and while the decade 'avalanched towards the disaster of 1939' Curnow notes that 'MacNeice was writing lyric poems which dwell more and more on the truth that what seems most precious may also be most ephemeral'[89]. Both comments are close to the complicated genesis of Dominion.

For Trussell, Dominion 'galvanised its author, established his direction, and persisted as a force in shaping his work and

his life'[90]. Certainly 'Struggle In A Mirror', the poem's final section, posits a mystical vision which promotes a positive future:

> Let like strive with like, evil be locked in strife
> with evil, till both lie dead: and out of their defeat,
> out of their marriage in disruption,
> being shall take its breath,
> triumph shall come, the shape of life be filled;
> the undying seed, the invulnerable good,
> love that was lost,
> long hidden in division, found at last,
> shall feed on their corruption, drawing vigour from death.[91]

There are clear parallels with The Waste Land here, as there are in the last stanza of the work where 'the seed shall spring in blackened earth'[92]. Yet the positive vision is unable to carry the work, and its reception after its completion in March 1938 was muted. Interestingly, the poem found its way into Eliot's hands in London who, whilst unable to publish it, claimed 'I have liked it myself'[93]. Glover criticised 'Dialogue' and 'Struggle In A Mirror' both for their mysticism and because Fairburn used figures as pegs on which to hang ideas. This comment prefigures Stead's notion of a fabricated reality. It also demonstrates further that contemporary opinion perceived the contradictory nature of the work.

Dominion failed to solve or articulate Fairburn's problems during the 1930s. His vision of society, politics, philosophy and eschatology remained riddled with doubt. Nor did the poem enable him to use these problems to construct a poetic which might successfully convey the crisis of the period, something MacNeice acheived in Autumn Journal (1938). His rejection of dogma was, in part, founded on a belief that such a systematic approach to life was alien to the functioning of culture in New Zealand. The rejection extended to contemporary literary influences. He talked of 'a sort of barrenness constantly threatening these younger

English poets'[94], and was unable to agree with Curnow's 1937 comment that 'England remains... the 'technical research laboratory', where the finest and most advanced work is done with that subtle material, the English language'[95]. He was therefore forced to adopt a position in a 'no man's land' which constantly oscillated between the English literary tradition and the material of contemporary New Zealand life. In his 1948 poem 'The Voyage' he was still attempting to articulate the multiplicity of life he had struggled with in the 1930s:

> Where, say where
> shall we find our answer?
> There
> or here, then or now, what does it matter?
> A world can be constructed, at a pinch,
> within a prison cell, a pack of cards,
> a spider's web. Here in this pygmy ship
> fo'c's'le is a kingdom, the galley an empire,
> the chart-room a properous parish. I give you
> an analogue for Christ: a rope well spliced;
> and this for Plato: a well-peeled potato.
> As for your hopes and hungers, and this ambitious
> voyage: we shall touch at many ports,
> tire of the girls and the strange foreign foods,
> and end in a far port, a silent
> and dark harbour at last. Beyond the best
> that head and hand can do, I promise nothing:
> anchor no trust in me.[96]

The resignation here is more effective than the uncontrolled energy of Dominion, but the poem still points to the central issue at the heart of Fairburn's poetics. The cornerstone of 'The Voyage' is doubt, as it was for He Shall Not Rise and Dominion. Fairburn adopted a variety of guises in an attempt reconcile the disparate elements of this doubt, and ultimately it is the adoption of these guises that is the most interesting facet of his poetry. This is an area ignored by the orthodoxy of the decade, in which a prescribed view of Fairburn is used to accompany set ideologies. To acknowledge his complexities is far more rewarding, since it is in these complexities that Fairburn

displays the traits that characterise him as a writer of the 1930s.

5. ROBIN HYDE: SPLIT PERSONALITIES.

In 1936 Robin Hyde conducted an argument with Denis Glover both in the pages of Tomorrow and by personal letter. Initially stung by an accusation that she had ghost-written a biography of Francis Bell, actually written by Downie Stewart, Hyde responded by reminding Glover of Jacob Wasserman's assertion that 'The unsuccessful and the candidates for success form a close phalanx against those who have achieved the slightest success.' Underneath this section of her letter Glover scrawled in pencil, 'Our lady writers - A bunch of bores in stuffy drawers.'[1]

The argument rekindled one of the seminal debates in New Zealand literature during the 1930s. Glover - along with other male writers of the period, notably A.R.D. Fairburn and D'Arcy Cresswell - was both nervous and scornful of the extent to which women had dominated the previous decades of New Zealand writing. In C.A. Marris' annual Best Poems series, Glover saw the continuation of the female/colonial tradition (fully defined by Frank Sargeson in his 1948 radio talk on Katherine Mansfield[2]) which he believed to be fundamentally alien to the specificities of New Zealand in the 1930s. Marris published not only Hyde, but also Eileen Duggan, Gloria Rawlinson and Eve Langley, and along with Alan Mulgan and J.H.E. Schroder represented a set of conservative and colonial critical attitudes at odds with the developing nationalism. Glover reacted in satirical verse typical of his mid-1930s output. 'The Arraignment of Paris' derides Marris for his editorial judgements, and then moves on to a stanza that deals specifically with Hyde:

there's one who's fairly good
a desolated star, a Robin Hood
who rages round among the greenwood trees
from classic style to rabid journalese,
who turns her pen from sonnet or from ballad
to gossip pars, or recipes for salad.
A pity she should lack a sense of humour;
if she is roused, beware! she's like the puma
this lassie who is never quite the same
without her daily teaspoonful of fame.
But let her be - she's still a giddy gal.
If she keeps on she should do fairly well.

'The Arraignment of Paris' was admired by E.H. McCormick who called it 'the one piece of sustained literary satire produced in this country.'[3] Hyde's reaction had the edge that typified much of her journalistic output. Writing in the Mirror she commented: 'The most admired satires were those written by well proved writers who attacked social evils not publishers who refused their verses and fellow-writers a little more successful.'[4] The debate highlights the tensions within which Hyde operated during the decade. The 'lassie' or 'giddy gal' was the victim of an emerging orthodoxy that grew increasingly misogynistic and doctrinaire, relegating her work to the 'minor tradition' later identified by Sargeson. Hyde's ouput during the 1930s - she was one of the most prolific writers of the period, working at a rate that has rarely been taken into account - reflects the pressures of this orthodoxy. More so than any other figure of the decade her writing displays huge discrepancies in quality and style. At its worst, it appears as the tired heir to a neo-Georgian tradition, a journalistic romanticism both dated and contrived. At its best, it offers the most radical presentation of life in New Zealand that any of the writers in the 1930s achieved, a view of society, both in content and form, fundamentally different from the structures which have been used to canonise the decade subsequently.

As Patrick Evans has noted, Hyde has been 'lost' from the tradition of the 1930s[5], a tradition defined by the masculine criticism of the 1940s and 1950s. There is no place in the nationalist canon for the author of a novel that treats 'reality' as flexibly as Wednesday's Children (1937) or offers the subjectivity of The Godwits Fly (1938). Hyde's peripheralisation is, on this level, easy to understand. Her conception of New Zealand is so at odds with that of her male contemporaries that the criticism of the period often ignores her altogether. Allen Curnow makes only the briefest mention of her in his introduction to the 1945 Caxton A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45, while in the extended survey of the 1960 Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse he claims that her writing was 'near hysteria, more often than not, and she was incurably exhibitionistic.'[6] Reviewing Houses by the Sea and later poems (posthumously published by Caxton in 1952), James Bertram - a friend of Hyde in the latter part of her life - notes that Hyde's poetry stood outside the 'mainstream' during the 1930s:

> To her popular audience... she has remained the poet of Kowhai Gold, a late Georgian in manner, lyrical within a respectable but unadventurous literary convention. She was never a favourite writer with the avant garde of the thirties: she was too romantic for tastes formed by Auden and Isherwood, and much of her work seemed marred by a juvenile desire to shock.[7]

Bertram's commentary is revealing. Recognising the lack of critical attention paid to Hyde's work, he is nevertheless harsh in judging her prose. Wednesday's Children is 'unsatisfactory', Dragon Rampant (1939) 'fragmentary and chaotic' and the end of The Godwits Fly is 'cobbled up'.[8] The source of this fragmentation is, for Bertram, Hyde's own turbulent life - 'a rather embarrassing record of dangerous living and over-stretched

ambition'[9]. This crude biographical determinism has also become a key component in the orthodox reading of Hyde promulgated by a nationalist criticism. Such a reading equates Hyde's work with a perceived idea of her 'sensitivity.' The novels are autobiography, hero-worship or wish-fulfillment, the poetry over-coloured by a romanticism that is ultimately deemed somewhat pathetic. Bertram's comment that 'Too often in her romantic yearning Robin Hyde was distracted by the Far' [10] clearly hints at this reading. As much as Curnow, Bertram confines Hyde to critical parameters that are ultimately based on gender or an idea of place. The poetry he values is only achieved when Hyde discovers the ability to locate her analysis in the 'near', to cut through the layers of 'sentiment' and evoke the particularities of place. It is an assessment which finally privileges nationalism, crediting Hyde only for her power to 'evoke' the tangible world of a physical New Zealand culture. It denies Hyde's ability to work within social, literary and cultural margins, producing images of New Zealand which bend accepted 'truths.'

Glover's satire in 'The Arraignment of Paris' takes refuge in an innate knowledge of superiority and privilege. Its lack of literary merit is balanced by an assumption of dominance that will justify its publication. It calls attention to the clique from which it is issued rather than the subject matter it derides. Bertram's critique attempts a positive reading, seeking recognition for the quality displayed in Hyde's work. Yet the very language of the piece imposes a strait-jacket not dissimilar to that of Glover. It too assumes a superiority, a clarity of vision and expression by which Hyde too often falls short. During the 1930s Hyde was caught in a literary framework which espoused

both these standpoints, patronising scorn on the one hand, a limiting acceptance on the other. The demands of the emerging orthodoxy favoured adherence to the 'real', 'what lies beneath the crust of everyday', as Robert Chapman would later term it in his influential essay 'Fiction and the Social Pattern.'[11] The critical debate left little room for a writer whose work, as Phillida Bunkle, Linda Hardy and Jacqueline Matthews have pointed out, 'strives to go beyond realism towards a vision of reconciliation, to a statement of what society... might be.'[12]

The 'loss' of Hyde to the 1930s tradition extends beyond the critical reception of her work. The orthodoxy also works to deny her place within the literary culture itself, preferring to concentrate on an isolated figure confined to the regime of the psychiatric institution. Again to quote Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, this 'emphasis on mental anguish in the interpretation of Hyde's work has often obscured the vigorous, perspicacious woman determined to relate to the world and to 'see' even its worst problems.'[13] 'Vigorous' is a useful word here. Hyde was an obsessive producer of material during the 1930s, often working on up to four differing manuscripts at the same time. The sheer volume of this work, and Hyde's dedication to a sense of craft, has never been given the critical study it deserves. The critical orthodoxy had found it far easier to concentrate on a perceived 'laziness' within her output, failing to recognise the extent to which she drafted and redrafted her work. A new critical approach is necessary, one that not only admits to the breadth and depth of the work she produced, but seeks to analyse the range of material within that work. By the time Hyde wrote Nor The Years Condemn in 1937 (it was published in 1938), she was attempting to convey a perception of a New Zealand society that was multi-faced

and complex. These difficulties are matched by the difficulties within her own work, and they need to be explored with a critical flexibility.

Hyde's work as a journalist in Wellington, Christchurch, Wanganui and Auckland, writing political and social commentaries as well as book reviews, placed her firmly in the literary milieu. She reviewed and commented on many of her male contemporaries, often with a sharp and irreverent insight. Reviewing Verse Alive, the second collection of poetry from the pages of Tomorrow, for the New Zealand Observer in August 1937, she noticed the excess of 'the schoolboy spitball in its pages' and criticised Glover, Curnow and Fairburn for a lack of New Zealand specifics in their satire. Similarly, reviewing Caxton's New Zealand Poems (to which she herself contributed) for the Observer in July 1937 she wished 'Allen Curnow wouldn't waste so many of his good poems dreeing the world's weird.'[14]

Hyde's was a constant voice in the criticism of the mid-to-late 1930s, and her proximity to the male dominated tradition meant that she was influenced by its demands and pressures. The marginal position accredited to her in relation to the period's tradition has not only obscured the differences between her work and that of her contemporaries, it has also masked the similarities. An evaluation of Hyde's place in the complexities of the decade's literature requires an understanding of this tension. The visionary modernism of Wednesday's Children has to be placed in the context of the 'masculine' realism of Passport to Hell (1936) or the historical romanticism of Check to your King (1936). In the same manner, her own nationalism and identification of place has to be considered alongside not only the prevalent literary nationalism of the decade, but also her

socialism and recognition of the international context of New Zealand culture. The poet who penned 'This is my country; here my feet are set/ Without question, in the soil I understand'[15] also wrote that 'any man who calls himself a socialist, and is not at the same time a thorough-going internationalist, is either a liar or a fool.'[16] The same writer who could describe the subtle shades of European seasons without having left the southern hemisphere, and who never conquered a longing for Britain, was also one of the most sensitive writers on the problems of Maori culture during the decade. A shallow Freudian reading is not enough to explain Hyde's ouput during the 1930s, neither are the partial readings of a strict nationalism or feminism. Her work eschews the rigid literary boundaries that have been used to contain it.

Hyde's prose reflects both social and literary pressures. In its disparities it forms a commentary on a professionalism that recognised the necessity of money for basic survival, and a subtle understanding of New Zealand culture that sought new modes of expression. Many of the tensions which suffuse her novels are already evident in her first prose work, Journalese, published in 1934. Hyde later claimed to 'despise' Journalese, feeling that she had let herself 'be talked into writing and finishing' a book which 'vulgarised' her prose style.[17] Certainly the collection of journalistic pieces and anecdotes has the air of a 'very lightweight, chatty sort of book... superficial and written to sell'[18], but its blend of sarcasm and impressionism prefigures the strengths and weaknesses of the later novels. Of the individual essays which make up the chapters of the book, the most successful are the social and political pieces that underscore their content with a sardonic touch. Hyde's criticism

of the parliamentary process in 'The House is in Session' works because of the parallels she draws between the actual debating and the pressures of her own position as a woman reporter in the segregated press gallery. It is the tone of this piece that makes it effective, a tone lost when her prose shifts to employ an impressionism which fails to fuse with the political or social reforms under discussion. The frivolity of such prose (many of the pieces were taken directly from the various newspaper columns to which Hyde contributed) stands in an uneasy juxtaposition with the polemical argument:

> If society consists of a body of individuals with some real tie of feeling between them, we have no society in New Zealand yet: there are ties of prejudice and self-interest, but of genuine feeling, no. However, there are some very lovely gardens, some very nice dogs, and the sun shines here as elsewhere.[19]

The obvious satire here diminishes when the context is established. Hyde's discussion of the social scene - the garden parties she was forced to report upon - is both biting and affectionate. She writes of a love for 'the old places and old things, haloed by the graciousness which was before all this inferiority complex business began.'[20] The uncertainty of tone leads to an ambiguity, and the merits and problems of colonialism and post-colonialism become mixed and confused. The seductive qualities of the pre-depression era clearly affect Hyde, and she wrestles to accommodate this viewpoint with her recognition of the need for social change. Journalese as a whole is witness to this struggle. In 'Menfolk' her discussion of gender politics descends into anecdotal reminiscing, lacking the perception of 'Woman In It' which traces the female literary tradition in New Zealand with a strong sense of purpose. Her passionate outbursts

- 'I shall continue to feel that State murder is an uglier and more cold-blooded sort of sin than private adultery can possibly be in any walk of life'[21] - illustrate a commitment that is missing from the other essays.

Journalese betrays the structural problems that affected Hyde in all her prose works. The shifting tone and the stylistic changes also portray a fundamental uncertainty about the authorial position. The book reads as a compromise, conscious of both a potential market and of fidelity to the seriousness of its subject matters. Hyde was uneasy about the literary climate and its demands, and worried about the necessity to tailor her output to an audience. The book also displays an uncertainty over the national position, capturing an author and a society desiring change but wary of what change might entail. These tensions, both stylistic and cultural, lead to the uncertainties in Journalese. They also prefigure the complexities of Hyde's novels, where verisimilitude interconnects with fantasy, modernism is juxtaposed with romanticism and a flexible sense of politics encompasses both socialism and nationalism.

Passport to Hell stems, in part, from Hyde's work as a journalist. Shortly after joining the New Zealand Observer in early 1931 Hyde worked on an article describing conditions in Auckland's Mount Eden gaol. She was introduced to J.D. Stark by contacts established during this period, although she did not begin to work on his story (originally entitled 'Bronze Outlaw') until 1935. The whole text was completed in six weeks between March and April of that year. The genesis of the novel is important. Its various sources display the interweaving of fact and existing documents with Hyde's own imagination that is also typical of Check to your King. In both cases Hyde worked from

existing manuscripts, and for Passport to Hell she also conducted a series of interviews with Stark before starting work on the novel. The factual base results in the novel occupying the marginal ground between fact and fiction that is typified by the war memoir. That it was a professional undertaking is demonstrated by Hyde also working on original drafts of Check to your King, The Godwits Fly and 'The Unbelievers' (an unpublished novel), as well as publishing The Conquerors and other poems, during 1935, the year in which Passport to Hell was written.[22]

Hyde's ability to compartmentalise, to move between styles and modes of expression, is central to an evaluation of her output during the mid 1930s. The material she worked on during 1935 was produced for different purposes, and the manner of writing varied accordingly. In Stark's narrative she discovered a 'human interest' story through which she could also express her own liberal humanism. It offered the opportunity to write for a recognisable market, but also to express what D.I.B. Smith calls 'her sense of the need for social justice.'[23] In the note at the beginning of the novel Hyde states; 'This book is not a work of fiction. I have related its incidents and the circumstances under which they happened, as Starkie told them to me.' The desire for verisimilitude involves Hyde subsuming her role as an 'objective' author. As Lawrence Jones notes:

> There is a sense of the narrator as a personality, not a disembodied authority, one who sympathetically or empathetically moves in and out of the mind and feelings of Starkie, with a second-person 'you could see' sort of construction running together Starkie's impressions with the narrator's imagined ones.[24]

The result is that the third-person narration, mainly from the point of view of Starkie, occasionally shifts into the first-

person, to intensify passages, and both mingle with sections where Hyde removes herself from character to relay authorial direction or description. For Jones this style descends from the type of international modernist psychological fiction of which Katherine Mansfield was one of the pioneers. He quotes Hyde's own declaration of intent, 'to write from the inner centre of what people think, hope and feel' and notes that in Passport to Hell Hyde herself stated that her 'object in writing... was not to portray the outside world looking at Starkie, but to portray Starkie looking at the outside world.'[25] This desire to merge with the persona of the novel, to reach 'what I have seen... what I have touched and tasted' as Bede Collins puts it in Nor The Years Condemn[26], connects Hyde to other novelists of what Jones has termed the 'Provincial period' in New Zealand literature. Her use of Starkie to reflect the society through which he moves parallels John Mulgan's manipulation of Johnson in Man Alone (1939) and the characters of Sargeson's early short fiction. Indeed, for Jones, 'Hyde and Mulgan set the basic Man Alone pattern',[27] and Starkie undoubtedly fulfills the stereotype of the gruff, laconic male which typifies that pattern.

To link Hyde with her male contemporary 'social realists' by way of Mansfield's psychological modernism blurs the boundaries which categorise New Zealand fiction in the 1920s and 1930s. The attempt at 'authorless' modernism, the desire to speak from within the character, is strikingly similar to the attempts to create a documentary fiction, one of the main manifestations of 1930s fiction worldwide. Passport to Hell undoubtedly reflects Hyde's intention to let Starkie 'speak for himself.' The passages in which the authorial voice is weakest are the strongest manifestations of the prose which ties Hyde to both her male

contemporaries in New Zealand and to the creators of 'objective' writing in Europe. For the novel itself, the result is a profound confusion. When Starkie arrives in Cairo, before the journey to Gallipoli, Hyde presents the city from his perspective. The random generalisations and xenophobia are, we are led to believe, natural reactions on encountering a strange culture. However, in her description of 'the battle of the Wazza', a riot in central Cairo, Hyde - through Stark - deals with an attack on the city's brothels which results in rape and murder. The misogyny and violence is justified by 'the loss of identity which war forces upon soldiers' and the remark that 'the place stole their sexual identity from them... They had to revenge themselves.'[28] The justification of violence against women in these terms sits uneasily with the presence of a female author, and directs attention to the manner of the narration. The passage is rendered all the more incongruous by Hyde's resumption of the role of the traditional omniscient narrator only one page later. It becomes impossible to judge the interaction of author and character, to recognise the stylistic and philosophical shifts that take place between the two.

The description of the riot in Cairo is one example of the novel's resorting to an aggressive, masculine prose that is strongly reminiscient of Sargeson. While this reflects Hyde's desire to allow Starkie his own story, it also reflects the pressures of orthodox modes of fiction. Hyde's constant use of a spare, undescriptive prose style and vernacular dialogue displays her understanding of the requirements of fiction in New Zealand during the period. Passport to Hell signals a desire to conform for the sake of publication. It stresses the constraints of the market under which Hyde was forced to work. The debate that

Sargeson and Fairburn conducted on the right for the creative writer to have 'time and space' became a matter of necessity for Hyde. As she remarked 'Frank Sargeson would say 'starve' and be right: but women get no sustenance and do have babies.'[29]

Passport to Hell thus embodies many of the structures typical of a novel from the 'Provincial period.' Its dissection of society points to Hyde's concern for the welfare of the returned soldiers caught up in the depression. She avoids Sargeson's avowed apoliticism. Instead the novel reflects the liberal humanism or romantic socialism displayed in John A. Lee's Children of the Poor (1934), a novel Hyde admired. Like Lee, Hyde's social analysis eschews Sargeson's focused concentration on the rigidities of New Zealand's legacy of puritanism. Her method incorporates a broader view, implicating a whole society. Starkie is also the first of Hyde's characters who, like Charles de Thierry, Wednesday Gilfillan and Eliza Hannay, are conscious of their role as outsiders. This authorial concern for the marginalised parallels Hyde's problematical relationship with the culture in which she lived.

The New Zealand tensions of Passport to Hell are matched by the complexities of its place within the context of international writing. Hyde's romanticising of Starkie (in sharp contrast to the power of the battle scenes) is a further example of the obsession with the purity of the working class that dominated English literature in the early 1930s and is also evident in the literature and mythology of New Zealand during the period. Hyde's description of Starkie's father, a 'Delaware Indian from Great Bear Lake' who was 'physically superb' with a body of 'carved mahogany'[30], reflects a romantic obsession with physique that informs the literature of the whole decade, from Stephen

Spender's The Temple (originally written in 1929) and W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood's The Ascent of F6 (1936) to Mulgan's Man Alone and Sargeson's That Summer (1946). Starkie inherits both his father's physical capability and romantic heritage (he is half Spanish, half Native American) and his response to the demands of physical labour on board a West Coast steamer is, once again, a portrayal familiar from Malcolm Lowry's Ultramarine (1933):

> His four months on the Kittawa were salty days for Starkie - exciting, hard working, thoroughly alive days, and nights when he could crawl into his hammock and listen to the old hands swap yarns, chipping in whenever he felt it wouldn't mean a boot behind the ear.[31]

This is the language of Sargeson, Mulgan and Dan Davin, all inheritors of the English tradition of working-class romanticism. It is a stance even adopted by Cresswell in The Poet's Progress (1930). The incongruity with Hyde lies in the knowledge that she is also the creator of the the impressionist prose of The Godwits Fly and A Home in this World (written in 1937 and published in 1984), where her language deliberately avoids this kind of location in the 'real.' The unease felt about Hyde's assumption of this masculine style is compounded by the knowledge that her portrayal of European battle scenes, the graphic horror with which she decribes Gallipoli and Armentieres, is entirely imaginary. Downie Stewart, reviewing the novel in the Otago Daily Times commented that 'the authenticity of the book is such that nobody could cavil at it'[32] and other reviewers praised Hyde's ability to recreate the intensity of conflict. This function of Hyde's imagination places Passport to Hell within another tradition, that of the colonial novel written in an outpost of

Empire but set in Europe. It adds another layer to the many which intersect in the novel.

Certainly Hyde intended the novel to be taken as a 'broad record of war experience.' In a series of letters in the Southland Times in October 1936 Hyde responded to a number of issues raised by John Tait, who had served in Starkie's Infantry Battalion, and who claimed that the details of Passport to Hell did 'not bear critical examination' and were 'worthless as a record of truth.' Hyde's reply demonstrated her anger at these accusations:

> It is curious that if my book is, as Mr Tait says, 'worthless as a record of fact' (sic), the most favourable reviews and comments should have come from returned soldiers. In addition to personal letters (some confirming actual incidents), the Imperial War Museum, in writing to thank me for a copy of Passport to Hell, which was sent on request, refers to the book as one of the most interesting New Zealand war records in its possession. Mr John A. Lee, a returned soldier of distinction, said when interviewed by The Standard that Passport to Hell was the most important New Zealand war book yet published, and made special mention of its realism... Mr Tait's suggestion that because of a few trivial errors Starkie's record and my book are practically a work of the imagination is so unfair and untrue that it cannot be left unanswered. Does he imagine that the experienced soldiers mentioned above would be taken in by any plausibility?[33]

The tone of this riposte reinforces Hyde's emphasis on verisimilitude. The factual validity of the novel's events was necessary for the acceptance of its political and humanitarian message. The mode of analysis Hyde invites matches the philosophy of the Left Book Club in Britain (Hyde became involved with the Club following her arrival in England in September 1938). It is also directly paralleled by Storm Jameson's essay 'Documents', published in the fourth issue of Fact in 1937. Unlike the Left

Book Club, which sought to spread political awareness by the publication of a number of texts in a variety of disciplines, Jameson is only concerned with the document in a literary context. Her argument is for a socialist literature rooted in the actual facts of daily experience, a body of work devoid of imagination. The texts then become the catalyst for political awareness and change:

> We need documents, not, as the Naturalists needed them, to make their drab tuppenny - ha'penny dramas, but as charts, as timber for the fire some writer will light tomorrow morning.[34]

Hyde's sense of politics was never sufficiently rationalised to embrace a use of literature this radical. As Gillian Boddy and Jacqueline Matthews note: 'It is not easy to define the political and social standpoint from which Hyde wrote and acted'.[35] Hyde herself claimed to have got her 'politics direct from Shelley and Shakespeare, with an occasional hint from the Holy Ghost.'[36] Nevertheless, while she refrained from adopting the language of the capitalist/proletarian duality, Hyde's allegiances lay with the Left. Like Fairburn and Mulgan she never allowed her work to be subsumed by propaganda, but Passport to Hell promotes an egalitarianism which is socialist at heart. Her defence of the documentary status of the book is precisely in line with Jameson's thesis. Hyde is a writer who advocates change, and as Jameson noted later in the same essay: 'Literature concerned with change and the changing world is concerned with revolution, and with all the stages of revolutionary action.'[37] Passport to Hell fails as a document in exactly the same way as does George Orwell's The Road to Wigan Pier (1937), commissioned by the Left Book Club in mid-1936. In both texts the validity of whatever documentary evidence they may possess is negated by the

fictionalising power of the author's imagination. Objectivity gives way to reminiscing, and the romanticism which infuses both texts works primarily to stress their place in a literary context. The Dickensian sentimentality with which Orwell regards the poor of Wigan is similar to Hyde's treatment of a widowed Starkie at the end of Nor The Years Condemn.

Passport to Hell emerges as a text full of the contradictions imposed by the multiplicities of the literary cultures both in New Zealand and England during the 1930s. Hyde is torn between commercial and aesthetic demands, between the pressures of New Zealand's emerging literary structures and the legacy of the European tradition. These tensions affected all the writers in New Zealand in the 1930s, but Hyde was further disadvantaged by being a woman in an environment so completely dominated by men. There is little in Passport to Hell that suggests the kind of fiction she would attempt in Wednesday's Children and The Godwits Fly, fiction which Patrick Evans has noted 'offered such a clear alternative to what we have come to think of as the Sargeson tradition.'[38]

Nevertheless, this first novel is a vital member of her oeuvre, not least because of the very differences that exist between it and her later more experimental fiction. As Evans suggests, these differences - products of the complexities she worked within - conveyed to the male literary culture an impression of uncertainty and unevenness:

> [T]he change from Hyde's masculinist novel to these later fictions made her seem unstable and irresponsible to some, and as if she had a narrow, inward vision seeking idiosyncratic expression at a time when there was a healthy, natural realism available to her. There is a cruel irony in that charge, since much male writing of the Thirties and Forties was to have a narrower and more inward vision than hers.[39]

It is perhaps not surprising that Passport to Hell was Hyde's best-selling book, since it dealt with a popular subject matter in a style that also aimed to be popular. When Hyde returned to the narrative of Starkie, in Nor The Years Condemn, it was after the experimentation of Wednesday's Children and The Godwits Fly, after the discovery of a more complex articulation of New Zealand culture. The resulting enlargement of scope in Nor The Years Condemn moved it outside the parameters of the orthodox literary culture, with the result that 'no one seemed to take much notice' of it.[40]

Hyde was aware that there was a tradition of women's writing and journalism in New Zealand, developed through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth by Edith Searle Grossman, Constance Clyde, Jessie Mackay, Margaret Macpherson and Jane Mander. However, she was also aware of the constrictions within which this tradition was forced to function. Discussing women's journalism she wrote:

> It can be said that there are only two things wrong with the woman journalists in this country, taken as a whole. One is that in nine cases out of ten, they are underpaid - anyone who does not believe that this is cramping to the style should try it - and the other is that they aren't given enough scope. There is still a horrible delusion that the social column is the only department women like to read, or are competent to write.[41]

In more general terms Hyde's own career is an example of this problem of 'scope.' Nevertheless, as the decade progressed she became more convinced that the orthodoxy was constricting and doctrinaire, and that the writing of New Zealand's women's writers may 'add up much nearer to the sum of a decade than do the big bull-frog figures, puffed out by the wind of a moment.'[42]

In 'The Singers of Loneliness', her long essay on New Zealand literature published in T'ien Hsia Monthly in August 1938, she elaborated on the limitations of these 'bull-frogs':

> A.R.D. Fairburn, Allen Curnow, Ian Milner, Frank Sargeson (whose short stories are of striking merit, though suffering from an overdose of the Hemingway technique), belong to this group, which has definitely furthered good printing and fought the 'pretty-pretty' in New Zealand. Its faults are endless, verbose political argument, and, like the erstwhile Spender-Auden-Lewis combination in England, on which its members have patterned themselves, not a little literary gang warfare.[43]

As ever, Hyde's critical eye on her contemporaries is acute, recognising the crossover influences that lay beneath the aggressive proclamation of a new nationalism. For her own fiction, the 'literary gang warfare' meant that the rewards of Passport to Hell were insufficient. Imitation of the gang style did not guarantee acceptance, and as Hyde developed her awareness of fiction's possibilities, she saw the need to progress beyond its boundaries.

While it is also an historical novel, Check to your King eschews the documentary style of Passport to Hell. Hyde's detailing of the life of Baron Charles de Thierry is based on the manuscript of his own An Historical Account of an Attempt to Colonise New Zealand, a collection of papers Hyde recognised as being 'fragmentary.' Her method in the novel is to act as a fictional biographer, the narrator moving in and out of the fictional narrative itself. Conventional narrative is repeatedly interrupted for a series of authorial commentaries on de Thierry's activities or the problematical nature of gathering historical information. This sense of form is important as Hyde's initial attempt to bend the rules of conventional fiction

writing. As Jones observes[44], it prefigures the more recent 'metafiction' which has become a favoured mode of expression for post-colonial writers, and in New Zealand has been perfected by Janet Frame. However, the modernistic form of Check to your King shapes a novel that is fundamentally descended from the tradition of the popular historical novel. In many respects Hyde is here the heir to the mode of nineteenth-century pioneer fiction and biography. Check to your King has much in common with a text like F.E. Maning's Old New Zealand (1863). Both aim to provide a commentary on the events they describe, moving within that commentary to argue or debate. The difference between the two is that, unlike Maning, Hyde is working entirely from documents. Her role as observer is one manufactured from her imagination. She is as much a character in the novel as de Thierry.

The conflict created is compounded by Hyde's impressionist prose, which leaves the novel grossly over-written. The description of de Thierry as 'the fauna of everywhere'[45] is typical of a rhetorical prose that appears to deem such elaboration to be a generic necessity. As with Passport to Hell, Hyde's conscious adoption of a 'role' as author leads to a succession of uneasy assertions, both racial and sexual. Following de Thierry's arrival in Nukahiva, the narration describes the islanders as a 'species of overgrown fairy'.[46] The novel collapses under the weight of such description, coupled with severe structural difficulties that create a time frame almost impossible to follow. As with Journalese the structural problems point to the genesis of the novel being a commercial venture, a text written at speed (like Passport to Hell) while Hyde lingered over the first draft of The Godwits Fly.

This professionalism, the adoption of a set 'style' of writing, explains the discrepancies with Passport to Hell, but the change from a spare, masculinist, factual, documentary style to the coloured romanticism and impressionism of Check to your King also signals Hyde's movement away from the tones and structures of the male dominated orthodoxy. It is too tempting to move to the other extreme however, and claim, as Frank Birbalsingh does, that Hyde's interest in de Thierry is purely a manifestation of her own neuroses. Writing in 1977 Birbalsingh notes that 'de Thierry's expectations of life are similar to the author's; and the sad frustration with his well-intentioned schemes parallels the tragic failure of her idealistic faith.'[47] This critique only sees Hyde's work as the result of a wounded, highly subjective consciousness, forced to cling to the comforts of Grey Lodge (the semi-independent unit of Auckland Mental Hospital where Hyde lived from 1933 to 1937), and forever seeking fictional characters who mirror her own perceived sensitivities. Birbalsingh's insistence on Hyde's 'pathos for de Thierry' revealing 'the deep compassion which is at the centre of Robin Hyde's view of life'[48] is another manifestation of the tradition of criticism which denies Hyde her proper place within the complexities of New Zealand's literary culture.

The structural difficulties of Check to your King (Chapter 10 even begins with the foreword: 'May be omitted by those with a constitutional dislike of historical detail'[49]) mask its political message. In spite of the rhetoric with which he is described, de Thierry fulfils a similar function to Starkie. Hyde is careful to present him as an egalitarian figure whose concerns for democracy and race relations are neglected by the institutionalised authorities with which he is forced to work. As

with Starkie, de Thierry is the victim of an authoritarianism which cares little for the well-being of individual citizens. Check to your King contains none of Jameson's prescriptions for the socialist use of documents, but it is important to recognise the place of politics within Hyde's conception of the novel. The liberal humanism she espoused throughout the decade never solidified into any form of political dogma. Like Fairburn, she was attracted to The Social Credit Party because of its ability to appeal to a leftist ideology which stopped short of the extremism of communism. However, as the decade progressed her resolve to speak for the marginalised settled into an outlook that was closer to conventional socialism. Her journalistic writing on the work of the Spanish Medical Aid Committee is one of the few examples of attention to the Spanish conflict displayed by any of New Zealand's major literary figures during the 1930s.[50]

As with Passport to Hell, Check to your King emerges as a text rooted in the peculiarities of the mid 1930s. Hyde's obsession with the seductive qualities of a romantic past combines with her knowledge of the responsibility to deal with the increasing politicisation of the present. The whole is contained within her struggle to develop a mode of writing not dependent on the limiting structures of New Zealand fiction. The novel wrestles with all of these. In her use of the past interconnecting with the present, her avoidance of propaganda, her consciousness of her place within two literary traditions, Hyde resembles Fairburn. Check to your King is flawed in the same way as Fairburn's 1938 Dominion (noticeably many of these problems are also found in Sargeson's later novels). Both display doubt and uncertainty as to the method of reconciling the

multiplicities of the time. Both fail because their internal tensions pull them apart.

The end of 1935 and beginning of 1936 mark a turning point in Hyde's literary output. The period illustrates a significant shift in the tone of her fiction. By late 1935 she had completed a draft of The Godwits Fly and in early 1936 she worked on a considerable revision to the novel. Also during this period she worked on 'The Unbelievers' and Wednesday's Children. The end of 1936 and the beginning of 1937 saw the production of Nor the Years Condemn, as well as the autobiographical A Home In this World and the impressionistic prose fragment 'A Night of Hell.' Again it is tempting to understand these changes in biographical terms. After her work on 'The Unbelievers' and Wednesday's Children, Hyde left Grey Lodge in January 1937. She wrote A Home In This World in a small bach in the Waitakere ranges, and then moved to Milford in Auckland. By the end of the year she had decided to journey to Britain. Leaving the security she had known since 1933 undoubtedly had an influence on her subsequent fiction, but it is an influence that must be set in the context of her increasing literary development and political awareness. Wednesday's Children is not simply the reflection of an author who had the courage to probe the emotional complexities of the individual. It displays an increasingly sophisticated attitude to the position of women within New Zealand culture, as well as a significant development in her understanding of the formal structures capable of giving this expression.

The final shape of Wednesday's Children owes much to Hyde's work on 'The Unbelievers.' Despite the fact that the 306 page typescript was sent to the Boston firm of Houghton-Mifflin following its completion in August 1935, 'The Unbelievers' is

virtually unpublishable. Its fragmentary, episodic nature means that the novel lacks any form of discernable narrative, and there are no real themes or motifs that work through the text as a whole. Nevertheless, in its attempts to portray a division between reality and fantasy, and in the conclusions it reaches regarding patriarchy, the role of women in society, and a picture of New Zealand society in general, 'The Unbelievers' is a clear precursor of both the experimental method and the perceptive contents of Wednesday's Children. In August 1935, Hyde wrote to J.H.E. Schroder that 'The Unbelievers' was:

> Comedy and fantasy with a magic island and communists & psychiatrists and idealized portraits of all my fair and false friends. I wrote it as a relief for pent-up feelings and it did.[51]

This description gives some idea of the chaotic nature of the novel, but it is important to stress its place in Hyde's working method. The two central female characters of 'The Unbelievers', Roxanne and Echo, are undefined as individuals (the novel begins to lose its momentum when they are forced to meet) and Hyde was far more successful when she combined the personae of the two in the single character of Wednesday Gilfillan. Similarly, the fantasy Pacific island of Aue that is the goal of many in 'The Unbelievers' seeking to escape the mundanity of middle-class New Zealand life is a romantic ideal that lacks any real shape or form. Hyde's decision to reject this for the immediacy of Wednesday's island in Wednesday's Children is a move which leads to a far more successful presentation of the reality/fantasy divide. In terms of narrative method, characterisation, and thematic unity Hyde builds Wednesday's Children out of the fragments of 'The Unbelievers.' As much as anything else, such a process is a testament to her sense of

craft. To juxtapose the two novels is to witness a rigorous attention to the particulars of creation.[52]

Wednesday Gilfillan is a woman in a world predominantly ruled by men, allowed to break free from the oppression of strict gender roles both by her winning of the lottery and by the power of her own imagination. She is a descendant of the female portrayals of Mansfield. Like Linda Burnell she is forced to seek an alternative 'reality' when faced with the restrictive structures of a patriarchal society, retreating into what Mansfield herself termed 'the secret self.'[53] In the most perceptive reading of the novel to date, Susan Ash has noted that 'Wednesday refuses to assent to her own subordination and confinement in a society which would reduce her to a passive, acquiescent recipient of male will', choosing instead to populate her island with myths and fictions with the result that 'the rich inner world of the female procreative imagination opposes the destructive, superficial external world.'[54] Hyde creates an allegorical world in which her central character develops from being the victim of male scorn (Wednesday had earlier been, like Beryl Fairfield in 'Prelude', the single woman dependent upon the charity of a male household) to establish her own independence in terms that are her own creation. As Ash comments, '[a] 'realist' interpretation of the novel might see a woman who indulges in wish-fulfillment rather than take part in the real, social world',[55] but Wednesday's ultimate suicide is, like that of Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899), an affirmative sign, a refusal to bow to reintegration with the male world. Her rejection of Bellister not only confirms her independence, it also subverts the generic expectations of the historical romance that Hyde has carefully hinted at throughout the narrative.

The novel portrays Auckland as a centre of middle-class values, the poverty of the back streets ignored by the conservatism of the bourgeois dinner-party set, itself functioning on superficialities and deceit:

> Clink-clink-clink chimed the delicate, indelicate mirth, mirth on the lips of the young-old men disappointed in everything but lechery, of women getting solid about the hips and fluid about the conscience, of women getting solid about the heart whilst remaining externally thin and waspish, of the bright young people whose dullness was a perpetual source of surprise and embarrassment to everybody...[56]

This is the world of Ronald and Brenda Gilfillan, of Crispin, Derwent and Pamela, even of Bellister, who appears to understand Wednesday's world but is ultimately rooted within a society based on money and privilege. In contrast Wednesday's island is full of her creations, an international brood of children who represent aspects of Wednesday's own character and who are strongly associated with the processes of art and nature. The internationalism of Wednesday's dream children is important, since it reflects Hyde's desire for a 'home' from which the artist could 'advance' and connect with a world from which no sources or influences would be barred. The semi-surreal world of the island, and of the children's relationship with Beppo and Giuseppe, confuses 'reality' and 'fantasy.' As Wednesday writes to Bellister in her final letter to him: 'My truths were amoebae, they had second selves, split personalities, double faces.'[57] Wednesday's island is not simply a retreat. It exists as an alternative form of 'reality' in contrast to the orthodox world of Ronald, Brenda and Bellister. Hyde displays the usefulness of Wednesday's creations in the character of Madame Mystera. In the guise of the fortune-teller, Wednesday's fictions offer hope and

support to the poor who come to consult her and, as Ash notes, 'Wednesday functions as artist in the external world, working not with objective facts, but with the 'unreal' truths of dreams, creating female stories and shaping female experience.[58]

Wednesday's Children is Hyde's most intelligent novel, displaying an awareness of social and gender roles, and an ability to convey these, in a manner that was far ahead of any of her contemporaries in New Zealand. While Hyde inherits the psychological power of Wednesday from Mansfield, her playful use of dream sequences within the narrative point to the later fiction of Janet Frame[59], and the structure of the novel (the winning of the lottery, the physical isolation of the island) is clearly a model for Keri Hulme's the bone people (1983). The novel's complexities place it outside the parameters of the orthodox criticism of the 1930s, and its initial reception and place in subsequent literary histories displays an ignorance as to its full diversity. Birbalsingh's comment that 'even if some of these adventures can be understood individually, they can not be said to join together into a coherent plot that conveys clear meaning'[60] only confirms Hyde's departure from the standard conventions of narrative fiction. It fails to recognise the necessity of such a form in an era dominated by a perceived social realism, as well as the novel's anticipation of the kind of 'excess' which defines post-colonial fiction not only in the work of Frame, but also of Wilson Harris, Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri.

Wednesday's Children is largely free from the structural problems that affect all of Hyde's other novels, probably due to the comprehensive nature with which she reworked (rather than simply rewrote) 'The Unbelievers.' Attica's kidnapping of the

choirboy and Dorset's journey with Mr Abednego jar the narrative but do not disrupt the fusion of the fantastic and the mundane. Hyde's success at subverting the conventional romantic ending is matched by her marginalisation of the international issues prevalent in the period. The minutiae of the 1930s - the war in Abyssinia, the role of The League Of Nations, the increasing politicisation of the social realm - are all discussed in Wednesday's Children. However, instead of the crude use of Starkie as a lens in Passport to Hell, Hyde's method is more oblique here. External events only prompt debate when they infringe on the private consciences of the characters. Attica's fictional rendition of her version of the Italo-Abyssinian campaign is typical of this subtlety.[61] Though the prose is different, this use of contemporary events is reminiscent of Christopher Isherwood in Mr Norris Changes Trains (1935) and Goodbye to Berlin (1939). Hyde's presentation succeeds because of its avoidance of a polemic. Instead the commentary on political issues is part of the dynamic realm of possibilities contained within Hyde's novel.

Despite Hyde's avowed contempt for the modernism that dominated literature following the First World War - she typified T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as 'poetic snobs,... clever to the point of inspiration in securing their divorce from the people' by plunging 'headlong into obscurites'[62] - Wednesday's Children is a modernist text. It is a deliberate move away from the 'popular' style of Passport to Hell and Check to your King, creating a world less uniform and more schizophrenic. It is ironic that a novel which posits such a radical transformation of society should have been classified as escapist, irrelevant fiction, but this was the reaction of the contemporary literary

orthodoxy. The novel was not a commercial success. It lay outside the boundaries of both 'traditional' women's writing (exemplified by the historical novels of G.B. Lancaster) and the nascent masculinist nationalism perceived in the short fiction Sargeson published in Tomorrow. Nevertheless, Hyde dispensed with the manufactured authorial roles of her first two novels and came to reject the androgyny, the 'effort of ceasing to be a woman', that the literary culture had forced upon her. Instead she recognised her position, 'caught in the hinge of a slowly-opening door', as a woman writer in society, seeing that position as one of potential strength:

> The 'over-wrought over-taut vision of the woman writer' may tap a nerve in the national consciousness which the 'serene male' cannot hope to reach, because he 'has never been obliged to look at life with a perpetual crick in his neck.'[63]

The Godwits Fly is, like Wednesday's Children, an assertion of this strength, an attempt to 'tap' the national nerve. It is less 'fictional' than the earlier novel, being largely autobiographical, but it continues to demonstrate 'how a woman's spiritual quest can provide new visions of individual power that can inspire the transformation of a culture or a society.' As with Wednesday's Children Hyde was conscious of her use of experimental form in the novel, 'trying to do something nobody else has tried.'[64] Lawrence Jones has characterised the form as one with 'no transitions, no narrative summaries, but a kind of continuously unrolling present-in-the-past, with metaphor and simile used to capture impressions and feelings of the characters.'[65] Hyde uses scenes as building blocks, stressing colours and sounds in her construction of the world as seen by Eliza Hannay. The movement from a third to a first person

narration is similar to the documentary style of Passport to Hell (Hyde interrupted her original composition of The Godwits Fly at the end of the fourth chapter in order to work on Starkie's story), but the novel contains little of the authorial posturing that characterised the earlier text. In her creation of the subtleties of Eliza's world, Hyde works within the tradition of psychological fiction developed by Mansfield, an impressionist subjectivity which M.H. Holcroft, in a phrase typical of the critical orthodoxy dominating New Zealand, termed 'breathless and feminine.'[66] Hyde's dislocations, her portrayal of the episodic nature of Eliza's childhhod, reflect a social and personal depiction fundamentally estranged from the rubric of literature Holcroft helped to establish.

Significantly, the experimental nature of both Wednesday's Children and The Godwits Fly establish Hyde's fiction as the most individual of the decade. Unlike her earlier novels she is free largely from the inherited structures of the 1930s orthodoxy in Europe. Both novels do owe a debt to the work of pioneering female modernists, but the legacy of Mansfield and Virginia Woolf leaves Hyde with a scope which her male contemporaries, obsessed with self-definition, lack. For all its faults, The Godwits Fly is arguably as representative of a distinct New Zealand culture as Sargeson's early short fiction. Hyde's fictional method does not produce a plethora of social detail, it does not root itself within the language of the working people, but it does present a specificity that is undeniably local. Eliza Hannay's journey from childhood to the world of a young adult (a process Patrick Evans relates to Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist) encapsulates a singular experience that catches the workings of a culture.

The Mansfield parallels are clearly evident from the novel's beginning. The Hannay family is structured like that of the Burnells, with Eliza occupying the pivotal role of Kezia, the middle daughter. The opening chapters deliberately recreate the events depicted in 'Prelude.' The depiction of adventure in moving house and the relationship Eliza develops with the place she is leaving both fit the pattern of Mansfield's story. Similarly, Augusta Hannay is portrayed as a composite of Linda and Beryl, an overworked woman in a male world, lacking the necessary space for articulation and dreaming of an unattainable England. In the character of Augusta, Hyde charts the constricting pressures on women within New Zealand culture, pressures which wear down the individual spirit. As Hyde wrote in 'Houses by the Sea', the poem sequence which parallels the story of The Godwits Fly:

> How she grew old happened in fine-darned places,
> Cracked pictures, seen too close; you'd barely know
> She was a red-haired woman, two little lines
> Sharp cut between her brows: her eyes looked tired
> As long as I can remember, and her strong mouth sad.
> ....
> I never saw my mother dressed in black
> But grief came... and she never let it go.
> ....
> Once she had liked her hands, but now no more
> Her pride kept up its make in waist or hair:
> Honour meant most. She listened by the door
> For who'd betray it; but too spent to care.[67]

In her portrayals of Eliza and Augusta, Hyde delineates the feminist concerns which she developed as the decade progressed. As early as 1935 she had contributed articles to the left-wing paper Working Woman (which became Woman Today in 1937) established by Elsie Locke. Nevertheless, the complexities of The Godwits Fly, the debates between nationalism and internationalism, between capitalism and socialism, result in a text where the feminist content lacks the power and intelligence

of Wednesday's Children. Hyde's structural difficulties return to compromise the novel's picture of bourgeois hypocrisy and middle-class moralising, despite the extent to which she reworked the material. The episodic nature of the narrative lacks the deft handling characteristic of Wednesday's Children and the lack of a satisfactory ending, along with a certain randomness in the second half, have led observers to dismiss the novel. Birbalsingh's comment is typical:

> [A]lthough the events are based on actual experience and accurately render this experience, they together fail to form a plot that endows them with any more significance than the random impressions of a sensitive young woman. The narrative seems aimless, and the aimlessness greatly detracts from our total response to the action which, on the whole, appears either confused or insignificant.[68]

This is the standard reaction of masculine criticism to Hyde's work. More surprising is the viewpoint of Shelagh Cox, writing in 1982. Cox stresses the importance of the feminism in The Godwits Fly, only to conclude:

> Hyde's efforts to create a realm of gold from the realm of the everyday is a creative illusion of enchantment; it is also ultimately, the fatal illusion of self-deception.[69]

Both Birbalsingh and Cox confuse style with philosophy, attributing technical difficulties to the complexities of Hyde's creative psyche. Both ultimately point to biographical sources for the novel's faults. To do so is to misunderstand both the text's strengths and weaknesses. As with Nor The Years Condemn, The Godwits Fly suffers from a number of uneasy juxtapositions. The feminism of the novel is compromised by Hyde's portrayal of Timothy Cardew, a portrayal that refers to the stock masculinism of the period. Timothy dreams of being the poet/tramp/scholar

composite that is typical of the romantic socialism of the decade: 'I've got to prowl over Europe, and sleep out with fuzzy tramps, and steal turnips, and live as Jack London lived.'[70] The scenes narrated from his point of view are distinctly Sargesonesque, full of a male bravado that fails to integrate with the tone of the rest of the novel.

This romanticism also undermines the portrayal of John Hannay, establishing him as a mouthpiece for a tame anti-capitalism. A tension is established in the politics of the novel; John's socialism reflecting Hyde's leftist, international humanism while the central theme of the godwits refers back to the traditional yearning for a pre-colonial 'home.' This juxtaposition masks Hyde's knowledge that both socialism and colonialism are, to some extent, fictions. Responding to Simone's comment that 'The godwits don't go anywhere near England. They fly to Siberia', Eliza simply states 'Not in my story.'[71] Similarly, when told by Timothy that she can't travel to England with him because she is a woman, she responds 'I'm not a woman; not for ordinary purposes.'[72] Eliza's use of fictions connects her to Wednesday Gilfillan and the narrative excesses of Wednesday's Children, but here this theme lacks explication. The various layers of The Godwits Fly constrict it, leaving it full of an internal wrestling. As with Passport to Hell this tension denotes the pressures of the literary culture, the complexities of the artist's place within society.

In Wednesday's Children and The Godwits Fly Hyde defines New Zealand not as a local 'reality', but as a series of alternative, destabilised fictions which overlap with existing cultural structures to produce 'meanings' which remain elusive. Hyde's combination of nineteenth-century romanticism with modernism, of

a proto-nationalism with an internationalist socialism, and of a feminism at odds with the restrictions of a male literary culture, produces a fiction which invariably functions by its contradictions (and mirrors a similarly contradictory society). Wednesday's Children did not prompt a move towards the sustained creation of 'metafictional' narratives.[73] Hyde's work does not follow such linear prescriptions. Her last novel, Nor The Years Condemn, and the poems written between late 1937 and her death in 1939 (collected in the 1952 publication Houses by the Sea), are her most ambitious work. Hyde seeks to enlarge the scope of her fiction, drawing a more complex picture of the culture in which she lived. As with her earlier novels the problems of form, tone and structure remain an obstacle to her articulation. Like Cresswell and Fairburn before her, Hyde faced the struggle of finding a mode of expression that communicated the complexities of her own position. In Nor The Years Condemn she again uses a process of lamination (as she does in her 1939 memoir of her travels in China, Dragon Rampant), building a text that seeks to combine these complexities.

In the last years of the decade Hyde's vision broadened. Not only was she more confident of expressing the nature of women's role in society, she also regarded the wider social issues of the period with more foresight. Her journalism during this time expands to deal with international events - the wars in Spain and China - as well as returning to national myths and fictions, particularly those of the Maori. As Boddy and Matthews have observed, Hyde's international outlook was more than just a recognition of new material:

> Internationalism was in any case not just a 'topic' for articles, but a vital part of Hyde's social and political philosophy, which

> was quite representative of the New Zealand left of the thirties.[74]

Nor The Years Condemn is an attempt to focus these concerns, returning to use the persona of Starkie to convey the 'boom and bust' period in New Zealand. Hyde's prefatory note to the novel describes it as a text that aims to 'tell as exactly as possible what happened, and the types of people who were caught up in a mounting wave, sank down into its pit, and are now struggling up again.'[75] However, the formal and thematic fluidity of the novel make it as much a successor to The Godwits Fly as to Passport to Hell. As Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews note: 'Divided within itself, divided between its different modes of speech, the text enacts the conflicts whose resolution it can only gesture towards.'[76]

The 'conflicts' of the novel are racial, social and economic. Starkie's tramping throughout Australia and New Zealand acts as a moving camera, focusing on the working classes of both urban and rural communities. Unlike Passport to Hell, Hyde's method in Nor The Years Condemn moves beyond a masculinist reportage. It attempts to 'force open the locked treasure chest'[77] of New Zealand history, to explore the Maori fictions of the past and juxtapose these with an analysis of the people marginalised by the economics of the depression. This awareness of history and geography reflects Hyde's movement away from the seductions of the colonial past. In 1936, whilst working on The Godwits Fly, she wrote to Gloria Rawlinson:

> [I]t's just dawned on me that I'm a New Zealander, and surely, surely the legends of the mountains, rivers and people that we see about us should mean more to us than the legends of any country on earth.[78]

It is far too simplistic to see this movement as the pivotal force in Hyde's work. The critical view of Colin Partridge,

writing in 1968, that Hyde's 'development as a writer... was a process of relating her artistic self to her own country'[79] is a limiting partial reading. It seeks to align Hyde with the perceived generalised nationalism of the decade and thereby excludes the constructive difficulties which inform her work. The focus on the land in Nor The Years Condemn does not make it a 'nationalist' text. In many ways it moves away from the nationalism of the period, since it challenges imperial versions of settlement and history. Hyde is interested in the fictions of the land, the myths of its creations and the stories of those who work on it. Starkie functions as a more subtle lens than in Passport to Hell, observing and listening, occasionally giving up the narrative to the 'voice' of the land itself.[80] Hyde carefully counterbalances Starkie with Macnamara and Bede Collins, providing a variety of perspectives that move the novel away from social realism towards what Hyde herself termed 'utopian politics.' Macnamara is the antithesis to Starkie, constantly providing an alternative explanation of events. Hyde deliberately refuses to root him in the novel's specifics, leaving him free to function as an omnipotent commentator.

Bede Collins reflects the harshness of the culture's attitude towards women. She is forced to observe the social decay around her. In her treatment of the wounded she is confronted with problems that 'troubled the depths, making her remember things she wanted to set aside.'[81] From her duties on the cripples' ward at the novel's beginning to her participation in the Anzac Day service, the Queen Street riots and the election that closes the narrative, Bede is an integral part of the public processes that indicate social upheaval. Through her Hyde

expresses her 'humanist conception of the people as the collective embodiment of essential human values.'[82]:

> I would like to tear down all the bricks and mortar in the world, all the prisons, hospitals, orphanages and asylums, and give them instead the great meadow.[83]

Unlike Mulgan, Hyde stresses the social position and responsibility of her central protagonist. Nor The Years Condemn has much in common with Man Alone. Both texts portray New Zealand under the economic stringencies of the depression, and both focus on the Queen Street riots as a key event in that depression. But whereas Mulgan portrays Johnson in a battle with the land and a population numbed by hardship, Hyde uses Starkie to affirm her optimism in the collective potential of the people. Starkie deliberately rejects the desire to turn his back on society:

> For the first time, the world looked clean, and for the first time also, he felt half disposed to wander off into the bush, looking for nothing, doing nothing. But that was how men went screwey, living alone.[84]

Unlike Johnson who turns to the bush in order to protect his personal freedom, Starkie returns to the social realm of hydro work at Waikaremoana, back to the people and to the community.

Hyde's sense of community, of the political potential of the people, is undoubtedly romantic. As in her other texts, the nebulous nature of the political content denotes a romanticism that runs through the novel. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews' comment that 'Starkie's tramping is an ideal of freedom and equality, of the justice of necessity and the values of survival' or that Macnamara's wanderings 'holds the possibility that people freed from social constraints can expand to realise their own freedom'[85] fails to recognise the origins of such actions in literary romanticism or their place in the obsession with

geographical specificities that characterises the period's nationalism. As with Passport to Hell the conventions of the male orthodoxy suffuse Nor The Years Condemn, providing another layer that complicates the novel. Hyde's mixing of her authorial position with the persona of Starkie, the 'double masquerade', is only in part a process of deliberate gender confusion. It also gives rise to structural problems that cloud the effect of the novel. The claim that 'Hyde's identification with Starkie surely owed much to her sense of herself as an outsider, a woman who throughout her life transgressed the implicit social laws that determined the boundaries of a woman's experience'[86] is similarly limiting. It negates the commercial and social pressures Hyde experienced in gaining publication for her work.

Hyde's structural problems in Nor The Years Condemn (many of which also characterise Dragon Rampant), the necessity to forge a narrative out of the interwoven fragments contained in the first chapter, do limit the novel's power. The sudden switch to a Joycean modernism in Chapter 16, with its fractured multiple personae, sits uneasily with the remainder of the text. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews are correct when they state that Hyde's intention is to make 'the reader work to decipher the meaning of this collage of fragments'[87], but the prose lacks the control of Wednesday's Children. However, this recognition of Hyde's modernist experimentation is more constructive than Patrick Evans's claims for the novel. Evans adopts the view that Hyde solved all her structural and technical difficulties in one blow:

> In her final novel, Nor The Years Condemn, it is as if her writing suddenly resolved itself completely, allowing her to write a prose that is completely unselfconscious, and with an openness that gives a sense of breadth to the novel, both in the range of characters offered and in the amount of territory it covers.[88]

Evans is right to highlight the novel's 'sense of breadth' but the remainder of his critique betrays a misreading of the text. His claim that: 'This bare, simple way of seeing is Hyde's way round the rules that were blocking her'[89] makes two crucial mistakes. Hyde's prose in the novel is not 'bare' and 'simple', it is a deliberate mixture of registers and perspectives which aims at a multi-layered portrayal. Similarly, the 'rules' of the male orthodoxy, the structures by which it operated, also have their place in Hyde's fiction. Nor The Years Condemn, like all Hyde's novels with the exception of Wednesday's Children, contains stereotypes and cliches derived from the mainstream writing of the period. What makes the novel so illuminating is the presence of these elements in conjunction with Hyde's more experimental and radical work. To imagine Hyde's later fiction as a body of work which succeeds constantly in avoiding the restrictions of a patriarchal culture is to ignore the ingrained effects of that culture on her writing. In its scope and breadth, its successes, failures and tensions, Nor The Years Condemn is perhaps the most complex piece of fiction produced in New Zealand during the 1930s. In that sense it could be argued that it is in some way definitive, since despite the simplifying discourses that dominated the decade, the period was one defined by doubt and complexities.

*

In broad terms, Hyde's poetic career parallels that of her fiction writing. It encompasses a movement from a singular craft, heavily reliant on both forms and themes adopted from the Georgians, to a more flexible poetry which addresses a wider

audience, with a less stringent accent on rigid form. As with her fiction however, she was never entirely able to release herself from a neo-Georgian romanticism, and the rhythms and tones which typify The Desolate Star (1929) are still discernable in some of her poems from the end of the 1930s.

Hyde's first three volumes of poetry, The Desolate Star, The Conquerors (1935) and Persephone in Winter (1937), are not strictly successive. The later volumes contain material dating from the late 1920s. The majority of the material is contained within formal structures. Hyde depends on the sonnet, the cross-rhymed quatrain and the rhyming couplet for effect, framing poems that deal with traditional Georgian themes of love or loss. 'Division', from The Desolate Star is a typical example:

> If it were nothing but some sheer abyss
> Opened between us; if some icy sea,
> Whose sword of waters clove 'twixt kiss and kiss,
> Hid your small garden's dreaming face from me,
> I should have faith, and parting would have end.
> I think our feet would cross on rainbows, friend.
>
> For love knows patient ways of building strong
> Bridges and stairs. Love flies with secret wings;
> Love's shining wind shakes cities with a song,
> Swirls wet pink blossoms round bewildered kings.
> But there is more to conquer - all that long
> Pageant of ghosts, in stained and tattered dress -
> The swift, mistaken word, the unmeant wrong,
> The pride, grown harsh at last for loneliness.[90]

In its subject matter and tone, as well as its inability to transcend the confines of the metre, 'Division' is similar to the bulk of Fairburn's verse in his first collection He Shall Not Rise (1930). Like Fairburn, Hyde's early poetry aligns itself with the work of the more Centrist Georgian poets. The poetry up to 1937 echoes with the legacy of Walter De la Mare, Ernest Dowson and Rupert Brooke, as well as the early W.B. Yeats. Again like Fairburn, Hyde displays herself as the heir to a metaphysical tradition which results in the adoption of personae

in The Conquerors and Persephone in Winter. Moving away from strictly personal experience, her work utilises classical, historical and mythical fantasies that betray 'an essential literariness, a self-consciously poetic sensibility that is perhaps Robin Hyde's greatest weakness.'[91] As with the contents of He Shall Not Rise, none of Hyde's early poems betray any awareness of New Zealand. Lydia Wevers' comment on the genesis of this poetry is indicative of Hyde's view of literature as a whole in the early to mid-1930s. According to Wevers, the poems illustrate 'the ways in which her imagination worked and the stimuli it received. In them she is present only as an interpreter, prophet or orator: they seem written out of some cerebral country, lacking nationality, geography or personal identity.'[92] This is as true of the author of Passport to Hell and Check to your King as of the poetry of this period.

As with her fiction, Hyde's poetry profited from her developing views on writing in late 1936 and early 1937. In the words of James K. Baxter: 'In her later work Robin Hyde frees herself all but completely from the mandarin style.'[93] The lines and rhymes become more irregular, and the increasing focus on the New Zealand environment parallels the concerns expressed in The Godwits Fly and Nor The Years Condemn. Hyde was disdainful of the modernist revolution in poetry, describing it in her journal as 'this ghostly modern-verse violin shop, where all the fiddles a-playing go, and never a hand to touch them nor a heart to be poured into them.'[94] Her formal experimentation in poetry does not match the development of multi-voice and multi-perspective narratives in her fiction. The qualification in Baxter's comment recognises the 'neo-Georgian decorative quality' that Hyde 'did not entirely put overboard.'[95] This decoration embellishes

'Arangi-Ma', where (as in Check to your King) a perception of European sophistication clashes with Maori culture, the whole framed in a language self-consciously literary: 'Ever to wander in a thicket, wild/ With dusk, the dear trails fainter in the wood.'[96] It also influences the tone of 'Houses by the Sea', where the sequence finishes with a vision of 'Faraway' that mixes childhood memories with the possibilities of benevolent fictions:

> Empty I knew it, but the low fires lighted,
> Snow in coarse gig-ruts mounting up beside:
> The curtains drawn for what obscure benighted
> Wanderer who'd not quite lived and not quite died;[97]

Yet, as with Hyde's fiction, this neo-Georgianism must be set in context with the influences of the contemporary orthodoxy. C.R. Allen, a regular reviewer of Hyde's work, decribed it as 'quasi-virile' and Wevers admits to the legacy of 'an established view whose influence Robin Hyde was never entirely to shake off.'[98] The tensions produced by such a juxtaposition are evident in 'The Exile':

> This is my country; here my feet are set
> Without question, in the soil I understand;
> Here the lean hardships whimpering at my hand,
> (Beggars, of rightful claimants to be met,)
> Are kinsmen still... their eyes too often wet.
> But every dream into this clean air split
> Circles about the leaf-red tower I built...
> Drive me away; ye are my people yet.
> Volumnia, you'll never know what bitter bread
> I begged in that strange land, of that strange sky.
> Their harsh red rabble of singing passed me by,
> Unmoved their passions left me as the dead.
> Let me reach up my hand to touch your head...
> Or move about your tasks; but yet be nigh.[99]

The poem's first two lines fit the nationalist mythology. The aggressive simplicity of statement is a clear example of the kind of 'fidelity' demanded by Curnow. It is a phrase that allows Hyde to be drawn into the canon as a poet who abandoned the 'false' literary atmospheres of her earlier work and produced her best work when detailing the specificities of New Zealand. But the

poem moves from this opening to a mythical land of dreams and Yeatsian artistic imagery which is at odds with the structures of nationalism. These conflicts demand recognition if an assessment of Hyde's work is to be attempted. The various orthodoxies that wrestle within her poetry include that of English literature during the 1930s, and despite her contempt for Auden, his rhythms and sentence structures are discernable in her later work. 'Prayer for a Young Country' includes the distinctly Audenesque: 'Feathered in what delusion/ Sing the fierce swan-song, stride this cataract/ Of one world's deadly purpose.'[100] Similarly, Hyde's poetry as a whole shows a continuing response to the development within Yeats' work.

James Bertram, in his review of 'Houses by the Sea', constantly refers to Hyde's ability to 'fully realise' the Wellington she describes. He generalises, 'When Robin Hyde kept her eye on the object, she seldom wrote badly' and values her poems from China because of the validity of their presentation.[101] It is ironic that he misses Hyde's violent outburst from the 'Houses by the Sea' sequence:

> None of it true; for Christ's sake, spill the ink,
> Tear out this charnel's darnel-root, that lingers
> Sprouting words, words, words![102]

This is a recognition of difficulties, of destabilising complexities. It is a sudden outburst of the recognition of uncertainty that underlies much of Hyde's work, both fiction and poetry. The inability to capture what Bertram terms the 'object', the impossibilites of a stable and 'honest' portrayal, were recognised by Hyde as the 1930s progressed. Her answer was to produce work which sought to match the multiplicities she understood to define the culture around her. In the mixing of traditions and styles, of social and political influences, Hyde

presents material which defies the comforts of a linear reading. It is instead a force field of meaning, and as such, it attempts to address the structures of the 1930s in their complex totalities.

6. FRANK SARGESON: THE TAKAPUNA IMAGINATION.

> One world, Sargeson's, has come from one populated mind, Sargeson's.[1]

With such inelegance, Helen Shaw begins her commentary on Frank Sargeson in Cherry Hankin's collection of essays on the New Zealand short story. This opening sentence sets the tone for the remainder of the piece, which moves with ever increasing reverence towards a celebration of 'the release of his genius.'[2] Shaw is at pains to stress the uniqueness of Sargeson's craft, and to reinforce the notion that his work reflects specific New Zealand themes; this place at that time - the product of a singular vision of the surrounding society and culture:

> Sargeson began the task of converting readers to look for something they could recognise as a Sargeson story, containing a philosophy original to Sargeson, with his first brief stories published in Conversations with my Uncle. Like a good evangelist, he has increased and maintained interest for those readers who have been converted to an appreciation for his complete works - stories, plays, novels, novellas and autobiographies. They amount to a totality, to one man's world. The craftmanship is almost without flaw from first to last, or latest, story.[3]

Shaw's rhetoric may seem overblown, but her location of Sargeson firmly at the centre of New Zealand fiction reflects a wider opinion, the kind of opinion that led Charles Brasch to call him 'the patron saint of his metier'[4] and C.K. Stead to label Sargeson an 'atmosphere.'[5] It stems from Sargeson's perceived position in that generation of writers who sought to modify their cultural identity. This generation of the 1930s accelerated the process of cultural decolonisation by challenging

the structures of previous modes of expression in New Zealand. As Stead noted, quoting Allen Curnow, they 'deflated the myth of a South Seas paradise and depicted New Zealand as 'a land of settlers / with never a soul at home.''[6] Sargeson, with his extensive use of New Zealand speech patterns and mannerisms, is canonised by the orthodoxy at the heart of a movement which was busily rejecting the Anglophile outlook of such figures as Alan Mulgan and Hector Bolitho, as well as Katherine Mansfield's European modernism and the kind of writing which Curnow labels as 'sentimental pseudo-patriotism.'[7] Consequently, Curnow groups Sargeson with D'Arcy Cresswell, R.A.K. Mason, A.R.D. Fairburn, Charles Brasch, John Mulgan, Denis Glover, Roderick Finlayson and Ursula Bethell as authors 'who, as New Zealanders, accepted the disciplines of uncompromising fidelity to experience, of an unqualified responsibility to the truths of themselves.'[8] In the emergence of this nationalist orthodoxy Sargeson becomes a linchpin in the assertion of cultural difference.

This view that Sargeson's writing mirrors a 'truth' is central to the depiction of him as a nationalist writer. The mythic dimensions of this 'truth' lay in the recognition of the illusory character of what Lawrence Jones calls 'the Pastoral Paradise and the Just City'[9], the colonial dream of a new Arcadia in the South Seas, a dream which James K. Baxter termed 'a lie commonly held to be truth.'[10] In its place the writers of the 1930s sought to present a new image of the Pakeha New Zealander as, to quote Jones, 'a racist, conformist, provincial, secularised puritan, sleeping complacently, if not a bit fretfully, in his self-made prison.'[11]

It is vital to stress the process of historicisation in an analysis of the nationalist mythology of the 1930s. In 1945 both

Sargeson and Curnow were seeking to define the direction in which post-war literature should move with their respective anthologies Speaking For Ourselves and Caxton's A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945. It was here that the contextualisation of nationalism during the period began. The anthologies of Curnow and Sargeson, as well as the criticism developing through the 1940s and 1950s, began to fix the 1930s as a stable set of meanings. Within these meanings, the 1930s fiction of Sargeson (collected in Conversation with my Uncle and other sketches (1936) and A Man and his Wife (1940), although many of the stories in That Summer and Other Stories (1946) also have their genesis in the 1930s) plays a vital part. Along with John Mulgan, Sargeson's image shares a history of fabrication within the nationalist canon. His position, not only as a nationalist 'father' in the context of New Zealand literature, but also as a stylistic innovator in the processes of post-colonial decolonisation, is steeped in the myth that also surrounds the decade's nationalism in general. To explore Sargeson's role within the New Zealand writing of the period is to attempt a precise dissection of a literature that is in a state of constant mobility and change. The layers of literary heritage fuse with both personal and national myths, and the whole is overlaid by a complex and lengthy critical historicisation. Despite the inherent complexities involved, this kind of exploration is necessary, since the role accredited to Sargeson in the 1930s is one that is not based on a full evaluation of his place within the decade's literary tensions. When the work of Sargeson is set in a proper context, it becomes apparent that his position in the canon is based on a selected reading of his works, and that it over-emphasises his importance in the period's literature.

Sargeson plays his own part in this process of critical historicisation, most notably in the 1970s, with the publication of his three-volume autobiography. With this hindsight he is able to shape and construct his past and define his fiction in terms that fit his position within the canon of nationalist literature. Writing in 1978, Lawrence Jones commented on the impact of Once is Enough (1973), the first volume of the autobiography, on his teaching of Sargeson:

> As I was preparing the lectures, Once is Enough came out and immediately became for me THE Sargeson text, not only because of its finely modulated structure of association and memory, but also because of the light it threw on Sargeson's own sensibility and on the nature of New Zealand. What had been an implicit source of value in the stories, the author's personal vision, became explicit. I could see Sargeson's imagination at work characterising itself.[12]

As Jones indicates in linking it to Sargeson's fiction, Once is Enough is as much of a 'creative' work as any of the stories. It is rooted in the kind of geographical specificities that Curnow demanded of New Zealand literature, a search for what Sargeson describes as 'my own New Zealand'[13]. It also establishes the central image of the whole autobiography, his uncle's King Country farm. For Sargeson the farm serves as a constant connection to the 'reality' of New Zealand culture. It guarantees that 'fidelity to experience' which Curnow both admires and demands. Implicit in this identification is the rejection of the 'nation building' of the late colonial era, the fashioning of New Zealand to British structures. In his 1970s perception of his 1930s self, Sargeson is at pains to root himself in the soil of the land, to fit his life story to the mythology that has been created around his fiction. At numerous points during his travels

in Europe in the late 1920s (briefly dealt with in Once is Enough), he reiterates this sense of location:

> When I wandered in the streets of London or Paris or Milan or Florence always it would be something in some way connected with my uncle which would remind me of New Zealand: feeling solitary, I would often tell myself that I had never felt so solitary in the remote centre of the country most remote from where I was.[14]

In the terms of this vocabulary Europe, and by implication, the bulk of the literature which Sargeson pored over in the library of the British Museum, is rejected once it has been experienced. The heritage of European culture, particularly as it manifests itself in geography (the physical, concrete appearance of the nation) is seen to be insufficient for the articulation that post-colonialism requires. As with the tone of much of Curnow's 1945 anthology, Sargeson's method in these sections of Once is Enough is to stress decolonisation as a physical process, a purgation which is fundamentally human and individual. The result of this cultural masochism is a sense of national self-consiousness: 'Like so many of my fellow-countrymen I had had to visit Europe to discover that I was truly a New Zealander.'[15] With his failed attempts to write in the manner of Joycean modernism behind him, Sargeson returned to the King Country, to commence the struggle to discover appropriate images and 'a new kind of writing', a prose 'different in an interesting and distinguishing way from any other piece of writing I had ever encountered.'[16] Shaw, writing in 1982, summarises the critical orthodoxy of the preceding decades in her analysis of 'Conversation with my Uncle'. In the story's style and tone, Shaw identifies Sargeson's perceived graduation to the writing of an

uniquely New Zealand literature, one that blends past forms into a literary specific:

> In the widest sense the formative, motivating, imaginative influence has been all drawn in by him to be recomposed into a language of his own. He has used not only the language of literature but also the much less formal language of everyday speech coming especially from the lips of New Zealanders. Listening, he has heard this speech in the air around him. The influences of literature and speech, of written and spoken word, are married in the prose.[17]

For Shaw, Sargeson absorbs the old to create the new. This syncretic process appears as the product of an intellect which chooses to locate itself in the very 'air around him.' Shaw's choice of phrase is revealing. As with her previous reference to Sargeson's evangelical qualities, the language here moves towards ideas of an almost transformational quality. Sargeson's idiom appears as transcendental post-colonialism, a sort of ascension for the decolonised:

> His writing transcends influences. It almost seems irrelevant to name the works that might have played a part in bringing him to his own way. He himself has made reference on occasion to Mark Twain and Sherwood Anderson. His total work is seen to be written in a style so idiosyncratic that a page or a paragraph or a few sentences by Sargeson might read as if only he could have written them.[18]

This is selective criticism at its most partial. Shaw's belief in Sargeson's stylistic novelty renders any invocation of a wider context invalid. Instead of a position within a dynamic model of the 1930s, one characterised by crossovers and complications, Shaw credits Sargeson's 1930s fiction with a tabula rasa status. While it refrains from any explicit explication of the relationship between writer and location, the internal logic of this criticism echoes the position Sargeson has

been accorded at the beginning of a nationalist tradition in fiction which has its alleged birth in the early 1930s. Sargeson himself alludes to a similar process (though this time it is more a form of literary and cultural osmosis) in More Than Enough (the second volume of the autobiography, published in 1975) during his recollections of the German writer Karl Wolfskehl. Initially borrowing Thomas Mann's phrase 'the last of the Europeans' to describe Wolfskehl, Sargeson then goes on to say of him:

> To me it was as though towards the end of a long life he was incredibly becoming a New Zealander, aware through the pore of his skin of what it was to be native-born.[19]

This is an articulation of nationalism in its most personal sense. The autobiography is full of these associations with New Zealand that develop, as it were, from an idea of self. The intensity of this subjectivity, and its interplay with the very idea of 'nationhood', is an indication of Sargeson's inheritance from the structures and codes of literary romanticism. As with so many of his New Zealand contemporaries, Sargeson's nationalism can be seen to be far more complex than the 'new-born' portrayal it receives from Shaw. His 1930s fiction (and possibly more important, the mythology which accompanied that fiction) is full of the tensions that define New Zealand literature's relationship with the history and geography of the nation and its ties with Europe. The fabrication of Sargeson as a nationalist fails to account for the numerous literary presences within his work, particularly that of a romanticism as it worked its way from the nineteenth century and into the poetry and prose of the Georgians.

Sargeson, of course, rejected the definition of New Zealand purely in terms of its relation to colonial Britain, and agreed

with Fairburn's comment that the depression and the early 1930s 'did a good deal to cure us of sentimental illusions about England... I hope we shall never again fall into that attitude of obsequious reverence for everything English that has been characteristic of us in the past.'[20] In one of a series of parodies he wrote for Tomorrow, entitled 'Spur of Moment' Sargeson mocked the Anglophile notions voiced in Alan Mulgan's novel Spur of Morning (1934):

> Away across the seas was England - Home! There were the slums and poverty and squalor of course, but so much that was gracious and refined. How different was his own country by comparison! There was the bush certainly - the cathedral-like hush, the great tops of forest giants wearing their chaplets of clematis. But was the bush enough?[21]

Here, Sargeson plays his part in the satire that characterises much of the output of those, like Fairburn, Glover and Curnow, who would come to be associated with the decade's nationalism. The scorn of the piece is clear, but Sargeson's attitude to the idea of a European cultural 'centre' is as apparent in his 1930s fiction as it is both in his satire and his later autobiographical work. His journey to England, France, Switzerland and Italy in the late 1920s turns out to be a abnegatory version of that undertaken by Mansfield and other New Zealand writers wrestling with the antipodean relationship.[22] What appears to be a failure (particularly a failure to write - Sargeson claims the journey inspired only a Galsworthy style prose which he found unacceptable) is turned into a success when it leads to the realisation that New Zealand must move beyond a literary culture rooted in British structures. In the fiction of the subsequent decade, Sargeson would carefully define Europe as a set of cultural attitudes - metropolitan, decadent and obsessed

with an experimental modernist subjectivity - against which he would develop his own fictional method.

What must be considered now is the extent to which Sargeson fits the criteria established by Shaw, and indeed by himself in his memoirs. The perceived homogeneity of the period's writing needs to be seen as one of the limitations of nationalism. Sargeson's fiction, which has received worldwide attention for its role in the decolonising process, needs a re-evaluation that recognises the relationship between the critical/historical myth and the stories, and can explore the totality of this relationship within the decade's literature as a whole.

Patrick Evans has shown that it is possible to construct the orthodox tradition of the 1930s - a tradition based on 'masculine values and the battle to survive and with some movement towards a non-romantic language'[23] - without reference to any of Sargeson's work. Frank Anthony detailed the localised speech of working men in the 1920s, Roderick Finlayson developed the parameters of a specifically New Zealand short story form before Sargeson began to publish regularly in Tomorrow, John A. Lee's attack on puritanism predates his, and Robin Hyde's work appears far more engaged with the diversities of New Zealand culture in the decade. As Evans notes: 'All this may be true; but the real question is why we have come to think that it is not.'[24]

Certainly the literary culture of the period is more fragmented than many subsequent critiques allow. In the establishment of the 'new' national literature, Curnow groups Sargeson with those figures surrounding the publication of Phoenix, yet the political nature of the magazine, particularly when Mason succeeded Bertram as editor after the first two issues, is hardly compatible with Sargeson's own fiction. As Ian

Reid has shown[25], fiction in New Zealand during the decade was free from explicit political comment upon the depression (in sharp contrast to Australian fiction of the same era). Sargeson himself criticised Winston Rhodes, who welcomed the rise of the proletarian novel in English and American literature. Writing in Tomorrow, Sargeson responded:

> The history of the novel alone will show that there are places in the human spirit where the Marxian word doesn't run.[26]

and later admonished Rhodes for seeking:

> to place a higher value on such writers than on writers whose interpretation of the human spirit is not limited by the rigid formulae derived from conditions produced by nineteenth century industrial development.[27]

In many ways this verbal battle between Sargeson and Rhodes reflects as much about the nature of the period's periodicals as it does about the diversity of the fiction. Neither Phoenix nor Tomorrow were the single-minded vehicles they appear to be from the nationalist canon. In early 1935, before Sargeson had published 'Conversation with my Uncle', Rhodes (one of the leading exponents of socialism during the decade, but also an Australian who had grown up through the nationalist literature phase in Australia) had called for 'the beginnings of a national literature... where writers turn to deal with the normal activities of ordinary men.'[28] Tomorrow, modelled on the literary periodicals of European modernism, reflected the drive for modes of expression that blurred the boundaries of nationalism and socialism. The argument between Sargeson and Rhodes begins to point to the complexities hidden by the nationalist agenda. Similarly, the geographical base for nationalism to which Sargeson alludes in his autobiography and the full force of what Curnow was later to term 'the anti-myth about New Zealand' were

largely articulated by Curnow himself in his collections Not In Narrow Seas (1939) and Island and Time (1941). The solidity of the nationalist myth/anti-myth was not achieved until the mid-1940s. Sargeson's early stories in Tomorrow belong not to this developing hegemony (despite the claims in his memoirs) but to the kind of flux within the period which produced the doubts and uncertainties of a poem like Fairburn's Dominion (1938).

Sargeson's position within the literature of the decade becomes less stable once the critical exigencies of the nationalist mythology are explored. The author of the stories, steeped in the vernacular of New Zealand English, published in Tomorrow was also the contributor of weak Marxist rhymes to Soviet News.[29] The nationalist personification of Sargeson is no full explication of the writer's position. It is, as Janet Frame notes, fictionalising the tensions in A State of Seige (1967), closer to 'an Identi-Kit dream of Wanted National Identity'[30]. Similarly, Terry Sturm, writing of the effect of the depression on New Zealand poetry points to the origins of what he (rather nebulously) terms the period's 'point of view' lying in the 1920s. Such a view was not 'the recipe for a thorough-going literary nationalism' but rather only implied 'the assertion of nationality.'[31]

In the 1930s Sargeson may not have been one of the constructors of Frame's 'Identi-Kit' but he was providing the building blocks for those who would do so later. During the decade itself he was not greatly interested in overtly political writing or the assertion of nationalism accompanying it, preferring the more 'traditional' role of the imaginative artist, peripheral to (and commenting upon) society. Like Johnson in John Mulgan's Man Alone (1939), many of Sargeson's characters

deliberately refrain from expressing political opinions or engaging in political debate. The narrator in 'The Making of a New Zealander', when told about Nick's communism, simply replies 'Good' and then adds for the benefit of the reader: 'Well, I thought, spoil a good peasant and you might as well go the whole hog.'[32] Reid has shown how New Zealand society in the decade lacked the class stratification which made the political/historical novel popular in other literary cultures.[33] Sargeson himself, talking of a 'thinness of material in New Zealand life'[34], alludes to this lack of social diversity. Such a 'thinness' may seem to justify the narrow focus of Sargeson's fiction, but the lack of any explicit political content in his stories cannot be measured solely in terms of a simple demography. By the careful positioning of himself on the edge of middle-class New Zealand, Sargeson deliberately eschewed a dogmatic political approach. His avowed apoliticism is, more than anything, the result of his own choice to adopt the self-conscious persona of the artist/craftsman.[35]

There is, of course, some truth in Reid's comments that for many New Zealand writers of the period 'the distinctive qualities of New Zealand life are more suitably represented in a work of limited proportions' and that Sargeson's interest 'is not in the serried groupings that connect people but in the deeper things that isolate them, not in men class-ified but in man alone.'[36] Certainly his inarticulate, wandering male characters reflect a version of New Zealand society as it emerged from the depression. Bill and Terry in 'That Summer', Tom and George in 'I've Lost my Pal' and the other itinerant males in Sargeson's fictions do offer specific portrayals of the working class. Yet Sargeson's attempts to convey what he termed 'a reality of the spirit rather

than a physical reality'[37], whilst it contains assertions of nationalism, also operates within conventional manifestations of 1930s literature worldwide. The interweaving of mythic romanticism and vernacular modernism - the male bonding and physique-based language in 'That Summer' and 'The Hole that Jack Dug' which is similar to the mixture in Stephen Spender's The Temple (originally written in 1929) and much of the work of D.H. Lawrence - is a process that establishes Sargeson firmly as a product of his time, as full of the decade's complexities as any of his counterparts writing fiction in Europe or the United States.

Sargeson's rejection of urban life for the perceived simplicity of his uncle's farm in the early 1930s is a vital move in the establishment of his personal myth. As Kai Jensen notes:

> He locates the spiritual heart of his life and writing in his uncle's King Country farm, which he depicts as a microcosm of the pioneering process, and also as a place of revelation. The farm is Sargeson's holy place, source of wholeness, the place where he was liberated from the limitations of a puritanism he generally embodies in women.[38]

Sargeson's move to the King Country is presented in his autobiography as a spiritual journey, a liberating decision which heralds a new kind of life, a new kind of fiction and hence a new portrayal of New Zealand. Yet the basis of this 'originality' involves the continuation of a Romantic tradition which can be traced from Hesiod, up through Theocritus, Virgil, Sidney, Wordsworth to Edward Thomas and the Georgians. The end of Once is Enough, with its journey from Wellington to the farm contains a pastoralism strongly connected to the imagery of Wordworth's Lyrical Ballads, in a poem such as 'Tintern Abbey', and the numerous prose volumes of John Ruskin:

> But where the terrace curved back again from the creek I left it to wander through the orchard, feeling pleased with myself because I could remember my uncle's plan of it off by heart, and name each tree as I touched it: only the plums (they were trees now, the only ones that had been allowed to grow without pruning) were beginning to show confident signs of blossom or leaf, but the peaches and nectarines were swelling their buds, and the eye of faith enabled you to discover a hint of pink if you half-closed your eyes instead of looking too closely.[39]

and it is important that this passage, with its strong images of fertility and growth, then feeds into a more abstract notion of expression. The landscape itself becomes the base for a process of transcendence:

> The immediate scene was dissolved as the previous one reimposed itself: my uncle was there with his scythe, the fruit was hanging on the trees, and I was listening as I had listened previously for those sounds which might reveal to me the secrets of all creation.[40]

Sargeson's rejection of middle-class values (firstly the law-firm in Hamilton then the Civil Sevice in Wellington) and his movement towards a celebration of the inarticulate, working-class male mirror Wordworth's desire to seek a greater degree of 'reality' than could be attained by attention to the 'dead' speech forms (the language echoes the form of Curnow's 1935 critical essay Poetry and Language[41]) of the bourgeoisie. In his 1805 preface Wordsworth states:

> Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated... The language, too, of these men is adopted... because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally

> derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets.[42]

Sargeson's fiction of the 1930s acts out these beliefs. The portrayals of Jack in 'The Hole that Jack Dug', Bill in 'That Summer', Fred and Ken in 'A Great Day' as well as the personification of Sargeson's own uncle, his Wellington street-cleaner friend and finally his long time companion Harry in the autobiography all reflect similar concerns, that there is something more 'permanent', more 'true' in characters of their kind. In his search for this kind of 'validity' Sargeson betrays impulses similar to those English writers of the decade who sought to locate 'truths' in the working classes. The literary Marxism in English literature of the period, the motivation behind Mass Observation and the Left Book Club, projected a view of the 'common man' similar to Sargeson. In both cases the individual is a repository of sincerity and honesty, free from any form of bourgeois contamination or political manipulation. In both cases the writers involved are manifesting differing responses to the heritage of literary romanticism.

Sargeson admits to the strong influence of Keats upon his early writing. In Once is Enough, Sargeson claims he spent time in Wellington attempting to write novels within the framework of a Keatsian sensibility. He talks of a burning desire to fit his experiences into a romantic expression: 'I returned to my lodgings with the conviction that I was going to repair the loss by writing the sort of novels which the poet (Keats) might have

written.'[43] Yet within the scope of Sargeson's personal mythology, the romantic tradition can only be admitted in order to be rejected. In Once is Enough, Keats is associated with bourgeois Wellington and Sargeson's struggle to shed the legacy of 'false' models. The Keatsian phase is one that has to be transcended, and after these attempted novels failed, Sargeson depicts himself tramping the streets of Wellington in search of 'human behaviour much less bookish; and therefore much more truly my own.'[44]

For Sargeson, the myth of nationalism and the attraction to a 'new' mode of expression was a way of dealing with the discomfort of his own position within the middle class, and his inheritance of a European literary tradition. This dislocation of feeling is a continuation of attitudes towards pastoralism which had found literary expression in a variety of forms over the previous centuries. As Raymond Williams shows in his study of literary attitudes towards both rural and urban environments, The Country and The City (1985), an association with these environments led to the celebration of the rural as a spring of the life-force itself.[45] Speaking of such developments in the mid-nineteenth century, Williams notes:

> A working country... was becoming, yet again, a place of physical and spiritual regeneration. It was now the teeming life of an isolated nature, or the seasonal rhythm of the fundamental life processes. Neither of these feelings was new in itself. What was new was their fusion into a structure of feeling in which the earth and its creatures - animals and peasants almost alike - were an affirmation of vitality and of the possibility of rest in conscious contrast with the mechanical order, the artificial routines, of the cities.[46]

Despite the fact that some of Sargeson's stories are located in urban environments ('That Summer' is set in Auckland but never

draws attention to the specific nature of its Auckland setting, preferring to concentrate on the place of individuals within a wider sense of location) his work deals directly with such a critique of modern society. Along with other readings, 'The Hole that Jack Dug' offers a portrayal of the desire to escape suburban entrapment. Indeed it goes further than this by providing, in the symbolic possibilities of Jack's hole, a threat to the very foundations of that suburbanism, something that also occurs more obliquely in the self-conscious craft of the later 'City and Suburban.' Likewise, the violence in Sargeson's stories, from 'A Great Day' to 'I've Lost My Pal' or 'Sale Day' stems from the author's perception of a constricting industrial world.[47] This perception accounts for the passages in Never Enough (1977) where Sargeson contemplates the establishment of a commune, a 'community set in this attractive piece of northern countryside - a place where people congenial to each other might cultivate the soil and escape from all that was life-destroying in modern agglomerations.'[48] Elsewhere, he talks with admiration of a friend who left the world of London publishing to establish a Northland farm of self-sufficiency, seeing the venture as an attempt to 'reverse wasteful practices which were in essence an extended form of large-scale business and industrial exploitation.'[49]

Sargeson was not alone in the 1930s in his desire to reject growing urbanisation and industrialisation. Both poetry and fiction in the period display the fear of the rise of consumer capitalism and its association with perceived morality (in New Zealand, both Cresswell and Finlayson in particular voiced violent protests against such 'development'). Correspondingly the literature portraying this fear sought a location in what

Williams terms the 'historical stereotype', a portrayal of character and event steeped in the conventions of literary history. (The trend was strong enough for George Orwell to satirise it in Keep the Aspidistra Flying (1936), where Gordon Comstock, would-be writer and heroic in his rejection of the 'money God' of advertising, appears as a perceptive dig at those writers who tried to reject their middle-class origins by strong associations with the working class and world of manual labour. Sargeson, the literary man who was also the proud self-sufficient market-gardener, seems to fit the category). It is in the makeup of Williams' stereotype that we find many of the characteristics familiar from Sargeson's fiction. Edward Thomas, one of the many Georgians who wrestled with a romantic inheritance, personified this historical stereotype in 'Lob':

> An old man's face, by life and weather cut
> And coloured - rough, brown sweet as any nut.
> A land face, sea-blue eyed.[50]

The move from the subjectivity of Wordsworth to the greater objectivity displayed by Thomas can be seen to pre-empt Sargeson's technique of portrayal. In 'The Hole that Jack Dug' the concentration on Jack's physique works to emphasise the same ideas of 'capability' and 'potential' as Thomas's verse:

> Jack had got a pretty considerable hole dug in the back-yard before I knew anything about it. I went round one scorching hot Saturday afternoon, and Jack was in the hole with nothing on except his boots and his little tight pair of shorts. Jack is a big specimen of a bloke, he's very powerfully developed, and seeing he's worked in the quarry for years in just that rigout, he's browned a darker colour than you'd ever believe possible on a white man. And that afternoon he was sweating so much he had a shine on as well.[51]

This kind of narrative gaze offers statements on both masculinity and sexuality. For Sargeson, Jack is a 'whole man', his body

reflecting a wider sense of dominance over his environment. This idea of masculine superiority is particularly important in New Zealand in the 1930s, especially as expressed by Fairburn and Glover, as well as Sargeson.[52] Fairburn's essay 'The Woman Problem' articulated this idea, arguing that a male dominance was necessary in both public and private life in order to break down the sentimentality and romanticism which he felt dominated New Zealand society. Although Fairburn asserts his position strictly in a hetereosexual context, and Sargeson's subtext in 'The Hole that Jack Dug' promotes sympathy for homosexuality, both are putting forward similar notions of male superiority. The irony is that, in both cases, this does not work to 'cleanse' the society from romanticism. Indeed, the reverse is true. Fairburn's own poetry is full of romantic overtones, and, as the parallels with Wordsworth and Thomas make clear, Sargeson is working within a recognisably romantic framework.

The portrayal of Jack in 'The Hole that Jack Dug' is echoed in the 'corker body' of George in 'I've Lost my Pal', who 'used to wash himself in the tub in front of everybody' and 'was pleased at the things we used to say about the different parts of him.'[53] It also informs the strength of Ken in 'A Great Day' and the 'hard-shot' and 'nuggety' character of Ted in 'That Summer.' Although Sargeson may present such a stereotype in order to subvert it (in 'A Great Day' Ken's strength is no help to him when he is stranded out at sea) his method of portrayal, and particularly the demotic language of that method, places him directly in the tradition of romanticism which developed up through the nineteenth century into the work of Lawrence and Georgian figures like Thomas. David Wright's comments on the

poetry of Thomas could well serve to describe Sargeson's own technique:

> As much as Pound's vers libre, Thomas's poems mark a return to the rhythms of common speech and to a non-literary vocabulary. The economy of Thomas's use of language shows how good, and how revolutionary, a poet he was and is. He does not depend on adjectives; the neck of rhetoric has been wrung. The strength of his poetry derives from the images and resonance evoked by undecorated nouns and verbs.[54]

What is important here is the realisation that both Sargeson and Thomas are working in the realm of what Williams terms 'authentic observation overcome by a sub-intellectual fantasy', a 'formation in which observation, myth, record and half-history are so deeply entwined.'[55] Sargeson's nationalism and the critical orthodoxy which has canonised him are products of this entwining. In 'Fiction and the Social Pattern' (1953) Robert Chapman details how the static nature of New Zealand society, particularly religion, led to the social patterns discernable in the nation during the first decades of the twentieth century. In the same way that these patterns, ostensibly in the 'new' post-colonial nation, have their roots in the multiplicities of the cultures from which they originate, so Sargeson's nationalism, itself partially a substitute for his rejected religion, discloses many of the conventions of nineteenth-century literature in Europe.

There is no sense in which this continuation of the pastoralist/Romantic tradition necessarily should be seen as a prescription for nationalism. Sargeson acknowledges his debts to Mark Twain and Sherwood Anderson in providing a precedent for the portrayal of the local, but Allen Tate's writings on the American literature of the first three decades of this century display the tensions inherent in such a volume of expression, tensions of

which nationalism can be only a part. There are correlations with Sargeson here, as when Tate, writing of the 1920s, speaks of the poets of the American South among whom there was an 'attempt to define the past in terms of an unsympathetic reaction to the industrial era; the poets in that region are conservative with respect to their own traditions, but they are prepared to use all the methods associated in the mind with literary 'radicalism'.'[56]

However, while this anti-industrialism points to a cross-cultural interplay, Tate details a fragmentation in American poetry during the 1920s which led to the breakdown of any attempt to 'find values for the whole of the American scene.'[57] Tate questions the motivation behind these ideas of prescription:

> This motive is, in general, disorder attempting to correct itself by means of the further disorder of catchwords and slogans. There is no reason to infer, from the distress into which the lack of an American myth betrays us, that it is possible to create one. It is not even desirable that such a myth should be created.[58]

It is worth stressing that Tate's is a particularly singular vision, but his criticism demonstrates that the rise of proletarian fiction and the development of the local (as in Anderson) need not be the kind of prerequisite for the nationalism that has been subsequently attached to Sargeson.[59] Similarly, the tradition of Australian vernacular writing, as it progressed from Henry Lawson and 'Steele Rudd' in the 1890s through to the work of figures like Frank Kellaway, Tim Burstall and Bruce Dawe in the twentieth century, incorporated far more than a simplistic nationalism. The very profusion of the style points to an agenda beyond the proclamation of a nationalist literature of decolonisation.

These varying layers - the hangover of a traditional romanticism, the parallels with writing of the period from Europe, America and Australia - suffuse Sargeson's work of the 1930s. In order to evaluate his place within the decade, it is vital to realise that this lamination is the most important aspect of his writing. It is misguided to attempt, as Shaw does, to reduce the disparate presences within Sargeson's writing to mere 'influences' that can be discarded. There is no kernel of authenticity in Sargeson's work, no nugget that shines amidst the remaining bric-a-brac of the period's literature. To divorce the stories from the mythology that surrounds them is a serious mistake. As David Norton has noted,[60] such an activity merely reinforces the inadequacies of the stories to act as a base for the mythology they have been forced to carry. Norton is shrewd to notice that often the individual story is merely a point of focus, a singularity through which Sargeson forces a range of ideas. 'Chaucerian' functions in this way, using The Canterbury Tales as a reference point for a wider conception of the world. Taken purely on its own, 'Chaucerian' is no nationalist text. It actually insists on the kind of detail which, as James K. Baxter points out, is a hallmark of existentialism: 'The detail is a web stretched over an appalling inner void; at times it wears thin and one can see the blackness underneath.'[61]

It is this idea of the story as a web, as a fragile and transparent medium, that allows for nationalism to be channelled through it. It is this fabrication which presents Sargeson's work as a sudden explosion of national self-recognition, and it is a critical orthodoxy which is working with the benefit of hindsight. This reading is strikingly partial, and it obscures the other non-nationalist conclusions that can be drawn from a

contemplation of Sargeson's web. It is not only the ideology of nationalism that is fixed in Sargeson's brief paragraphs.

Like Curnow's poetry later in the decade, Sargeson's stories can be seen to reflect an obsession with language as a medium of expression. This may seem to carry explicit nationalist overtones, but many of Sargeson's characters use language in a more individual sense. Fay Zwicky's comment on the influence of Ernest Hemingway's style on Australian writing also applies in this context. When she says: 'there are two selves to be catered for: the morally-concerned, solemn, wordy self, the truth-seeking self with only language as a guide; and the ironic tough-talking survival artist in a community whose speech habits come as close to silence as you can get,'[62] Zwicky is identifying a cultural schism which divides and informs many of Sargeson's characters. Ken and Fred's conversation in 'A Great Day' displays the tensions implicit in this idea of language. As the two row out to the island, Fred's laconic speech pre-empts his darker intentions:

> Pull her round a bit with your left, Fred said. And there's no need to bust your boiler.
> It's O.K. Ken said.
> You've got the strength, Fred said.
> I'm certainly no infant.
> What good's a man's strength anyway? Say he goes and works in an office?
> I hadn't thought of that.
> Another thing, he gets old. Fancy you getting old and losing your strength. Wouldn't it be a shame?
> Sure, Ken said. Why talk about it?
> It sort of fascinates me. You'll die someday, and where'll that big frame of yours be then?
> That's an easy one. Pushing up the daisies.
> It might as well be now as anytime, mightn't it?
> Good Lord, I don't see that.
> A man'd forget for good. It'd be just the same as it is out here on a day like this. Only better.[63]

As Claudio Gorlier has noted, this use of language 'goes beyond the boundaries of region and nation... it never envisages

definite truths.'[64] 'A Great Day' succeeds because of the reader's shock when Fred strands Ken out at sea, and Sargeson's subversive use of convention in preparing for this. The story probes the validity of both language and physical strength. Though it utilises the vernacular, 'A Great Day' does not seek to point to such language as its raison d'etre. Sargeson is far more interested in the smaller scale, the games that words can play.

The process is the same in 'The Making of a New Zealander', despite the explicitness of the title. As the narrator tells us, there is no guarantee that the story is loaded with significance:

> What I want to tell about is how I sat on a hillside one evening and talked with a man. That's all, just a summer evening and a talk with a man on a hillside. Maybe there's nothing in it and maybe there is.[65]

Sargeson is in careful control of the narrative voice here. It is stressed that the story we receive is only one from a number that we could have been told. The fictions concerning Mrs Crump and her husband are narratives that 'I'll be getting round to another time.'[66] This ambivalence is the true tone of the story. Like the tensions within the language of 'A Great Day', it is the lapses and the pauses that dominate 'The Making of a New Zealander.' Nick, the immigrant, is neither a New Zealander nor a Dalmatian. He is denied a point from which to speak and, as such, his speech is full of hopes and assertions which remain unsubstantiated. Nick and the narrator arrange to meet for an evening's drinking, but it is a rendezvous which is never kept, as the narrator is fired for his insolence. The story is full of the problems of communication and thus the title becomes an ironic twist. Such an act of 'creation' is impossible when language functions in this way.

'A Great Day' and 'The Making of a New Zealander' are only in part an attempt to express 'a provincial society's attempts to cope with the rapidly expanding parameters of its experience.'[67] They, along with 'An Affair of the Heart', 'An Attempt at an Explanation', 'I've Lost my Pal' and 'That Summer' (which, as Baxter points out, is foremostly a love story), are more concerned with exploring the issues that surround individual expression than with detailing the cultural condition. These alternative readings are often lost in the seeming omnipotence of the nationalist criticism. In actuality, Sargeson does not take the relationship of language and location as far as Curnow, who in poems like 'Sestina', 'The Scene' and 'The Unhistoric Story' explores the validity of knowledge and statements in the process of decolonisation. Sargeson's world is more insular, lacking Curnow's sense of vision. While some of his 1930s fiction displays a subtle understanding of the problems of communication, other stories (notably the shorter pieces) fall short of such achievements. Pieces like 'Cats by the Tail', 'A Piece of Yellow Soap', 'The Last War', 'A Good Boy' and 'Conversation with my Uncle' are little more than images, snapshots which depend upon a hinterland of varied knowledge in order to achieve meanings (in his 1970 Landfall interview with Michael Beveridge Sargeson admitted to the use of the persona in these stories presenting 'a great constriction'[68]). It is these stories, when gathered together and discussed as a whole, that provide material for the nationalist mythology. Their essential pliability make them perfect material for the partial readings which dominated the nationalist criticism in New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s.

Consequently the criticism dealing with Sargeson's work is uniformly limiting. R.A. Copland's 1976 monograph Frank Sargeson

is full of a simplistic nationalist new criticism. Winston Rhodes' 1969 study is equally narrow, and the panegyric of the special issue of Islands in 1978 (to commemorate Sargeson's seventy-fifth birthday) added little critical complexity. In all of these cases, and in the contents of numerous journal articles addressing Sargeson's work, the issues discussed are those of nationalist concerns, the discovery of a 'new' way of writing or what W.N New has described as Sargeson's status as a 'social story-teller.'[69]

In truth Sargeson's version of the national psyche is not the product of some unique articulation. The bulk of his stories from the 1930s fail to reflect the mythology of a 'new' mode of expression. Instead, Sargeson's work appears as a continuation of a literary portrayal that is all too successful in amalgamating perceived history with literary interpretation. In his movements between record and convention, Sargeson self-consciously created a myth of himself as a writer. He deliberately manipulated his own neo-pastoralism to fit the emerging nationalist orthodoxy in New Zealand at the end of the 1930s. In fact many of those nationalist structures - obsessions with geography, with the laconic male central protaganist - stem directly from his own writings. His own input into his historicisation, in interviews and notably in his autobiographical trilogy, renders his critical heritage even more complicated. The interweaving of fiction and myth that accompanies any evaluation of Sargeson is a complexity that requires a flexible critical response. Too often this response has been inadequate. The result has been that Sargeson occupies a position of prominence in the New Zealand literature of the 1930s which is over-exaggerated.

7. JOHN MULGAN: OXFORD MAN.

As he shaped and defined the nationalist canon through his criticism of the 1950s and 1960s, Allen Curnow drew John Mulgan into what was becoming an established rubric. In 'New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition' (1963) Curnow twice refers to Mulgan, in each case including him in a list of those writers who were perceived to have participated in the founding of a national literature. Similarly, in his discussion of Mulgan's novel Man Alone (1939), Paul Day sees fit to place the author in this context:

> Thus, Mulgan's achievement in Man Alone may in some respects be compared with those of the New Zealand poets of the thirties - of Curnow, Glover and Fairburn for instance. These men in their several ways sought to destroy the imperial myth and to discover the essential quality of the country they inhabited.[1]

The word 'essential' invokes the notion of the zeitgeist, tying the novel into the structures of New Zealand nationalism as they were delineated by M.H. Holcroft and E.H. McCormick. Mulgan is placed within the tradition, his fiction defined by its nationalist content. Man Alone is singled out, not only as 'the first serious achievement in the novel form by a New Zealander'[2] but also because, within it, Mulgan's concern 'is to show things as they really are.'[3]

Of all the literary figures of the 1930s in New Zealand, Mulgan is the one whose work has been put to the purpose of nationalist myth-making most laboriously. Since James Bertram, in the first review of Man Alone, called the novel 'one of the

strongest and most unsentimental bits of writing these islands have ever provoked'[4], Mulgan has been subjected to a mythology that has sought to place him within the nationalist construction of the decade's literature. Central to this theory is the idea that he is the prose equivalent of the 1930s poets, an ideological associate of Curnow, Fairburn, Glover and others now seen by the orthodoxy to define the content of the decade's writing. Within this context, Day has portrayed Mulgan as the 'first to formulate and to bring into literary focus the theme of the interlocking complexities of individual, human society and landscape in New Zealand.'[5] Such terms echo Curnow's call for an 'uncompromising fidelity to experience'[6], the battle cry in the proclamation of a distinct cultural identity and the literature of decolonisation.

The earliest criticism of Mulgan's work reflects these concerns. Day sees the novel as a direct rejoinder to the fiction of Mulgan's father, Alan, particularly his novel Spur Of Morning (1934). In contrast to the lyrical portrayal of a colonial New Zealand to be found in Mulgan senior's novel, Man Alone, according to Day, is a statement of 'truth':

> He would distance his homeland by writing objectively about it; recreate its essential nature, and so lay the ghost of his memories and turn his mind to the country he had adopted.[7]

Such a comment discloses the interpretive parameters which delineate it. The novel's genesis is seen to stem from a desire to deal with national portrayal, to come to terms with the landscape Mulgan had left. For Day, Man Alone is an exercise in exorcising a cultural nostalgia:

> At a blow Mulgan destroyed the sanctified myth of the benevolent Motherland with her dutiful colonial offspring in the antipodes. He substituted a harsher, though truer,

> myth; for the world of Man Alone has the persuasive force and the coherence of myth.[8]

This quote demonstrates some of the problems Day creates for himself; a confusion between 'truth' and 'myth' being the most central. For Day, Mulgan is a heroic figure. The construction and detail of his literary persona bears a marked resemblance to the mythic public schoolboy figure in much English literature of the 1930s.[9] In Day's criticism, Mulgan emerges as scholar and soldier, academic and athlete, holder of both a First from Oxford and a Military Cross for his war time activities in Greece. This aspect of the Mulgan legend is shown most forcibly in James Bertram's description of the mythology surrounding him:

> [M]emories of New Zealand hills and Oxford quadrangles, desert warfare and Odyssean intrigues with Greek partisans, through which a fair-haired smiling figure moves like a sleepwalker to an early death.[10]

This view of Mulgan, one that revealingly promotes a nationalism yet ignores the implications of 'English' decadence also within it, stresses certain biographical details. The 1932 Queen Street riots in Auckland (fictionalised in Man Alone) are highlighted as a turning point in Mulgan's life, displaying the basic inequalities of the social system, and producing in the writer a move to the political Left which never actually embraced communism. In this construct, Mulgan's time at Oxford provided him with an objective outlook on New Zealand life and society. It is this outlook, Day claims, which is at the heart of Man Alone. The selection of these facts, and subsequent interest focused upon the novel's wider social aspects, affirm Man Alone as a 'national' text:

> [Mulgan] is interested not in personality but in social process. Not Johnson, but the life Johnson encounters, is the real subject of the book... Johnson is a good type of reflecting mirror in which the quality and

> texture of New Zealand life can be seen for what it is.[11]

In the language of such criticism, the novel becomes a catalogue of harsh economic realities, chiefly battles with the land. These serve further to distance Mulgan from the heritage of a colonial portrayal emphasising Britain as 'home'. The concepts of the 'just city' and 'fair land' are replaced by a critique which undermines these values. The structures of this emerging nationalism emphasise a series of economic, social and cultural 'realities', processes which function to stress New Zealand's developing cultural difference. In Man Alone the portrayal of the depression and other instances of social privation offer material that can be drawn into the nationalist critique. For Day, the episode on Stenning's farm is a coalescence of these narrative threads:

> Stenning has interested [Johnson] by engaging his sympathy and challenging his manhood to accept the battle against the land. He is in a fair way to becoming a New Zealander, with all that that implies of harshness and inhumanity.[12]

The explicit terms of reference here - masculinity, nationalism, economic hardship and the sense of ongoing 'war' - firmly place the novel within the orthodoxy of the decade's literature. The structures of this literary orthodoxy also work to emphasise the apolitical nature of the decade's literature (since any parallels with the worldwide political movements of the period, by implication, diminish the validity of an aggressive proclamation of national location) and, in his analysis, Day seeks to counter any reading of Man Alone as a political text. Johnson, he tells us, is not a Marxist. Despite his final actions in Spain he 'remains politically uncommitted'[13]. Part II of the novel, which

reads as being overtly political, is thus problematic for Day. His solution is to reject it from his nationalist reading:

> [T]he emotional excitement which kindled with the contemplation of far-off New Zealand died out with the end of Part I. It is that which is unique and irreplaceable in Man Alone.[14]

Similarly, Dan Davin avoids the Marxist possibilites of his own comment when he defines the issue at the centre of Mulgan's writing as 'the problem of how men are to live together.'[15] To back this up, Day quotes Mulgan's own comments from his 1947 biographical memoir, Report on Experience, where communism in England is described as a 'parlour game'[16] and where Mulgan also talked of 'finding myself again doubtful of a political system that embraces men so willing to escape from themselves, that offers this easy answer and refuge from decision.'[17]

This critical position operates as a deliberate attempt to distance Mulgan's work from the seeming political commitment of English literature of the 1930s, and therefore to affirm his status as one of the constructors of the national literary identity. It is reinforced by Day's juxtaposition of Man Alone with the the frontier ethic of nineteenth-century New Zealand, an ethic which celebrates not the colonial relationship with the mother country, but the harshness involved in the founding of a nation. Bill Crawley, one of the few other characters in the novel Day finds 'humane' is characterised by this nationalist criticism in terms that seek to connect the novel to the ethical and social codes of New Zealand's foundations:

> He is, in fact, a practical Christian, though he would be likely to disclaim this. His is the archaic unwritten code of the early settlers when 'Thou shalt help thy neighbour in his hour of need' was the law of life.[18]

Both Crawley and Petersen, the skipper of the scow Johnson works on during the last of the 'good days', are also 'men alone.' Both conform to an ideal stressed by Day and Bertram, and also depicted in M.H. Holcroft's The Deepening Stream (1940), Sargeson's short fiction of the 1930s and the opening chapter of Mulgan's Report on Experience. In the vocabulary of this portrayal, simplicity is seen to be a virtue, the laconic male voice (derived, in part, from the Australian nationalism of the 1890s) embodies the capability of the nation, a capability which rests upon the achievements of New Zealand's colonial founders. At times Mulgan's memoir lapses into such a mythology:

> New Zealanders are not given to abstract thinking nor to the formulation of principles.[19]

while elsewhere he writes in a style which mirrors Sargeson's early prose, a prose full of laconic male understatement:

> I had the good fortune in these years to serve with the British Army. We went to Ireland first and stayed there for what seemed like a long time, but is short now in the perspective of war. There we saw no action but only cold seas rolling on to cold northern coasts. We saw many other pleasant things and had good times.[20]

The child-like nature of this commentary conceals a concept of New Zealand heritage. This concept stresses a masculine self-containment (Peter Gibbons calls it a concise 'convergence of masculinity, personal identity and national identity'[21]) that is seen to extend from the rigours of the colonising experience. It favours a preoccupation with landscape and physical struggle. Day sees Man Alone within the context of a greater 'war', namely the battle with both economic and physical conditions that establish both a qualified reading of history and a projected mythology of culture.[22] Day's use of Mulgan's own memoirs to support such a

structure offers the kind of limited reading which is a leitmotif in the criticism that has, over time, produced the mythologisation of the 1930s. The bulk of Report on Experience fails to conform to the myth. The majority of the text promotes a liberal individualism that questions dogma and categorisation, whether it be political communism or the construction of a male dominated literature. Report on Experience is a contradictory work, one that Mulgan himself was displeased with, and the depiction of New Zealand in the first chapter adopts a laconic tone which is not maintained throughout Mulgan's detailing of his war-time activities.

Such selective criticism has created and fostered the myth of Mulgan as a writer concerned primarily with New Zealand nationalism. In part, Day and Bertram's readings can be attributed to their position as the earliest commentators on much of the New Zealand literature of the decade. As with Curnow's anthologising, their commentaries work by a process of consolidation, channelling the multiplicities of the decade's writing into a format which is containable, one that offers the stability of a fixed reading of the period. Moreover, there is validity in much of Day and Bertram's criticism. In part, Man Alone is Mulgan's reaction to his father's fiction. While in Oxford as a student and publisher, Mulgan was often charged with placing Alan Mulgan's work at various publishing houses, a task that also involved quantities of proofreading and correction. The correspondence between them during these periods reflects clearly the dissatisfaction with which Mulgan viewed his father's lyric portrayal of New Zealand. Day is right to see aspects of the novel's origin in this context. In addition, Day's analysis of the social nature of Man Alone identifies much that is of value,

and displays his astuteness as a close reader. It would be hard to argue with many of his conclusions as to the novel's wider social implications and the economic picture that is developed of New Zealand society. Nevertheless, as Patrick Evans notes in his foreword to the 1990 Penguin edition of Man Alone, the chief consequence of the criticism has been to submerge the text in a mythic portrayal of its author:

> The Mulgan legend, with all its unexamined implications, was as hard to shift as any other part of the Phoenix generation's iconography. The book which should have begun the process, Paul Day's John Mulgan (1968), effectively added to it.[23]

Evans is correct to note such processes which, in Dan Davin's words, turned Mulgan into 'the martyr of our time'[24], but his juxtaposition of Mulgan with Phoenix understates the complexities of Mulgan's position within the decade's literature. It demonstrates that, in spite of his reservations, Evans himself accepts the earlier categorisation and notion of a homogeneous literature. Thus he classifies the novel as 'a text that has helped to manipulate the ways in which people have perceived part of our history in the years of which it seems to write; and... as a prolonged insight into the sort of mind that dominated New Zealand society for so long.'[25] Such a comment is misleading. Mulgan was 21 when he left New Zealand for Oxford in October 1933. He was a student, and by no means any kind of established literary figure. While still in Auckland he had voiced reservations about the nature of Phoenix, with 'strong disapproval of the use of a university publication for the purposes of political propaganda.'[26] (Allen Curnow, who knew Mulgan briefly in Auckland before Mulgan left for Oxford, remembers him as a distinctly conservative figure, and puts his

change in political outlook down to his experiences in England[27]). Similarly, when sent a copy of Tomorrow in early 1934, Mulgan wrote to his parents:

> The average New Zealand revolutionary intellectual is a very lonely and useless figure. Having just seen Tomorrow I can see how futile it all is. They are out of touch with the working class and with their own class.[28]

This comment indicates Mulgan's awareness that, to a degree, the political commitment of many New Zealand literary figures owed more to a sense of middle-class neurosis than to ideas of working-class solidarity, as was the case with his contemporaries in the English scene. It also indicates that, in 1934, Mulgan was more concerned with questions relevant to English literary culture than with New Zealand nationalism or the construction of a national literature. This is not to imply that Mulgan was ignorant of the complexities of New Zealand during the decade, but rather he realised any analysis of the situation belonged in an international context. Evans touches upon this in an earlier commentary on Mulgan:

> The advent of the depression in New Zealand drew the attention of local observers overseas, for it proved that this country was no more insulated from the world economic virus than any other had been, and scenes which were occurring the world over occurred here. To thoughtful observers like Mulgan, New Zealand was being steadily drawn into a world which was engulfed in an endless war - in which the conflict of 1914-18 had been followed not by peace but by the economic warfare of individuals and classes which marked the 'twenties and by the general collapse of the world's economy which occurred after 1929. In such an interpretation the riots in Karangahape Road and the rise of Hitler were aspects of a single phenomenon, the civil war in Spain or Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia were upheavals which could well have occurred in New Zealand instead. Our social structure and economic system had not been sufficiently unusual to prevent our catching the economic

> disease; why then should we be proof to the virus of war which came with it?[29]

and likewise:

> The wild scramble for money, in which men kill themselves and others, is an image not just of this country but of the whole world in the 'twenties, and the riot which Mulgan depicts as the emotional centre of the novel - the fictional version of the one he witnessed - is simply the eruption of forces which have been latent and symbolical in this country but overt overseas.[30]

While some of the terminology here reflects the notion of 'ongoing battle' proposed by Day, the importance of Evans's observation is that it widens the scope with which we view not only Man Alone but also the other New Zealand literature of the decade. In the light of the international context, the idea of an isolated national literature is bypassed or at least rendered peripheral. The 'Phoenix mythology' is brought into question, and Mulgan becomes not simply a nationalist writer, but one rooted in a broader perspective.

C.K. Stead's essay on Mulgan acknowledges this. While he still considers Man Alone vital in establishing notions of identity, he also manages to view the novel within the English literary culture of the time. Stead cannot commit himself to place Oxford at the centre of a novel so important to the New Zealand nationalist canon, but he notes that Mulgan's realism belongs to a tradition encompassing more than simply local literature:

> But finally... every stylisation of experience - even a negative one - is a form of romanticizing. The steady eye that does not flinch at what it sees, the cool tone, the laconic speech - all are part of a convention that is not solely negative in effect. Spender's pylons and Auden's slag heaps are not only symptoms of the evils of industrial society; they are also beautiful in their ugliness... [Man Alone] is a dour picture of the New Zealand of that time, and

> a truer one than that found in Alan Mulgan's work. It has a political dimension with international implications. But it is in its way also a romantic view of New Zealand, a piece of frontier mythology.[31]

Like Curnow, Mulgan realises that the codes of mythologies offer ways of dealing with the past. Man Alone lacks the kind of mythic proportions that Curnow details in Not In Narrow Seas (1939) and Island and Time (1941), but in cloaking his realism with the romantic mythology that developed from nineteenth-century depictions of New Zealand, Mulgan seeks to root larger questions of isolation and privation within a local context. In addition, Stead's juxtaposition of Mulgan with W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender allows for a new reading of Man Alone, one that looks to establish this sense of the local within a larger framework. It is a reading Stead is not quite prepared to give, since he still seeks to tie the novel into a concept of national culture. Thus, although he offers a differing perspective to that of Day, he ends his essay by asserting that the novel is 'one which, in its rare dour sober truthfulness enacts a phase in our national history and catches certain truths about our national identity.'[32]

Stead's main disagreement with Day is over the political nature of the novel, claiming it to be 'an essentially Marxist analysis of the period of New Zealand history from 1919 to 1932.'[33] He is correct to point out that Day draws his analysis of Mulgan's political commitment from Report on Experience. Mulgan's memoir was written in 1945 when the fascist triumph in Spain and subsequent war had firmly crushed any hopes of a new left-wing order. In addition, Mulgan had seen communism at work in Greece and concluded its extremism to be divorced from the fundamental practicalities of government. However, this does not

imply that Mulgan lacked commitment to the cause in the mid-to-late 1930s. Disillusionment was common to left-wing sympathisers in the years following 1939. Auden and Christopher Isherwood rejected politics when they left for the United States, the former depicting the 'low, dishonest decade' that had gone before. Spender detailed his disenchantment in World Within World (1953), George Orwell did likewise in 'Inside The Whale'(1940). Mulgan's 1945 pessimism does not render Man Alone an apolitical text, nor does it serve to distance it from the English literary culture of the decade.

Stead sees the novel as two fictions. The first is an economic history, where characters fulfil the roles of social categories (farmer, sailor etc.) and the Auckland riots display an image of collective humanity that is essentially Marxist (Johnson talks of 'men moving together'). The second fiction is that of Johnson against the landscape, and is fundamentally an attempt to come to terms with the physical nature of the New Zealand environment. For Stead, part II of the novel, with its overt politics, signals a return to the original philosophy, possibly because Mulgan was even more committed to the leftist cause, possibly to give greater cohesion. Recognition of these two disparate themes does not prevent Stead from preserving the canonical nature of the text:

> Mulgan was trying to establish in his own mind the identity of the New Zealand he had left behind - at one level socially and politically, at another (one might say) mythically, existentially, even metaphysically.[34]

Nevertheless, the critique does suggest the possibilities inherent in an 'English' reading of Man Alone. Although Stead retains an essential definition of Mulgan in terms of a

distinctly local literature, his essay is at its best when it explores the complexities inherent in Mulgan's position. He is particularly observant in his analysis of the elements with which the Mulgan myth came to be built:

> [T]here is a sense in which everything conspired to make him an established figure, the expression of a current orthodoxy; and I suspect this laid upon him an identity which may have been alien to his nature, and left him with little freedom to discover what his own nature was. Even as he rebelled against the politics of his family it was an orthodox rebellion, sanctioned by undergraduate Oxford as he found it in the 1930s - and in Report on Experience one can feel him moving cautiously back (as Auden did) with the return swing of the pendulum, already looking back on his politically radical days with detachment and irony.[35]

Stead is unable fully to delineate the nature of Mulgan's commitment to Marxism, but Mulgan's editorship of Poems Of Freedom (1936) for Gollancz and the Left Book Club points to a strong political involvement (the anthology also contained an introduction by Auden). Similarly, in December 1937 Mulgan embarked upon a lecture tour for the Workers' Educational Association. This kind of activity mirrors the attempts of Orwell and Edward Upward, and later Spender, to create and foster an interest in both literature and politics among the working class. Letters from Mulgan to his parents between 1936 to 1938 employ the tone and vocabulary of the Auden generation in their discussion of current affairs, including the shift to apathy and pessimism that accompanied the events at Munich and the defeat in Spain. In February 1938 he wrote:

> At times I've looked forward with a sort of gloomy pleasure to the destruction of this country and its selfish intolerant ruling classes. As it comes nearer I can see how much that might have been enlightened and fine is going to be lost. As you look back to 1935, saw how they sabotaged the League - rather than risk communism in Italy - how

> things have got worse ever since, how the democracies throughout Europe feel themselves betrayed, the Americans turning away disgusted, the splendid fight that the Spanish put up going for nothing - it isn't any real satisfaction to know that all these people will destroy each other.[36]

and in December of the same year he doubted whether it was possible to justify his position as a literary publisher when fascism seemed so close to victory:

> But as things are moving now, life is no longer liberal or scholarly. We are going into bad times, of continued economic depression, and external threats. If the democracies are to survive they must organise and have faith.[37]

This lends substance to Stead's claim that Man Alone was composed at the time when Mulgan felt most committed to the left-wing cause. Though never a member of the Communist Party, Mulgan's politics were distinctly left-wing, and several of his friends and associates in the world of publishing were party members. While it may be impossible precisely to define the nature of Mulgan's politics, there is little doubt that he was aware of the level to which political thought influenced the decade's literature.

The strongest indications of Mulgan's politics during the 1930s, and thus also a vital point in determining his relationship with the literary orthodoxy, are the 'Behind The Cables' columns he and Geoff Cox wrote, firstly for the Auckland Star and then for the Dominion, for fifteen months during 1936 and 1937. The columns detail events in Europe for a New Zealand readership, and there is a clear change in tone as the reporting moves from a consideration of British parliamentary procedures to address the developing war in Spain. The objective journalistic stance with which Mulgan and Cox comment upon British politics,

noting the limitations of both the political Left and Right, moves to a recognition of the seriousness of the Spanish conflict. Whilst Mulgan and Cox rarely allow their opinions into their prose, the necessity of a Republican victory is stressed as the rise of a European fascism becomes a possibility. As early as July 27 1936, Mulgan addresses the international consequences of fascist expansion: 'At this point the question becomes international, and becoming international, affects you in New Zealand.'[38] This comment illustrates the tone of the 'Behind The Cables' pieces. In his writing, Mulgan is at pains to remain objective, to stress the limitations of political extremists on both sides. Yet his newspaper articles reflect an obvious personal desire to inform the New Zealand audience of the severity of the European crisis. Like his literary counterparts in England, Mulgan is pushed into adopting a political role, and it is clear that, by the time the columns ended, Mulgan's sympathies lay clearly with the Left. There is a bitterness in his piece of November 5 1936 when he writes: 'There is no doubt that the policy of non-intervention has directly aided the rebels.'[39]

Mulgan's recognition of the complexities of the situation in Europe, of its international context (and therefore its consequences for New Zealand), and of a necessity to support any manifestations of anti-fascism, displays an intricate relationship with the period's literary culture. The nationalist/internationalist or regional/metropolitan dualities are insufficient to explain Mulgan's politics and the way that they inform Man Alone. The politics within the novel stem from the convolutions of the European situation in the late 1930s, where many literary figures adopted leftist sympathies without

embracing the dogmatic rhetoric of propaganda. In this sense of partial commitments, half-readings and interweavings, Man Alone is very much the product of the English literary multiplicities during the decade.

The association with the orthodoxy of English literature during the decade reveals another view not only of the novel but also of Mulgan. In the mythology of the decade's New Zealand literature, delineated by the criticism of Day, Bertram, Holcroft, McCormick and Curnow, Mulgan is an example of what we might term the 'Truly Strong Man'. The concept develops the scholar/soldier image proposed by Day and expressed in Sargeson's short fiction. The gruff, capable, inarticulate male is a repository of strength, in direct contrast to English literature of the same period. That literature was seemingly dominated by neurotic, confused and homosexual central characters.[40] Johnson, with his undoubted physical strength and laconic manner, is a fictional version of the New Zealand form of capability. The construction of Mulgan as a nationalist writer demonstrates it equally. In the same manner that Glover and Fairburn would shun the company of fellow literary figures in favour of 'working' men, so Mulgan is given his place as a constructor of the decade's 'manual' literature.[41] This image of strength and capability is rendered problematic by Mulgan's suicide in 1945. Indeed, the facts so contrasted the myth that, for years after the event, Mulgan was claimed to have been killed in action at the end of the war.[42] Commenting on Mulgan's death over twenty years later, James Bertram saw him as a man who found it impossible to cope with peace:

> More telling, and surely more tragic, is the willed death of those who have reached the point of 'victory' - and found it meaningless. Perhaps the classic modern case

> is that of T.E. Lawrence, who committed a kind of mental suicide when he found just where victory was leading a cause he had believed in.[42]

The analogy with Lawrence is interesting, for he was one of the heroes of the Auden generation. In Lawrence, the English writers of the 1930s saw a neurotic, middle-class figure battling to come to terms with the crisis growing around him and achieving an individual victory. Lawrence was the model for many of the decade's major fictional characters. Michael Ransom, the central character of Auden and Isherwood's The Ascent of F6 (1936), is based on Lawrence, and he was the subject of essays by Spender, Christopher Caudwell and others. To use the terminology of Samuel Hynes, Lawrence is the archetypal 'Truly Weak Man', the character who must prove himself. To a generation of writers caught in a public situation they felt powerless to influence, the self-conscious intellectual who could achieve individual strength was a hero. The 'Truly Weak Man' is one of the dominant characteristics of the decade's literature.

The two differing orthodoxies thus offer images of Mulgan which are diametrically opposed. The contradiction is revealing, showing Mulgan to belong to neither tradition fully, and displaying the interaction that takes place between traditions. Like many of his contemporaries, Mulgan operates within a plurality of discourses, interweaving elements of the critical heritages of both Europe and New Zealand. His position within the nationalist canon in New Zealand emphasises a limited perspective of his life and work. Though the English tradition is at times as prescriptive as that of New Zealand, an analysis of Man Alone within its parameters casts new light on the novel's complexities.

In his analysis of the decade's literature in Britain, Bernard Bergonzi devotes a chapter to the significance of the frontier. The image of frontiers and borders, and hence of countries and crossings, was a flexible symbol that ran through much of the writing of the 1930s. It owed its origins to Auden's first collection, the Poems of 1928, in which Poem V begins:

> On the frontier at dawn getting down,
> Hot eyes were soothed with swallows: ploughs began
> Upon the stunted ridge behind the town,
> And bridles flashed.[44]

The poem's first three words also became the title of Auden's final collaboration with Isherwood in 1938, and On The Frontier was the last in a series of plays that used the symbol of the frontier to convey both personal and public themes. Such use was not confined to Auden and Isherwood. The image also occurs in Spender's Vienna (1934), Cecil Day Lewis's The Magnetic Mountain (1933), Upward's Journey to the Border (1938), Rex Warner's The Wild Goose Chase (1937), and became a motif for the non-fiction of the decade. William Abrahams and Peter Stansky entitled their book about Julian Bell and John Cornford (both of whom died in Spain) Journey to the Frontier (1966), while both Orwell in Homage to Catalonia (1938) and Graham Greene, in Journey Without Maps (1936) and The Lawless Roads (1939), demonstrate the extent to which the frontier became a common symbol in both literature and journalism.

In part, this is an example of the Auden generation's playfulness and propensity for a private vocabulary and landscape. Julian Symons's opinion of this is somewhat caustic:

> What fun everything is on this side of the frontier, cosy it is to be with friends who talk one's own sort of serio-comic nonsense: yet on the other side life, as it seems, is

> going on. On the other side, the myth of the future: on ours, the myth of Mortmere.[45]

This idea of exclusiveness illuminates the New Zealand literature of the period, which also retained an air of exclusiveness that was, in part, based on notions of landscape.[46] But, as Bergonzi points out, the significance of the frontier 'could be variously psychological, social and political.'[47] Man Alone is full of these various kinds of frontiers. The novel both begins and ends with geographical boundaries. Arriving in Auckland, Johnson is told about the new land he has come to - 'It's a nice little country when you know it'[48] - and this arrival is mirrored by the departure aboard the 'Stamboulos' which concludes Part I. Similarly, the final words of Part II describe Johnson's entry to Spain with the International Brigade:

> The sun came out for a moment as they were coming down the mountain side and into Spain.[49]

and, in the Epilogue the narrator records the last sight of Johnson, waiting to return to France:

> The last word I had of him was from someone who was with him waiting in a tunnel by Port Bou to get over the frontier.[50]

This latter quotation echoes Auden's lyric in 'Spain':

> They clung like burrs to the long expresses that
> lurch
> Through the unjust lands, through the night, through
> the alpine tunnel;
> They floated over the oceans;
> They walked the passes. All presented their lives.[51]

There are also a series of internal frontiers within the novel. Johnson's movements from farm to farm, from Auckland to the Waikato to the King Country, emphasise an idea of geographical divisions. This is strongest in Johnson's flight from Stenning's farm, where his journey over Mt. Ruapehu involves a transition between a number of differing terrains. Possibly

this helps to explain the nationalist reading of the novel. Here, the frontier emphasises a geography of location, firmly placing the novel in THIS place.

But Man Alone conforms to Bergonzi's definition of the frontier as a flexible symbol. Other boundaries are social, historical and psychological. The novel begins with the implication that Johnson's journey to New Zealand is an attempt to escape from the complexities of post-war life in Europe:

> In that period, just at the end of the war, the distance and strangeness that such a journey involved and going there to a new country with no money, was slight beside everything else that had happened to him in the last four years of his life.[52]

Johnson searches for a 'new' country in order to relieve the chaos of the time. This search is a constant in Part I of the novel, where the continual presence of Mt. Ruapehu acts as a magnet, a symbol of a more simplistic world where choices are easier. This idea of the frontier being a psychological and social boundary mirrors Day Lewis's The Magnetic Mountain (1933) - the title resembles Mulgan's use of Mt. Ruapehu - and From Feathers To Iron (1931). In Part XV of the latter Lewis writes:

> I have come so far upon my journey.
> This is the frontier, this is where I change,
> And wait between two worlds to take refreshment.[53]

Johnson's arrival at Stenning's farm appears to offer the possibility of stability, a refuge from chaos. However, Stenning's death precipitates a journey into a new environment. The threat hanging over him, and Johnson's philosophy on his situation - 'He weighed in his mind the possibilities of going away and escaping from it all and he knew that, if this were possible, it was what he wanted to do'[54] - echo Auden's obscure

lyric in 'Venus Will Now Say a Few Words', written in November 1929:

> Do not imagine you can abdicate;
> Before you reach the frontier you are caught;
> Others have tried it and will try again
> To finish that which they did not begin:[55]

The crossing of Mt. Ruapehu involves terrain which indicates a change in situation. Johnson finds 'a strange and desolate country... a waste of scarred and pitted desert, bare of all growth for long stretches, loose scoria and pumice powdered to sand by years of weathering.'[56] This harsh world is also a 'legend haunted country'[57], full of Maori myth and clearly symbolic of a new and different environment. The frontier between mountain and bush also denotes change. As Johnson enters the Kaimanawas, the landscape reflects his psychological condition:

> As he followed it in, going in for five days laboriously forward, making at best not more than eight or ten miles each day, the hills seemed to close round and over him until he felt himself to be farther than anyone could ever follow him, surrounded and drowned in the hills and bush, safe and alone and submerged.[58]

The frontier precipitates a change in consciouness:

> Johnson lost all real count of time there in the dark loneliness of the bush. There was sound all the time, of the river running, and birds from early morning to the owls calling at night, but he felt within himself a great solitude, a feeling which had never troubled him before in the long periods of his life that he had spent alone. There was a heaviness of the bush that pressed upon him, and weighed him down, until the sound of his own voice was startling to him.[59]

Mulgan's use of the journey across Mt. Ruapehu mirrors many of the English fables of the 1930s (it is also similar to Samuel Butler's Erewhon, written in 1872), in which heroes cross borders to encounter 'new' lands. Ruthven Todd's Over The Mountain (1939) contains a trek similar to that of Johnson's. The hero climbs a

mountain, eventually discovering a Kafka-like world with a strongly repressive secret police. When he tries to return to his own country he finds the two to be indistinguishable, and discovers himself to be the son of one of the key representatives of the repressive society in the 'other' world. This plot is almost identical to that of Rex Warner's The Wild Goose Chase (1937), where the political element is again important. In both cases the 'other' world stands for a nightmare social order, usually a fabulous extension of fascism and corporate capitalism. Though Johnson's flight lacks this blatant social categorisation, frontiers and landscape are used similarily to denote spheres of consciousness. The concept is expressed most succintly by Day Lewis in The Magnetic Mountain:

> Simply, one day
> He crossed the frontier and I did not follow:
> Returning, spoke another language.[60]

Mulgan's position as a publisher render these similarities more than coincidental. Following his graduation from Oxford in 1935, Mulgan worked for the Clarendon Press on a variety of topics. These included The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature (1939) - a condensation of Sir Paul Harvey's Oxford Companion to English Literature - and a similar reworking of Legouis's Short History of English Literature. This was finished in 1947 by Dan Davin, who supplied the final chapter, and called An Introduction to English Literature. Mulgan was also involved with the Left Book Club's Poems of Freedom (1936), as well as placing his father's A Pilgrim's Way in New Zealand (1935) and The Emigrants (1939) - a book of essays on early travellers to New Zealand Mulgan worked on with Hector Bolitho - with appropriate publishers. Mulgan's understanding of the publishing world necessitated a knowledge of the fiction and poetry that was

emerging between 1935 and 1939. The time when his publishing activity was at its height, 1937 and 1938, was the time when the bulk of Man Alone was written. Humphrey Carpenter's biography of Auden also notes that, when Auden and Isherwood left for China in January 1938, Auden left his incomplete Oxford Book of Light Verse with Mulgan.[61] Mulgan's work on this anthology involved more than simply proofreading and setting. Some of the actual poetry selection became his responsibility.

Mulgan's relationship with Auden is revealing. The two had collaborated on Poems of Freedom, and now again on the Oxford Book of Light Verse. Clearly they had a working relationship, yet there are suggestions that their correspondence was more than simply that of author and publisher. There is no evidence that the two ever met while working on the Gollancz anthology, but a series of letters exist following an initial meeting on the 28th of September 1937 to discuss the Oxford Book of Light Verse. In this correspondence, the tone changes from one purely denoting business. After his return from China and the United States, Auden wrote to Mulgan from Brussels in August 1938, informing him that he was 'bathing and cafe crawling.'[62] The letters, which continue up to January 1939, abound in the cheery familiarity which typifies much personal correspondence in the 1930s. Mulgan may not have been on close terms with Auden, but their association again points to the extent of his immersion in the particulars of English literary culture.

Any relationship with Auden - the orthodox figurehead of English literature during the decade - is of interest in a consideration of the background to Man Alone. The correlations between Johnson and Michael Ransom, the central character in Auden and Isherwood's The Ascent of F6, display a range of

similarities. Both characters possess a self-containment and laconic intelligence. Both seek a 'freedom' that involves an escape from larger social and cultural pressures. Ransom's occupation as a climber mirrors the magnetic pull of Mt. Ruapehu upon Johnson, and his final tragedy is the invasion of politics into a sphere of consciousness that appeared 'simple'. Man Alone lacks the complexities and overt politics of The Ascent of F6, but both display the clash between the private and the public that was so common a theme in the 1930s. Both Ransom and Johnson are characters to whom things happen, rather than figures who determine their own ends. Ransom is destroyed because climbing, an occupation he understands and can contain, is corrupted by outside social and political forces. Johnson, who seeks a freedom to do as he pleases, is drawn into the Auckland riots in order to protect a friend. This event is a catalyst for a series of activities which force Johnson into reactions. The move to the King Country, the death of Stenning, the final flight from Auckland; all display the potentially deadly force of public events upon the individual. One of the main reasons that Part II of the novel sits so uneasily with Part I is that, in his new political commitment and conduct in Spain, Johnson is invested with a sense of purpose and vision that he did not possess while in New Zealand.

The level of Johnson's political commitment, and particularly his actions during the riots in Auckland, point to illuminating parallels with Robin Hyde's dramatisation of the same events in Nor The Years Condemn (1938). Hyde's novel works to stress the place of the individual in the greater social world. Her use of Bede Collins in the Queen Street riots is a subtle process which works on many layers. Not only does Hyde

point to the methods by which the culture can physically intimidate women (the violence that surrounds Bede during the protests), but - unlike Mulgan - she depicts a society where the indivdual is involved, by necessity, in the manifestations of cultural change. Hyde's characters engage with the complexities of their environment to a far greater degree than Johnson. They display a political consciousness that, for the New Zealand section of Man Alone, Johnson is denied. The complexity of Hyde's portrayal points to a writer seeking to analyse her society in depth. This lack of depth in Man Alone is another indication of the divisions - temporal, geographical and in the actual process of writing - that existed between Mulgan and the nation he was trying to depict. The narrative processes which display the 'sober truths' of New Zealand's isolation can also be seen to illustrate the peripheral position from which Mulgan was forced to write.

The comparison with Hyde strengthens the validity of a consideration of Mulgan within the English literary milieu. As an employee for the Clarendon Press in Oxford, Mulgan would have been aware of the trends of contemporary poetry and fiction, and the sheer amount of work he undertook meant constant travelling and a variety of contacts within the literary milieu. In contrast, Mulgan's connections with the major New Zealand writers of the period date from his time at Auckland before his departure for Oxford in 1933. His work for the Auckland Univeristy College Student's Association brought him into contact with Curnow and Glover, though these were not substantial acquaintances (Curnow can only recall talking to Mulgan once). The New Zealanders Mulgan knew at Oxford included Bertram and Charles Brasch, but in many ways, because of their exile, they shared a combined

marginalisation from the particulars of the New Zealand literary scene (Brasch's 1980 memoir Indirections details the kind of schizophrenia this caused). There is no evidence that Mulgan even knew Dan Davin, who was his successor at O.U.P. and also a student at Oxford during the 1930s.[63] The peripheralisation from the discourses of a developing New Zealand nationalism during the decade is given credibility by an analysis of Man Alone within a specifically English context.

In some respects the son is therefore successor to the father. Though he protested against the nature of his father's portrayal of New Zealand, Mulgan inherited the view of England, if not as 'home', then certainly as a centre of sophistication and achievement. This becomes even more striking following a consideration of the Mulgan family background before they arrived in New Zealand. In a recent study of the Irish in New Zealand the Canadian historian Donald Harman Akenson points out that 'John Mulgan was a legatee of the purest Irish Protestant community ever to exist in New Zealand.'[64] Mulgan's grandparents were among the first settlers to establish the Irish settlement at Katikati, but, as Akenson goes on to say:

> Unless I am totally misreading his Man Alone (1939) and his Report on Experience (1947), I cannot find even a palimpsest of his Ulster heritage. That part of the past to him is a bleached tapestry.[65]

Akenson contrasts Mulgan with Dan Davin, in whose work there are constant reminders of his Irish background, though in this case the background is Catholic and not Protestant. Mulgan's grandparents, in contrast, appear to have suppressed their ethnic origins, but not to embrace their new country. Ireland may have been rejected, but it was England, and not New Zealand, that was

celebrated. In Home: A New Zealander's Adventure (1927) Alan Mulgan writes:

> There was no one to tell of 'Kathleen Ni Houlihan' and 'Dark Rosaleen' and their wrongs. To a boy who had been born in New Zealand and had never been out of it, Ulster was a shadowy place. England and English things were always before my eyes, the English army, the English navy, English statesmen, English power throughout the world. I have no English blood in me that I have ever heard of. Had I been brought up in a different atmosphere, I might have grown to manhood filled with the hatred of England which used to grow with such bitter luxuriance in the land, that of all her territories, England most deeply wronged. I had some affection for the country of my parents, but infinitely more for England.[66]

By the time such an ideology reached John Mulgan, he was almost completely purged of his ethnic characteristics. Though he was undoubtedly sentimental about New Zealand, his family history displays a concerted effort to reject any notions of New Zealand nationalism. Despite the validity of the nationalism in Man Alone and Report on Experience, this left a legacy which permeated the manner in which he viewed the two countries.

It is the nature of this legacy, and the differences between Mulgan's Irish heritage and that of Davin or Eileen Duggan, that again illustrates the specifics of New Zealand's form of settler post-colonialism. Duggan's 1921 Poems is a volume dominated by Irish themes, displaying not just a cultural nostalgia for the British Isles, but the manifestations of ethnic expression in the 'new' country. Her use of the ballad in the 1930s, the attempts to convey aspects of New Zealand rural life in the tradition of Irish pastoral literature, is one exposition of the Irish literary heritage. By its very absence from Mulgan's work, that same literary heritage displays the kind of fractured reception it received when transposed to New Zealand. There are no clear

lines of progression, of 'influence', in the ways in which European structures were used by the New Zealand writers during the 1930s. Mulgan and Duggan, in their differing reactions to their Irish pasts, illustrate the kind of complexities inherent in the necessary processes of decolonisation.

These subtle aspects of cross-culturalism are very much denied in the traditional canonisation of Mulgan. In many ways, his distance from the specifics of both New Zealand society and its literary culture have made it easier for his placement within the nationalist rubric. His lack of a voice on so many intricate points of New Zealand culture during the 1930s, his inability to engage with it in the fashion of Hyde, leaves him open to the machinations of nationalist criticism. The smooth lines that emerge in the critiques of Day and Bertram went unchallenged for decades precisely because of the silences implicit in Mulgan's relationship with the country he left in the early 1930s.

Yet these are only silences in the narrowest sense. Mulgan's participation in the decade's English literary culture is a vital component in his relation to New Zealand, even as it serves to emphasise his physical marginalisation from the country. These two positions are not any kind of strict binary opposition. Mulgan's ties to England are more explicit than those of any other major New Zealand writer of the period, and the value of this is that it makes his work the best example of the complicated relationship that existed between the two literatures. His very peripheralisation, the huge differences between his location and Sargeson's careful tending of his Takapuna garden, informs one of the key layers in the laminated literature of New Zealand in the 1930s. He deserves a far more sensitive archaeology than he has received.

8. ALLEN CURNOW: HAMMERING UNITIES & RISKY HORIZONS.

In 1935 Allen Curnow published a small booklet entitled Poetry and Language, limited to 150 copies and overseen by the Caxton Club Press, the forerunner to the Caxton Press, in Christchurch. The booklet is a collection of eight sections, largely a series of notes, that seeks to outline Curnow's early theories of the relationship between poetry and language, and their position in a wider cultural context. Curnow's tone is youthful and arrogant, tinged with the rhetoric of the schoolmaster:

> A thing must be made of something.
> Poetry is made of language.
> A thing must be made for something.
> Poetry is made for the pleasure and stimulation of the mind.[1]

Curnow's concerns here are those of definition. His initial assertion that language is the material of poetry then leads on to a series of statements about the relationship of that material to contemporary society. Curnow draws the distinction between 'living' and 'dead' languages, claiming the former 'must be a language spoken by the living people'[2] and that the latter is an ineffectual material for poetry:

> But poetry is never written in what is, at the time, a 'dead' language. There are a number of reasons for this:-
>
> (a) Poetry, like any other art, has a direct relation to human needs.
>
> (b) Human needs (in terms of language) can only be well served by things made out of the language with which human beings (including the artist) are most familiar.
>
> (c) All the things which can be most usefully said or written in a 'dead' language have

> already been said or written. That is why it is called 'dead.'[3]

These generalisations draw huge lines of demarcation across a literary culture, for as Curnow makes clear, his definitions are not merely a collection of abstract principles. He states 'To each age its own experience./ To each age its own language./ To each age its own literature'[4] and, in the one specifically local reference in the booklet, he claims 'The language of most New Zealand poets is 'quasi-dead'.'[5]

This is a familiar Curnow. As early as 1935, his criticism is prefiguring the arguments and theories that will emerge in his two influential anthology introductions, the 1945 Caxton A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45 and the 1960 Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse. 'Poetry and Language' contains the same doctrinaire approach of these later essays, the same rigidities and prescriptions. It is also an opening gambit, a series of statements that belong in a distinctly local context. In condemning the majority of New Zealand poetry as 'quasi-dead', Curnow is pronouncing authoritatively on a tradition of writing in New Zealand that has its roots in the pioneer culture of the nineteenth century and, in figures such as Alan Mulgan, Eileen Duggan and J.H.E. Schroder, continued to have a substantial influence into the 1930s. The modernism of 'Poetry and Language' (and even its layout owes something to the high modernist publications of Imagism and Vorticism such as Blast) seeks a revolution of language. For Curnow, this revolution is not simply a question of stylistic devices, the abandoning of a 'redundant' Georgianism, but also a vital process of decolonisation, a recognition that poetic reality must (as he later termed it in

the Penguin anthology) be 'local and special at the point where we pick up the traces.'[6]

This is an aggressive nationalism, a necessary strategy. What is needed in the context of the 1930s is to juxtapose this nationalism with the development of Curnow's poetry during the decade where, as he wrote in 'Landfall in Unknown Seas' (from the 1943 collection Sailing or Drowning), 'the eye scans risky horizons of its own.'[7] There is a seeming incompatibility between the prescriptions of Curnow's criticism, its demands upon literature, and the scepticism revealed in his poetry, where the very act of utterance is often seen to be riddled with doubt. Curnow's role as a literary public mentor, a position that owes much to W.B. Yeats and perceptions of previous nationalisms, is central to any discussion of New Zealand literature since the 1930s. The public nationalism that developed up through the 1940s and 1950s is a Janus-faced phenomenon that eludes full explication, but carries with it a host of delineating structures. It is the public face of the literature of decolonisation. Curnow's poetry addresses the same issues; the relationships between language and location, the need for statements of difference. Yet the admission of doubt and flexibility in the poetics, the recognition of the difficulties implicit in 'the cunning history [and] contrived corridors' of time (the phrase is T.S. Eliot's) leads to an assessment both of the post-colonial situation and the specificities of the 1930s which is unmatched by any writer in New Zealand.

The relationship between Curnow's criticism and poetry need not be problematical. As Hugh MacDiarmid demonstrated during the Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s, the adoption of seemingly contradictory political or cultural positions in the

nationalisitic process has a justifiable, even a logical base. The hard edges of Curnow's criticism, the constant demand for a fidelity to an experience that is determinedly local, does not undermine the philosophical and theological scepticism within the poetry. Curnow's conception of literature does not revolve around such basic dualities. Like Edward Said, he is aware of 'the wrong turns, the overlap, the senseless repetition, the occasionally glorious moment'[8] that accompany the literature of nationalism. The rigidities of the criticism explore questions of decolonisation within specific public contexts, and deserve archaeologies that recognise this. The results of these rigidities: the creation of a partial canon, the exclusion of writers who fail to fit the dominant mythology, the selective evaluation of previous literary figures, cast shadows over New Zealand writing that must be addressed. Yet they do not rule out the possibility that it is within Curnow's own creative work that the multiple questions facing New Zealand literature in the 1930s receive their most sensitive and articulate exploration.

It is impossible, even harmful, to split Curnow's output into critical and poetic ideologies. To explore the poetry, to note the complicated interweaving of language, geography, history, theology and philosophy, and not to heed the Yeatsian public stance is an approach which limits an evaluation of Curnow's importance to the literary culture within which he works. Similarly, any commentary on the aggressiveness of the anthologising must take the tensions of the poetics into account. Curnow is not a poet who fluctuates between 'public' and 'private' realms. The geographical concerns of Not In Narrow Seas (1939) and Island and Time (1941) are not divorced from the ontological and eschatological questions of collections as

diverse as Valley of Decision (1933), Trees, Effigies, Moving Objects (1972) and An Incorrigable Music (1979). As Curnow himself noticed in titling his 1988 collection, the idea of the continuum is a useful one in addressing his work, whether as a whole or in a specifically 1930s context.[9]

Curnow's poetry of the decade found a variety of outlets. His major collections are Valley of Decision (1933), Enemies: Poems 1934-36 (1936), Not In Narrow Seas: Poems with Prose (1939) and Island and Time (1941). 1941 also saw the publication of Caxton's Recent Poems in which Curnow's work appeared alongside that of A.R.D. Fairburn, Denis Glover and R.A.K. Mason. Similarly the 1935 publication by the Caxton Club Press of Another Argo contained one poem each by Curnow, Fairburn and Glover. As a satirist for the Christchurch Press and the New Zealand Listener, Curnow published under the pseudonym of Whim-Wham and the bulk of this 1930s material was collected in Caxton's 1940 A Present for Hitler and Other Verses. From 1934 onwards Curnow published a variety of poems in Tomorrow under the pseudonym Julian. Some of these found their way into his own collections, while others appeared in the two volumes of Verse Alive (a collection of poetry from Tomorrow) in 1936 and 1937. Curnow also published a number of other poems in a variety of student magazines, Kiwi, Phoenix and the Canterbury College Review, from 1931 to 1934.

The eclectic nature of this publishing record is an indication of the multiplicities of the decade. Curnow's satirical output as Whim-Wham and Julian is as much a response to the conditions of New Zealand of the 1930s as is the studied intelligence of Not In Narrow Seas. The tremendous amount of satirical verse produced by the major New Zealand literary figures (Fairburn and Glover in particular were prodigious

exponents of the art) appears as a nervous, sometimes evasive, approach to a situation, both national and international, with a potential for social catastrophe. In the same way that the English writers of the 1930s created fabular worlds dominated by oppressive politics, and W.H. Auden evoked a portrayal of a secret police state that drew both on an esoteric mythology and contemporary society, their New Zealand counterparts produced spoofs and lampoons of politicians and political events that often masked their more serious concerns. Curnow was an accomplished satirist, but his role in this peculiar 1930s manifestation of the craft never deflected the rigour of his search for a meaningful and complex poetic.

In Curnow's own words an analysis of Valley of Decision in which 'some crisis or change from faith to scepticism may be read'[10] is valid. For many, the scepticism of the volume is the beginning of Curnow's poetic centre. Writing in 1975, Terry Sturm notes the syntactical and philosophical exigencies of the poems:

> The stance behind the poetry written in the 1930s implies, continually, that poems don't come easily, that the impulse to write a poem is not necessarily sufficient to make a poem, and that first thoughts are not necessarily the best thoughts... The impression [the poems] give - despite the conventional shape of most of the poems - is of a poet attempting to break free of trite or coventional sentiment, especially in his use of a carefully wrought or unusual syntax.[11]

while for Trevor James, writing in 1984:

> The early poems in Valley of Decision (1933) are freighted with undertones which suggest that the mature Curnow's sceptical stance proceeds from a period of early religious idealism which, while it was succeeded by disenchantment, was never wholly exorcised.[12]

Both Sturm and James pick up on elements which are vital to Curnow's poetry, the sense of linguistic craft and the palimpsest

of a religion whose dogmatic ideology has been rejected. In Valley of Decision these two threads intermingle in a poetry that is centred on the understanding that the approach to the world must be through the senses and particularly through language. 'Renunciation' makes the point well:

> Darken, eyes, towards the day,
> look well on neither flower nor tree:
> I have given a springing world away
> for worlds which I believe to be.
>
> The motion of this ill belief
> I cannot speak, lest every word
> whine to a soft attenuate grief
> and every flower burn out a sword
>
> edged as electric flame to cut
> the soul's taut artery in two.
> Eyes, darken; whining mouth, be shut
> till I have cleaner work for you.[13]

Like much of the collection, the poem is reminiscent of R.A.K. Mason's poetry, Curnow's language echoing Mason's turn of phrase and his concerns with the theological and ontological. 'Renunciation' addresses these concerns through a concentration on the approach of the senses. The validity of the eye or the voice to record and express that which it witnesses is constantly questioned. This obsession with the senses runs through the volume, whether it is the 'eye, ear, hand' of 'Et Resurrexit', the 'clouded sight' of 'At The Brink' or the 'withering eyes' of 'Power of the Many.' Within this poetic stance there is a clear anticipation of a poem such as 'The Eye Is More Or Less Satisfied with Seeing' from the later Poems 1949-1957. The poet is engaged in an exploration of his relationship with the world, consciously aware of the dilemma involved in any expression of that relationship.

It is important to state what the poems in Valley of Decision are not. They are not poetic equivalents of a

Sargesonesque vernacular or a token local nationalism. Only one poem deals with what we might term the 'exterior' world of social and political structures, and that poem, 'Relief', eschews a dogmatic or doctrinaire approach:

> They gave your hands a grubbing-tool
> and you have learnt to use the thing:
> you thought, a man's a bloody fool
> who starves when work is offering.
>
> And there's a stiffness in your eyes
> that is not earth nor labour-pain;
> your eyes give nothing to the dust
> though foot and hand shake out the chain:
>
> this iron marks you man, bound low
> under a mad king's blind control,
> who wills you change, you would or no,
> his mass-compassion for a soul.[14]

Whatever political reading this may offer (the 'mad king's blind control'), the poem is concerned fundamentally with an ontological dilemma and the nature of its expression. It is this dilemma, and its manifestation in the wrought syntax of the poetry, the lapses and the pauses, that dominates Valley of Decision. Curnow's recognition of the problematic nature of language is also a recognition of the problematic nature of place. Though none of the poems in this first volume address nationalist topics in the same way as Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time, they revolve around the position of the poet and validity of his statements. It is in this question of rhetorical stance that Valley of Decision expresses Curnow's awareness of the multiplicities of decolonisation. The sense of blockage, of slippage of language, which the early poems illustrate feed in to the sense of disillusionment in the poems of the late 1930s. Curnow's recognition in 'The Unhistoric Story' that maps and discovery are not enough, that there will always be 'something different, something/ Nobody counted on' is an extension of the

problems discerned in 'Renunciation.' The reference to the 'stuck clods' in 'Status Quo' is a similar expression of the suburban imagery that dominates Not In Narrow Seas. Curnow is aware of New Zealand's position as a settler colony, of the unique history, society and culture such a position brings. The disenchantment and problems reflected in the poems of the early 1930s are a striking statement on a culture, with all its excesses of language and history, that has not developed as planned.

The density of the poems in Valley of Decision reveals a craft that values caution. There is nothing in Curnow's work that parallels the exuberance of the early phases from other nationalisms. The excitement of much Irish nationalist writing of the 1890s or the passion of a text like MacDiarmid's 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' (1926) carries an excess, a revolutionary sense of potential, that is alien to Curnow's sense of writing. In part, this may stem from the specifics of Curnow's own Anglican background, and the tenor of Canterbury life in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is also a question of ego, and the level to which a 'public' poet like Yeats or MacDiarmid (and, to widen the scope, figures like Ezra Pound and Charles Olson, both of whom attracted Curnow's attention[15]) project themselves into their work. Curnow's increasing pre-eminence in New Zealand literature as the 1930s turned into the 1940s invites these comparisons. Valley of Decision may seem an early volume to discuss in these terms (and a more fruitful explanation may well come from an analysis of Curnow's position in world literature in the 1980s and 1990s) but Curnow's loss of faith in Christianity recorded, however obliquely, in the volume is the genesis of a poetic career that lacks the rhetorical expansiveness of Yeats, MacDiarmid, Pound or Olson. Curnow's

position as a 'post-religious poet' (to use Mark Williams's useful term[16]) means that his is always a poetry with a fundamental concern for the problematic. The caution of his early poetry is not due to the inchoate thoughts of a young writer. It is the beginning of a scepticism that aligns Curnow more with writers like Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams. His early sense of what it means to write in New Zealand is one that invites wary footsteps. As Chris Wallace-Crabb notes in a study of Curnow, his is a poetry that lays claim to discuss a huge variety of topics but, at the same time, 'the acknowledged limits of language keep beating the claim down.'[17]

Valley of Decision has early indications of the kind of 'finished' poem Curnow would later create, poems that, in their sense of completeness, invite comparisons with Stevens. This concern with a dense language is also apparent in 'Aspects of Monism', the first of the Three Poems of 1935. Once again the primacy of the senses is affirmed, and the resistance to any idea of transcendence:

> This was untrue, that there is division
> between body and mind
>
> ....
> Now it is too late to save the deceit;
> it is death or whole acceptance of the vision
> of beauty gone down full-eyed in defeat
> earth receiving her. There is no division.[18]

As with the poems of Valley of Decision, 'Aspects of Monism' wrestles with linguistic density. The linking of man and the cosmos in 'And the day has one white foot on the very far/ first step from darkness, and a white arm takes/ the sea in a bowl held upward in a glory'[19] is typical of Curnow's craft in the early 1930s, where language and imagery are worked and reworked in a rigorous attempt to fashion a robust poetic.

'Aspects of Monism', with its proclamation that 'There is no division' looks towards a poem such as 'The Kitchen Cupboard' from the 1972 collection Trees, Effigies, Moving Objects, with the similar admission 'Everything happens at once. It is enough.'[20] It is important to stress this sense of a continuum, as it reinforces the status of Curnow's 1930s work. His poetry of the decade is not juvenilia, nor is it solely a response to the specific and peculiar literary atmosphere of the period. It is work which functions within the social and cultural context of its writing, with all the benefits and problems that entails, but it is not disconnected, by the specifics of this context, from the same studied thought that characterises Curnow's later poetry.

If 'Aspects of Monism' looks towards the styles of Curnow's 1970s poetry, then 'Restraint', the second of the Three Poems, is one of the earliest expressions of the particular nationalism discernable in Curnow's work in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The poem asks the reader to 'think of the way you would choose' when faced with the 'slight memory' of 'seas crossed, other lands,/ strange speech, strange faces/ and the work of strange hands.' The poem then moves on:

> For a time your heart will plead with you
> for space in which to see
> the sun rise upon dark places
> that were lost utterly;
>
> but there will be silence in a while
> and another memory
> of a dream broken and beauty left
> at the border of the sea:
>
> there is one sun the world over
> and the one heaven's blue;
> and one heart risen with the morning
> can light the world for you.[21]

In his study of Curnow's mythopoeia James Wieland has noted how the poet's use of myth is not for the purposes of transcendence but rather a method which is 'directed towards a radical awareness of reality'[22], a reality experienced in a constant exploration of language. 'Restraint' echoes these concerns, particularly in its desire to contain significance in a local context. As Wieland notes: 'Myth provides a means of making contact with the eternal verities, but Curnow is aware of the danger of accepting unequivocally the myths... His plea to his countrymen, if they must have myth, is: 'Do it yourself!''.[23] The poem is the first instance in Curnow's oeuvre of the movement towards what Wieland (in a very useful phrase) terms an 'inclusiveness of mind.'[24] This idea of a controlled and stable viewpoint echoes Yeats's dictum to 'Hammer your thoughts into unity.' It leads to the shape and structure of Curnow's poetics in Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time as well as the critical processes of the anthologising. It is also implicit in the later poems where the poet's point of view is honed with a precision that often makes the very act of poetic utterance the subject matter of the material.

Curnow ends Three Poems with 'The Wilderness', where the desire to 'put on' the 'well-chosen word and gesture'[25] reflects the adoption of the poetic persona that is integral to the nationalism of 'Restraint.' But the 'inclusiveness of mind' does not develop in a neat, linear fashion through the contents of Enemies (1937). What emerges instead is a volume that appears far more typical of the problematical 1930s. In Enemies, the control of Valley of Decision becomes lost in a mixture of the decade's orthodoxies in both England and New Zealand. The attempt to portray a 'disillusionment - especially with New Zealand society

as Curnow knew it'[26] fragments into a series of poems that recall the tautologies of Auden and Fairburn, with language that lacks Curnow's usual scrupulous concerns.

Enemies marks Curnow's first sustained attempt to address the specifics of New Zealand society, to 'name his world.'[27] In poems such as 'New Zealand City' and 'Colonial Outlook' he reflects the nascent nationalism that achieved a loose formation in the New Zealand of the mid-1930s. An analysis of the contents of Tomorrow between the period 1934-37 (as Winston Rhodes wrestled greater editorial control) reveals the increased prominence of figures such as Fairburn, Glover, D'Arcy Cresswell and Curnow. This is no real homogeneous unit, and in many ways the tone of Tomorrow during this period can be argued to reflect Rhodes's socialism rather than a strict literary nationalism, but the blurring of the boundaries does not detract from the increased attention paid by the writers of the period to the culture they were working within. Enemies is very much a product of this, as well as a reflection of the complex interweaving that characterised the inheritance of a varied literary heritage during this phase of cultural self-analysis.

If Valley of Decision illustrated Curnow's assimilation of Mason, then Enemies contains much that is familiar from the poetics of Fairburn[28]. 'New Zealand City' has many of the faults that characterise Dominion (1938):

> Small city your streets hold no particular legends,
> your brothels are inconspicuous as your churches,
> your potentates think in thousands not millions
> and the nations do not quote your newspapers.
>
> London has spawned. Here are banks in the egg,
> foetus Beaverbrooks, Edens and Baldwins,
> toy art and labour, the importance of children
> under an unstained sky.[29]

This is a poetic posturing, a rhetorical stance emphasising a sense of distance from the subject matter which is uncharacteristic of Curnow. The result is that the poetry often descends into the didactic and obvious, as at the end of 'Colonial Outlook':

> Our beds empty, streets a desert no less
> than in the other provinces of the sun:
> yet we remain, dog-at-heel, obsequious. [30]

This approach to the social condition, particularly as it is manifested in the last line, is the stock nationalism of Fairburn and Glover. It contains all the uncertainties of Dominion, the mixing of literary influences, the esoteric conception of politics and a quasi-mythic language that cloaks the whole. Like Dominion, Enemies appears as a hinterland of doubt hiding beneath a display of aggression. 'Chief End' is the standard limerick-style satire with which Fairburn and Glover filled the pages of Tomorrow, 'Quasi-Slum' and 'Enemies' are energies without focus, the ostensible targets (the poor, the ill-educated, those who refuse to listen to the demands of literature in New Zealand) clearly a victim of a poetical uncertainty.

As with Fairburn, Curnow's lapses reveal the maldigested influences of the English poets of the decade[31]. The love poems (again strikingly similar to Fairburn's 1930s pieces) are palimpsests of a literary neo-pastoralism encountering a pseudo-modernistic linguistics. The neo-pastoral tendencies of the orthodoxy may also be responsible for the anti-industrialism of 'Orbit' where 'the distraught people/ in twitching panic tread the collapsed hours' of 'chaos' steam and steel writhing.'[32] Yet such pieces are accompanied by attempts at a demotic register (in truth simply a personal poetic mannerism) that are

quintessentially Audenesque. In 'Recall to Earth' Curnow borrows Auden's vocabulary of the mid-1930s, with all its eccentricities:

> Fear, iron-eyed chauffeur of ambition
> drives daily to the gold-lettered door
> a man of rapidly increasing income,
> successful, admired, damn'd and a bore.
>
> Monkey-chatter in the newest manner
> offends your spirit, foolishness harries you.
> Will you play bridge? - The talk cuts and flays;
> dead handshake, rhetorical How d'you do.[33]

This is the anxious middle classes talking to themselves, and it is clearly a borrowed idiom. Subjected to the developing literary culture of the mid-1930s, Curnow resorts to a collage of orthodox offerings. The studied ontological concerns of Valley of Decision are replaced by confusion. A poem such as 'Quasi-Slum', which starts in 'the garden of our Father' switches abruptly to 'the factory and/ the filthy house' and then moves to a quatrain that is pure 1930s orthodoxy:

> We have agents behind the lines,
> expounders of truth, seers of signs,
> preaching that the starving should not covet
> good things, bringing Moses' law to prove it.[34]

The juxtaposition of the Audenesque frontier spy with Curnow's own theological concerns results in a poetry similar to that of Cecil Day Lewis in the early 1930s, where industrial imagery was contained within a heady pastoralism. In both instances, the work reflects a poetical stance dominated by the pressures of an increasingly publicised literary culture. Enemies, like Day Lewis's Transitional Poem (1929) and From Feathers To Iron (1931), is full of the struggle between propaganda (or at least a literature which seeks to publicly instruct) and a more conventional literary expression which dominated the 1930s. It mirrors the often volatile tensions of

the decade and reflects the problems that lay in attempting to express the period's multiplicities.

Curnow was probably aware of the faults of Enemies. When his Collected Poems 1933-1973 was published it was the material from this volume which he subjected to the harshest revision.[35] The discontent is even apparent in 'Paid Well', the final poem in the collection which, like Fairburn's 'Rhyme of the Dead Self' from He Shall Not Rise (1930), acknowledges the limitations and problems of the expression:

> No more burns the fire within the word.
> Use stiffens the rhythm, effaces the soft image
> which came and went like flame.
> Great waters
> are come upon the world, all cold
> untroubled by birth and death alike.[36]

In the context of Curnow's poetry, Enemies appears as an aberration; a collection of experiments and a manifestation of a subconscious heritage. It provides no sense of method, no structure with which to address the complexities of decolonisation in the 1930s. The demands of nationalist expression, as Curnow experienced them during this period, and the demands of the individual poetic require more than Enemies provides. Curnow's answer lay in the 'inclusiveness of mind' which underlies his next collection, Not In Narrow Seas, and dominates the 'geographical' concerns of the next two volumes.

Undoubtedly Curnow sought to revise his poetic method after the failures of Enemies. Alan Roddick claims that the creator of Enemies and of Not In Narrow Seas 'might almost have been different poets', noting in the verse-form, locutions and sense of poetic authority a more mature debt to Auden.[37] The changes lay not simply in a growing assimilation of the possibilities of Curnow's English literary heritage, but also in an understanding

of the complexities that same heritage produced. Curnow could never respond to the processes of colonial displacement as an indigene. The erasure, loss and cultural dismemberment implicit in the colonial situation was, because of his own European background, always subject to further complications. Lacking access to any Polynesian heritage which might have provided structures with which to combat the stresses and ruptures contained within colonialism, Curnow was forced to address the ambivalence of his location. Denied connections to the concept of tangata whenua, Curnow's poetry in Not In Narrow Seas is writing under pressure, having to utilise the traditions of literatures and nationalisms in English yet also aiming to provide an analysis of the specifics of New Zealand culture as he saw it.

Within this context, the example provided by Yeats's nationalism is important. Curnow himself recognised the limitations imposed by a naive, unsophisticated nationalism, even as he was working on the material for Not In Narrow Seas. Writing in the Christchurch Press in March 1937, he declared: 'The production of good poetry cannot be assisted by the 'national literature' sentiment.'[38] Yeats's varying nationalisms, from the 'popular' sentiments of the 1890s, through the esoteric idea that 'it is the personal element alone that can give [art] nationality in a fine sense, the nationality of its maker'[39], to the political commitment of the 1920s, provided Curnow with an intelligent and flexible model for the possibilities of nationalist self-expression. Curnow may have lacked the heritage of the Gaelic ballads, myths and legends, and Yeats's extreme sentimentality or eclectic elitism (displayed at differing points of his career) might have provided leads that were too idiosyncratic to follow, but the general concept of an 'imaginative nationalism' and the

idea of a 'public' mentor were available to him in the New Zealand of the 1930s.

Curnow's use of Yeats is intelligent. He nevers adopts Yeats's stylistic armoury. The language of Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time, coming close to its own distinctive timbre, is more influenced by Auden than any other figure. Perhaps Eileen Duggan's use of the ballad in a New Zealand context demonstrated to Curnow the strains of utilising such an obviously adopted form. Nor does Curnow ever seek to match the symbolic excesses of Yeats's poetry. Writing 'A Job for Poetry: Notes on an Impulse' early in 1941, Curnow noted that: 'We can no longer trust in some rearrangement of now-observable elements to bring us to some clearly desirable end.'[40] This lack of trust means that Curnow's inheritance from Yeats is always one buttressed by scepticism. Whether he is resisting Yeats's poetic individualism or his post-1900 reversion to an appreciation of the 'vivacity of common life'[41], Curnow is selective in his appreciation. As 'A Job for Poetry' makes clear, his concerns are the relationships between language and place, and the meaning of those relationships in 'the fact or mystery, mathematic or metaphysic, of Time.'[42] Yeats provides the concept of the role, the 'inclusiveness of mind' that Curnow now brought to his subject matter.

As a result Not In Narrow Seas is no exercise in nationalistic self-promotion. Instead it is the product of a studied intelligence, and the dominant tone is a downbeat disappointment that is established in the 'Dedication' which opens the volume:

> To him who can distinguish
> In an unfeigned anguish
> What is general
> From what is personal,
> Who has heard optimism
> Crash in the last chasm

> And knows hope more near
> His heart's despair.[43]

The New Zealand of Not In Narrow Seas is fundamentally suburban. The processes of colonising, of settlement, are riddled with doubt, fear and ambiguity. The result is a spiritual atrophy and an amoral capitalism characterised by reproduction and imitation. The constant refrain of the volume echoes that of the later 'The Unhistoric Story', from Island and Time, where colonisation 'was something different, something/ Nobody counted on'.[44] Curnow's disenchantment (which extends a tradition which runs through Samuel Butler's Erewhon (1872), Edward Tregear's 'Te Whetu Plains' and Katherine Mansfield's 'taint of empire') is the basis of what he later termed 'the anti-myth about New Zealand which a few of us poets - and almost nobody else - were so busy making in those years.'[45] Auden's proclamation that 'Art is not life, and cannot be/ A midwife to society' informs this attitude, and there is something of Auden's scepticism about the poet's ability to speak at a national level in Not In Narrow Seas. However, Curnow is not really interested in creating an 'anti-myth' in the same way Auden did, by becoming the 'silly old man' of letters, belittling the function of poetry and obsessed with particulars. He values poetry too much for this, and must have hankered for the idea of nationhood where the images and themes of Cathleen ni Houlihan (1902) might - even to the smallest degree - have led to the Easter Rebellion. But he is not prepared to manufacture such a nation, and Not In Narrow Seas looks towards both the foreword from Cresswell's Present Without Leave (1939) in Island and Time - 'As yet they have have no future of their own; and when at length one confronts them, they shall awake to find where they lie'[46] - and the vision of national self

crystallised in Curnow's 1943 poem 'The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch':

> Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year,
> Will learn the trick of standing upright here.[47]

Not In Narrow Seas does display a suburban New Zealand. The poetry and the prose work to create a narrative of the Canterbury settlement, moving between past and present, wherein the historical significance of the colonising process is slowly undermined by the particulars that process encounters. From the optimism of Section IV where 'Only the best had been taken, it seemed, of the English tradition' and the recognition that 'Jerusalem is built as a city' comes the recognition of Section V:

> Frustration drives the men to seek a new country; but the savagery of the new land threatens an even more terrible frustration; so that fear swallows creative effort; and the sole effective desire remaining is to conserve and extend the illusion of life in the old world.

As the poetry notes, 'Green grows the bungalow/ At the courageous heels.'[48] As the narrative unfolds, the prose commentary becomes more cynical and ironic, talking of 'the pleasant work' that makes the 'country fit for civilised people to live in', and the poetry moves to describe how such a 'civilised' woman begins each day in the 'new land':

> Waking next morning, moving curtain, she
> Sees front plot fenced, path in place;
> The cloud, the mountain-terror tamed now
> Framed to taste for parlour chimneyplace.[49]

The culture is seen to be a filmic artificiality, where the 'Island and ocean' are a 'theatre// Screening a weary self-flattery/ Where colour and where courage is/ Costumed secondhand, in character.'[50] The 'Epilogue' to the volume interweaves Curnow's own verse with lines from Blake's 'My silks and fine

array', from the 1783 Poetical Sketches. As Roddick notes[51], the importance of this is that the Blake Curnow chooses is not the Blake who seeks the building of 'Jerusalem'. Instead of the Edenic image, we have an immature work, a poor reflection.

These images of suburbia and capitalism feed into Island and Time, whether in the 'market-place' and 'accustomed haven' of 'The Unhistoric Story' or the 'land of settlers/ With never a soul at home' of 'House and Land'.[52] Like Not In Narrow Seas, Island and Time also ends on a downbeat note with the recognition that there is 'No Second Coming.'[53] Both volumes point to a revelation that can only happen in the future. In 'The Scene', where it is recognised that 'Here among shaggy mountains cast away/ Man's shape must be recast', the promise of the future is that 'Some day thought will startle the bush like scarlet.'[54] This echoes the end of Not In Narrow Seas, where there is hope that 'out of the orgy of imitation, there will be born men of spirit.'[55] Curnow's desire is for knowledge and art to inform the culture. It reminds us that both Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time, despite their status as 'public' volumes, are still echoing the linguistic concerns central to Curnow's poetics. 'The Scene' calls for a language that can do justice to the location and, in so doing, it looks forward to the later poems where this act of naming becomes a more central concern. 'The Unhistoric Story' is a poem about history and geography, about the process of colonisation, but it is also about language, as if the whole settlement procedure is itself a sentence that lacks a grammatically correct ending. As in his earliest poems, Curnow is aware that conclusions about the location of colonisation are constantly interwoven with conclusions about the language of colonisation.

A feeling of disenchantment, the detailing of the cultural suburbia, suffuses the contents of Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time. This places Curnow's work within a context of New Zealand literature recognisable from subsequent literary criticism. Analyses as disparate as Robert Chapman's 'Fiction and the Social Pattern' (1953) and Lawrence Jones's Barbed Wire and Mirrors (1987) identify what Jones terms the 'provincial' nature of such writing, the backlash to a heritage of Protestant morality and economics and a mythology derived from perceptions of nineteenth-century capability. Hence Frank Sargeson's short fiction, the poetry of Glover, Fairburn and Curnow are interpreted as a rejection of the structures of New Zealand history and society and a desire to mould, through a 'new' literature, an alternative expression. This argument has a place in discussing the literature of the 1930s, but it is an orthodox criticism which addresses the orthodox nature of the writing with the same vocabulary and horizons. To view Curnow's poetry (and nationalism) in this light is an act of reduction, not of explanation. Such a social new criticism merely points to the limitations of New Zealand literary culture as a whole. To emerge from Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time purely with an impression of social criticism displays an ephemeral reading, the kind of 'solidity' in the critical process which has led to the hegemony of the literary orthodoxy for so long.

Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time have depths which are subtle and ironic. Despite the debts owed to Yeats and Auden, the hangover of previous nationalisms and literary structures, the two volumes mark Curnow's emergence as a poet developing his own methods of naming, the beginning of what Wieland refers to as Curnow's 'Adam-act.'[56] This is not a process of Curnow 'finding

his own voice', some sort of poetic graduation ceremony. Threads of influence do not simply 'go away', they are always contained, worked and reworked, occupying a constant realm. It is better to concentrate on the methods of naming themselves, the 'discovery of viewpoints.'[57] In Island and Time in particular Curnow engages in a sophisticated analysis of the post-colonial condition which, in its intelligence and recognition of complexity, is unmatched by any New Zealand writer of the era. Yet this intelligence is the 'inclusiveness of mind' which, as Ian Wedde notes[58], led firstly to the radical and seemingly independent nature of Caxton's 1945 anthology of New Zealand poetry and then on to the 1960 Penguin collection, where the judgements involved led to a prescriptive male orthodoxy that denies flexibility. Curnow's attempts to re-open the stale truths he sees in New Zealand's history coalesce into a critical orthodoxy characterised by the narrowness of its boundaries.

Such a situation is not, of course, simply the product of Curnow's personal critical faculties operating within time, there are numerous related variables, but the ironies and complications implicit in this era of New Zealand literature need to be addressed. More than anything else, the emphasis returns to Curnow's own conception of the relationship between language and location, to the poetic that emerges from the tensions within this.

Vital in an understanding of this poetic is an appreciation of Curnow's use of myth which, in a definable sense, dates from the contents of Not In Narrow Seas. The relationship between myth and anti-myth is complicated and ironic, for the 'anti-myth' to which Curnow contributed in the late 1930s is very much the solidifying of the literary myth of New Zealand that

characterises the decade's nationalism and emerges in the introduction to Curnow's 1945 anthology. Again there are parallels with Auden, for as Richard Ellman points out in Eminent Domain:

> Auden's anti-mythological attitude would seem to be a myth of its own, a belittlement of traditional glories only to make a reduced but very solid residual claim, like stripping a Victorian house of its gingerbread in order to display its history.[59]

However, Curnow's use of the myth/anti-myth is more serious than Auden's. It is not simply a reaction to canonisation or ways of reading. Curnow recognises that myth can function locally, that it can be specifically useful, and he uses myth to probe the laminations of New Zealand history, continually aware that the chaos of history is a particular legacy of the post-colonial condition. As Wieland points out, 'myth has the potential to offer a release from history's dislocations and to offer paradigms for finding continuity in the face of temporal exigencies.'[60] This establishes Curnow as a poet not simply concerned with a local phenomenon, a provincial nationalism, but places him in the context of a much wider series of questions. It connects his work to that of other post-colonial poets, such as Nissim Ezekiel, Christopher Okigbo and Derek Walcott, who wrestle with the possibilities fictions and myths offer as solutions to a cruel history. Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time become documents which are not simply analyses of New Zealand, but reach out from a local idea of geography and nation (as the title of the latter collection indicates) to address the relationships of New Zealand to a larger world. Sturm recognised this point when he noted that Curnow's poetry implies 'a polarity between a there (which might be anywhere) and the poet's immediate and local here

(which is wherever he happens to live and which defines his angle of vision).'[61]

This polarity is, in fact, a complicated continuum and Island and Time displays a poetic that moves within it, illustrating an awareness of the depth of the issues which surround colonialism and its consequences. The poems in the volume that concentrate on specific geographical or historical events, poems such as 'St. Thomas's Ruins', 'Crash at Leithfield' and 'A Victim' (dealing with the death of Jan Tyssen, one of Tasman's crew, during the visit to New Zealand in 1642), all seek a point of specific focus. Like the later 'The Weather in Tohunga Crescent', Curnow recognises the value of such a point of focus as a location for 'meaning', but he also knows the problems latent within any expression from these points. The specific poems in Island and Time all revolve around considerations that develop from 'The Unhistoric Story.' The recognition of the problematic nature of history of culture, of the inability to give a linguistic definition to the 'something different', suffuses the remainder of the volume. Charting the local in poetic terms, as in 'Country School' or 'Lake Mapourika', Curnow is aware of the slippage involved in his Adamic role. Even the percussive beats of 'Wild Iron' serve to evoke images of isolation at the same moment they draw attention to their own noisy existence.

All these examples are recognitions of complexities and difficulties. Curnow's refusal to be precise in his processes of naming promotes an elliptical concept of meaning, where the gaps and pauses - the unnamed bulk of the nation - are as vital to the poetry as the examples upon which he chooses to focus. This is poetry which transcends the realm of a mere social criticism, for

as Curnow illustrates in 'The Dance', despite the necessity of naming for a literature of decolonisation, the value of that which is beyond comprehension must be maintained:

> Nothing could be worse
> Than standing drumming
> While the dancers disperse
> Than a turf unbroken
> Than roses in a row
> Than an old man reading
> Than a new radio
> Than a long itching finger
> Than nothing left to know.[62]

This recognition of non-linear knowledge, of the usefulness within the problematic relationship of language and location, points to a redefinition of the methods (and in particular the kind of nationalism) contained within Curnow's poetry. He is not interested in history in the same way that Olson is, lacking the wider sense of anthropological concerns. Nor is his portrayal of New Zealand geography reminiscent of the way MacDiarmid considered geography in the 1930s. Also reflecting on islands (he moved to the island of Whalsey in the Shetland archipelago in 1933), MacDiarmid's poetics in his 1934 collection Stony Limits and Other Poems envisages a far more concrete sense of geography and geology than Curnow provides. Though he might sympathise with the structures of MacDiarmid's nationalism, Curnow could never commit himself to the assertion, from 'On a Raised Beach', that 'All is lithogenesis.' Curnow is not prepared (even ironically) to deal with such absolutes. As he notes in 'Sestina' (a poem where the very verse form works to throw light on the difficulties of writing in the post-colonial situation), 'Wreckage mocks history' and 'Continents pull like moons where the pilot gropes/ By dials false to the day.'[63] The tools of reference by which we measure certainties are often deceitful.

In his poetry Curnow is aware that narratives form nations. This is a constant concern with linguistics that starts in Valley of Decision and continues into the 1990s. The 'local' specifics of Not In Narrow Seas and Island and Time are always couched within this wider frame of reference. 'Sestina' proclaims that 'Not by voyages or accidents of ships,/ Not by waves or the larger rhythms of the sea,/ Are your islands mapped, measurable in Time.'[64] Curnow's myth mixes the past with the present, geography with history and theology, but always with the knowledge, articulated by a weary and cynical personification of Time in 'Dialogue of Island and Time', that 'Nation is a hazardous sign.'[65]

This caution and flexibility is the product of a rigorous poetic ego, a constant refusal to allow the stereotypes of convention to simplify the complexities of New Zealand's spatial and temporal location. Curnow comprehends Wole Soyinka's recognition that - to be valid - any literature of decolonisation must go 'beyond the standard anti-colonial purge of learning and education and [embrace] the apprehension of a culture whose reference points are taken from within the culture itself.'[66] Curnow is aware of the complexities of such 'self-apprehension.' Island and Time, with its blend of geographical location and temporal debate, is a prolonged explication of Soyinka's thesis.

Yet the Curnow of the late 1930s and early 1940s is also a critical ego. Curnow has always developed his postion within New Zealand's literary culture with scrupulous care and attention. His critical output since the 1930s shows an unnerving ability to achieve definitions, to maintain his position as a central figure in the literary debate. Even his silences form an implied comment. Here he again reflects Yeats. Both Curnow and Yeats

refused, unlike a poet such as Thomas Hardy, to 'grow old', to solidify into a received criticism. The power Curnow imparts to his poetic scepticism was also working at the end of the 1930s, seeking critical paths that would outline the development of a national literature.

This critical energy is focused into Curnow's introduction to Caxton's 1945 A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45. Originally planned for the Progressive Publishing Society, the anthology was delayed due to the Society's financial difficulties. It was not until Denis Glover's return to New Zealand from war service in Europe that Caxton took over the responsibility of publication. Curnow had confessed to Ursula Bethell that the orthodox view of New Zealand literature at the end of the 1930s was 'an outlook so utterly foreign to my own, as if 'New Zealand literature' were some indirect advertising stunt.'[67] His response in the anthology is a ruthless selection, and an essay that promotes aggressive definitions. Curnow talks explicitly of 'beginnings' and 'realities' in his introduction, following a tone that is set in his opening quote from Yeats's The Trembling of the Veil:

> Lacking sufficient recognized precedent I must needs find out some reason for all that I did. I knew almost from the start that to overflow with reasons was to be not quite well-born; and when I could I hid them, as men hide a disagreeable ancestry; and that there was no help for it, seeing that my country was not born at all.[68]

Curnow is reaching out with Yeats's 'gloved hand' of the nation. By inference, the yardstick of nationalism is the one by which poetry should be judged. For Curnow this appears less an ideological move than a recognition of a simple local 'reality':

> Local reference ought never to decide our estimate of a poem's worth. Yet anyone capable of poetry, feeling his own land and people, his footing on the earth, to be in any way inadequate, unstable, unreal, is

> bound to attempt a resolution of the problems set by his birth. Unless he is a new and altogether less passionate variety of 'social man' - I wonder, is that possible? - the New Zealand poet is unlikely to escape wholly the character of prophet to his people, some trace of Whitman and other Americans, the Polish Romantics, or the Irish poets of the revival.[69]

Thus New Zealand as a culture is 'stunted emotionally because we have not dealt directly with life, but through intermediaries.'[70] The poets who are to be praised are those, like Cresswell, Mason and Fairburn, who refuse to 'falsify their situation.'[71] Curnow ploughs a furrow from these poetic 'fathers' through a small selection of others - Robin Hyde (but only the later poems, after she had 'discovered' her country), Douglas Stewart, Ursula Bethell and Charles Brasch[72] - ending with James K. Baxter as the torch carrier into the future. In many ways the essay seems less than satisfactory, even as an introduction to the anthology it accompanies. In this context it seems partial, promoting criteria by which to read the contents rather than a guide to the poems within. Curnow is unrepentant. In the short note to the second edition (A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-50, published in 1951, and with forty new poems and seven new poets) he returned to reiterate the central issues outlined in the 1945 introduction:

> Much of the introduction to this book is an attempt to show how the dilemma of our 'New Zealandness' arose with that long refusal or inability to engage in poetry as a present adventure, so that outworn fashions were mistaken for traditional values, and the paraphrasing of scenery for a native poetry. The social and economic shocks of two decades released us into the living present of the language: the extraordinary problems and preoccupations of English poetry itself expelled the shallower sentiments that had formed an idea of 'New Zealand' verse. The large and comfortable illusion gave way to the small and painful reality. Poets had first to mature - and in a community where

> provincial communities were grotesquely magnified. 'New Zealandness' might follow; but was not what had been so much talked about. We had to cut ourselves, taking up the edged tools of the language, where it had been safe to play with those which were blunt or rusted.[73]

This is decolonisation as a process of pain and purgation, the self-inflicted wound the severing of the cultural umbilical cord. It is a process for which Curnow has chosen to be the spokesman, or at least the communicator, for the criticism as a whole seeks to stress that this particular backlash to literary imperialism is founded in events that brook no doubt: 'If we are concerned with nationality it is because we recognize certain physical and social realities.'[74]

Curnow's belief in this kind of solid 'reality' may seem at odds with the scepticism of his poems. The critical rigidities seem to contradict the poetic flexibility. However, Curnow's poetic scepticism is itself a position which is maintained with a firm authority. The role of the sceptic can display a tyranny equal to any proclamation of dogma. In addition to this, Curnow is adopting a deliberate critical stance here. The Yeatsian 'inclusiveness of mind' is a strategy, a method of collecting the diversity of a literature and channelling it into a containable format. In this choice he is not only following examples set by Celtic nationalisms. Though it might seem an odd parallel, there are areas of interaction between Curnow's rigidities and prescriptions and the emerging nationalisms of South America, Africa and the Caribbean. Exploration of this interaction is a fruitful activity, yielding informative links and placing New Zealand nationalism within an illuminating context in which it is not usually discussed.

It was also in the 1930s that Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire established the magazine L'Etudiant noir. The magazine only lasted for a single issue, but the ideology of Negritude that developed from its concerns occupies an important place in the discussion of post-colonial literatures. The doctrine of Negritude was a search for an alternative decolonised ideology and, with its incorporation of a strong political agenda, was a far more vocal and powerful movement than the cultural nationalism in New Zealand. However, the necessity of a rigid point of view, a singular outlook with firmly established boundaries is a position both movements share. The determination of Senghor's polemics matches the rigorous criticism of Curnow. The African nationalism that developed, through Senghor, to surround the 1954 publication of Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart is a context that is also worth quoting. It is because of the strict boundaries of the nationalist debate that Achebe became locked into a role, in constant demand as a lecturer and speaker, but always on the topics of African nationalism, the African novel, the relationship between the African writer and the English language.[75] To read through Achebe's 1975 collection of essays Morning Yet on Creation Day is to be aware of the straitjacket in which he found himself, a constant commentator on a narrow topic.

There are loose generalisations to be made here, recognitions which are not over-deterministic, but point to the complex interweaving of traditions and literary heritages. Achebe provides a necessary hinterland to the work of later figures such as Soyinka and Ben Okri. Like Curnow he articulates fundamental positions about the post-colonial nation's relationship to the culture that colonised it and the history with which it is left.

In his carefully constructed sentences, full of the tradition of the English literary heritage, Achebe also provides a link between the structures and models of the colonisers and the nationalism that develops in their wake. Cesaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (1956), one of the key texts of the Negritude, does likewise. Full of an aggressive ideology that seeks to promote racial and cultural difference, it also has a strong literary connection with the work of the French Surrealists. Like Curnow, Cesaire realised that the language and heritage of the coloniser can provide the tools by which cultural difference is asserted.

Curnow's introduction to Caxton's 1945 anthology belongs in this context. In deliberately choosing to reduce the critical debate, to silence certain factions and to elevate others, Curnow is following a well-honed nationalist practice. His criticism reflects the inflexibilities that often characterise early nationalisms. It is deliberately partial and, as such, is open to argument and rejection. In his Historia de la literatura argentina, Ricardo Rojas engages in practices similar to those of Curnow. Rojas's contention that the gauchesque poetry of Argentina - the work of Hidalgo, Ascasubi, Estanislao del Campo and Jose Hernandez - derives directly from the poetry of the payadores, from the popular poetry and songs of the gauchos, is an aggressive reading that also resembles the use of the Gaelic heritage by Celtic nationalisms. Reacting to Rojas's canonisation, Jorge Luis Borges argues against the limitations of such a strident nationalism. Borges, writing in the mid-1950s, sees the nationalist relations of the Argentine writer and tradition as 'a mere rhetorical topic which lends itself to

pathetic elaborations... an appearance, a simulcrum, a pseudo problem.'[76] Borges refuses the narrow boundaries of the critique:

> [O]ur patrimony is the universe; we should essay all themes, and we cannot limit ourselves to purely Argentine subjects in order to be Argentine; for either being Argentine is an inescapable act of fate - and in that case we shall be so in all events - or being Argentine is a mere affectation, a mask.[77]

This kind of argument shows the fracturing implicit within the nationalist debate. Borges rejects the singularities that nationalism offers, preferring to incorporate nationalist elements into a wider literary frame. He even posits the possibility, so alien to Curnow, that the very processes of colonialism offer advantages that cannot be enjoyed by the colonising power:

> I have observed that in our country, precisely because it is a new country, we have a great sense of time. Everything that has taken place in Europe, the dramatic happenings of the last few years in Europe, have had profound resonance here. The fact that a person was a sympathizer of Franco or of the Republic during the Spanish Civil War, or a sympathizer of the Nazis or the Allies, has in many cases caused very grave quarrels and animosity. This would not occur if we were cut off from Europe.[78]

Borges is being over simplistic here, nationalisms do not function to remove every shred of debate with the former coloniser, but in his sense of optimism, in the recognition of the possibilities that exist in this kind of cross-culturalism, Borges comes close to the vision manifested in the work of Wilson Harris. Harris, recognising the extent to which the legacy of colonialism has irrevocably shaped the modern world, writes fiction which challenges the very structures by which we debate the nationalist issue. In calling for a radical revision of the reading of history, Harris sees the regenerative potential in the

post-colonial situation. The fractures and schisms can produce a new awareness.

Curnow's critical stance seems completely at odds with that of Borges, a clear case of a different interpretive method. Yet in many ways they are similar, for the polarity they enact really serves to point to the rigidities of the nationalist debate itself, a debate that Harris's vision transcends. Both Curnow and Borges, formulating responses to nationalisms that have developed through the first half of the twentieth century, are part of a historical process. The early nationalism of post-colonial literatures exhibits a need for clarity and definitions, a procedure of establishment. Yet it must also be emphasised that this procedure is a product of choice. Deliberately Curnow eschews any notion of semantic ambiguity when formulating his criticism. He is aware of the extent of his critical decisions.

The result is that, acknowledging their international context, the full force of Curnow's critical machinations are displayed at a local level. Whilst it is counterproductive to isolate Curnow's poetry from his criticism, it is valid to discuss the differing legacies of the two. The introduction to the 1945 Caxton anthology operates on a level of discrimination that defines a canon established by selective criteria. Curnow's accusations that the Georgianism of Eileen Duggan and Robin Hyde's poetry displays a 'habit of sentimental posturing'[79] are qualitative critical judgements. Yet Curnow declines to note the 'posturing' of Cresswell (surely as aggressive a display of pretension as is possible) because he is required for a purpose, to serve the role as a 'founding father.' In this decision the subtle subversions of Duggan and the complex esotericism of a text like Cresswell's Lyttelton Harbour (1936) are wiped away.

Each writer is carefully placed in position by a critic concerned with a definitive overview.

The extent to which Curnow is operating a personal criticism is important here. He has expressed that he never felt that he was acting as the vanguard for an emerging nationalism, that the anthology was very much a personal undertaking.[80] As such, Curnow claims that he was 'looking for the poems I liked best, as I think any anthologist does.'[81] This expression of Curnow's critical ego reflects the extent to which he is seen to dictate the development of New Zealand literature out of the 1930s. The anthologist who claims all their decisions are motivated on grounds of personal preference (and Curnow is at pains to point to himself as a naive figure in the 1930s, unaware of the full political tone of the decade, less well read than many of his contemporaries[82]) deflects charges of prescription. Yet the parallels which exist between the structures of Curnow's anthologising and the manifestations of other early post-colonial nationalisms display that these questions work <u>through</u> both Curnow and the New Zealand literature of the period. Perceptions of the level of his 'control' can fail to take into account what Wilson Harris terms 'the implications of these uncertainties.'[83]

Indeed the terminology of Harris's criticism is useful in a final assessment of Curnow's nationalism and the legacy of that nationalism. Curnow's anthologising works as a process of 'consolidation', not simply a consolidating of the literature to fit a perceived consolidation of the fledging nation, but also a self-conscious treatment of history, society and morality. It provides a literature of 'persuasion', founded on notions of 'common sense' drawn from traditional linear readings of a literary and historical heritage. This process rules out what

Harris terms a potential for 'fulfilment', a sense of regenerative hybridisation and cross-fertilisation.[84] In his selective process, the elevation of Cresswell and Mason as more 'important' literary figures than Duggan and Hyde, Curnow displays a critical process he may believe to be based on personal qualitative judgement, but one that actually engages a variety of ideas and concepts that work through post-colonial literatures. These ideas - of prescription, of nationalism, of the complications of cultural histories - are not easily defined, they are 'more extraordinary than one can easily imagine' as Harris puts it[85], but they inform both Curnow's own work and the totality of the decade's literaure.

The result is ironic. Curnow's influence on the literature of the 1930s, and its development through the criticism of the 1940s and 1950s, has coalesced into a firm linear orthodoxy. Yet the doctrinaire processes of selection are not ends in themselves. Rather they are part of a wider realm. Recognition of the nature of this realm leads to the realisation that Curnow's criticism is not at odds with his poetry, but rather the two interweave in a manner which is, in fact, typical of the multiplicities of literary cultures worldwide during the 1930s. In a specifically New Zealand context, Curnow's position is far more complex than the orthodoxy would have us believe. The straight lines give way to laminations, gaps and circumgyrations, and these movements are certainly to be found in the pages of Island and Time. That Curnow can both display this recognition of depth, yet also reject it in the processes of his criticism is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of his 1930s persona. He engages with the period, and his struggle to fashion orders - of

whatever kinds - out of its complexities is, perhaps, a true testament to his pre-eminence.

NOTES.

INTRODUCTION.

1. Alex Calder, rev of The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, ed. Terry Sturm, Landfall 46 (1991): 99.

1. THE 1930S: CONFUSION AND COMPROMISE.

1. Edward Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization,' Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature (Derry: Field Day Publishing, 1988) 8.

2. Said, 9.

3. Said, 11-13.

4. Terence Brown, The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, 3 vols. gen. ed. Seamus Deane, (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991) vol. 2. 517.

5. Both Pope and Gillespie, writing in 1930, are full of apologies for the contents of their respective anthologies. Pope claims that New Zealand has seen 'a good deal of writing... but little art' and that New Zealanders have 'written stumblingly.' (introduction, Kowhai Gold: An Anthology of Contemporary New Zealand Verse [London and Toronto: J.M Dent, 1930] vii) For his part, Gillespie feels that his anthology may well be found wanting: 'It treats of an extraordinary variety of subjects, and is permeated throughout with a quiet humour; but, to many, it may prove disappointing because the stories, particularly by contrast with those from Australia, lack any national outlook or distinctive atmosphere.' (preface, New Zealand Short Stories [London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1930] vii) This reticence, which is similar to that expressed in Alexander and Currie's 1906 anthology, is indicative of a literary culture that is engaged in building a canon. The apologies also point to a heritage of colonialism which had taught New Zealand its 'place' in the British Empire. The nationalism of the 1930s was a more aggressive proclamation of potential than anything contained in Pope or Gillespie's introductions, but at times it shares their fears that the national voice is somehow invalid.

6. E.H. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey (London: OUP, 1959) 108.

7. Allen Curnow, 'New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition,' The Future of New Zealand, ed. M.F. Lloyd Prichard, (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1964) cited in

Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935-1984, ed. Peter Simpson, (Auckland: AUP, 1987) 200.

8. Curnow, cited in introduction, Look Back Harder xxiii.

9. Peter Simpson, introduction, Look Back Harder xix.

10. Robert Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern,' Landfall 7 (1953): 26-58, cited in, introduction, Look Back Harder xx.

11. Curnow, introduction, Selected Poems (Auckland: Penguin, 1982) x.

12. Curnow, cited in introduction, Look Back Harder xv.

13. Julian Symons, The Thirties: A Dream Revolved (London: Cresset Press, 1960) 47.

14. Cecil Day Lewis, Collected Poems (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954) 64.

15. Samuel Hynes, The Auden Generation. Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s (London: Bodley Head, 1976) 105.

16. Hynes, 110.

17. Bernard Bergonzi, Reading the Thirties (London: Macmillan, 1978) 48.

18. Hynes, 113.

19. Hynes, 95.

20. W.H. Auden, cited in The English Auden. Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939, ed. Edward Mendelson, (London: Faber & Faber, 1977) xv.

21. Responding to a reader's letter, Auden wrote: 'I am very dissatisfied with [The Orators]... I didn't take enough trouble over it and the result is far too obscure and equivocal. It is meant to be a critique of the fascist outlook, but from its reception among some of my contemporaries, and on rereading it myself, I see that it can, most of it, be interpreted as a favourable exposition. The whole Journal ought to be completely rewritten.' (Cited in The English Auden, xv) However, when Auden had the chance to rewrite 'The Journal of an Airman' for a second edition in 1934, all he did was drop two of the interpolated poems and change the sex of the airman's lover from female to male. As with much of his 1930s output, the political content of The Orators (in a dogmatic sense) was not of any primary importance to Auden, despite what he said in public.

22. Kai Jensen, ''A Poet Quite As Large As Life': Literary Masculinity in New Zealand 1932-1960,' Landfall 45 (1991): 206-224.

23. Maxim Gorky, cited in William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral, 2nd ed., (1935; London: Chatto & Windus, 1950) 18.

24. Empson, 21.

25. Empson, 11.

26. Virginia Woolf, cited in Hynes, 392.

27. Phillida Bunkle, Linda Hardy and Jacqueline Matthews, introduction, Nor The Years Condemn, by Robin Hyde (1937; Auckland: New Women's Press, 1986) v.

28. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, v.

29. John Lucas, 'Introductory Note,' The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy, ed. John Lucas, (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978) 1.

30. Tomorrow was not the only vehicle for 1930s literature in New Zealand that was modelled along English lines. The four volumes of New Zealand New Writing, edited by Ian A. Gordon and published by the Progressive Publishing Society in Wellington between December 1942 and March 1945, followed the outlines of John Lehmann's Penguin New Writing series in England. A wide spectrum of writers, including Sargeson, Glover, Greville Texidor, A.P. Gaskell, Kendrick Smithyman and J.R. Hervey, had material published in New Zealand New Writing, which was probably the most important journal detailing the reaction of the New Zealand literary establishment to the war of 1939-45. As with the Left Book Club and the cooperative bookshops and publishing societies, New Zealand New Writing highlights the degree of interrelationship between the literary cultures in England and New Zealand.

31. Rachel Barrowman, A Popular Vision: The Arts and the Left In New Zealand 1930-1950 (Wellington: VUP, 1991) 46.

32. The seeming omnipotence of the nationalist mythology which surrounds the 1930s has obscured the extent to which these figures (and others such as J.H.E. Schroder) influenced the shape of the period's literature in New Zealand. Alan Mulgan's Home: A New Zealander's Adventure (1927) was a key text against which many of the 1930s writers rebelled, seeing within it a dated version of the colonial relationship. However, such writing was not 'killed off' by some form of nationalist revolution in the early 1930s. Possibly the best example of the Mulgan/Marris/Bolitho philosophy which came out in the 1930s was Ian Donnelly's The Joyous Pilgrimage: A New Zealander's Impressions of 'Home' (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1935). Donnelly travels through England on a tour that is a virtual mantra of all the stereotypes of colonialism. He visits Oxford, plays cricket, marvels at the countryside, and engages in constant wonder at the sophistication around him. With regards to literature, Donnelly visits G.K. Chesterton, Humbert Wolfe, Aldous Huxley, Gilbert Murray and Edmund Blunden and his commentary is full of both his admiration for these writers and a hatred for the modernism of Auden and Spender. Donnelly's outlook is typical of a sector of the New Zealand literary establishment, those who 'want people who will make plain and beautiful statements' (205), and distrust all manifestations of an aggressive cultural modernism (at one point Donnelly stands in front of what, from his

description, is clearly a work by Salvador Dali. Not only does he fail to recognise it, he views it as 'nightmarish.') Donnelly may seem to be the heir to a tired tradition, but his views are not mere ramblings in the face of a modernist and nationalist drive for change. Some of his beliefs (for example Cecil Day Lewis's pre-eminence among the younger English poets) were shared by supposedly 'nationalist' writers like Fairburn and Cresswell. Donnelly may seem an extremist, but his views have their place in the complex make-up of the New Zealand literature of the period.

33. New Zealand was not alone in having the nationalist discourse subsume the left-wing energies of the 1930s. As Barrowman notes, similar processes occurred in Australia and the United States immediately following the end of the 1939-45 war. Once again, the international context of New Zealand culture in the 1930s is affirmed. 'Although the histories of these movements were not exactly parallel, the similarity in the pattern of cultural development in these countries and in New Zealand suggests that there were problems fundamental to the theory and practice of socialist culture. (Barrowman, 230)

34. Barrowman, 233.

35. Barrowman, 232.

36. Charles Brasch, letter to Ursula Bethell, 22 Oct. 1938, Ursula Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Correspondence Box 1, University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch.

37. Brasch, letter to Ursula Bethell, 22 Oct. 1938.

38. Brasch, fragment of letter to Ursula Bethell, May/June 1939.

39. Brasch, letter to Ursula Bethell, 23 Nov. 1940.

2. D'ARCY CRESSWELL AND R.A.K. MASON: DOUBTFUL PATERNITY.

1. Homi K. Bhabha, introduction, Nation and Narration, ed. Homi K. Bhaba, (London: Routledge, 1990) 2.

2. Bhaba, 4.

3. Bhaba, 3.

4. Bhaba, 3.

5. Allen Curnow, introduction, A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45 (Christchurch: Caxton, 1945) cited in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935-84, ed. Peter Simpson, (Auckland: AUP, 1987) 51.

6. Curnow, Look Back Harder 51.

7. Allen Curnow, introduction, Collected Poems by R.A.K. Mason (Wellington: VUP, 1990) 9.

8. Curnow, Look Back Harder 51.

9. Curnow, Look Back Harder 54.

10. Bhabha, 4.

11. Patrick Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Penguin, 1990) 108.

12. Curnow, introduction, Collected Poems by R.A.K. Mason, 9.

13. Charles Brasch, Indirections: A Memoir 1909-1949 (Wellington: OUP, 1980) 359.

14. A.R.D. Fairburn, letter to Charles Brasch, 8 April 1947, The Letters of A.R.D. Fairburn, ed. Lauris Edmond, (Auckland: AUP, 1981) 157.

15. MacDonald Jackson, The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, ed. Terry Sturm, (Wellington: OUP, 1991) 380.

16. D'Arcy Cresswell, Christchurch Press, 27 January 1932, cited in W.S. Broughton, 'Three New Zealand Poets in the 1920s,' Essays on New Zealand Literature, ed. Wystan Curnow, (Auckland: Heinemann, 1973) 12.

17. Broughton, 13.

18. D'Arcy Cresswell, The Poet's Progress (London: Faber & Faber, 1930) 67.

19. Cresswell, The Poet's Progress 58.

20. Cresswell, The Poet's Progress 24.

21. Cresswell, The Poet's Progress 40.

22. Cresswell, The Poet's Progress 137. See also 68-71 for more detail on the 'failings' of the English poetry of the period.

23. Cresswell, The Poet's Progress 44-45.

24. For more details on Sargeson's journey, see my ''A New Tramp Abroad.' Sargeson in Europe,' Journal of New Zealand Literature 8 (1990): 66-73.

25. Cresswell, The Poet's Progress 49.

26. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave (London: Cassell, 1939) 171.

27. Cresswell, Present Without Leave 159.

28. Cresswell, Present Without Leave 33.

29. Mark Williams, 'Muscular Aesthete: Malcolm Lowry and 1930s English literary culture,' Journal of Commonwealth Literature 24.1 (1989): 68.

30. Williams, 69.

31. Cresswell, Present Without Leave 46.

32. Williams, 68.

33. Cresswell, Present Without Leave 55.

34. Cresswell, Present Without Leave 116-117.

35. Cresswell, Present Without Leave 99 & 168-169.

36. C.K. Stead, 'R.A.K. Mason: Bringing Disorder to Life' in In The Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature (Auckland: AUP, 1981) 175.

37. R.A.K Mason, cited in J.E. Weir, R.A.K. Mason (Wellington: OUP, 1977) 12.

38. Weir, R.A.K. Mason 6.

39. Evans, Penguin History 109.

40. Evans, Penguin History 107.

41. Arthur Donnelly, cited in Weir, R.A.K. Mason 26.

42. Mason, cited in Weir, R.A.K. Mason 25.

43. Stead, 'R.A.K. Mason: Bringing Disorder to Life' 178.

44. Stead, 'R.A.K. Mason: Bringing Disorder to Life' 181.

45. Mason, Collected Poems 36.

46. Charles Doyle, R.A.K. Mason (New York: Twayne, 1970) 178.

47. Doyle, R.A.K. Mason 173.

48. Alistair Campbell, cited in Weir, R.A.K. Mason 57.

49. James K. Baxter, cited in Weir, R.A.K. Mason 57.

50. James K. Baxter, Aspects of Poetry in New Zealand (Christchurch: Caxton, 1967) 13.

51. Harold Monro, cited in Weir, R.A.K. Mason 59.

52. R.A.K. Mason, cited in Weir, R.A.K. Mason 52.

53. Mason, Collected Poems 71.

54. R.A.K. Mason, cited in Weir, R.A.K. Mason 55.

55. Mason, Collected Poems 72.

56. Mason, Collected Poems 81.

57. F.W. Dillistone, Myth & Symbol (Naperville: Allenson, 1960) 23.

58. Mason, Collected Poems 84.

59. Weir, R.A.K. Mason 52.

60. C.K. Stead, 'R.A.K. Mason's Poetry - Some Random Observations,' Comment 4.4 (1963): 38.

61. Rachel Barrowman, A Popular Vision: The Arts and the Left in New Zealand 1930-1950 (Wellington: VUP, 1991) 174.

62. Mason, cited in Barrowman, A Popular Vision 175.

63. Mason, cited in Barrowman, A Popular Vision 175.

64. Mason, cited in Barrowman, A Popular Vision 183.

65. Weir puts it as early as the late 1920s, but offers no evidence to substantiate this.

66. The one other locally written play produced by the Auckland People's Theatre, Ian Hamilton's Falls The Shadow, is also set in the environment of the English upper classes. It too is extremely bourgeois in its message of revolution.

67. R.A.K. Mason, Squire Speaks (Christchurch: Caxton, 1938) 5.

68. Barrowman, A Popular Vision 185.

69. W.H. Auden, The Orators, in The English Auden, ed. Edward Mendelson, (London: Faber & Faber, 1977) 102.

70. R.A.K. Mason, 'Skull on Silence,' People's Voice 24 November 1939: 7.

71. Cited in Barrowman, A Popular Vision 185.

72. R.A.K. Mason, 'This Dark Will Lighten,' People's Voice 15 September 1939: 7.

73. Rex Warner, Poetry of the Thirties, ed. Robin Skelton, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964) 30.

74. Michael Roberts, cited in introduction, Poetry of the Thirties, 16.

75. Barrowman, A Popular Vision 191.

76. R.A.K. Mason, cited in Barrowman, A Popular Vision 191.

77. Barrowman, A Popular Vision 191.

78. Skelton, introduction, Poetry of the Thirties 33.

79. Skelton, introduction, Poetry of the Thirties 36.

80. Wilson Harris, interviewed by Alan Riach, The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks, eds. Alan Riach and Mark Williams, (Liege: Universite de Liege, 1992) 40.

81. Alan Riach, 'Tradition and the New Alliance: Scotland and the

Caribbean.' Gairfish (1992): 143.

3. URSULA BETHELL AND EILEEN DUGGAN: HINTERLANDS.

1. Allen Curnow, letter to Ursula Bethell, 29 May 1944, Ursula Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Literary Manuscript Box 4, University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch.

2. Curnow to Bethell, 29 May 1944.

3. Curnow to Bethell, Mar. 1944.

4. Curnow to Bethell, Mar. 1944.

5. Allen Curnow, introduction, A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923 -45 (Christchurch: Caxton, 1945) cited in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935-1984, ed. Peter Simpson, (Auckland: AUP, 1987) 69.

6. Curnow, Look Back Harder 70.

7. Curnow, Look Back Harder 70.

8. Allen Curnow, introduction, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960) cited in Look Back Harder 167.

9. Allen Curnow, 'New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition' The Future of New Zealand, ed. M.F. Lloyd Prichard, (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1963) cited in Look Back Harder 200.

10. Patrick Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Penguin, 1990) 113.

11. E.H. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey (London: OUP, 1959) 122.

12. Lawrence Baigent, 'The Poetry of Ursula Bethell,' Landfall 5 (1951): 25.

13. D'Arcy Cresswell, 'Ursula Bethell: Some Personal Memories,' Landfall 2 (1948): 283.

14. M.H. Holcroft, Discovered Isles (Christchurch: Caxton, 1950) 23.

15. M.H. Holcroft, Mary Ursula Bethell (Wellington: OUP, 1975) 42.

16. Bethell and Baughan corresponded for most of the decade. The University of Canterbury Library in Christchurch possesses nine letters from Baughan to Bethell, dated between 1932-40. On the whole they are composed of gossip and observations about religion, although they do reveal that Bethell sent a variety of her work to Baughan before submitting it for publication. The correspondence displays a close friendship.

(Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Correspondence Box 1).

17. Charles Brasch, Indirections: A Memoir 1909-1947 (Wellington: OUP, 1980) 302.

18. Charles Brasch, letter to Ursula Bethell, 16th Aug. 1940, Ursula Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Correspondence Box 1, University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch.

19. Brasch to Bethell, Easter Sunday 1940.

20. Brasch to Bethell, 11th Mar. 1940.

21. Denis Glover, letter to Ursula Bethell, 7th Sept. 1939, Ursula Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Literary Manuscripts Box 3, University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch.

22. John Summers, 'Ursula Bethell: Some Personal Memories,' Landfall 2 (1948): 291.

23. Evans, Penguin History 110.

24. Robin Hyde, 'New Zealand Authoresses,' Mirror February 1938 cited in Gillian Boddy and Jacqueline Matthews, Disputed Ground: Robin Hyde, Journalist (Wellington: VUP, 1991) 200.

25. Bethell, letter to E.H. McCormick, 1940, MS Papers 1020, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, cited in Vincent O'Sullivan, introduction, Collected Poems, by Ursula Bethell (Auckland: OUP, 1985) xii.

26. Ursula Bethell, Collected Poems, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan, (Auckland: OUP, 1985) 5.

27. O'Sullivan, introduction, Collected Poems, by Ursula Bethell xv.

28. Bethell, Poems 9.

29. Bethell, Poems 5.

30. Holcroft, Mary Ursula Bethell 19.

31. MacDonald Jackson, The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, ed. Terry Sturm, (Auckland: OUP, 1991) 369.

32. O'Sullivan, introduction, Collected Poems, by Ursula Bethell xiii.

33. Bethell, Poems 12.

34. Holcroft, Mary Ursula Bethell 23.

35. Bethell, Poems 8.

36. Holcroft, Mary Ursula Bethell 25.

37. Baigent, Landfall 26-7.

38. Baigent, Landfall 30.

39. Bethell, Poems 25.

40. Jackson, Oxford History 372.

41. O'Sullivan, introduction, Collected Poems, by Ursula Bethell xiv.

42. Bethell, Poems 31.

43. Cited in Oxford History 372.

44. Jackson, Oxford History 372.

45. O'Sullivan, introduction, Collected Poems, by Ursula Bethell xiii.

46. Baughan correspondence with Bethell, Ursula Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Correspondence Box 1, University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch.

47. Bethell, Poems 46.

48. Jackson, Oxford History 373.

49. Jackson, Oxford History 374.

50. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey 71.

51. F.M. McKay, Eileen Duggan (Wellington: OUP, 1978) 10.

52. McKay, Eileen Duggan 7.

53. McKay, Eileen Duggan 10.

54. Duggan, letter to Nettie Palmer, MS Papers 801/2, Folder 2, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 10.

55. Duggan, letter to Palmer, cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 13.

56. Eileen Duggan, Poems (London: Allen & Unwin, 1937) 13.

57. Duggan, Poems 56.

58. Duggan, 'New Zealand in its Literature,' America 15th January 1938: 355-6.

59. McKay, Eileen Duggan 27.

60. Duggan, Poems 44.

61. Eileen Duggan, New Zealand Poems (London: Allen & Unwin, 1940) 53.

62. McKay, Eileen Duggan 34.

63. Duggan, New Zealand Poems 10.

64. Duggan, New Zealand Poems 19.

65. McKay, Eileen Duggan 34.

66. Duggan, letter to W.F. Alexander, MS Papers 423, Folder 6, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 6.

67. James K. Baxter, cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 34.

68. Duggan's mistrust of Curnow may also stem from her perception of his politics during the 1930s. Curnow has related how she believed anyone associated with Tomorrow during the decade to be 'dangerously left-wing.' This view of Tomorrow was not uncommon among the more conservative elements of New Zealand's literary culture during the period, and Duggan's antipathy to the magazine and everybody concerned with it was strengthened by her Catholicism. The anti-war stance of Tomorrow (which finally led to its cessation of publication) led many to distrust those who were connected with it. In part, this explains Curnow's pseudonym of 'Julian' - the name under which he published in Tomorrow - as he sought to keep his association with the magazine from his employers. Duggan was extremely wary of what she perceived as the radical politics of Tomorrow, and this certainly extended to her dealings with Curnow. (Curnow, personal interview, 2 September 1992)

69. Duggan, letter to Alexander, MS Papers 423, cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 55.

70. Duggan, letter to Alexander, MS Papers 423, cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 55.

71. McKay, Eileen Duggan 27.

72. Curnow, Look Back Harder 51.

73. Duggan, New Zealand Poems 51.

74. Duggan, New Zealand Poems 52.

75. Times Literary Supplement, February 1938, cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 52.

76. William Lyon Phelps, Rotarian, May 1939: cited in McKay, Eileen Duggan 54.

77. Evans, Penguin History 53.

78. Ian Wedde, introduction, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse, eds. Ian Wedde and Harvey McQueen (Auckland: Penguin, 1985) 35.

4. A.R.D. FAIRBURN: STRANGLING SELVES.

1. MacDonald Jackson, The Oxford History of New Zealand

Literature in English, ed. Terry Sturm, (Auckland: OUP, 1991) 377.

2. James Bertram, 'Fairburn in his Letters' Flight of the Phoenix: Critical Notes on New Zealand Writers (Wellington: VUP, 1985) 58.

3. R.A.K. Mason, cited in Bertram, 54.

4. Jackson, 376.

5. Jackson, 376.

6. Jackson, 379.

7. Jackson, 378.

8. Patrick Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Penguin, 1990) 76.

9. Evans, 110.

10. Evans, 146.

11. Ian Wedde, introduction, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse, eds. Ian Wedde and Harvey McQueen, (Auckland: Penguin, 1985) 41.

12. Jackson, 377.

13. Jackson, 370.

14. Kendrick Smithyman, A Way of Saying: A Study of New Zealand Poetry (Auckland: Collins, 1965) 63.

15. Evans, 76.

16. James McNeish, introduction, Walking On My Feet: A.R.D. Fairburn: A Kind of Biography by James and Helen McNeish (Auckland: Collins, 1983) ix.

17. McNeish, viii.

18. Denys Trussell, Fairburn (Auckland: AUP/OUP, 1984) 1.

19. A.R.D. Fairburn, 'Poetry in New Zealand,' Year Book of the Arts (1945) cited in The Woman Problem & Other Prose, eds. Denis Glover and Geoffrey Fairburn, (Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1967) 132.

20. Fairburn, cited in Trussell, 62.

21. Trussell, 62.

22. Fairburn, 'The Poet's Progress,' cited in The Woman Problem & Other Prose 113.

23. Allen Curnow, introduction, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960) cited in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935- 1984, ed. Peter Simpson,

(Auckland: AUP, 1987) 158.

24. Curnow, introduction, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse 159.

25. Allen Curnow, 'A.R.D. Fairburn: A Sketch in Advance of a Visit' Christchurch Press 4 October 1947: 7 cited in Look Back Harder 158.

26. It is noticeable that the only sections of Dominion which Curnow included in his various anthologies were those which favoured nationalist readings.

27. Allen Curnow, introduction, A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923 -45 (Christchurch: Caxton, 1945) cited in Look Back Harder 58.

28. C.K. Stead, 'A.R.D. Fairburn: The Argument Against' Landfall 20 (1966): 367-381 cited in In The Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature (Auckland: AUP, 1981) 161.

29. Fairburn, cited in Trussell, 52.

30. Trussell, 64.

31. The mixture of influences on Fairburn's writing are well documented in his unpublished manuscripts that date from the 1920s. The most illuminating of these is an unfinished novel which, though it is undated, probably dates from the mid-to-late 1920s. The manuscript is a classic bildungsroman, charting the growth of Phil and Tony, two sons in an extended family who live just north of Auckland. The portrayal of the large family (complete with grandparents and housekeeper) parallels Katherine Mansfield's method in her New Zealand stories. Fairburn's debt to Mansfield becomes explicit in a scene in which Phil places a duck's egg in his mouth only for it to break, displaying a clear link with Mansfield's 'Prelude.' Indeed, in the novel's early scenes Fairburn is deliberate in his attempts to re-create Mansfield's sense of atmosphere and tone, but the prose is unredeemingly flat and lifeless. Mansfield is not the only voice behind the novel. Over and over again Fairburn betrays an inherited romanticism that suffuses the whole of the text. In his attempt to detail the colonial relationship, he talks of the methods by which the English have corrupted the Maori, a 'race of beautiful savages' who were living in a pre-contact 'state of happy savagery.' All the romantic relationships in the novel are framed in a benevolent pastoralism, and the one sex act in the text concludes with a 'passionate consciousness of unity' that is distinctly Lawrentian. This romantic heritage, and the overall fragmentation and mixing of literary influences, pulls the novel in contradictory directions, and the manuscript ends with no clear sense of direction and a lack of authorial control. In its mixed messages, an attempted romantic socialism that blends with a colonial hunger for 'home', and a prose style that hints at occasional modernism but is also full of a Celtic twilight mysticism, the text prefigures the kind of tensions that define Fairburn's work during the 1930s. (MS Papers 1128, Folder 76, A.R.D Fairburn Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New

Zealand, Wellington)

32. Trussell, 65.

33. A.R.D. Fairburn, Collected Poems, ed. Denis Glover, (Christchurch: Pegasus, 1966) 216.

34. James Elroy Flecker, cited by Sir John Squire, introduction, Collected Poems by James Elroy Flecker (London: Secker and Warburg, 1947) xviii.

35. Arthur Waugh, 'The New Poetry' cited in Georgian Poetry 1911 -1922: The Critical Heritage, ed. Timothy Rogers, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) 150.

36. Cited in Trussell, 62.

37. Trussell, 62.

38. Stead, 161.

39. Stead, 161.

40. Stead, 162.

41. Fairburn, Collected Poems 220.

42. Fairburn, Collected Poems 200.

43. Fairburn, Collected Poems 218.

44. Fairburn, Collected Poems 215.

45. T.E. Hulme, cited in The Georgian Revolt 1911-1922: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal by Robert H. Ross (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965) 17.

46. A.M. Clark, cited in The Georgian Revolt 1911-1922: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal 24.

47. D.H. Lawrence, cited in The Georgian Revolt 1911-22: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal 15.

48. Fairburn, letter to Guy Mountain, 26 Sept. 1931, cited in Trussell, 113.

49. Fairburn, personal notebook, cited in Trussell, 242.

50. In part, the English poets of the Auden generation shared this view of Eliot. As Samuel Hynes has noted, The Waste Land was the single most important work in defining the postwar era for those who wrote in the 1930s. Though they admired it greatly, Auden and his contemporaries recognised Eliot's poem as a definition of decay. As successors, they felt obliged to offer a more constructive vision. (Hynes, The Auden Generation. Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s [London: Bodley Head, 1976] 25-31.)

51. Stead, 162.

52. Ross, 12.

53. Cited by Ross, 12.

54. Fairburn, letter to Denis Glover, 8 Oct. 1936, cited in Trussell, 58.

55. Michael Hamburger, The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960s (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 118.

56. Fairburn, Collected Poems 90.

57. Fairburn, letter to R.A.K. Mason, 15 Aug. 1931, cited in Trussell, 114.

58. Fairburn, letter to Mason, 28 Dec. 1931, cited in Trussell, 116.

59. Fairburn, letter to Glover, 8 Oct. 1936, cited in Trussell, 110.

60. In October 1930 Fairburn met Harold Monro, an influential member of the Georgian group who had founded the Poetry Bookshop and edited the landmark anthology Twentieth Century Poetry. Monro's homosexuality, and his standing in the literary circles of London, were factors Fairburn found difficult to accept. It was at this point that his letters first show his growing disillusionment with English literary life, a disillusionment that would expand to become a virtual paranoia of homosexuality.

61. Oswald Spengler, The Hour of Decision, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, (1934; London/New York: George Allen & Unwin/Alfred A. Knopf, 1963) 86.

62. Spengler, 34.

63. Spengler, 43.

64. Spengler, 38.

65. Spengler, 38.

66. Spengler, 40.

67. Spengler, 40.

68. Fairburn, cited in Trussell, 123.

69. Ezra Pound, cited in Humphrey Carpenter, A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound (London: Faber & Faber, 1988) 359.

70. Pound, cited in Carpenter, 357.

71. Trussell, 159.

72. Nicolas Berdyaev, introduction, Dream and Reality. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950) xii.

73. Berdyaev, Dream and Reality 1.

74. Nicolas Berdyaev, The Origins of Russian Communism. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937) 179.

75. Stead, 164.

76. Fairburn, letter to Clifton Firth, 10 Jan. 1930, cited in Trussell, 72.

77. Fairburn, Collected Poems 151.

78. Stead, 165.

79. Fairburn, Collected Poems 15.

80. Trussell, 155.

81. M.H. Holcroft, cited in Stead, 163.

82. Holcroft, cited in Stead, 163.

83. Louis MacNeice, Collected Poems 1925-1948 (London: Faber & Faber, 1949) 19.

84. Fairburn, Collected Poems 30.

85. Fairburn, Collected Poems 32.

86. Fairburn, Collected Poems 32.

87. Philip Larkin, cited in Allen Curnow, 'Louis MacNeice' Look Back Harder 210.

88. Curnow, 'Louis MacNeice' 212.

89. Curnow, 'Louis MacNeice' 209.

90. Trussell, 167.

91. Fairburn, Collected Poems 33.

92. Fairburn, Collected Poems 34.

93. T.S. Eliot, letter to Fairburn, 7 July 1936, cited in Trussell, 164.

94. Fairburn, rev. of Enemies, by Allen Curnow, Tomorrow 3 (1937): 415.

95. Curnow, 'Author's Note,' Enemies (Christchurch: Caxton, 1937).

96. Fairburn, Collected Poems 46.

5. ROBIN HYDE: SPLIT PERSONALITIES.

1. Robin Hyde, cited in Gillian Boddy and Jacqueline Matthews, Disputed Ground: Robin Hyde, Journalist (Wellington: VUP, 1991) 64.

2. 'Katherine Mansfield,' writ. Frank Sargeson, Mainly About Books 1YA, Wellington. 28 July 1948. Text in Conversation In A Train and Other Critical Writing (Auckland: AUP/OUP, 1983) 28-33.

3. Denis Glover and E.H. McCormick, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 127.

4. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 127.

5. Patrick Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Penguin, 1990) 138.

6. Allen Curnow, introduction, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960) cited in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935-1984, ed. Peter Simpson, (Auckland: AUP, 1987) 168.

7. James Bertram, 'Robin Hyde: A Reassessment' Landfall 7 (1953): 181-191 cited in Flight of the Phoenix: Critical Notes on New Zealand Writers (Wellington: VUP, 1985) 18.

8. Bertram, 17.

9. Bertram, 16.

10. Bertram, 26.

11. Robert Chapman, cited in Lawrence Jones, The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, ed. Terry Sturm, (Auckland: OUP, 1991) 146.

12. Phillida Bunkle, Linda Hardy and Jacqueline Matthews, introduction, Nor The Years Condemn, by Robin Hyde (1938; Auckland: New Women's Press, 1986) x.

13. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years v.

14. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 228-231.

15. Robin Hyde, Selected Poems, ed. Lydia Wevers, (Auckland: OUP, 1984) 58.

16. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 132.

17. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 99.

18. Hyde, 28 March 1935, Notebook EX 13, Robin Hyde Papers, 46.

19. Robin Hyde, Journalese (Auckland: National Printing Co, 1934) 113.

20. Hyde, Journalese 103.

21. Hyde, Journalese 73.

22. Hyde's output during 1935 is considerable, and reflects an important aspect of her writing career. In March, having completed a draft of Check to your King, her journal records her decision to begin The Godwits Fly. This was then almost immediately interrupted by the production of 'Bronze Outlaw' (which became Passport to Hell). Returning to work on The Godwits Fly, Hyde also composed 'The Unbelievers', a novel of which there are three typewritten versions, and a manuscript entitled 'These Poor Old Hands.' Her journal records the last of these as being a novel about early Maori history, but no evidence of any manuscript still exists. Check to your King was also rewritten during this period, and Hyde kept up her production of short stories (about twenty-seven were written during the decade, totalling over 70,000 words) and the poetry that was later published in Persephone in Winter in 1937. This almost fanatical work rate not only raises questions about the parallels between Hyde and her male contemporaries (the virtue with which Sargeson describes the slow process of creating one page of text every day), but it also displays an obsession with perceived quality. Hyde's 1935 Journal records constant references to the problems she encountered in the writing process and her uncertainty as to the merit of the work she was producing: 'The Godwits Fly is either tripe or faintly promising. It's at least honest but I'm no novelist.' 'The Unbelievers' was shelved because of Hyde's dissatisfaction with it, and rather than attempt to rewrite the text, she completely reworked it to become Wednesday's Children. Given the amount of effort involved in these processes, it is ironic that Hyde was often categorised by her contemporaries as an author who lacked the necessary rigour to fully polish her work. In many ways, the intensity of her work is itself the defining motif of her output in the mid-1930s. The production of 'These Poor Old Hands' also shows that Hyde's desire to include Maori fictions in her work started in 1935, and not later in the decade when she is perceived to have 'discovered' her country in a burst of national self-awareness. (Notebook, EX 13. Robin Hyde Papers held by Derek Challis). The best analysis of the complex history of Hyde's career as a writer is in Patrick Sandbrook's 1985 PhD thesis, 'Robin Hyde: A Writer at Work,' which provides a comprehensive detailing of all her work.

23. D.I.B. Smith, introduction, Passport to Hell, by Robin Hyde (1936; Auckland: AUP, 1986) xxi.

24. Jones, Oxford History 166.

25. Jones, Oxford History 166.

26. Hyde, Years 33.

27. Jones, Oxford History 148.

28. Hyde, Passport 75-78.

29. Hyde, cited in Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years v.

30. Hyde, Passport 10.

31. Hyde, Passport 18.

32. Downie Stewart, cited in Smith, Passport xviii.

33. Hyde, cited in Smith, Passport xiv-xviii.

34. Storm Jameson, cited in Samuel Hynes, The Auden Generation. Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s (London: Bodley Head, 1976) 271.

35. Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 100.

36. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 100.

37. Jameson, cited in Hynes, The Auden Generation 272.

38. Evans, Penguin History 138.

39. Evans, Penguin History 138.

40. Evans, Penguin History 185.

41. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 86.

42. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 114.

43. Hyde, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 357.

44. Jones, Oxford History 167.

45. Robin Hyde, Check to your King (1936; Auckland: Golden Press, 1975) 17.

46. Hyde, Check 91.

47. Frank Birbalsingh, 'Robin Hyde,' Landfall 31 (1977): 373.

48. Birbalsingh, Landfall 374.

49. Hyde, Check 109.

50. On June 17 1937 Hyde wrote an article for the New Zealand Observer entitled 'N.Z. Nurses for Stricken Spain' in which she discussed New Zealand's reaction to the Spanish conflict, cited in Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 359-363.

51. Hyde, letter to J.H.E. Schroder, 8 Aug. 1935, MS Papers 280, Folder 6, J.H.E. Schroder Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

52. There are certain specific parallels between 'The Unbelievers' and Wednesday's Children which warrant close attention. In the same way that Hyde fused Roxanne and Echo into the character of Wednesday Gilfillan, she also develops the character of Bellister from that of Tracey Meade, Roxanne's lawyer. Both Meade and Bellister share a desire to inhabit the 'exotic' world of their female friends, but both are tied to perceptions which stem from an innate conservatism. Possibly more important than these character parallels is the anticipation of gender perceptions in Hyde's work. Roxanne's child, Jarah, (who has a 'good head' but a 'bad heart') displays the kind of androgyny which

Eliza Hannay yearns for in The Godwits Fly. Jarah's assertion to Echo that 'I have much of the woman in me' (196) is similar to Eliza's desire to subsume her sexuality in order to receive social acceptance. As well as this, both Roxanne and Echo display characteristics that are typical of Hyde's later female protagonists who seek to defend themselves from the excesses of a volatile world by the assertion of a personal reality. When, in 'The Unbelievers', Hyde says of Roxanne: 'Most people said that Roxanne was mad. They were wrong, however. Living in a world which had acquired a list or bulge to starboard, she had simply accommodated herself to it, which was the sanest thing she could do. She seldom understood what they were talking about, but that was because their talk did not fit in with her own experiences' (27) she is prefiguring the kind of relationship Wednesday Gilfillan, Eliza Hannay and Bede Collins establish with the world. There is a similar sense of 're-creation' in Hyde's description of Echo's outlook on the society around her: 'From simply not being close to people, she became very far away from them. At a distance they were blurred and strange and fantastic. She started to invent other people, idealised for the most part, and, when a few years later she was introduced to human creatures who looked nice, instead of giving them a chance to be themselves, she at once presented them with ready-made and etherealised personalities.' (72) In both these examples Hyde is working towards the kind of 'invention' and alternative reality that characterises her scrutiny of the role of women in New Zealand society. The presence of such material in 'The Unbelievers' enables us to date that process from as early as mid-1935, or even before, since many of Hyde's short stories from the early years of the decade contain female protagonists in fantasy worlds. ('The Unbelievers: A Novel' ts. Robin Hyde Papers held by Derek Challis)

53. Katherine Mansfield, letter to Dorothy Brett, 12 Sept. 1921 cited in Mansfield, Selected Letters, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan, (Oxford: OUP, 1990) 224.

54. Susan Ash, afterword, Wednesday's Children, by Robin Hyde (1937; Auckland: New Women's Press, 1989) 290.

55. Ash, Wednesday's 294.

56. Hyde, Wednesday's 30. Hyde's technique here is close to that utilised by the Australian novelist Christina Stead in her 1934 novel, Seven Poor Men of Sydney. The 'impressionistic modernism' with which Hyde's describes the home of Ronald and Brenda Gilfillan parallels Stead's depictions of narrative dislocations, emphasising the distance of the central characters from the environment they inhabit. (Stead, Seven Poor Men of Sydney. [1934; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1976] 182)

57. Hyde, Wednesday's 273.

58. Ash, Wednesday's 292.

59. Both Hyde and Frame spent periods in psychiatric

institutions, and in both cases the confines of the establishment provided time and space in which to write. Hyde talks of needing madness, an economic as well as a psychological need. For both writers the social definitions of 'normal' and 'abnormal' appear necessary, but they are definitions which they recreate on their own terms, recognising the ironies involved in 'needing' madness in order to have the space in which to write. Both Hyde and Frame also recognise the effect of this definitive dualism on the position of women within society. Wednesday Gilfillan is labelled 'mad' by the men in the novel, who use the term to define her difference.

60. Birbalsingh, Landfall 364.

61. Hyde, Wednesday's 63.

62. Hyde, cited in Ash, introduction, Wednesday's 6.

63. Ash, Wednesday's 7.

64. Hyde, cited in Gloria Rawlinson, 'Robin Hyde and The Godwits Fly' Critical Essays on the New Zealand Novel, ed. Cherry Hankin (Auckland: Heinemann, 1976) 40-59.

65. Jones, Oxford History 167.

66. M.H. Holcroft, cited in Rawlinson, Hyde and Godwits 44.

67. Hyde, Poems 68.

68. Birbalsingh, Landfall 365.

69. Shelagh Cox, 'Creating a Bearable World: Imaginative Transformation of an Alien Society in the Fiction of Robin Hyde & Angela Carter, Women's Studies Conference Papers '82 (Auckland: Women's Studies Association [NZ] Inc, 1982) 14.

70. Robin Hyde, The Godwits Fly (1938; Auckland: AUP/OUP, 1980) 162.

71. Hyde, Godwits 101.

72. Hyde, Godwits 162.

73. The short fragment 'A Night of Hell', written shortly before the publication of Wednesday's Children, is formally similar. It details a morphine addiction through a variety of broken perspectives, and with a fractured sense of narrative.

74. Boddy and Matthews, Disputed Ground 130.

75. Hyde, Years Author's note.

76. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years xxvi.

77. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years xv.

78. Hyde, letter to Gloria Rawlinson cited in Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years xiv.

79. Colin J. Partridge, 'Wheel of Words: The Poetic Development of Robin Hyde,' Journal of Commonwealth Literature 5.1 (1968): 92.

80. On page 188 of the novel the Waikato river assumes the narration.

81. Hyde, Years 16.

82. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years xxii.

83. Hyde, Years 114.

84. Hyde, Years 149.

85. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years xii-xiii.

86. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years xxiii.

87. Bunkle, Hardy and Matthews, Years xxv.

88. Evans, Penguin History 138.

89. Evans, Penguin History 138.

90. Hyde, Poems 3.

91. Wevers, introduction, Poems xiv.

92. Wevers, Poems xv.

93. James K. Baxter, James K. Baxter as Critic, ed. Frank McKay, (Auckland: Heinemann, 1978) 88.

94. Hyde, Notebook EX13 cited in Wevers, Poems xix.

95. Baxter, Critic 93.

96. Hyde, Poems 33.

97. Hyde, Poems 70.

98. Wevers, Poems xx.

99. Hyde, Poems 58.

100. Hyde, Poems 87.

101. Bertram, Phoenix 21.

102. Hyde, Poems 64.

6. FRANK SARGESON: THE TAKAPUNA IMAGINATION.

1. Helen Shaw, 'Two Views of Frank Sargeson's Short Stories,' Critical Essays on the New Zealand Short Story, ed. Cherry Hankin, (Auckland: Heinemann, 1982) 30.

2. Shaw, 30.

3. Shaw, 35.

4. Charles Brasch, rev. of Eric Lee-Johnson, ed. Janet Paul, (Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1957) Here And Now 57 (1957): 29.

5. C.K. Stead, 'A Letter to Frank Sargeson' Frank Sargeson at 75, ed. Robin Dudding, spec. issue of Islands 6 (1978): 214.

6. Stead, 'John Mulgan: A Question of Identity,' In The Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature (Auckland: AUP/OUP, 1981) 71.

7. Allen Curnow, 'New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition,' The Future of New Zealand, ed. M.F. Lloyd Prichard, (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1964) cited in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935-1984, ed. Peter Simpson, (Auckland: AUP, 1987) 200.

8. Curnow, 'New Zealand Literature' 200.

9. Lawrence Jones, 'Versions of the Dream: Literature and the Search for Identity,' Culture and Identity in New Zealand, eds. David Novitz and Bill Willmott (Wellington: GP Books, 1989) 187.

10. James K. Baxter, cited in Jones, 'Versions of the Dream' 196.

11. Jones, 'Versions of the Dream' 196.

12. Lawrence Jones, 'Once is not Enough: On Re-reading Sargeson,' Frank Sargeson at 75, ed. Robin Dudding, spec. issue of Islands 6 (1978): 271.

13. Frank Sargeson, Once is Enough (Wellington: A.H. & A.W Reed, 1973) 9.

14. Sargeson, Once is Enough 110.

15. Sargeson, Once is Enough 110.

16. Frank Sargeson, More than Enough (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1973) 51.

17. Shaw, 40.

18. Shaw, 36.

19. Sargeson, More than Enough 110.

20. A.R.D. Fairburn, We New Zealanders (Wellington: Progressive Publishing Society, 1944) 15.

21. Sargeson, 'A New Zealand Anthology: Spur of Moment,' Tomorrow 4 (1937): 56.

22. On his return from Europe, Sargeson wrote up the journey in the form of a travelogue. The typescript was written in both

Hamilton and Wellington, but remains unfinished, not describing the Italian section of the trip. The document, entitled 'A New Tramp Abroad', is interesting in that it pre-dates Sargeson's other autobiographical writing by over forty years, and contains none of the mythic historicisation which characterises the later trilogy. Sargeson's account of the journey through France and Switzerland (as well as his journal accounts of his time in London) show him to be wrestling with stylistic problems. 'A New Tramp Abroad' is full of a prose that fluctuates between a Hemingway realism and a more romantic form of expression. Though not a major example of Sargeson's technical ability, the document is vital in displaying the processes that Sargeson worked through in order to achieve his 1930s stlye. It demonstrates that the 1930s fiction is the product of a studied selection of ways of writing, and not some explosion of novelty. For greater detail on the document, see my ''A New Tramp Abroad': Sargeson in Europe,' Journal of New Zealand Literature 8 (1990): 66-73.

23. Patrick Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Penguin, 1990) 131.

24. Evans, 132.

25. Ian Reid, Fiction and the Great Depression: Australia and New Zealand 1930-1950 (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1979). Reid's analysis has become a little dated now. Some of his comments on the trans-Tasman relationship are still valid, but though he is right to point to a lack of political content in New Zealand fiction, his failure to take into account the overall political nature of the literary culture (the politics of Tomorrow, the importance of figures such as Rhodes and Mason) means his study is a little limiting as a whole.

26. Sargeson, 'Mr Rhodes' Heroic Novelists' Tomorrow 3 (1937): 633.

27. Sargeson, letter, Tomorrow 3 (1937): 736.

28. Winston Rhodes, cited in Evans, Penguin History 87.

29. The nationalist mythology has been most successful in playing down the extent of Sargeson's commitment to the political Left during the 1930s, and this is a process Sargeson himself aided, only discussing his own political outlook in terms of a general liberal/leftist stance. Nevertheless, Sargeson did contribute to some of the more overtly political journals of the 1930s. Apart from his pieces in Tomorrow (both fiction and non-fiction) he also sent material to the Soviet News, the paper that expressed the pro-Soviet line of groups like the Friends of the Soviet Union. Sargeson's journals contain a number of clippings from the various papers to which he contributed. In fact some of the journals are, in reality, scrapbooks that chart Sargeson's own publishing career. In one such personal journal he included a poem entitled 'For the Little Ones' which appears to have been published in the Soviet News in February 1935. It is worth quoting in full:

Twinkle, twinkle, Soviet star

How I wonder what you are!
I wonder why you are so red
The other stars look pale and dead.

I have heard it said you are
Oh, lovely little Soviet star
A beacon set above my eyes
To guide my hand and make me wise.

Once another star, they say
Drew wise men from far away
Wise men now, at your behest
Are drawn from north, south, east
and west.

Twinkle, twinkle Soviet star
I have found out what you are
You that made me see when blind
Do the same for all mankind!

The context in which this poem appears, the marginalia of the journal, emphasises that it is not as satirical as it might at first seem. There was a profusion of such material by many of the major New Zealand writers of the 1930s. Sargeson had his place in this output, but it is one almost totally obscured by subsequent nationalist criticism. Sargeson was by no means a committed political writer, but his manufacture of such pieces should be taken into critical account. (MS Papers 432, Folder 496, Frank Sargeson Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington)

30. Janet Frame, A State of Siege (Christchurch: Pegasus, 1967) 121. In the novel Frame brings the debate on national identity into a fictional framework. The comment comes as Malfred Signal is engaged in an internal wrestling over the meaning of being a New Zealander.

31. Terry Sturm, 'New Zealand Poetry and the Depression,' Essays on New Zealand Literature, ed. Wystan Curnow, (Auckland: Heinemann, 1973) 28.

32. Frank Sargeson, Collected Stories 1935-1963 (Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1964) 115.

33. Reid, 68.

34. Sargeson, cited in Mark MacLeod, 'Bruce Dawe and Frank Sargeson: Speaking in Other Voices,' Australian Literary Studies 11.1 (1983): 6.

35. In his 1970 interview with Michael Beveridge, Sargeson talked at length of the actual processes of his writing, how 'the actual writing is suffering... it's a matter of getting the right sentences in the right order, what each sentence has to convey in the way of visual image, sound for the ear; it has to carry thought.' ('Conversation with Frank Sargeson,' Landfall 24 [1970]:7) This obsession with the craft of writing, the almost puritanical nature of the daily regime, is part of the myth Sargeson built around himself. It

confirms his image of himself as a 'serious' artist, locked into a world that is perceived to be uncaring, and intent on the manufacture of art. It is a view of craft noticeably dissimilar from that of Katherine Mansfield or Robin Hyde, the latter capable of working on two or three manuscripts at the same time. Thus, even in his description of the writing process Sargeson is adopting a self-conscious position. That kind of self-consciousness is a trademark of Sargeson's literary career, noted by many of his contemporaries. James Bertram, who knew him in the 1930s, felt Sargeson was always acutely conscious of the image he projected, and took care over its manipulation. (Bertram, personal interview, 4 December 1991)

36. Reid, 98.

37. Sargeson, 'Conversation with Frank Sargeson' 10.

38. Kai Jensen, 'Holes, Wholeness and Holiness in Frank Sargeson's Writing,' Landfall 44 (1990): 37.

39. Sargeson, Once is Enough 131.

40. Sargeson, Once is Enough 131.

41. In the essay, Curnow draws the distinction between 'living' and 'dead' languages, claiming the former 'must be a language spoken by the living people.' Both Curnow and Sargeson use this duality to validate their nationalism. A 'living' language implies novelty and regeneration, as well as a closer proximity to the 'reality' of everyday existence. In both cases what is presented as an obvious conclusion is, in fact, a strategic nationalism. (Curnow, Poetry and Language [Christchurch: Caxton Club Press, 1935] cited in Look Back Harder 1)

42. William Wordsworth, preface, Lyrical Ballads 1805, ed. Derek Roper, (Plymouth: MacDonald & Evans, 1968) 21.

43. Sargeson, Once is Enough 120.

44. Sargeson, Once is Enough 122.

45. Williams's study relies heavily on the critical philosophies of F.R. Leavis in its approach to the image of a pastoral past. Leavis himself was very much caught up in the anti-industrialism centred around the magazine Scrutiny in the 1930s. It is highly likely that Sargeson would have read Scrutiny, since it was one of the more established (and hence more available) journals of the period.

46. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (London: Hogarth Press, 1985) 252.

47. In a less than satisfying essay, Joost Daalder examines the nature of violence in Sargeson's stories, concluding that often the author's sympathies lie with the perpetrator of the act. Daalder's view of Sargeson's morality appears to be founded on a reading that is somewhat selective. (Daalder, 'Violence in the Stories of Frank Sargeson,' Journal of New

Zealand Literature 4 [1986]: 56-80.

48. Frank Sargeson, Never Enough (Wellington: A.H. & A.W Reed, 1977) 62.

49. Sargeson, Never Enough 50.

50. Edward Thomas, 'Lob,' The Collected Poems of Edward Thomas, ed. R. George Thomas, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 159.

51. Sargeson, Collected Stories 1935-1963 255.

52. Kai Jensen explores the wider scope of this fixation on the male and masculinity in his article ''A Poet Quite As Large As Life': Literary Masculinity in New Zealand 1932-1960,' Landfall 45 (1991): 206-224.

53. Sargeson, Collected Stories 1935-1963 42.

54. David Wright, introduction, Edward Thomas: Selected Poems and Prose (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 26.

55. Williams, 257.

56. Allen Tate, 'American Poetry Since 1920,' cited in The Poetry Reviews of Allen Tate, eds. Ashley Brown and Frances Neel Cheney, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983) 83.

57. Tate, 82.

58. Tate, 83. There are other general reasons for the lack of a fully developed nationalism in the United States. Not only must size be taken into account (the very geography tends to invite regional, rather than national, identification) but American nationalism is often tied to a more specific political and economic agenda. The ideals of freedom and democracy (more important in the American construction of the 'new' land than in any other example) imply a theoretical plurality that is somewhat alien to the European concept of geist.

59. There are parallels to be drawn between Sargeson and Flannery O'Connor in this context. Though her 'local' stories date largely from the 1950s and 1960s, O'Connor's use of a demotic narrative idiom is very similar to Sargeson's. For example, the opening of 'A Good Man is Hard to Find' has the same tone and register, the same clipped sentences, as the opening to 'In the Midst of Life', a short 1935 piece by Sargeson. However, while Sargeson developed a nationalist mythology around such a style, O'Connor eschewed such rigidities. She claimed that her Catholicism prevented her from being a 'regional' writer and her sense of the local prevented her from being a 'Catholic' writer. Such inherent mistrust of the validity of categories is not to be found in Sargeson.

60. David Norton, 'Two Views of Frank Sargeson's Short Stories,' Critical Essays on the New Zealand Short Story 44-61. Norton is one of the few critics who discusses the stories in terms of their limitations.

61. Baxter, 'Back to the Desert,' James K. Baxter as Critic (Auckland: Heinemann, 1978) 173.

62. Fay Zwicky, 'Democratic Repression and the Admission of Difference: The Ethnic Strain,' The American Model, ed. Joan Kirby (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982) 85.

63. Sargeson, Collected Stories 1935-1963 82.

64. Claudio Gorlier, 'Confronting the Concealed Experience: Regionalism and the National Voice in Robert Kroetsch, Rudy Wiebe, and Frank Sargeson,' Regionalism and National Identity, eds. Reginald Berry and James Acheson (Christchurch: Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand, 1985) 502.

65. Sargeson, Collected Stories 1935-1963 112.

66. Sargeson, Collected Stories 1935-1963 112.

67. MacLeod, 11.

68. Sargeson, 'Conversation with Frank Sargeson' 16.

69. W.N. New, 'Frank Sargeson as Social Story-teller,' Landfall 36 (1982): 343-346.

7. JOHN MULGAN: OXFORD MAN.

1. Paul Day, John Mulgan (New York: Twayne, 1968) 120.

2. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne), preface n.p.

3. James Bertram, 'Between Two Wars: An Outstanding New Zealand Novel' Tomorrow 6 (1940) cited in 'John Mulgan: Between Two Wars' Flight of the Phoenix: Critical Notes on New Zealand Writers (Wellington: VUP, 1985) 41.

4. Bertram, 'John Mulgan: Between Two Wars' 38.

5. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 38.

6. Allen Curnow, 'New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition' The Future of New Zealand, ed. M.F. Lloyd Prichard, (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1964) cited in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935-1984, ed. Peter Simpson, (Auckland: AUP, 1987) 200.

7. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 91.

8. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 119.

9. In his study, Reading the Thirties (1978), Bernard Bergonzi explores the relationship between the English writers of the 1930s and their obsession with portrayals of school life. The conventions and codes of public school life were often utilised, notably by Auden, Isherwood and Upward in their

creation of Mortmere, to convey political and social attitudes. The homogeneity of the education of many of these writers is unusual, and their shared background provided a constant source for the myths and allusions with which they shaped their subsequent comments on the society they saw around them. In part, it is this obsession with the intricacies of school life that accounts for much of the esoteric nature of the decade's writing. (Bergonzi, Reading the Thirties [London: Macmillan, 1978] 10-37)

10. James Bertram, 'John Mulgan in Perspective' Comment 9.3 (1969) cited in Flight of the Phoenix 43.

11. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 97.

12. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 105.

13. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 117.

14. Paul Day, John Mulgan (Oxford: OUP, 1977) 25.

15. Dan Davin, 'John Mulgan' in Landfall Country, ed. Charles Brasch, (Christchurch: Caxton, 1962) 373.

16. John Mulgan, Report on Experience (1947; Oxford: OUP, 1974) 31.

17. Mulgan, Report on Experience 32.

18. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 112.

19. Mulgan, Report on Experience 17.

20. Mulgan, Report on Experience 43.

21. Peter Gibbons, The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, ed. Terry Sturm, (Auckland: AUP, 1991) 75.

22. Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 32.

23. Patrick Evans, foreword, Man Alone, by John Mulgan, (Auckland: Penguin, 1990) n.p.

24. Dan Davin, rev. of Report on Experience, by John Mulgan, Landfall 2 (1948): 58.

25. Evans, foreword, Man Alone, n.p.

26. Mulgan, cited in Day, John Mulgan (Oxford) 14.

27. Allen Curnow, personal interview, 2 September 1992. Curnow remembers Mulgan expressing reservations about the nature of Phoenix, believing it to be 'radical.' Mulgan warned Curnow not to get involved with the venture.

28. Day, John Mulgan (Oxford) 14.

29. Patrick Evans, 'The Provincial Dilemma,' Landfall 30 (1976): 248.

30. Evans, 'The Provincial Dilemma' 249.

31. C.K. Stead, 'John Mulgan: A Question of Identity' Islands 25 (1979) cited in In the Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature (Auckland: AUP, 1981) 74.

32. Stead, 'John Mulgan: A Question of Identity' 96.

33. Stead, 'John Mulgan: A Question of Identity' 78.

34. Stead, 'John Mulgan: A Question of Identity' 84.

35. Stead, 'John Mulgan: A Question of Identity' 90.

36. Mulgan, cited in Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 40.

37. Mulgan, cited in Day, John Mulgan (Twayne) 42.

38. John Mulgan, 'Behind The Cables' Auckland Star 27 July 1936: C1.

39. John Mulgan, 'Behind The Cables' Auckland Star 5 November 1936: C1.

40. The Airman in Auden's 'The Journal of an Airman' (from his 1932 publication The Orators) is the classic characterisation of this neuroticism. However, the English literature of the 1930s abounds with such examples of middle-class confusion. The tutor in Edward Upward's 1938 novel Journey to the Border is, like Auden's Airman, lost in a form of personal chaos. Upward presents the whole narrative from within the tutor's troubled mind, and the technical dislocations mirror the difficulty with which the tutor perceives external reality. These two examples are possibly the most extreme in the decade, but the fiction of Lowry, Isherwood and even Orwell all contain similar central protagonists. The seeming omnipotence of such characters points to the disturbing complexities the English writers of the period perceived in the society around them.

41. For more detail on the relationship between literature and masculinity during the period, see Kai Jensen's article ''A Poet Quite As Large As Life': Literary Masculinity in New Zealand 1932-1960,' Landfall 45 (1991): 206-224.

42. Evans, foreword, Man Alone, n.p.

43. Bertram, 'John Mulgan in Perspective' 49.

44. W.H. Auden, The English Auden. Poems, Essays & Dramatic Writings, 1927-1939, ed. Edward Mendelson, (London: Faber & Faber, 1977) 440.

45. Julian Symons, The Thirties: A Dream Revolved (London: Cresset Press, 1960) 35.

46. In the fourth volume of New Zealand New Writing, published in March 1945 and edited by Ian Gordon, R. Seymour contributes an essay entitled 'A Present Tendency in New Zealand Literature' in which he attacks the exclusiveness

of a clique of writers who he feels dominates the literary culture. Naming Curnow, Holcroft and McCormick, he goes on to accuse them of 'romanticis[ing] the postion of the New Zealander in time and place' and states: 'Their criticism and their poetry is based on a notion which induces self-pity and which is contrary to the facts.' Seymour's essay, with its charges of a 'false' presentation of New Zealand, points to the latent romanticism in much of the nationalism in the country during the 1930s. It also demonstrates the degree to which, as in England, a select group of writers were perceived to dominate nation's literature. (R. Seymour 'A Present Tendency in New Zealand Literature' New Zealand New Writing, ed. Ian Gordon, 4 [1945]: 31-34.)

47. Bergonzi, Reading the Thirties 70.

48. John Mulgan, Man Alone (1939; Auckland: Penguin, 1990) 9.

49. Mulgan, Man Alone 200.

50. Mulgan, Man Alone epilogue n.p.

51. Auden, The English Auden 212.

52. Mulgan, Man Alone 9.

53. Cecil Day Lewis, cited in Bergonzi, Reading the Thirties 68.

54. Mulgan, Man Alone 127.

55. Auden, The English Auden 45.

56. Mulgan, Man Alone 135.

57. Mulgan, Man Alone 135.

58. Mulgan, Man Alone 139.

59. Mulgan, Man Alone 141.

60. Day Lewis, cited in Bergonzi, Reading the Thirties 68.

61. Humphrey Carpenter, W.H. Auden: A Biography (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) 232.

62. W.H. Auden, letter to John Mulgan, 17 August 1938, Mulgan/ Auden correspondence, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

63. Mulgan's widow, Gabrielle Day, claims never to have heard of Davin until after the war. (Personal interview, 20 March 1991).

64. Donald Harmon Akenson, Half the World from Home: Perspectives on the Irish in New Zealand, 1860-1950 (Wellington: VUP, 1990) 123.

65. Akenson, Half the World from Home 155.

66. Alan Mulgan, cited in Akenson, Half the World from Home 85.

8. ALLEN CURNOW: HAMMERING UNITIES AND RISKY HORIZONS.

1. Allen Curnow, Poetry and Language (Christchurch: Caxton Club Press, 1935) cited in Look Back Harder: Critical Writings 1935 -1984, ed. Peter Simpson, (Auckland: AUP, 1987) 1.

2. Curnow, Poetry and Language in Look Back Harder 3.

3. Curnow, Poetry and Language in Look Back Harder 2.

4. Curnow, Poetry and Language in Look Back Harder 4.

5. Curnow, Poetry and Language in Look Back Harder 5.

6. Allen Curnow, introduction, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960) cited in Look Back Harder 133.

7. Allen Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1974) 138.

8. Edward W. Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization' Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature (Derry: Field Day Publishing, 1988) 18.

9. In his 1991 Penguin Selected Poems 1940-1989, Curnow chooses to start his selection from the 1941 publication of Island and Time. This does not necessarily imply that Curnow wishes to consign his 1930s work to the level of juvenilia. In the 'Author's Note' to the Collected Poems 1933-1973, he states that '[t]hese earliest poems... have their place with all that I have written since.' Curnow believes each book he produces should be received on its own terms, and the Selected Poems 1940-1989 is, in many ways, an introduction to his more mature work for an overseas audience. Nevertheless, these publication details do reveal a degree of discontent with his earliest collections. ('Author's Note' Collected Poems 1933-1973 xii)

10. Curnow, Collected Poems xii.

11. Terry Sturm, 'Allen Curnow: Forty Years of Poems,' rev. of Collected Poems 1933-1973, by Allen Curnow, Islands 4 (1975): 68.

12. Trevor James, 'Allen Curnow: Theologian Manque,' Poetry of the Pacific Region, ed. Paul Sharrad, (Adelaide: Centre for Research in New Literatures in English, 1984) 57.

13. Allen Curnow, Valley of Decision (Auckland: Auckland University College Students' Association Press, 1933) n.p. When he came to include poems from Valley of Decision in his Collected Poems 1933-1973, Curnow left out three from the original publication and revised all the remainder. This revision also extended to those poems included from Three Poems (1935) and Enemies (1937). The process of revision is a contentious one. The poem that the literary critic may wish to serve as a historical landmark is often, for the poet, in a continuous present, and thus always available for rewriting. On the whole Curnow's changes are very minor, shifts in vocabulary rather than structural revisions. They

do, however, raise the revealing possibility of gauging how the Curnow of the 1970s thought the Curnow of the 1930s SHOULD write.

14. Curnow, Valley of Decision n.p.

15. In a lecture delivered for the series 'New Zealand Through the Arts: Past and Present' (part of the 1981 Turnbull Winter Lectures) Curnow addressed the relationship between Olson and Pound, and the influence that Olson's poetics had over a younger generation of writers in New Zealand. Curnow claimed to be unfit to comment upon Olson's The Maximus Poems, never having read them. He characterised Olson as an 'extravagant syncretist and philosophical dilettante' who had 'narrowed' the vision of poetry, seeing Olson's manifesto 'Projective Verse' (1950) as no real addition to Pound's 'A Few Don'ts' published in 1913. For Curnow, Pound belongs in that 'true line of descent from the great innovators and reformers of poetry' and is an acknowledged 'master.' Curnow's reactions to Olson are disappointing, since, as Alan Riach has pointed out ('Stranger Eyes: Charles Olson, 'Pacific Man' and Some Aspects of New Zealand Poetry' Landfall 43 [1989]: 57-73) there are strong parallels between the two. Both are, to a degree, 'national' poets with all that entails in respect to ideas of geography and history. Both are also prescriptive critics and, despite the polarity that exists between their actual writing practice, the exploration of connections between the two is a fruitful exercise.

16. Mark Williams, 'Selected Poems 1940-1989' ts (unpublished review).

17. Chris Wallace-Crabb, 'That Second Body: An Australian View of Allen Curnow's Progress,' Ariel 16.4 (1985): 73.

18. Allen Curnow, Three Poems (Christchurch: Caxton Club Press, 1935) n.p.

19. Curnow, Three Poems n.p.

20. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 222.

21. Curnow, Three Poems n.p.

22. James Wieland, 'Reality's Adam: A study of the place of myth in the poetry of Allen Curnow,' Landfall 34 (1980): 394.

23. Wieland, Landfall 396.

24. Wieland, Landfall 393.

25. Curnow, Three Poems n.p.

26. Alan Roddick, Allen Curnow (Wellington: OUP, 1980) 7.

27. Wieland, Landfall 391.

28. Fairburn reviewed Enemies for Tomorrow in April 1937. After remarking initially upon the stylistic and technical influences of English poetry upon New Zealand poetry - 'it is

only natural that we should have been overpowered by the technical strengths of these young English poets' - he goes on to praise Curnow for developing a 'distinctly individual expression.' He notes 'the sort of artistic integrity that can be attained only by subduing one's 'influences' and applying a rigid standard of self-criticism.' This is an illuminating comment, since Enemies displays a noticeable lack of self-criticism from Curnow. Instead of the problems within the poetry, Fairburn notes a 'purity of feeling', and in conclusion points to a perceived moral rigour: 'The reason for the success of such poems is, I think, that the moral categories underlying them are not of the sort that can be put on and off like a coloured shirt; that is to say, they are genuine categories, and not merely ad hoc creations like those of e.g. Kipling and certain of the younger communist poets.' There may well be a strategy at work here, Fairburn attempting to gain public attention for Curnow as a poet who has thrown off his 'influences' to produce a local literature that is close to Fairburn's own poetic rendition of a New Zealand nationalism. (Tomorrow 3 [1937]: 415-416)

29. Allen Curnow, Enemies (Christchurch: Caxton, 1937) 1.

30. Curnow, Enemies 6.

31. In his 'Author's Note' to Enemies Curnow talks of a 'great temptation' to include a number of poems 'which seemed competently written, but which were merely (or chiefly) written in satisfaction of the desire to emulate some admired poet.' After noting that New Zealand poetry displays too much of such maldigestion, Curnow goes on: 'I have tried to avoid a preconceived idea of what poets in New Zealand should write about. And I have tried to show the possibility of a technical development pari passus with that of recent English poetry. Whatever may be said or written about a national literature for New Zealand, England remains at the very least the 'technical research laboratory', where the finest and most advanced work is done with that subtle material, the English language.' Curnow's comment displays the tensions in the decade's poetry. Despite a firm attempt to eschew the models of Auden and Spender, Curnow still conceives of some form of parallel development between the poetry in the two nations. This anomaly accounts for much of the confusion in Enemies. Had the poems had a more conscientious editor, Curnow suggests, the volume may well not have been published. (Allen Curnow, personal interview, 2 September 1992)

32. Curnow, Enemies 22.

33. Curnow, Enemies 3.

34. Curnow, Enemies 19.

35. Curnow's 1970s revisions to Enemies make interesting reading. As with nearly all his 1930s work, the revisions are mainly changes in vocabulary, yet some of the changes appear to make the verse even more Audenesque. In 'Recall To Earth' the lines 'Will you play bridge? - The talk cuts and flays;/ dead handshake, rhetorical How d'you do' become 'Will you play bridge? Tongues fence, lips mince/ Trapped handshake,

mechanical howdyaoo.' (Collected Poems 1933-1973 33) In this and in other cases, Curnow's process of revision seems to have been to rewrite with the benefit of a knowledge of the established English orthodoxy. In the revised poems the questions of influence and historical heritage become even more firmly mixed.

36. Curnow, Enemies 24.

37. Roddick, Allen Curnow 8-9.

38. Curnow, 'Poets in New Zealand: Problems of Writing and Criticism,' Christchurch Press 6 March 1937: 17.

39. W.B.Yeats, cited in Colin Meir, The Ballads and Songs of W.B. Yeats: The Anglo-Irish Heritage in Subject and Style (London: Macmillan, 1974) 5.

40. Curnow, 'A Job for Poetry: Notes on an Impulse,' Book 1 (1941) n.p. cited in Look Back Harder 24.

41. Meir, The Ballads and Songs of W.B. Yeats 60.

42. Curnow, 'A Job for Poetry' in Look Back Harder 24.

43. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 53.

44. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 79.

45. Curnow, 'Author's Note' Collected Poems 1933-1973 xiii.

46. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 77.

47. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 142.

48. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 60-61.

49. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 64.

50. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 70.

51. Roddick, Allen Curnow 12.

52. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 79 & 92.

53. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 116.

54. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 93-4.

55. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 73.

56. Wieland, Landfall 386.

57. Wieland, Landfall 385.

58. Ian Wedde, 'Craft Interview with Ian Wedde' by David Dowling Landfall 39 (1985): 175-6.

59. Richard Ellmann, Eminent Domain: Yeats among Wilde, Joyce, Pound, Eliot and Auden (New York: OUP, 1967) 124.

60. James Wieland, The Ensphering Mind: History, Myth and Fictions in the Poetry of Allen Curnow, Nissim Ezekiel, A.D. Hope, A.M. Klein, Christopher Okigbo and Derek Walcott. (Washington: Three Continents, 1988) 95.

61. Sturm, Islands 73.

62. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 81.

63. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 105.

64. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 105.

65. Curnow, Collected Poems 1933-1973 115.

66. Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World (Cambridge: CUP, 1976) viii.

67. Allen Curnow, letter to Ursula Bethell, May 18 1944, Ursula Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Literary Manuscript Box 4, University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch.

68. Allen Curnow, introduction, A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45 (Christchurch: Caxton, 1945) cited in Look Back Harder 42.

69. Curnow, New Zealand Verse 1923-45 in Look Back Harder 49.

70. Curnow, New Zealand Verse 1923-45 in Look Back Harder 56.

71. Curnow, New Zealand Verse 1923-45 in Look Back Harder 53.

72. Curnow's treatment of Brasch in his anthology introduction fails to deal with the complex relationship Brasch developed with New Zealand in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Writing to Ursula Bethell in 1940, Brasch mirrors Curnow's desire for the kind of Yeatsian criticism that forged Irish nationalism: 'I want somebody to do for New Zealand the kind of service that Yeats did for Ireland - make its place names and traditions and legends live in poetry, bring them into a wider circle of relevance and meaning, and so enrich by reciprocity the places themselves.' Yet, as his relationship with Bethell suggests, he was also drawn away from the strict nationalism he saw in New Zealand in the late 1930s. On receiving a copy of Not In Narrow Seas he wrote to Bethell in June 1939: 'The new Curnow I don't like, either book or contents. The poems are a failure I agree, and Leo Bensemann's drawing execrable.' (Ursula Bethell Papers, MS Papers 38, Correspondence Box 1, University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch)

73. Allen Curnow, 'Note on the Second Edition' A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-50 (Christchurch: Caxton, 1951) cited in Look Back Harder 74.

74. Curnow, New Zealand Verse 1923-50 in Look Back Harder 75.

75. Even as late as the mid-1970s, Achebe was being asked to articulate his thoughts on these matters. Asked to speak at a conference on African Literature at Dalhousie University in Canada in May 1973, Achebe's reaction on hearing that the

topic proposed for him was 'The African Writer and the English Language' was to decline to speak. He has stated: 'Then I was asked what I should prefer to talk about. I said nothing; I had no idea what I wanted to talk about.' (Morning Yet on Creation Day [London: Heinemann, 1975.] 49) Achebe's silence betrays the boundaries of the debates that dominate early post-colonial literatures and nationalisms. His role as public mentor led him to become a figure who could be reduced to a spokesman. It is a position Curnow has been careful to avoid.

76. Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition,' Labyrinths trans. James E. Irby, ed. Donald A.Yates and James E. Irby (1964; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) 211.

77. Borges, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' 219.

78. Borges, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' 217.

79. Curnow, New Zealand Verse 1923-45 in Look Back Harder 50.

80. Allen Curnow, personal interview, 2 September 1992.

81. Allen Curnow, 'Conversation with Allen Curnow' with MacDonald P. Jackson Islands 2 (1973): 150.

82. Curnow, personal interview, 2 September 1992. Curnow's reticence on these matters is interesting. He works to place himself on the periphery of the decade's energy. Even his association with Phoenix (he was nominally the editor of the second issue) is portrayed as the product of chance. Curnow claims that his involvement with Bertram's editorship was simply a question of making up the numbers and overseeing the printing when there was nobody else around. Certainly his position as a journalist meant Curnow was, to a degree, removed from the decade's literary activity. Yet, despite its seeming homgeneity, the literature of the period had no real 'centre' as such. Curnow's insistence on his own innocence during the period may be nostalgia, yet he was extremely well read in certain areas (having read most of Eliot and Yeats by the end of the 1920s) and his reticence may mask the kind of ego that sought constant definitions, both in a personal poetic and in the wider concept of a national literature.

83. Wilson Harris, The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks, eds. Alan Riach and Mark Williams, (Liege: Universite de Liege, 1992) 18.

84. Wilson Harris, 'Tradition and the West Indian Novel' Tradition, the Writer and Society (London and Port-of-Spain, 1967) cited in Critics on Caribbean Literature, ed. Edward Baugh, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978) 31-32.

85. Harris, 'Tradition and the West Indian Novel' in Critics on Caribbean Literature 31.

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