# Settler Literature and the Booker Prize

*Transnational Literatures and Metropolitan Reception, 1985-2000*

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Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Hilary Term 2022

## Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of the Booker Prize on transnational literary circulation — specifically that of Anglophone settler novels from New Zealand, Australia and Canada. Drawing distinctions between the desires of local and international audiences in these countries, the thesis examines work that has been locally but not transnationally canonized. It compares this work in each case to texts from the same country which have circulated transnationally and been recognized by the Booker Prize. The three winners of the prize examined here (Keri Hulme, Peter Carey and Margaret Atwood) found international success according to distinguishing criteria that discouraged reading for settler commonalities in favour of giving information about a particular place or group whose uniqueness is emphasised. Meanwhile, texts which remained locally circulated (by John Mulgan, Gerald Murnane, Leonard Cohen and Sheila Watson) are more productively read for commonalities.

In the first chapter, the Māori Keri Hulme's Booker winner *The Bone People* is read to show how features common to a literary tradition shared with the Pākehā John Mulgan's *Man Alone*, and theorised across settler contexts, are read as markers of indigeneity because of prize culture. In the second chapter, Peter Carey (primarily in his *True History of the Kelly Gang*) is read as dealing with cultural cringe by emphasising Australian quiddity and uniqueness, as well as by presenting (Irish) Australians as colonised rather than colonisers. The less well-known Gerald Murnane, especially in *The Plains*, avoids this by emphasising individual subjectivity over group identity, but the individual subjectivities he presents have been shaped by a settler colonial context. The third chapter examines how the state funding of literary production in Canada has created a bifurcated model where certain texts — Margaret Atwood's earlier work, Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* — respond closely to the concerns of different groups within and shaped by a settler state, especially when read hermeneutically. Meanwhile literature for export, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*, instead responds to mimetic readings — such as in the context of the Booker — that establish a unitary and exotic Canadian identity for metropolitan readers. The conclusion briefly examines a final text, the South African Damon Galgut's Booker-winning *The Promise*, to show the recurrence of patterns already identified throughout the thesis.

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# Introduction

Some years ago, I found myself in Toronto reading a succession of Canadian texts — *The Stone Angel*, *The Double Hook*, *Civil Elegies*, even *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* — with some awe. I had encountered Canadian literature before, in prize-winning international figures like Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje, and thought then that I liked it well enough. I had even taken an honours seminar which included some less well-known Canadian literature. But these more recently-encountered texts were something new, something — the phrase is inevitable, considering myself as someone who had always been most interested in New Zealand literature — 'something nobody counted on.' They surprised me both as very powerful and novel aesthetic experiences, and yet as bizarrely familiar; they did not, in an unsatisfactorily vague phrase, *feel* alien to the traditions of New Zealand literature which I already knew in the way that parallel American or English texts did.[1]

And so, an obvious set of questions followed; why did I not know these texts already, when I knew some Canadian texts which had not induced the same response as a reader and which did not appear, within Canada, to be any more celebrated than these? Why had they not been compared to texts I did know?

## Introduction

This thesis responds to these questions by exploring the transnational and national dissemination and reception of novels from three settler nations — New Zealand, Australia, and Canada — where a source population whose cultural institutions came primarily from the

1. Lydia Wevers described the same sensation — 'a thrill of the familiar but so different' — on exposure to Australian texts in New Zealand (Lydia Wevers, 'The View From Here,' *JASAL*, no. 6 [Special Issue: Australian Literature in a Global World 2009]: 9, https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/JASAL/article/view/10162/10059).

British Isles developed independent literary traditions over time. (Only Anglophone Canadian literature is considered.) It explains my Canadian experience by arguing for a divergence of national canons, shaped by national concerns, and international canons, shaped by metropolitan (especially English) reception and especially by prize culture in the form of agents of dissemination like the Booker Prize.[2] In doing so, it attempts to rehabilitate a particular tradition of specifically settler literary criticism within the postcolonial sphere, arguing that this critical tradition fell into abeyance not because it was necessarily inadequate, but because it was formed by and operates best upon local canons still particularly shaped by common legacies of settlement (and by attempts to manage these legacies), rather than upon a transnational canon formed by other pressures such as metropolitan desires for exoticism and settler cultural diplomacy.[3] Its methodology, in arguing for these two propositions, is to combine readings of Booker Prize winning texts with readings of parallel texts which have not become transnationally canonical — or, in most cases, been circulated at all beyond a national context. To explore these parallel successes and failures, it uses a book-historical approach. This emphasises the conditions of textual dissemination and circulation as much as the intrinsic properties of a given text, with especial reference to state support, national identity-building and to prize culture both generally and in the specific form of the Booker Prize.

This introduction begins by discussing the thesis topic and aims. It then explains some key factors behind the selection of timeframe and particular texts for analysis. It moves towards, first, the identification of a particular form of settler colonialism shared between Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and, second, a discussion of the chronologies of this particular form. This discussion identifies a distinct cultural moment in the latter half of the twentieth century in which the form's evolution produced certain cultural responses of both affiliation and independence together with anxieties about identity. These concerns, alongside related state intervention in cultural production and dissemination, can be understood as influencing the literary production of the period.

The introduction then moves to discuss possible critical approaches to such literary pro-

2. For a history of the theoretical concept of prize culture, see Claire Squires, 'Literary Prizes and Awards,' in *A Companion to Creative Writing*, ed. Graeme Harper (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 292–297.

3. Cultural diplomacy can be understood as the instrumental dissemination of national culture and cultural productions in order to achieve foreign policy goals; see Ien Ang, Yudhishthir Raj Isar, and Phillip Mar, 'Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest?,' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no. 4 (2015): 366–370 for a discussion of interpretations and possible definitions.

duction, beginning with an examination of the origins of a particular school of comparative settler literary analysis. It then explores the development of this approach alongside Commonwealth literary analysis and its eventual decline. It argues for the continuing importance of the transnational approach of this analysis, especially its consideration — in addition to purely literary qualities — of the dissemination of literature in a context of continuing cultural colonisation and transnational circulation and similarities. This point is made by considering how a single Booker Prize winning work, Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries*, has been read in national contexts across Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

The introduction then considers how the Booker Prize has worked to allow certain texts (such as *The Luminaries*) to move beyond a national context. The history of the prize is briefly discussed and critical approaches towards it are examined in order to both come to preliminary conclusions about its operations and suggest reasons that national canonisation might reward a very different set of texts and concerns. The primary reason, it is suggested, is that the Booker process is likely to reward exoticizing and actively revisionist texts which emphasise settler national cohesion and distinctiveness from a broader imperial culture. As a result, the failure of settler literary criticism can be understood as caused by difficulties applying an emphasis on commonalities to an unrepresentative transnational canon emphasising uniqueness.

The identification of the states, of the significance of the prize, and of the chronological period then allows the selection of three Booker Prize winners for discussion. Finally, an outline of each of the three chapters discussing each text and local comparators is given, exploring how each chapter applies these insights in different contexts.

## Topic and Aims

This thesis evaluates Booker Prize winning texts from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand in the period 1985-2000, while also discussing less internationally successful texts which are nonetheless comparable. These texts are both by the authors of prize-winning novels and by other authors from the same national or regional context who have not been as successful in achieving transnational circulation. The earliest text discussed is John Mulgan's *Man Alone*, first published in 1939; the latest analysed in detail is Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly*

*Gang*, which won the Booker in 2001 but was first published in 2000.[4] Its evaluation is not restricted to the texts themselves, but also to how they have circulated or failed to circulate in both national and transnational contexts — especially because of the Booker Prize.

The context of this evaluation is a broader comparison of legacies of settlement, intended to explore and argue for — if not commonalities of production — commonalities of analysis which consider a shared legacy of settlement within all three states. This legacy is likely to have had continuing effects on cultural production generally and the novel in particular. I will argue that these effects mean that analytical approaches derived from an awareness of this common legacy remain valuable and can be transferred across national contexts in a way which allows productive readings perhaps not otherwise apparent.[5]

The primary aim of this thesis, then, is to identify and explain substantial divergence between national and transnational canons of settler literature, as exemplified by Booker Prize winning texts and local comparators. Secondarily, this divergence is used to expose the possibility of considering texts not normally read in dialogue with one another as amenable to productive readings based on legacies of settlement (even while differences remain). This approach treats settler literature as a product of a distinct but ambivalent second world, not the first world of the metropole, the third world of the postcolonial, or the fourth world of indigenous experience within the settler states.[6] Finally — given that the recognition of this distinctiveness was once the subject of substantially more scholarly interest than at present — the thesis suggests recognition has been diminished by the transnational circulation of Booker Prize winning texts which are less representative of these concerns and experiences (since, rather than circulating inevitably, they have been selected by a process influenced by metropolitan interests and incentives) than the local canons which have not been as avail-

4. Mulgan here is something of an anomaly, considered primarily because of his influence upon Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, published more than forty years later.

5. A handful of examples among many can be extracted from the following chapters: an awareness of state care as an assimilatory process, culturally much more prominent in Canada, can be used to explain attitudes to child abuse in Keri Hulme's New Zealand novel; the desire for indigenization, identified by the Canadian critic Terry Goldie can be applied both straightforwardly in a New Zealand context and with variation to a sense of Irishness in Victoria in the work of Peter Carey; Leonard Cohen's bizarre attitude towards victimhood in *Beautiful Losers*, exemplified by an orgy with Hitler, can be read as the same desire to expunge settler guilt by removing individual responsibility in favour of the collective will that motivates Mulgan's Johnson to finally find happiness by abandoning his own desires and going down the hillside into Spain as part of a unified anti-fascist front.

6. c.f. Stephen Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World,' *World Literature Written in English* 30, no. 2 (1990): 30–41. I follow Slemon here in modifying common usage to indicate settler states, not the Soviet bloc, by 'second world'. The phrase 'fourth world' comes originally from George Manuel (George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* [New York: Free Press, [1974]]).

able to transnational criticism. Results of this process can be discerned by comparing prize-winning and non-prize-winning texts and their circulation and reception.

## Selection of States and Chronological Period

### Definition and Identification of Anglophone Settler States

This thesis examines the literature of three settler colonial states at a particular time: New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, in the latter part of the twentieth century — although the conclusion also explores an example from post-apartheid South Africa. ('Settler colonialism', in this thesis, can be defined as a cultural construct in a geographical location derived from but distinguishable from a source culture located elsewhere. The settlers within this cultural formation exercise sovereignty in a new location where they have chosen to remain but the cultural formation is based on its antecedents rather than being derived from the abstract experience of settlement itself.) This selection is based upon the assumption that — whatever recurring forms different instances of settler colonialism may take — a particular instance, and especially its cultural productions, will be influenced by the prevailing ideologies and cultural formations of the settlers' point of origin, both at the moment of settlement and in ongoing interaction.[7] This emphasis on culture means that settler colonialism can be understood to continue as a cultural phenomenon long after political independence and the development of distinct national identities.

The states considered in this thesis were settled or invaded across a relatively short period by settlers who came, in the main, from the British Isles or from other instances of British settler colonialism with 'a relatively uniform sense of the kinds of institutions of law and gov-

7. The relatively new corpus of settler colonial theory provides a counterpoint. (See Jane Carey and Ben Silverstein, 'Thinking with and beyond settler colonial studies: new histories after the postcolonial,' *Postcolonial Studies* 23, no. 1 (2020): 5 for a recent history of the field's development and spread.) This argues that certain irreducible features of settler colonialism like the desire for land will inevitably occur and then recur even through apparent change, so that settler colonialism is best considered as a structure rather than a chronologically-bounded event. Application of these ideas is limited in this thesis; I share Philip Steer's concern that:

> A wholesale rejection of the language of 'event', however, encourages a dehistoricized criticism that potentially obscures the differences between disparate colonial spaces, while risking blindness to the changing local and geopolitical imperatives that continuously shaped each settler project (Philip Steer, *Settler Colonialism in Victorian Literature: Economics and Political Identity in the Networks of Empire*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020], 27).

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ernance that ought to order these colonies.'[8] They then became independent in a slow and (at least in the cultural sphere) perennially incomplete process.[9] This led to a continuing cultural and economic entanglement with Great Britain which reinforced similarities.[10] As such they can be distinguished from earlier instances of British settler colonialism, such as the United States and Ireland, and from other settler colonies from the same period such as South Africa, Rhodesia, and Kenya. The earlier instances were settled from a culture which had changed by the time of later settlements, and therefore developed different political and cultural institutions.[11] They also moved earlier to cultural and political independence. In contrast, later settlements developed at the same time with a common ideology of the role of the state (the recurrence of the phrase 'peace, order and good government' in their constitutional law is one indicator) under the influence of 'a highly mobile corps of officers and administrators [...] who had a strong sense of relationship throughout the British colonies.'[12] A figure like Edward Gibbon Wakefield — who will reappear in the Australian chapter — could be successively a key figure in the establishment of South Australia; in the New Zealand Association; in the Durham Report, influential in its turn both in Canada and further abroad;[13] in the New Zealand Land Company (governor, to make the same point, Lord Durham); in Canadian colonization schemes; as a Canadian parliamentarian; in the Canterbury Association; and, as the final end to a tri-continental career, a parliamentary representative once again, this time in New Zealand.[14] Wakefield's advocacy of systematic colonisation meant settlement began in various locations with the same foundational assumptions. Later developments echo the same

8. Benjamin L. Berger, Hamar Foster, and A.R. Buck, 'Introduction: Does Law Matter? The New Colonial Legal History,' in *The Grand Experiment: Law and Legal Culture in British Settler Societies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 7.

9. Appendix A of this thesis is a chronology of selected events across the states, which tracks some of the developments towards independence.

10. For example, political commitments meant that all three nations joined Great Britain in a succession of foreign wars which developed great cultural importance.

11. I am influenced in this argument by Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964) and David Hackett Fischer, *Fairness and Freedom: A History of Two Open Societies: New Zealand and the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), while retaining some doubts based upon the importance of considering continuing immigration.

12. Russell McDougall and Gillian Whitlock, 'Introduction,' in *Australian/Canadian Literatures in English: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Russell McDougall and Gillian Whitlock (North Ryde: Methuen, 1987), 1.

13. For example, Angela Woollacott discusses how closely the Durham Report (and Wakefield's activity in New Zealand) were followed in Australia, so that the Durham Report influenced Australian self-government on Canadian models (Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015], 106–108).

14. For an overview of Wakefield's career, see Tony Ballantyne, 'The Theory and Practice of Empire-Building: Edward Gibbon Wakefield and 'systematic colonisation',' in *The Routledge History of Western Empires*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 89–101.

point, especially the tendency for colonial administrators and settlers to circulate between colonies: George Grey, for example, was the governor of South Australia, the Cape Colony and (twice) New Zealand, as well as New Zealand's Premier.[15]

This understanding does not necessarily exclude other settler colonies, most obviously South Africa — and especially (in terms of reception) South Africa after the end of apartheid, a complication discussed in the conclusion. Therefore, these colonies are excluded from the scope of this study for another reason. In Australia, Canada and New Zealand, settlers became a majority; not just through immigration but through deliberate killings and violence, as well as disease and neglect. In other colonies, settlers were never a majority. This difference meant that the maintenance of settler power relied upon undemocratic means and stronger ideologies of racial separation, so that admittedly common origins were expressed differently. Meanwhile, large and dispossessed native labour forces led to different economic institutions, with their own cultural consequences.

Another consequence, also important in considering Ireland and the United States, was that the moment when political independence was achieved can be much more clearly seen than in the primary subjects of this study. Independence and subsequent political change naturally led to institutions working to justify and explain independence as a result of cultural, ideological or ethnic difference. As a result, cultural production is likely to have been influenced by these emphases.

South Africa here, as another dominion, is a more ambiguous case. Its declaration of a republic and withdrawal from the Commonwealth was certainly a moment of rupture, but its settler minority retained political control long afterwards. Arguably, the influence of the apartheid system on cultural production was pervasive enough to change emphases away from what Australia, Canada and New Zealand held in common, but this is a very debatable point (especially since ideologies of racial separation remained influential in the other former dominions). Apartheid South Africa might be understood as a state which shared a common ideology of settler colonisation based upon exclusion of the indigene up until a certain point, but which then remained to some degree held in a racializing ideology its comparators at least officially abandoned in favour of first assimilation and then biculturalism or multicultural-

15. See Edmund Bohan, *To Be a Hero: A Biography of Sir George Grey, 1812-1898* (Auckland: Harper Collins, 1998).

ism.[16]

This does not seem enough to exclude South Africa from a common set of critical approaches to British settler colonialism. For the purposes of this study, however, external cultural perceptions are as important as internal. That international perceptions of South African literature and its circulation and reception before 1994 were profoundly and reductively shaped by knowledge of apartheid, while international readers were less familiar with similar racism in the other settler states, seems a much less doubtful contention; as one overview put it, 'the international consumer of South African culture has been encouraged to view South Africa as an ideological battleground that represents the Manichean conflict *par excellence*.'[17]

## Period

This thesis examines a later stage of settler colonialism in the three states, in a period when political independence was solidly established and cultural independence was increasing.[18] This has been called a situation 'of acute public uncertainty as the three Commonwealth countries finally dissolved economic and cultural ties to Britain and sought out new postcolonial identities in the Asia-Pacific region.'[19] An overview of the transition across all three countries similarly identifies 'a palpable sense of something lacking [...] in civic culture' together with attempts to replace lost Britishness with cultural productions.[20]

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16. See Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality*, Critical Perspectives on Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 353–356

17. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly, 'Introduction,' in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

18. An underlying assumption here is that a British identity, contrary to some national myths, was important beforehand; this is the position taken by what is sometimes called the 'new British History' or the 'British world' historians; for a discussion of the concept see Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowitch, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003). For a discussion of the importance of Britishness and then its decline across all three states, see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 456–473. For specific arguments for each nation, see (for example) Shannon Conway, 'From Britishness to Multiculturalism: Official Canadian Identity in the 1960s,' *Études Canadiennes / Canadian Studies*, no. 84 (2018): 9–30; Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections,' in Bridge and Fedorowitch, *The British World*, 120–135; James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A history of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001). An interesting but perhaps overreaching cultural studies analysis of Britishness in the antipodes up to the millennium is Tara Brabazon, *Tracking the Jack: A Retracing of the Antipodes* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000). Finally, the third chapter of Daniel Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) usefully discusses the Scottish adaptation and invention of 'Britishness' in Anglophone Canadian literature and academia, in a text generally based upon the premise that Britishness was a vital means to manage a settler-colonial situation.

19. Miranda Johnson, *The Land is Our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

20. Stuart Ward, 'The "New Nationalism" in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: Civic Culture in the Wake of the British World,' in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Culture*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 236.

This period's beginning cannot be precisely dated, but certain markers (both shared and unique) can be identified in a process which perhaps began in Canada (perhaps because Canada, through proximity to the United States, was always less dependent on imperial trade or preference).[21]. These markers are presented in the attached timeline, but they include the abandonment of a common imperial citizenship[22]; the Massey Report; the appointment of native-born governors general (including Vincent Massey); the ANZUS treaty and British withdrawal from east of Suez; Canada's response to the Suez crisis; the introduction of immigration restrictions by the UK in 1962-1971; the dismissal from office of Gough Whitlam; and — probably the most important two factors — British membership of the European Economic Community and attempts to develop a postcolonial identity through reconciliation with indigenous peoples. British integration with Europe — to John Diefenbaker 'going a long distance in endeavouring to destroy the British Commonwealth'[23] — led to an economic uncoupling and declines in trade, not only because of new tariff barriers but also because of the associated end of the sterling area.[24] To one scholar, 'the disentangling of Australian and British cultural identities was directly informed by the disentangling of their political and economic interests.'[25] This has been generally recognised across the historiography; it is, for instance, the persuasive argument underlying much of James Belich's *Paradise Reforged* and Stu-

21. For example, the establishment of a Canadian independent foreign policy owed a great deal to the work of Oscar Skelton; his career and methods are very closely recalled by the work of Alister McIntosh in New Zealand, but McIntosh was appointed head of the new department of External Affairs in 1942; Skelton began at the Canadian External Affairs in 1925. See Ian McGibbon, ed., *Unofficial Channels: Letters between Alister McIntosh and Foss Shanahan, George Laking and Frank Corner 1946-1996* (Wellington: Victoria University Press in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1999), 27–28; John Hilliker, *Canada's Department of External Affairs: Vol. 1: The Early Years, 1909-1946*, Canadian Public Administration Series (Montreal and Kingston: The Institute of Public Administration of Canada / McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 93–95

22. It is worth remembering that the three primary subjects of this study — Carey, Atwood, and Hulme — all began their lives as British subjects rather than national citizens. Another novelist of that generation, C.K. Stead, who 'once carried a passport that said "British Subject, New Zealand citizen"' thought that

> There was in the 1980s no more salutary reminder of where we now stood than to wait at Heathrow in the long line of 'Others' while former Luftwaffe pilots went straight through on their EC passports (C.K. Stead, 'Michael King's History of New Zealand,' in *Book Self: The Reader as Writer and the Writer as Critic* [2004; Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008], 167).

23. Qtd. in Paul Robertson and John Singleton, 'The Old Commonwealth and Britain's First Application to Join the EEC, 1961-3,' *Australian Economic History Review* 40, no. 2 (July 2000): 166.

24. For an in-depth discussion of how trade had been built upon perceptions of a common culture, see David Thackeray, *Forging a British World of Trade: Culture, Ethnicity, and Market in the Empire-Commonwealth, 1880-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)

25. Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 107.

art Ward's *Australia and the British Embrace*.[26]

Following British membership of the EEC, governments wishing to minimise trade barriers with Britain no longer had any incentive to do so by claiming kinship or cultural commonality, since barriers were now established across a common market unlikely to respond to such appeals rather than by solely British decisions.[27] Instead, cultural differentiation became more important in order to maximise trade with new partners in the decolonised world (especially, later on, in international education), Europe and the United States. These partners might negatively associate a particular state either with Britain as a former colonial power or with a generalised settler context which included South Africa as an apartheid state, unless cultural differentiation could occur.

In this my analysis differs from Bill Schwarz. He reads the settler colonies as underwritten by a 'hysteria about race' as they attempted to achieve 'tantalizingly incomplete and unobtainable' whiteness and remain united with a metropole which, although influenced by colonial experience, was never quite so exclusive of difference as they desired.[28] This may well have been true for some time, but his exploration (for Australia, and to the very limited extent he examines Canada and New Zealand) is of a period well before the changes discussed here. This point might be explored further — since much of Schwarz's analysis examines the Australian politician Henry Parkes — by considering a remarkable 1983 speech by Bob Hawke. Opening a state-funded Australian Studies Centre in London, he recalled his arrival at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, where he had been met with startling ignorance and complacency about Australia. Rather than treat the centre as an opportunity to re-affiliate Australia with Great Britain, he saw the centre's purpose as making Britain aware of Australian difference and multiculturalism, 'especially under the impact of the post-War immigration program, and the recognition of Australians that they belong forever to the South-East Asian region.'[29] The context here is clearly a desire to trade with Asia and — as his later response to apartheid would

26. Belich, *Paradise Reforged*; S. Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*.

27. It has also been argued that perceptions of Britishness in settler colonies once 'paid dividends', since a combination of institutions and presumed traits of national character were seen as protecting investment (Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 212).

28. Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire*, vol. 1: The White Man's World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 108.

29. Qtd. in Alan Hallsworth and Susan Hodgett, 'Down but Not Out: British Academics resolutely Determined to Explore Canada,' in *Promoting Canadian Studies Abroad: Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy*, ed. Stephen Brooks, Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 81.

make clear — separate Australia in the public mind from association with white racism.[30] (The chronology shows just how rapidly similar changes occurred around this time across all three states.)

Such cultural differentiation inevitably became entangled with the support and promotion of literature, in a process which chapter three discusses in greater detail in a specifically Canadian context. It was, however, common; Witi Ihimaera, for example, was recruited as a senior New Zealand diplomat in the early seventies (although he delayed taking up the role until 1976) because — he argues — he was both Māori, and therefore 'an asset to [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs'] presentation of New Zealand policy internationally,' and a novelist with associated cultural authority.[31] This made him doubly well-placed to promote New Zealand distinctiveness and disavow its colonial past, or — as he puts it, 'not representing Queen Elizabeth [...] representing New Zealand.'[32] As Ihimaera's case implies, the imperial past began to be re-evaluated at the same time as the imperial present began to disappear. Triumphant narratives of peaceful settlement progressing to independent democracy were revealed as inadequate. This process began with revisionist histories and anthropologies — Bill Stanner, for example, pointed out the 'Great Australian Silence' in 1968, a 'cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale'[33] – but quickly moved into the legal and political sphere, especially with court decisions around native title and investigations of treaty violation such as the New Zealand Waitangi Tribunal and the Canadian Comprehensive Claims process.[34] It then entered the culture more broadly.

30. A recent chapter by Harriet Aldrich tracks the South African propaganda effort to label Canada and Australia as *less* virtuous than South Africa: the argument ran that Canada and Australia did not face South Africa's struggles with managing indigeneity only because of their genocidal past. They were labelled 'a country that largely solved its own colour problem by poisoning the Aboriginals' watering hole.'(Harriet Aldrich, 'Racial Legacies: South African Apartheid and the Old Commonwealth,' in *Commonwealth History in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Saul Dubow and Richard Drayton, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series [Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020], 238) She argues that the anti-apartheid stance of these states drew from the realisation — pointed out by numerous domestic critics — that their treatment of indigeneity did amount to a domestic apartheid. By taking a stance against South Africa, they could launder their reputation.

31. Witi Ihimaera, 'Maori life and literature: A sensory perception,' in *New Zealand through the Arts: Past and Present*, Turnbull Winter Lectures (Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1982), 47.

32. Margaret Meklin and Andrew Meklin, 'This Magnificent Accident: An Interview with Witi Ihimaera,' *The Contemporary Pacific* 16, no. 2 (2004): 365.

33. W.E.H Stanner, 'After the Dreaming,' in *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938-1973* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 214–248.

34. These were and are attempts at reconciliation based on different premises but with similar results; the New Zealand version involved compensation for treaty breaches, and the Canadian a process in which, following Supreme Court acknowledgment of Aboriginal title, modern treaties were negotiated (Christopher Alcantara, *Negotiating the Deal: Comprehensive Land Claims Agreements in Canada* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013], 3).

It became more difficult to base national identity on pride in settler history, and – in fact – governmental apologies for aspects of that history followed, together with constitutional and legislative reforms which established the settler states as bi- or multicultural. This was undoubtedly desirable, but came with an associated loss of cultural certainty; acknowledging indigenous histories necessarily meant recognising the myths rediscovered histories were replacing had, after all, been myths, leading to the loss of a 'properly constituted national selfhood.'[35] Settlers then found themselves with 'some reason to know what it is to belong to a people which thought it had a history and is now instructed by others that it has none.'[36] Implicitly, these two processes made it more difficult for settlers to claim either to still be British or to have evolved from British origins into a new national identity through a history in which they could take pride. Dennis Lee's *Civil Elegies* captures the mood of the period:

> And what can anyone do in this country, baffled and making our penance for ancestors, what did they leave us? Indian-swindlers,
> stewards of unclaimed earth and rootless what does it matter if they, our
> forebears' flesh and bone were often
> good men, good men do not matter to history.[37]

The poem depicts a Canadian identity which is Canadian, no longer British or French — 'where else on earth?' — but has no desirable history and is alienated from the landscape in which it finds itself. Simon During, writing of Australian culture, put the new mood simply and persuasively:

> in relation to those whose lands were appropriated, settler culture never had right on its side, and in relation to the world the colonialists left, theirs was a provincial society, more or less second-hand and second-rate.[38]

A text from the final state in this study's triad, Greg McGee's play *Foreskin's Lament*, ex-

35. Haydie Gooder and Jane M. Jacobs, '"On the Border of the Unsayable": The Apology in Postcolonizing Australia,' *interventions* 2, no. 2 (2005): 235. In a New Zealand context, but presumably in an argument applicable across all three countries, Philippa Mein Smith recognises this trauma but argues it only afflicted older generations and workers and farmers, rather than educated and urban baby boomers (Philippa Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, 2nd ed. [Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 210–211).

36. J.G.A Pocock, 'Deconstructing Europe,' in *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (1997; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 278.

37. Dennis Lee, *Civil Elegies and Other Poems* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), 34. See also Dennis Lee, *Savage Fields: An Essay in Literature and Cosmology* (Toronto: Anansi, 1977) for a critical text exploring similar issues; this was an influence on both early critical discussion of settler literature (e.g. Diana Brydon, 'Australian Literature and the Canadian Comparison,' *Meanjin* 38, no. 2 (1979): 162) and the discussion of Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* in this thesis.

38. Simon During, 'Postcolonialism And Globalization,' *Meanjin* 51, no. 2 (1992): 353.

pressed a similar anxiety about identity even more succinctly: 'Whaddarya?'[39] These works can be understood as presenting a new cultural worry, discernible not only in an artistic or political elite but also in a broader population.[40] This worry was derived from the settler position as part of a state justified and created by a colonial project which had become discredited. It was no longer possible to assert the legitimacy of the state on the basis of a civilising mission, membership in Empire, or racial superiority. To do so risked the pariah status of South Africa and Rhodesia; a charge both indigenous inhabitants, decolonised states, the Soviet bloc and South Africa itself were all willing to make.[41]

When this study begins in detail, with the 1985 publication of Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, both individual settlers and the settler state as a whole then found themselves, at a moment when '[s]ettler disavowal of colonialist relations is becoming impossible,' with an urgent demand for texts dealing with, and potentially rehabilitating, settler identity.[42] Literary critics, as will be discussed, were not exempt from these concerns. One of the key ways the state and the critical discourse sought to both influence and manage this crisis of legitimacy was in the field of cultural production; at the same time, these new worries opened up new markets for fiction and caused questions of settler identity to influence the work of many authors. These influences are likely to have changed both cultural production and its interpretation in ways significant enough to make this particular cultural moment necessarily the subject of different analytical frameworks to earlier periods of less ambiguously imperial identities. A rough period can then be determined where writing and criticism in the settler states — somewhere after the sixties — was especially concerned with questions of what it meant to be a citizen in

39. Greg McGee, *Foreskin's Lament*, New Zealand playscripts (Wellington: Price Milburn / Victoria University Press, 1981).

40. For example, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower has, discussing the Australian 'Sorry Books', identified a 'persistent collective guilt.' (Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, *Frontier Fictions: Settler Sagas and Postcolonial Guilt* [Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018], xviii). Kate Grenville has said that her influential novel *The Secret River* developed from the experience of one of the associated 'Reconciliation Walks' (Kate Grenville, *Searching for the Secret River* [Melbourne: Text, 2006], 11–12)

41. For example, Aboriginal delegates at the Australian Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement moved in 1961 a motion that 'we must abolish apartheid in our own country before the next Prime Ministers' Conference, or we may find ourselves in a similar position as South Africa this year.' (Jack Horner, *Seeking Racial Justice: An Insider's Memoir of the Movement for Aboriginal Advancement, 1938-1978* [Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004], 63) As early as 1949, Australian diplomats were warning that 'Australia is now being specifically named with South Africa when the question of racial discrimination is ventilated in the Indian press.' (Meg Gurry, *Australia and India: Mapping the Journey 1944-2014* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2014), quoted in Tim Watts, *The Golden Country: Australia's Changing Identity* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2019), 81) Newly-decolonised countries in Africa boycotted the 1976 Olympics over New Zealand's sporting links with South Africa. In a Cold War context, the Soviet Union and its allies pointed out ongoing injustices in the settler states for their own reasons.

42. During, 'Postcolonialism And Globalization,' 351.

a settler state rather than part of an imperial project becoming less culturally desirable and significant.[43]

## Critical Approaches

Concurrently, an increased critical interest in settler literature developed both in the states themselves and in the metropole as part of the broader phenomenon of Commonwealth literary analysis. Local theorisations can be traced back to a beginning in imitative anthologies for British publication.[44] These were followed by a project by the Humanities Research Council of Canada to 'to bring before Canadian humanities scholars knowledge of the other dominions.'[45] This led to a series of academic exchanges — 'A. D. Hope, Brian Elliott, Tom Inglis Moore went north and Reg Watters, Claude Bissell and J.M.S. Careless, R. L. McDougall, and (with Canada Council support) Earle Birney, went south'.[46] These in turn led to early attempts at literary comparison: Roy Daniell's 'Letter from Canada', for New Zealand's *Landfall*, was the 'first time Canadian literary events had been reported abroad annually.'[47] Claude Bissell, after visiting Australia, wrote the earliest academic comparison I have been able to trace.[48] As these explorations influenced national criticism, they simultaneously developed into a flow of postgraduate students and academic interchange.

The Australian John Matthews arrived for postgraduate study under Bissell at the University of Toronto in 1953.[49] His doctorate became the first book-length comparative study of settler literatures, *Tradition in Exile*.[50] Matthews remained in Canada, teaching for many years at Queen's University. He supervised there many Canadian and antipodean students.[51] Sim-

43. It is arguable that the increasing American cultural influence and demographic changes caused by mass immigration and increasing urbanisation have left the states concerned culturally constructed as being as much immigrants as settlers, ending this period. This thesis does not need to take a position here.
44. Carole Gerson, 'Canadian Literature at Home and Abroad: International Contexts of W.D. Lighthall's *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889) and Robert Weaver's *Canadian Short Stories* (1960),' *Studies in Canadian Literature* 41, no. 2 (2016): 61–80.
45. Carl F. Klinck, *Giving Canada a Literary History*, ed. Sandra Djwa ([Ottawa]: Carleton University Press for the University of Western Ontario, 1991), 50. See also McDougall and Whitlock, 'Introduction,' 4
46. Alan Lawson, 'The Recognition of National Literatures: The Canadian and Australian examples' (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 1987), n.p.
47. Sandra Djwa, *Professing English: A Life of Roy Daniells* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 310.
48. Claude T. Bissell, 'A Common Ancestry: Literature in Australia and Canada,' *University of Toronto Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (January 1956): 131–142. For this trip, see A. Norman Jeffares, 'Elementary, My Dear Watson,' *ARIEL* 31, no. 4 (October 2000): 141.
49. He was preceded in fiction by a bemused New Zealand warden of Hart House, perhaps in honour of Desmond Pacey (Morley Callaghan, *The Varsity Story* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1948]).
50. J.P. Matthews, *Tradition in Exile: A Comparative Study of Social Influences on the Development of Australian and Canadian Poetry in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).
51. A full list can be found in Gillian Whitlock and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Re-Siting Queen's English: Text and Tradition*

ilarly, Australians and New Zealanders also frequently travelled to the University of British Columbia, where W.H. New played a key role, and a cohort of Canadians travelled to Australian universities, especially Queensland and ANU.

From Australia, Helen Tiffin, Russell McDougall and Gillian Whitlock (to name only three of a series) travelled to Matthews at Queen's.[52] In this they were following Adrian Mitchell, who had completed an MA comparing Canadian and Australian literature there in 1965; however, for his PhD (also at Queen's), he turned to other topics.[53] Stephen Slemon, on the advice of W.H. New, went from UBC to Queensland to be supervised by Tiffin after her return.[54] Diana Brydon travelled to ANU from Canada.[55] Other Canadians to do so were Bruce Nesbitt (after an MA under Matthews at Queen's), Jack Healy and Adam Shoemaker. Mark Williams went from New Zealand to UBC, to be supervised by W.H. New and have his thesis assessed by Brydon.[56] Others connected into this network while studying in their own country; Terry Goldie was another of Matthews' students; Alan Lawson was Slemon's contemporary at Queensland, but limited his travel to Canada to the influential Badlands Conference on Canadian and Australian Literatures, which he arranged with Charles Steele.[57]

These students naturally developed an interest in transnational comparison, or — in many cases — had travelled because of a pre-existing interest. Diana Brydon, for example, describes travelling to Australia as 'a deliberate search for an expanded comparative framework' inspired in part by Matthews.[58] This common interest then formed a loose network which developed into a relatively coherent body of theorisation around settler literature, sustained by institutions of Commonwealth literature.[59] This theorisation was also supported by other

*in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), 195–200.

52. Bruce Nesbitt, 'M.A. and PhD theses supervised by John Matthews at Queen's University, 1964-1991,' in *Re-Siting Queen's English: Text and Tradition in Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. Gillian Whitlock and Helen Tiffin (Leiden: Rodopi, 1992), 195–201.

53. Adrian Mitchell, 'Towards the source: A comparison of two fundamental images in Australian and Canadian literature' (master's thesis, Queen's University, 1965); Adrian Mitchell, 'Comic perspectives in the picaresque novel' (PhD diss., Queen's University, 1971).

54. Anne Collett, 'Notes of Contributors, Helen and Friends, Notes on Editorial Advisors,' *Kunapipi* 34, no. 2 (2012): 232.

55. Diana Brydon, 'Living in an Instant Myth: A Canadian Student Remembers the Whitlam Years,' *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, no. 9 (June 1993): 86–88.

56. Clifton Mark Williams, 'Remittance Bards: The Places, Tribes and Dialects of Patrick White and Malcolm Lowry' (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1983), v.

57. Many of the papers from this conference were published in McDougall and Whitlock, *Australian/Canadian Literatures in English*

58. Diana Brydon, 'Introduction: reading postcoloniality, reading Canada,' *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 56 (Fall 1995): 9.

59. A typical footnote, for example, comes in Slemon's 'Modernism's Last Post': 'Discussions with various colleagues — among them Helen Tiffin, Diana Brydon and Bill New, members of the Research Unit on Post-Colonial

critics not so directly associated with transnational interests: this thesis has been influenced especially by the arguments of Simon During and Linda Hutcheon, but the settler predicament was also explored by both South African criticism and a metropolitan tradition especially associated with Commonwealth literary studies and the University of Leeds. (Arthur Ravenscroft and Elleke Boehmer, both South African born lecturers at Leeds in the 1980s and 90s, respectively, laid down important links; Graham Huggan, who studied under New and Brydon, and became Professor of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Literature at Leeds in 2001-2 provides a further connection.)[60]

A long chain of publications followed, including some key influences which will recur throughout this thesis.[61] However, many of the critics associated sensed a diminishment of interest as postcolonial theory more broadly moved away from the Commonwealth tradition to incorporate colonial discourse analysis and poststructuralism.[62]

An analysis of ongoing criticism both supports this view and provides some reason for doubt. On the one hand, a necessary correction certainly seems to have occurred in which unqualified claims for the postcoloniality of the settler states — some going as far as Margaret Laurence's notorious claim that Canadian literature should be understood as a third-world literature[63] — have been rejected.[64] But these were not particularly common critical claims,

Writing at the University of Queensland, and members in my study group at the University of Alberta — assisted my thinking on this topic.' (Stephen Slemon, 'Modernism's Last Post,' *ARIEL* 20, no. 4 [1989]: 15)

60. Graham Huggan, 'Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction' (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1989).

61. For example, Brydon, 'Australian Literature and the Canadian Comparison'; Lawson, 'The Recognition of National Literatures'; Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin, eds., *After Europe: Critical Theory and Post-Colonial Writing* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1987); Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*, Studies in Canadian Literature (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988); Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures* (Kingston, Montreal, and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire'; Alan Lawson, 'Postcolonial theory and the "settler" subject,' *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 56 (Fall 1995): 20–36

62. For a discussion by Helen Tiffin, a leading theorist of what she calls 'Commonwealth post-colonialism', of the supplantation of this model of thought, which aimed 'to include study of the settler invader colonies as crucial for the study of imperialism' by a colonial discourse analysis coming from a different tradition of thought which excluded the settler colonies and displayed some 'amnesia in relation to the work already done,' see Helen Tiffin, 'Plato's Cave: Educational and Critical Practices,' in *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction*, ed. Bruce King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 161, 159. Similar sentiments are expressed in Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin, 'Introduction,' in *After Europe*, x; Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire,' 30; Terry Goldie, 'Introduction: Queerly Postcolonial,' *ARIEL* 30, no. 2 (1999): 13; Leslie Monkman, 'Canadian Literature in English "Among Worlds,"' in *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy & Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), 125; Diana Brydon, 'The Mission Itself is in Question,' *ESC* 32, nos. 2-3 (2006): 28.

63. Margaret Laurence, 'Ivory Tower or Grass Roots: The Novelist as a Socio-Political Being,' in *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. W.H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1970), 17.

64. The classic rejection of this approach is Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism,"' *Social Text*, nos. 31/32 (1992): 84–98

and would have been rejected by almost all the critics cited.[65] In a stronger form, however, at least some critics, mostly of a Marxist persuasion, have become clear that postcolonialism as they understand it does not include the settler colonies. For example, Neil Lazarus — one of the more prominent voices among them — in 2004 dismissed considering the settler states in a supposedly comprehensive introduction to the postcolonial: 'it seems to me that little would be gained'. By 2011, their absence from consideration is not even worth mentioning.[66] These approaches tend to come from critics working within materialist or Marxist critical traditions which find little relevance to the postcolonial in the economic success and political independence of the settler states. A similar lack of interest can also be observed in critics more focussed upon poststructuralism and hybridity: the tricontinental 'third world is the postcolonial world,' declares Robert Young, excluding the settler states from his analysis.[67] Writing in 2015, it seemed clear to Fiona Polack that 'interest in this juxtaposition [between Australia and Canada] seems to be diminishing [...] Scholarly interest in Canadian-Australian comparative work arguably peaked in the 1980s and 90s.'[68]

A drift away from interest in transnational settler comparison can also be seen at a national level. Explicitly comparative journals such as *True North/Down Under* and *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada* have mostly disappeared, while surviving journals have shifted emphases.[69] For example, W.H. New's long editorship of *Canadian Literature* ended in 1995. Under his editorship, the journal 'regularly situated its vision of Canada within larger Commonwealth contexts,' especially as a settler state.[70] Its later emphases were more explicitly Canadian, or at most focussed on other forms of transnationality. In a 2019 special issue, one article gives a handful of incidental and passing references to commonalities in Australian and Canadian fiction dealing with the First World War, without reference to specifics, but otherwise Canadian literature is not considered in a settler context.[71] This is particularly interest-

65. See, however, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, 2nd ed., New Accents (London: Routledge, 2002) for an example of at least some blurring of the lines; so too Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, 2nd ed. (1995; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

66. Neil Lazarus, ed., 'Indicative Chronology,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xv; Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

67. Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 16.

68. Fiona Polack, 'Juxtaposing Australian and Canadian Writing,' *JASAL* 15, no. 3 (2015): 1–2.

69. Very recently, however, a new interdisciplinary journal, the *Journal of Australian, Canadian, and Aotearoa New Zealand Studies*, has appeared.

70. Diana Brydon, 'Cross-Talk, Postcolonial Pedagogy, and Transnational Literacy,' in Sugars, *Home-Work*, 60.

71. Anna Branach-Kallas, 'Trauma Plots: Reading Contemporary Canadian First World War Fiction in a Com-

ing since the call for papers had, along with questions about the institutional place of Canadian literature outside Canada, specifically asked 'How are Canadian texts read and circulated beyond the national borders? [...] How do those transnational contexts negotiate the relationship between texts and readers?' Twenty years earlier, these questions would have led to obvious responses.[72]

On the other hand, international criticism can be seen as continuing to attend to settler literature, especially in the aftermath of Commonwealth literary analysis, through institutions such as the triennial ACLALS conferences, a tradition of inquiry and institutional support at the Universities of Leeds, Kent and Stirling, and *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (edited for many years at Hull and Leeds). Despite the predictions of a disappearance in the nineties discussed already, a survey of the *JCL* in the same decade (highly aware of an ongoing theoretical transition) finds that

> in general there was a respectable coverage of "settler" writers, including an article on Afrikaans literature. As this suggests, the "Commonwealth" category in a number of cases served as a way of highlighting literary traditions which did not receive the same level of critical attention in more mainstream postcolonial commentaries.[73]

Directly-descended affiliations also remain; transnational explorations of the settler gothic have remained a distinct subfield,[74] and it is possible to begin to observe the beginnings of a new subfield focussed on settler cultural production and speculative economics especially in the nineteenth century, centred in New Zealand academia.[75] Nineteenth-century examinations in general have remained, especially from a book-historical perspective or a histor-

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parative Perspective,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 238 (Rescaling CanLit: Global Readings 2019): 47–65.

72. Eva Darias-Beautell, 'Rescaling CanLit: Global Readings,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 238 (Rescaling CanLit: Global Readings 2019): 8. I do not mean to criticise *Canadian Literature* for this shifting emphasis, since it is much more likely to be the result of a lack of supply than demand; 'submissions were not very numerous [...] That this was so should open a space for reflection on the situation of Canadian Studies as an international field.' (8)

73. Elleke Boehmer and Alex Tickell, 'The 1990s: An increasingly postcolonial decade,' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 50, no. 3 (2015): 324–325.

74. Gerry Turcotte, *Peripheral Fear: Transformations of the Gothic in Canadian and Australian Fiction* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009); Alison Rudd, *Postcolonial Gothic Fictions from the Caribbean, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010); Melissa Gniadek, 'Unsettled Spaces, Unsettled Stories: Travel And Historical Narrative In The United States, 1799-1859' (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2011); Cynthia Sugars, *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History, and the Spectre of Self-Invention*, Gothic Literary Studies (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014); Melissa Edmundson, *Women's Colonial Gothic Writing, 1850-1930: Haunted Empire*, Palgrave Gothic (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

75. Stephen Turner, 'Anglosphericism,' *JNZL* 31, no. 2 (Special Issue: New Zealand's Cultures: Histories, Sources, Futures 2013): 15–34; Steer, *Settler Colonialism in Victorian Literature*.

ical perspective which incidentally examines cultural productions.[76] Occasional, often consciously less-theorised, collections can still be found.[77] For some time, an emphasis on the short story as a settler form also survived, perhaps because of the influence of W.H. New or because of the common interpretation of the short story as 'notably a form of the margins'.[78] A further sub-genre involves the comparison of the United States with other settler nations, often approaching this topic from a different critical tradition.[79] At the national level, works dealing with the legacy of settlement within the literary productions of a particular country are abundant. Why, then, was there such certainty among critics of a particular affiliation that the settler had disappeared or would disappear from the postcolonial, and why did it seem to matter so much?

One answer depends upon a point such critics continually re-emphasised: the distinction between cultural and political colonisation. Settlers were only politically colonised to a limited extent, but cultural dominance endured and endures.[80] The settler states can then be seen as examples of the same pattern famously identified by Pascale Casanova: an opposition between a metropole (in this case London) which confers literary validity through 'consecrating authorities' like the Booker Prize and nation-based literatures from the periphery which — lacking their own cultural authority — cannot circulate transnationally without metropolitan imprimatur.[81] This duality, in which the settler states are culturally but not politically post-

76. e.g. Kenton Storey, *Settler Anxiety at the Outposts of Empire: Colonial Relations, Humanitarian Discourses, and the Imperial Press* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016)

77. For example, Anna Jackson, Helen Rickerby, and Angelina Sbroma, eds., *Truth and Beauty: Verse Biography in Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016); Michelle J. Smith, Kristine Moruzi, and Clare Bradford, eds., *From Colonial to Modern: Transnational Girlhood in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literature, 1840-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

78. The quotation is from Clare Hanson, 'Introduction,' in *Re-reading the Short Story*, ed. Clare Hanson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 2. New's influence follows W.H. New, *Dreams of Speech and Violence: The Art of the Short Story in Canada and New Zealand* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). A late representation of this emphasis came in 2007 (Marta Dvořák and W.H. New, eds., *Tropes and Territories: Short Fiction, Postcolonial Readings, Canadian Writing in Context* [Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007]). Derived from a conference on the short story, this emphasised primarily Canadian readings but also included several approaches to Indian, Australian and New Zealand literature.

79. See, for example, Paul Giles, *Antipodean America: Australasia and the Constitution of U. S. Literature*, Oxford Studies in American Literary History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

80. Not necessarily as an imposition: instead, I follow J.G.A. Pocock's argument that, because settlers brought an imperial culture with them, rather than having 'it imposed on them by alien rulers,' its 'replacement will probably not be a revolution, certainly not a liberation, but a complex and never complete historical process' as they choose elements to replace or retain (J.G.A Pocock, 'The antipodean perception,' in *The Discovery of Islands*, 6–7). My thought here has been influenced by considering (in Canadian discourse) the role of perceived British or French culture in opposition to dominant American or Anglophone Canadian cultures.

81. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (1999; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11, 84. Casanova in fact discusses the Booker Prize in these terms in an aside (120-121). Although she does not discuss settler literature specifically in this context, it seems reasonable to iden-

colonial, has continued to be recognised at the national level and will be discussed further in the second chapter.[82] The critics I have discussed may have been influenced into novelty simply because they did not travel to major metropolitan universities for their education, as was traditional.[83] By travelling between the semi-peripheries rather than to the centre, these critics may have escaped the degree of cultural colonisation metropolitan universities would have imposed. In contrast, as will soon be discussed, an institution like the Booker Prize represents an ongoing English cultural dominance over those literary cultures and publishing markets which ascribe importance to metropolitan judgement, even as it appears to celebrate work from other locales.[84] Similarly, critical approaches emphasising resistance to or complicity with imperialism in settler colonisation continue to treat the metropole-settler relationship as more important than other features of a given work. In doing so, they reinforce the influence of the metropole even if they appear to celebrate opposition to it.[85]

An enduring theme of this thesis will be the disjunction between metropolitan and national desires for literature, as well as an interest in the circulation and transmission of literature between the two sites. In this context, approaches to settler literature which are grounded in the single nation or in the nation-metropole relationship will be understood as obscuring certain approaches. Literature and the state are inextricably implicated, and within a partic-

tify the settler states among a category she *does* identify: nations 'dominated not politically but literarily, through language and culture.' (84)

82. For a variety of approaches in a specifically Canadian context, see Laura Moss, ed., *Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003); Cynthia Sugars, ed., *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004). For Australia (including an introduction with much detail about Australia's exclusion from common, especially American, theorisations of postcoloniality), see Nathanael O'Reilly, ed., *Postcolonial issues in Australian literature* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2010). In New Zealand, Alex Calder, *The Settler's Plot: How Stories Take Place in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2011) is a particularly fine example of reading in a settler tradition, but touches less upon issues of cultural colonisation.

83. See Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 189, 191–2. I have written on the influence of Northrop Frye upon M.K. Joseph's fiction after an Oxford friendship (they shared a college and flat) (Tom McLean, '"An Amateur Self-Deceiving Job": M.K. Joseph's *A Soldier's Tale* and the Gothic Tradition in New Zealand literature,' *JNZL* 35, no. 2 [2017]: 103–104), but although both men would go on to publish on their national literatures after their return, neither seems to have been influenced into considering transnational comparison after a metropolitan encounter.

84. Recent work has tended to identify an evasion of complicity with imperialism throughout the British world, especially in Scotland and Ireland, by a slippage from 'British' to 'English' when discussing imperialism . Although I take this into account, in this context, I do refer specifically to ongoing English cultural dominance.

85. See Graham Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies*, Postcolonialism across the Disciplines 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 164; Diana Brydon, 'New Approaches to the New Literatures in English,' *Westerly* 34, no. 3 (September 1989): 23; Sylvia Söderlind, *Margin/alias: language and colonization in Canadian and Québécois fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 6; Gareth Griffiths, 'The Post-colonial Project: Critical Approaches and Problems,' in King, *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures*, 175 for further discussion.

ular state readings will be funded by a state with its own desires, while literary dissemination will rely upon reaching audiences who have in turn been influenced by nation-building efforts and settler-colonial experiences.[86] A settler-colonial state will desire differentiation from its now-discreditable origins while also emphasising its ongoing reality (despite its existence as an imagined community in part sustained by literature); this is demonstrated by the ongoing state subsidies for literary production and prizes in all three countries. Cultural colonisation will also contribute to a tendency to treat literature as, in a famous phrase, 'more significantly studied as a part of Canadian [or, as the case might be, antipodean] life than as a part of an autonomous world of literature.'[87] The cumulative effect is likely to encourage interpretation of literature as the product of a unique group and locale, although this does not preclude regretful acknowledgements that comparison would be possible and desirable or explanations of uniqueness by reference to processes of settlement.[88]

Readings from the metropole will meanwhile be influenced by ongoing cultural colonisation. In the worst case, these readings will assume cultural or moral superiority; in others an already-existing knowledge of a cultural context which is in fact substantially unknown.[89]

86. A sustained exploration of this in a Canadian context is Jonathan Kertzer, *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). A piece of quantifiable evidence for different literary patterns in high culture is Sarah Corse's argument that the academic canon and literary prize-winners display differences between Canada and the United States. She concludes, however, that popular literature does not show the same differentiation, suggesting that the 'distinctiveness of high-culture literature is indicative of its political role as an adjunct of the nation state.' (Sarah Corse, 'Nations and Novels: Cultural Politics and Literary Use,' *Social Forces* 73, no. 4 [August 1995]: 1293)

87. Northrop Frye, 'Conclusion to the First Edition of *Literary History of Canada*,' in *Northrop Frye on Canada*, ed. Jean O'Grady and David Staines, vol. 12, Collected Works of Northrop Frye (1965; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 340–341.

88. See, for example, Laura Moss, 'Is Canada Postcolonial? Introducing the Question,' in *Is Canada Postcolonial?*, 23 n1. This argument is also influenced by a consideration of authors who have moved outside the national sphere — one thinks of Mavis Gallant or Fleur Adcock — and whose place in national literatures has therefore become uncertain. Nick Mount has argued that nationalist readings of Canadian literature, a new critical emphasis on 'the spirit of the soil', worked to exclude expatriate Canadian writers who had 'represented over half the country's more prolific writers [from 1900–1920], and all but a few of its bestsellers.' (Nick Mount, *When Canadian Literature Moved To New York*, Studies in Book and Print Culture [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005], 16)

89. The *JCL*'s first issue, for example, began with an overview of Canadian literature that found:

> utter mediocrity [...] Canadian literature must contain more writers not worth the grading than any other literature in existence; a literature that cannot offer the reader even one great writer in compensation for the hundreds of nonentities[...] Even the most mature of Canadian literary scholars cannot make much of the subject interesting (Douglas Grant, 'Canada's Literature,' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 1 [1966]: 167–168).

With regard to the assumption of knowledge, Meaghan Morris has (in an Australian context, but in a manner highly familiar elsewhere) described 'encounters with intellectual voyagers in search of that ultimate blank space — their last frontier (such voyagers are usually American), their mystic destination (German), their pre-Oedipal idyll (French) — on which to inscribe what European History always already knows.' (Meaghan Morris, *Identity Anecdotes: Translation and Media Culture* [London: Sage, 2006], 35). Similarly, Slemon and Tiffin identify 'ridiculously credulous readers – 'critics' who systematically shut out the world.' (Slemon and Tiffin, 'Introduction,' x). I

(A related but distinct issue which will recur throughout is a tendency to rely upon authors as cultural or historical informants, minimising the artifice involved in literary production and encouraging mimetic readings.) More frequently, however, they will be influenced invisibly by ongoing cultural colonialism into ignoring pre-existing literary traditions in favour of assumed links to the metropole, or into a focus on works disseminated through networks created by cultural colonialism. In this context, for example, we can look a little more closely at the article reviewing the output of the *JCL*. This found that 'Booker Prize-winners tend to feature within a few years of their winning [...] In some cases there is a bias towards just one representative from a region.'[90] The example given was Robert Kroetsch, but the most common Canadian subject — with twice as many articles — was actually the Booker-Prize winning Ondaatje.[91] Here, ongoing interest in settler literature in the metropole was likely created and constrained by the Booker Prize. A critical sense of diminished attention even while works from settler states still circulated can then be explained if prize culture meant those circulating works were not seen as representative, or as readable in the same terms as a broader grouping of settler literature.

A recent Booker Prize winner, Eleanor Catton, provides an example of the limitations of approaches which do not consider the transnational. Her *The Luminaries* has been claimed both as Canadian and New Zealand fiction after winning national prizes for fiction in Canada and New Zealand.[92] (She is a citizen of both countries.) More surprisingly, she has also been interpreted (from within an American scholarly context) as an *Australian* writer, on the grounds that Australia and New Zealand are similar cultural formations, 'linked not just by language and colonial history but also by sport, popular culture and trade.' As such, they are read and encountered by global readers in a shared context as part of the Anglophone South Pacific. Catton specifically — it is perhaps doubtfully argued — has responded to 'the cruel inequalities of neoliberalism in a way no Australian writer has, and in a way (thanks to the cultural

have written on this process in readings of Katherine Mansfield (Tom McLean, 'Suspicion and Settler Literature: Readings of Katherine Mansfield,' *JNZL* 37, no. 1 [2019]: 9–26).

90. Boehmer and Tickell, 'The 1990s: An increasingly postcolonial decade,' 325.

91. Atwood also had more articles discussing her than Kroetsch.

92. Andrew David Irvine, 'The Governor General's Literary Awards: English-Language Winners, 1936-2013,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada / Cahiers de la Société bibliographique du Canada* 52, no. 1 (2014): 156. For an example of a Canadian reading, see Reinhold Kramer, 'Emergent Fiction,' *University of Toronto Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (2015): 1–24. For a New Zealand reading of Catton including *The Luminaries*, see Hamish Dalley, 'The Meaning of Settler Realism: (De)Mystifying Frontiers in the Postcolonial Historical Novel,' *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, no. 3 (November 2018): 461–481.

proximities mentioned above) that is highly resonant for Australia.'[93]

To reconcile such divergent approaches it must be recognised first that works respond to particular national traditions and environments as well as transnational commonalities, and second that they have significance in themselves alongside an ability to be interpreted as representational of a specific context. To Jane Stafford, for example, although Catton's novel is 'like nothing else', it [my emphasis] '*looks back* to 19th-century New Zealand novelists such as Charlotte Evans' and 'Maurice Shadbolt's 1980 work *The Lovelock Version*' even though it *resembles* – 'no praise from me could be higher' – 'the work of a number of Canadian authors, especially Jane Urquhart and the redoubtable Robertson Davies.'[94]

Stafford here makes clear that *The Luminaries* is written partly in response to global Anglophone traditions (most obviously Wilkie Collins) and partly in response to the New Zealand canon and landscape, but because the culture and environment of settler colonies is similar it also bears a resemblance (as Birns would agree) to novels Catton probably has not read: the place, identity and memory are all different but come out of the same process of transnational settlement. Attempting to analyse her work only in a New Zealand context — something with which she has often expressed unhappiness[95] — is unnecessarily limiting, but not to do so at all is to ignore influences which she also admits can be discovered.[96]

Catton, however, is a rare case of transnational circulation. Would Birns have managed to smuggle a New Zealand text into a book on Australian literature if it had not been sanctioned by the Booker Prize? Would the novel have circulated and been celebrated in Canada to such an extent if it had not escaped a New Zealand context already by winning an international prize? In other words, the coincidence of her Canadian citizenship makes such links apparent — but do they exist in other novels less likely to circulate?

There is some reason to suspect so. For example, the epistolary relationship of Fiona Kid-

93. Nicholas Birns, *Contemporary Australian Literature: A World Not Yet Dead*, Sydney Studies in Australian Literature (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2015), 220.

94. Jane Stafford, 'Crying Duffers,' *New Zealand Review of Books / Pukapuka Aotearoa*, 103 2013, https://nzbooks.org.nz/2013/literature/crying-duffers-jane-stafford/.

95. Sue Carter, 'Eleanor Catton wins Governor General's Literary Award,' *Quill & Quire*, November 13, 2013, https://quillandquire.com/awards/2013/11/13/eleanor-catton-wins-governor-generals-literary-award/; Australian Associated Press, 'Eleanor Catton angry with 'shallow' New Zealand Government,' *New Zealand Herald*, January 27, 2015, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/eleanor-catton-angry-with-shallow-new-zealand-government/CMFDQVYKJZYGCAKGNGKO35IYGA/; Witi Ihimaera, *Where is New Zealand Literature Heading? A New Zealand Book Council Lecture* (Wellington: New Zealand Book Council, 2015), 11.

96. Radio New Zealand, 'Eleanor Catton on winning the Man Booker Prize,' October 16, 2013, https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/2572992/eleanor-catton-on-winning-the-man-booker-prize.

man and Timothy Findley contributed to Kidman's best-known novel being set as much in Canada and Australia as New Zealand, based on (not at all unusual) migration between settler colonies.[97] Similarly, Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story* is in part based upon Canadian experience.[98] But, so far as I know, Kidman and Ihimaera — often discussed in a New Zealand context — have never, unlike Catton, been read against Canadian comparators.

## The Booker Prize

Any attempt to examine questions of settler transnationalism as it applies to contemporary literary fiction soon, then, must deal with the influence of the Booker Prize as one of relatively few drivers of transnational circulation.[99] In this section, I briefly discuss the history of the Booker prize and discuss critical identifications of its significance. I establish here the basic point which the thesis goes on to explore in much greater detail: that the structure and underlying influences of the Booker Prize can be expected to lead to the selection of a discrete set of works on principles quite different from those which create national canons.

The Booker prize was established in 1968 after being proposed by Tom Maschler and Gra-

97. Fiona Kidman, *The Book of Secrets* (London & Auckland: Heinemann, 1987); their correspondence is in Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Group-0067; Kidman discusses Canadian influence and experience on her in Fiona Kidman, *Beside the Dark Pool* (Auckland: Vintage, 2009), 84, 108–113; see also Fiona Kidman, 'In Search of a Character: Researching "The Book of Secrets,"' *JNZL*, no. 9 (1991): 10–14

98. Melissa Kennedy, *Striding Both Worlds: Witi Ihimaera and New Zealand's Literary Traditions* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 193.

99. Other possible sources of canonical transnational status were briefly considered, but invariably cover only a very limited number of texts. Most international prizes were won by authors from only one or two settler states. (An exception is the Neustadt Prize for literature, but this was awarded for a body of work, not single instances, complicating the selection of texts for analysis.)

The primary exception is the Commonwealth Writers Prize, but its judging process emphasised regional not metropolitan judgement in 'a model of complex multi-national administration' (Gillian Roberts, *Prizing Literature: The Celebration and Circulation of National Culture* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011], 44; Boyd Tonkin, 'The real prize would be lifting the literary world's curse,' *Independent*, April 26, 2005, 33, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/boyd-tonkin-the-real-prize-would-be-lifting-the-literary-worlds-curse-519747.html). Perhaps as a result, it received 'particularly scant attention in Britain.' (Roberts, *Prizing Literature*, 45) This complicates examination of the metropole-settler relationship.

Outside prize culture, common anthologies are simply inadequate as a source of circulating and canonised texts to examine. The tenth edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* is 'the bible of English literature' and has had an enormous effect on the taught canon especially in North America (Sean Shesgreen, 'Canonizing the Canonizer: A Short History of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*,' *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 [2009]: 296). It includes only two stories by Katherine Mansfield, two by Margaret Atwood, three poems by Les Murray and an extract from Anne Carson (Stephen Greenblatt and M.H. Abrams, eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 10th ed. [New York: W.W. Norton, 2018]). (Leslie Monkman has discussed the neglect of Canadian literature even in Canada derived from its exclusion from earlier editions (Monkman, 'Canadian Literature in English "Among Worlds,"' 121).) Meanwhile, *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* includes no texts from Australia, Canada or New Zealand (Martin Puchner, ed., *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, 3rd ed. [New York: W.W. Norton, 2012]). The competing *Longman Anthology of World Literature* includes translations of Mahmoud Darwish by Fawwaz Tuqan and the New Zealand poet Ian Wedde.

ham (C.) Greene, young publishers at Jonathan Cape. An imitation of the Prix Goncourt, it was intended to reward the best novel published in England by a writer from the Commonwealth, South Africa or Ireland. Sponsorship came from Booker McConnell Ltd, a conglomerate with strong links to the sugar trade in British Guiana which had moved primarily into wholesale food supply in the United Kingdom after Guyanese independence. After a difficult beginning, the prize became — fuelled by controversy – generally acknowledged to be the United Kingdom's most important literary prize and a major driver of sales for literary fiction. As such, it played an important role in introducing (and legitimising) fiction from the Commonwealth to a metropolitan audience, but has also attracted some critique as a reinscription of metropolitan cultural authority over imported literature.

The Booker Prize has been much discussed by scholars; a typical argument is that — in Malcolm Bradbury's words — it encouraged 'publishers to support the serious novel at a time when there was a belief that its audience was dying,' and provided at least influence upon later canonisation.[100] Potentially negative effects in encouraging the production and circulation of a particular kind of 'prize-oriented' fiction over other forms are also often discussed. Perhaps the most influential expounder of these views has been Richard Todd. His *Consuming Fictions* argues both for the influence of the Booker Prize in creating a marketplace for literary fiction and for, despite acknowledged effects on that marketplace, an overall positive effect.[101]

Other scholars have paid greater attention to the exact terms on which the prize allows texts to circulate. Critique here has tended to come in two inter-related forms: an approach based on Bourdieu, and an approach based on postcolonial theory. The first has emphasised the prize's exchange of cultural for commercial capital.[102] This exchange has been theorised as intended to launder the reputation of the Booker Group and validate the preferences of a mingled class of creators and evaluators, or simply to increase the saleability of works for publishers. Postcolonial criticism has perhaps been more acutely aware that the exchange is more complicated than a simple lending of cultural capital by authors; the prize has also functioned as a metropolitan validation of works from the relative periphery which may, through that

100. Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1993), 103–104.
101. Richard Todd, *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).
102. e.g. James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005); Sharon Norris, 'The Booker Prize: A Bourdieusian Perspective,' *Journal for Cultural Research* 10, no. 2 (2006): 139–158.

validation, reassert metropolitan authority.[103]

A recent intervention in this postcolonial tradition comes from Paula Morris. She argues that the structure of the Booker Prize, which requires metropolitan publication[104] and allows 'large publishing conglomerates' multiple submissions, devalues Commonwealth writing and prizes.[105] Since local writing is either not published in the United Kingdom or tends to be published by independent presses which have only a limited ability to submit works, the majority of Commonwealth writers are never considered, as a series of examples primarily drawn from New Zealand show. As a result, the prize is dominated by English, Irish — and now also American — writers, and attention to it works to reinscribe English authority.

It is true that English writers are, as Morris argues, dramatically over-represented (with about ten times as many winners as should be expected based upon their population).[106] Morris therefore suggests interrogating whether 'only three New Zealand novels in 50 years were worthy of Booker shortlisting.'[107] In those fifty years, however, around 300 novels would have been shortlisted. New Zealand's population has hovered around 0.2% of the Commonwealth's population and GDP. By this measure, New Zealand novels are also over-represented — by a factor of five.[108] For this reason, I am uncomfortable with the suggestion that the Booker Prize is especially exclusive of Anglophone settler novels in particular (even if it entirely excludes Francophone or Afrikaans settler novels); instead, it seems to disproportionately favour them (including white South African writing, but in all cases to a lesser extent than Irish and British novels) while disfavouring novels from the rest of the Commonwealth. Accepting this point, however, does not mean that the prize does not preferentially reward novels for particular features made significant by the UK-centric infrastructure identified by Morris, especially those features needed to appeal to almost exclusively English stakeholders and audiences.

103. An important contribution here is Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), 105–121. See also Simon Rosenberg, 'Promoting the Exotic? – the Ideological Mechanisms of Literary Prizes,' in *Ideology in postcolonial texts and contexts*, ed. Katja Sarkowsky and Mark U. Stein, Cross/Cultures (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2021), 127–144.

104. She claims UK publication is required, but books published in Ireland are also eligible.

105. Paula Morris, 'The "leftovers of empire": Commonwealth writers and the Booker Prize,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 56, no. 2 (2020): 262.

106. See also Rosenberg, 'Promoting the Exotic? – the Ideological Mechanisms of Literary Prizes,' 138. In considering this figure, however, it should also be remembered that a larger GDP will allow a larger publishing industry, and that large areas of the Commonwealth are not Anglophone, or — like the Pacific islands — essentially lack a publishing industry.

107. P. Morris, 'The "leftovers of empire,"' 267.

108. Australia and — especially — Canada are similarly over-represented; the final chapter of this thesis discusses why this might be so in the Canadian case.

### Operation and purpose of the Booker Prize

It is therefore useful to further examine the attraction of the Booker Prize to these stakeholders. Four groups for whom and through the prize operates might be disentangled: authors, publishers, sponsors and judges. Doing so helps to clarify the different impulses behind the prize's operation and selection of texts for canonisation.

Authors and publishers find relatively unambiguous benefit in the commercial effects of the prize. For publishers, the prize is valuable for its effect on the sales of successful works as well as the broader marketplace for literary fiction, which receives attention as a whole because of the prize's cultural influence. For an established author the prize can be seen as a exchange of an association with their cultural capital to sponsors for both direct and indirect commercial reward; the prize further increases their reputation and has a strong effect on sales. For less well-known authors, the exchange should be understood slightly differently: the prize's influence is sufficient to also grant cultural capital to its recipients, while the prize will then benefit from an association with the reputation it has helped to create.

For sponsors, the prize is not only disinterested philanthropy but also acts as a form of advertising and enhances corporate reputations. For the Booker Group, the sponsors throughout most of the period discussed, the prize appears to have functioned first as advertising for an otherwise unglamorous business in the wholesale food trade; second, as a way to build relationships with key trading partners by offering them access — in the form of prize dinner tickets, one of the most discussed topics in the prize archives — to the cultural capital of the literary scene; and, third, as a way for a company previously intimately associated with the Caribbean sugar trade and its moral outrages to present itself as a supporter of post-imperial diversity.[109] (A fourth reason has sometimes been suggested — the company had purchased literary copyrights and wished to increase their value — but these tended to be of very popular authors, rather than of potential prize-winners.[110]) These motivations should not be taken as

109. The group's chairman, the Fabian Jock Campbell, appears also to have had a genuine and strongly-felt desire to repudiate his company's past. See Clem Seecharan, *Sweetening 'bitter sugar': Jock Campbell, the Booker reformer in British Guiana, 1934-1966* (Kingston, Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005).

110. e.g. English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 200. For tax reasons, it was mutually beneficial for some authors to sell copyrights to the Booker group. They would then pay capital gains tax on a lump sum rather than pay tax on ongoing royalties, while Booker could receive the same royalties at lower tax rates. This strategy only worked for bestsellers: therefore, Booker's Authors Division was the holder of rights in authors like Ian Fleming and Agatha Christie, not in literary fiction (Martyn Goff, 'Literary prizes: Big money and glamour for some,' *Logos* 2, no. 3 [1991]: 151).

meaning that the prize was simply intended to reward whatever work was best suited to the brand behind the prize. Public attention is a necessary pre-condition for the goals of sponsors, and scholarly comment tends to argue it is better for them to have a prize where awards sometimes have unintended but widely discussed results — such as John Berger's denunciation of the Booker group — than an obscure prize.[111]

For judges, the prize is necessarily influenced by mixed motives, since the judicial composition is also mixed:

> Since 1977 it has been established as a five strong body consisting of "an academic, a critic or two, a writer or two and the man in the street". These days the Booker website specifies "a literary critic, an academic, a literary editor, a novelist and a major figure."[112]

This is perhaps best understood as a minimal set of requirements across judges, rather than as a description of each individual judge, and there has therefore been some variation across years when roles were combined, together with a willingness to loosen definitions in cases where greater prominence could be achieved by doing so. Norman St John-Stevas, the chair of the judges in 1985, was certainly a legal academic, but perhaps owed his role not to his academic work — at that point a quarter-century in the past — but to his parliamentary profile and the chairmanship of the Royal Fine Art Commission he was about to take up when selected.[113] It is also important to note that the requirement to meet regularly in London and attend an awards ceremony there leads to an effective social and geographic restriction reinforced by the institutional requirements of the criteria. This results in a very restricted pool of potential judges, to the extent that judges have been on panels which shortlisted books by their own spouses.[114] Sharon Norris points out the unsurprising result that there are other close connections between judges and authors across years, and that this restricted pool of judges inevitably respond to work closer to their own experience.[115] Norris further notes a

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111. James F. English shows that 'scandal is [the Booker's] lifeblood,' necessary for the attention which enables other goals and therefore cultivated and encouraged by the prize administration (English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 208).
112. Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate: The Fourth Decade of the Booker Prize and the Contemporary Novel in the UK* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017), 90.
113. Dennis Kavanagh, *Stevas, Norman Antony Francis St John-, Baron St John of Fawsley (1929–2012), politician*, January 2016, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-104855.
114. English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 193.
115. Norris, 'The Booker Prize: A Bourdieusian Perspective,' 148.

strong presence of both authors and judges associated with the Universities of Oxford and East Anglia; English similarly gives the example of an East Anglia 'mafia':

> When [Malcolm] Bradbury chaired the jury in 1989, one of his fellow judges, Helen McNeil, was an East Anglia colleague, as was one of the shortlisted writers, Rose Tremain. The winner, Kazuo Ishiguro, was an East Anglia graduate and a former student of Bradbury's.[116]

Some very generalised assumptions can be made about the intent of judges. Since it is unlikely that they are motivated by the relatively small financial rewards on offer, it can be presumed that they too are interested in accruing social and cultural capital, and that this capital will be gained in a specific and small context: little more than a triangle of North London, Oxford and Cambridge.[117]

In a case where an author from a settler state has independent cultural capital within this triangle, such as Margaret Atwood (by the time of her later successes), awarding the prize to them boosts the capital of the prize and judges by association, and is therefore desirable; in a case where the author has almost none, such as Keri Hulme, awarding the prize will dramatically increase their reputation and sales, emphasising the selective power and taste of the prize and judges, and is therefore desirable; in a case where an author has a national reputation but not an international one, awarding the prize will do less work to indicate the selective power of the judges, but the already-existing national cultural capital will not be fungible with metropolitan cultural capital and accrue there, so there is less benefit.

As a result, the judges as a collective group are more likely to have interpreted the novels before them from settler states not in terms of their own experience but as a depiction of

116. English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 210.

117. Judges are almost exclusively British; from 1985-2001, the period covered in this study, there were eighty-one different judges. (The discrepancy from the expected number is because some judges — Penelope Fitzgerald, Gillian Beer, Valentine Cunningham, Malcolm Bradbury and Rose Tremain — served twice.)

From the British Isles excluding England, seven judges were Scottish, including some who had lived in England for many years. Roy Foster was Irish but made his career in British academic institutions, and Bernice Rubens was Welsh. From outside the British Isles were Olivier Todd, from France, and A. Walton Litz and Edmund White, both Americans from Princeton University. (Helen McNeil, in 1989, was another American, but had taught for many years at the University of East Anglia.) This left three judges from the remainder of the Commonwealth: Dan Jacobson in 1997, Carmen Callil in 1996, and Trevor McDonald in 1987. All three judges had left their countries of birth (South Africa, Australia and Trinidad) while relatively young and made their careers in the United Kingdom many years earlier.

Biographical details of the judges from 1979-1989 are given in Sharon Norris, '"Simply the Best (Better than All the Rest?)" An investigation into the Booker Prize, 1980-1989, with particular regard to the general rise in business sponsorship of literary awards during the Eighties, and the likely effects of the Booker on fiction' (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1995), 288–308. Remaining details were constructed from the correspondence with judges and discussion of their selection in the prize archives.

places or identities exotic to them and known through metropolitan rather than local cultural formations, and without reference to national or settler traditions which would have been substantially less familiar.[118] Since the Booker Prize is a major influence on literary dissemination in the global marketplace, the natural conclusion is that the global dissemination of settler literature is predicated in significant ways upon its appeal to this very constrained group of primarily British judges. In some ways, such as the interests of sponsors in accruing cultural capital, there is a strong incentive not to encourage awarding the prize to settler authors whose distance from the metropole — except in atypical cases such as Margaret Atwood — is likely to be associated with a lack of metropolitan cultural capital, unless this lack of cultural capital is so great that it emphasises the power of the prize to bestow it on the otherwise obscure.[119]

It is difficult to find direct evidence of a given judge's preconceptions of the settler states, although some archival evidence for specific works will be discussed in the following chapters. Instead, their preconceptions must be understood as reflecting the preconceptions common in their environment. Any selected evidence for these will be somewhat arbitrary. At the same time, however, it is not difficult to observe patterns that suggest such preconceptions are in play: it is, for example, noticeable that the West Coast — an isolated and poorly populated region with a strong sense of its own distinction, where few novels have ever been set — has been the setting for both Booker Prize-winning novels from New Zealand, and that Peter Carey's shortlisted and winning novels have tended to respond to canonical English texts and emphasise rowdy Australian masculinity. This thesis anticipates conditional and somewhat nebulous assumptions about the settler states in the metropole: a sense of Canada as tedious but safe, sunk into peace, order and good governance; New Zealand as exotic and gorgeously-

118. See Leslie Monkman, 'English Canadian Citizenship in "The World Republic of Letters,"' *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 41, no. 1 (2008): 10–12 for a discussion of this point as it applies to Yann Martel's Booker win. Related arguments in another context — deliberately provocative — emphasise the circulation of world literature as enabled by a displayed difference which is in fact easily translatable and consumable by global elites (Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* [London: Verso, 2013]; 'World Lite: What is Global Literature?,' *n+1*, no. 17 [2013], https://www.nplusonemag.com/issue-17/the-intellectual-situation/world-lite/).

119. In some cases, a compromise between these two positions can be observed. For example, in Catton's case, she had some pre-existing metropolitan cultural capital after the success of her earlier novel *The Rehearsal* and through her association with metropolitan institutions like the Iowa Writers' Workshop, which could validate the judges' decision. But at the same time her position as a New Zealander was itself associated with a lack of cultural capital which could emphasise the power of the prize; according to Paula Morris:

> The British novelist Susan Hill was a Booker Prize judge in 2011. When The Luminaries won in 2013, she was asked her reaction. 'Who, Catton?' said Hill. 'I couldn't even begin to read a book as long as that set in, of all places, New Zealand.' (P. Morris, 'The "leftovers of empire,"' 268)

landscaped; Australians as wild and rowdy, motivated by a sense of cultural inferiority; and, South Africa, as represented in my coda, as grappling with the legacies of apartheid even many years after its formal end.[120] At the same time, it proceeds on the basis that these assumptions are not particularly desirable — or self-evidently accurate — for the governments and peoples concerned.

## Selection of Texts

Assuming the use of Booker Prize winning texts as a selection principle limits the number of internationally-circulating texts to consider, by restricting candidates to a corpus of prize nominees or winners.

In practical terms for this thesis, the earliest possible date to consider was 1971, when Mordechai Richler became the first author from the states studied here to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize — with *St Urbain's Horseman*, a novel set largely in London. Later Commonwealth shortlistings before 1985 were Thomas Keneally (1972, 1975 and 1979), Brian Moore (1976) and Alice Munro (1980). Of these novels, only Keneally's 1972 nomination for *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* and Munro's 1980 nomination for *The Beggar Maid* were for fiction set in a settler state. The first winner was Thomas Keneally in 1981, with *Schindler's Ark*, later known as *Schindler's List* after its US title. However, this novel deals with the Holocaust and is not set in Australia, making its relevance within my framework questionable. Keri Hulme's 1985 win is therefore the earliest plausible novel to study, since it was the first which fulfilled the dual conditions of both winning the Booker Prize and unambiguously responding to and depicting a settler state.

The other novels by an author associated with these states which have won a Booker Prize are (in order) Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*, Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*, Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, DBC Pierre's *Vernon God Little*, Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries*, Richard Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*. Of these, *Vernon God Little* seems immediately excludable; Pierre has little connection to Australia, having left the country in early childhood — his father was an academic, Keith Finlay, who moved around the

120. For an example of these attitudes in the work of a figure associated with the Booker, see Jan Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets: An imperial retreat* (1978; London: Faber & Faber, 1998), 321–322.

globe[121] — before returning briefly in his twenties. He 'has not written on Australian themes,' in the judgement of one critic.[122]

There were also three reasons to exclude the novels after *True History of the Kelly Gang*. The first concern is demographic and cultural change in the three states, where immigration rates have dramatically increased and globalisation has diminished a sense of difference.[123] Instead of distance and marginalization it now sometimes appears — as a classic line of New Zealand poetry puts it — that settler writers 'live at the edge of the universe / like everybody else'.[124] Another consideration is access to the Booker Prize archive. Although material relating to the prize from 1968 to the present is held there, access is restricted for material from the past twenty years.[125] Any evaluation of the prize's star-making potential in transnational circulation would be better informed by access to material explaining and contextualising judging decisions in a given year. Finally, the expansion of the prize to include novels from outside the Commonwealth suggests that there may be a diminishingly colonial emphasis in the future, although on current evidence this is not yet necessarily the case: the transition did not prevent wins by Flanagan, Atwood, and Galgut.

The remaining candidates for discussion are therefore Hulme's *The Bone People*, Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*, Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*, and Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*. I focus primarily upon *The Bone People*, *The Blind Assassin* and

121. Although media descriptions present Finlay as an English geneticist, he was a Western Australian agricultural scientist expert in barley and wheat breeding who had studied in England ('Improving Tomatoes,' *The Mail* [Adelaide], January 23, 1954, 4).

122. Carol Hetherington, 'Little Australians? Some Questions about National Identity and the National Literature,' *Antipodes* 21, no. 1 (2007): 12.

123. See the timeline for some indicators; in both Australia and New Zealand, around 30% of the population were born overseas; the number is somewhat lower for Canada, but still substantial.

124. Bill Manhire, 'Milky Way Bar,' in *Milky Way Bar* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991), 19. Patrick Evans identifies globalisation as having led to 'the removal or neutralising of the New Zealand referent from fiction written by New Zealanders.'(Patrick Evans, 'Spectacular babies: The Globalisation of New Zealand fiction,' *World Literature Written in English* 38, no. 2 [2000]: 104) For a skeptical contrasting of this process with an earlier cultural nationalism, see John Newton, *Hard Frost: Structures of Feeling in New Zealand Literature, 1908–1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2017). With greater enthusiasm, Stephanie Burt — to give an example of a trend — convincingly reads one of the most prominent young New Zealand poets, Hera Lindsay Bird, as writing for a global audience, not just a national one, and in response to a variety of American influences rather than as 'overtly tied to the place' (Stephanie Burt, 'On Hera Lindsay Bird,' *London Review of Books*, November 30, 2017, no. 23, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n23/stephanie-burt/on-hera-lindsay-bird). In discussion, Bird strongly aligns herself with American traditions easily reachable online ('I grew up after the internet') rather than a tradition of New Zealand literature — 'old Jack at the mill' — which appears to have little relevance, in her view, to an urbanised life. This contention is supported by Chris Prentice, who discusses how many local referents in the New Zealand literary tradition are now equally unfamiliar to international *and* domestic students because of urbanization and cultural change (Chris Prentice, 'Articulating New Zealand and literature in "New Zealand literature" classes: Attending to the parergon,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 56, no. 2 [2020]: 243–244).

125. This, unfortunately, currently includes material from 2001, the year Carey won for the second time.

*True History of the Kelly Gang*, with less discussion of *Oscar and Lucinda* and *The English Patient*. An examination of *Oscar and Lucinda* would tend to cover ground already well-examined. As a text, it appears to respond to concerns more generally postcolonial than specific to the settler experience, as well as reiterating the very English story of Edmund Gosse; to M.D. Fletcher, 'it is almost as if Carey had read [*The Empire Writes Back*] and set out to illustrate it.'[126] Its central characters think of themselves as English as much as Australian: even Lucinda, born in Australia, at first 'had come to London thinking of it as "Home."'[127] They are engaged — sometimes with the violence of Jeffris — on a project of exploitation as much as settlement. Whereas — as will be discussed — *True History of the Kelly Gang* obscures the violence inherent in settlement in its desire to examine national identity, in *Oscar and Lucinda* this violence is relatively overt, and national rather than colonial history is little examined (fine as the distinction may be). For example, the narrative simply excludes Lucinda's later role 'among the Australian labour movement' from any discussion.[128] It focusses instead on the earlier and colonial rather than nation-building aspects of her life, in what might be called an exploration of colonisation rather than settlement. In contrast, *True History of the Kelly Gang* sets out to explore Australian identity through the figure of Ned Kelly.

*The English Patient*, meanwhile, rewards analysis as an example of settler literature less than does *The Blind Assassin*. *The English Patient* is not set in Canada, although several of its characters are Canadian. Correctly or not, Ondaatje — who was born in Sri Lanka and educated in England before moving to Canada as a young university student — has also more often been read as a postcolonial rather than settler writer, no doubt because of the complicating issues of race and birth. Although I would question this characterisation, pointing especially to his poetry and his *In the Skin of a Lion* (to which *The English Patient* is a sequel), it is certainly fair to say that *The Blind Assassin* is a more direct response to Canadian conditions. A fundamental organising principle of *The English Patient* itself is a division between Europe and its others, in which Kip, an Indian sapper, is made other to Europe in a way Canadian characters are not. This comes to the fore in Kip's response to the atomic bombing of Japan, based on the knowledge that — as the Canadian Caravaggio thinks — 'they would never have dropped

126. M.D. Fletcher, 'Post-Colonial Peter Carey,' *SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Asso*, 32 1991, 12.
127. Peter Carey, *Oscar and Lucinda* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), 203.
128. Carey, 506.

such a bomb on a white nation.'[129] In this way the significance of Canadian identity as settlers rather than part of the metropole is treated as relatively unimportant compared to their identity as white; a very defensible position, but not one which makes the novel a particularly deep exploration of Canadian settler identity specifically.

This thesis therefore examines the three remaining novels: *The Bone People*, *True History of the Kelly Gang* and *The Blind Assassin*. These allow a survey of literature across time and styles: the romanticism of *The Bone People*, the historiographic metafiction of *True History*, and the realism of *The Blind Assassin* all offer different approaches to different locations of settlement.

## Outline of Chapters

The first chapter deals with Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* as well as John Mulgan's *Man Alone* and discusses how *The Bone People* entered the international marketplace through winning, in succession, The Pegasus Prize for Literature and then the Booker Prize. In both cases, I argue, its win was facilitated by a prize culture which sought to both find and reward indigeneity and exoticism, and in which key figures made assumptions about its value based not so much on its literary qualities and creative invention as its representation of an assumedly static Māori culture. I argue that this tendency continued in both its academic and popular reception in Great Britain and the United States. Antipodean critics, however, read the novel in a *national* context, as a blending of Māori and Pākehā precursors which eased settler anxieties. I expand on this approach to explore its relationship with selected precursors, especially John Mulgan's *Man Alone*. I use a combination of close reading and statistical analysis (as well as identifying some parallel scenes and lines) to show that the two novels are very closely linked indeed, building upon a suggestion by Mark Williams that the novel can be read as writing a version of *Man Alone*. This develops into an argument that, since Mulgan's novel can be read without controversy as displaying typical tropes identified by settler criticism, we can also apply these to Hulme's work.

A reading position between the two critical approaches already described is developed: the novel is read as both revealing certain transnational patterns of settler literature and being described by them. For example, the novel's attitude towards child abuse, can, I show, be

129. Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 286. For a discussion, see Roberts, *Prizing Literature*, 71–72.

interpreted by considering the history of assimilation in settler states, which led to the sustained kidnapping of children by the state. This insight explains the otherwise inexplicable treatment of state care in the novel, something which has perplexed and frustrated readers, Booker judges, and critics. I then move to discuss another point of contention, Hulme's right to present herself as Māori. I use Terry Goldie's thesis of indigenization to argue that a settler culture of assimilation and indigenization in New Zealand leads the Māori Hulme into a desire to emphasise her authenticity as Māori over her perceived inauthenticity as someone whose contact with Māori culture has been mediated and attenuated by colonisation. As a result, the novel tends to present what is good, in its worldview, as being indigenous even when this is not necessarily the case. I go on to suggest that this willed indigeneity should not necessarily be considered a problem but should be understood as an example of settler ambivalence: it indicates a desire to be both European and Māori at the same time and mingles authorities and sources of authenticities.

The second chapter, primarily on Australian postmodernism in the work of Peter Carey and Gerald Murnane, deals with the same problem in a different form. It explores two features of settler identity: the inheritance of a culture from elsewhere to be applied to a new landscape, and an internalised sense of inferiority to that culture. Two different responses are comparatively explored, first Carey's and then Murnane's. I argue that Carey's approach can achieve popular readership and circulate internationally, but necessarily — at least for some readers — repeats the attitudes of inferiority it wishes to escape. In contrast, Murnane's emphasis on the individual vision avoids association with cultural inferiority but appears to lack Carey's depiction of Australia and Australians as fundamentally different to their metropolitan origins.

I begin by discussing the phenomenon of cultural cringe in Australia, before identifying a distinction between a desire to disprove perceived colonial inferiority by producing works that transcend and destabilise the nation, and a popular demand both in Australia and abroad for depictions of a distinct Australian experience and apparent quiddity. I discuss how, in Carey's *Tristran Smith* and various comparable works, an abstraction of the Australian experience failed to find a readership. In contrast, I suggest, his most commercially successful work exploits postmodern approaches to unite the two desires, so that multiple readerships and

goals are arguably satisfied. I use Canadian critical thought to argue that Carey's distinct form of settler postmodernism challenges the veracity of certain depictions of Australia but does not challenge the quiddity of Australia as a whole. As a result, different audiences can read his work to different ends, and his apparent revisionism reinforces certain metanarratives, such as the idea of an Australian identity, rather than subverting them. I move to explore this process in action in *True History of the Kelly Gang*, arguing that international audiences and Booker Prize judges could read the novel as a revelation of a true history which dramatized the subaltern status of a true, convict-based, Australian identity as compared to British colonisers. But — I show after a digression into the historical situation and Ned Kelly's life — Carey (as is his right as an author) fictionalizes freely to construct this conflict of identities and present an Irish-Australian identity as victims rather than perpetrators of settler colonialism. This has a double commercial appeal — for an international audience, it makes a complicated history comprehensible according to familiar meta-narratives while also not conflicting with existing metropolitan stereotypes, so that — despite its apparent resistance — it can be read as keeping cultural and linguistic authority in British hands. For a domestic audience, the novel defuses settler anxieties and provides a narrative which justifies settler presence on the land, replacing a history of dispossession and frontier violence directed towards Aborigines with a history of dispossession and frontier violence suffered by settlers.

I turn to another exemplar of Australian postmodernism, Gerald Murnane, to further explore this problem based in cultural cringe. Murnane, I show, has received none of Carey's popular acclaim, but writes about the same landscape of the state of Victoria. In his case, however, landscape can only be perceived as the product of a set of cultural assumptions and imagined international experiences reified in an individual consciousness. The Victorian landscape which, to Carey, creates a consciousness is, to Murnane, the creation of a consciousness. This situation is dramatized in his short story 'The Battle of Acosta Nu', which turns suburban Melbourne into Paraguay because the referents 'Australia' and 'Paraguay' can, in the world of the story, be meaningful only in the experience of individual consciousness. I discuss this situation in his *The Plains*, arguing that the novella works against cultural cringe more successfully than in Carey's case by simply ignoring it in favour of personal visions. This approach both enacts and overcomes a settler discomfort with landscape, and — in certain crucial ways — shows that the landscapes of the settler world are not an objective fact but a synthesis of the

real and the settler imagination of a cultural inheritance. In other words, Murnane offers veracity but no claim to quiddity, reinforcing the argument that settler commonalities can be found across different locations and cultures.

The final case study draws upon a book-historical approach to examine the construction of the Canadian domestic and international canons, showing that there is a substantial difference between the two. It analyses Canadian state cultural funding to ascribe the difference to a model of cultural funding which allows the commercially viable production of texts for particular regional or ethnic communities within Canada as part of a state management of difference and diversity, even when potential markets are very small, and then uses literary production to reinscribe difference within the state. However, I show, there has also been a consistent pattern of state funding for the international export of Canadian literature. This funding has the very different goal of presenting a unitary Canadian culture in order to emphasise its postcoloniality and distinctiveness from both Great Britain and the United States. To sustain these contradictory patterns, I suggest (developing the Australian argument further) that the international canon is constructed from texts which encourage apparently mimetic readings which describe and display an abstracted Canadianness emphasising difference from its cultural origins. In contrast, the local canon is more willing to acknowledge distinct origins and encourages hermeneutical readings, since texts within it can assume a readership with shared knowledges and structures of feeling. Textual features desirable to the latter audience — places, assumed experiences and cultural knowledges — alienate the former and work against uniqueness and exoticism by demonstrating the quotidian. I demonstrate this by comparing the reception of Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man*, a highly localised text, to her Booker Prize-winning *The Blind Assassin*. The former closely depicted urban Canadian experience and did not appeal to an international audience; the latter abstracts this experience and explains rather than assuming knowledge, and was highly successful. I show that Atwood was aware of the metropolitan desire for exoticism and description in Canadian fiction, but also wished to represent Canadian life as it was rather than purely as it existed in the international imagination. I suggest that Atwood used her critical work and global reputation to shape the terms of her own reception by international audiences, providing a way for her audience to discover the apparently new, in a depiction of the uniqueness of the Canadian locale,

and yet already know how to interpret it. To achieve this Atwood had to emphasise explanation and a selective mimeticism over the sort of incidental detail foreign to an international audience which could have enabled suspicious readings on the basis of a settler rather than Canadian identity.

I then look at two contrasting novels from the same publisher, Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, to explore a different approach within Canada. These novels did not need to be successful outside a particular context, and so could move beyond mimetic presentation to an uninformed audience and into an obscurity (both are notoriously difficult texts) highly reliant on local knowledges and shared cultural constructs. Atwood has written on both these novels, and I challenge her interpretation of them as uniquely Canadian. Paradoxically, the implied reader's assumed knowledge of the local and particular reveals incidentally common patterns of settler literature by integrating with specific instances of settler experience and desire rather than with the imagined community of Canada, an identity constructed by state need to disavow its colonial past. I then read the assumed context and hidden patterns of these works to show, once again, how amenable they are to readings based on a generalised settler context as well as their local context. Specifically, I show Cohen's engagement with universal victimhood and redemptive suffering as a double move to both valorise the ambivalent settler position and efface their historical guilt. I show a hidden obsession with guilt, indigenous observation and dispossession in *The Double Hook* which exists as a penumbra of secrets (in a term I adapt from Frank Kermode) around the ostensible narrative and can only be observed by treating the novel as anti-mimetic.

# Chapter 1

# New Zealand

In this chapter, I use the example of Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* to explore the continuing relevance of readings drawing upon conceptions of a settler literature.[1] My investigation is divided into two parts. I first explore how the novel's prize wins and continuing reputation develop from a sense that it represents a unified and continuing (post)colonial experience to the metropolitan centre. The second part then considers reading the novel as part of a transnational settler literature. I begin by considering how several critics have been troubled by the novel's seeming minimisation of child abuse. I argue that this is best examined by extrapolating from the common attitudes towards child welfare in the settler states. In this reading, I demonstrate the significance to fiction of social context and the necessity of considering this social context as part of a transnational phenomenon of settler colonialism. I then move to examine Terry Goldie's idea of indigenization, his influential argument that settler literature, haunted by the figure of the indigene, embarks on an impossible project of trying to make itself indigenous. I look at the history of argument over Hulme's authority to speak as Māori and argue that the novel shows this same pattern of attempting to indigenize itself, complicating criticism which relies upon an appeal to indigenous authority.

Stephen Slemon and others have argued that settler literature is defined by its radical ambivalence, its oscillation between positions as it tries to balance between contradictory roles. I argue that *The Bone People* similarly displays this pattern of ambivalence, contradicting it-

1. A note on usage: the novel originally appared under the title *the bone people*; I have preserved this in quotations, but in general use the title under which it is most familiar. Similarly, as in conventional in New Zealand literary criticism, words in Te Reo Māori are not italicised and macrons are used where appropriate. Their absence has not been corrected in quotations, or in the title of the exhibition Te Maori.

self and moving between different positions. I show that even as it attempts to enact a Māori worldview — to the approbation of international audiences — *The Bone People* falls back into the colonising myths of the Pākehā discourse, strongly suggesting the need for readings aware of its settler context.

## 1.1 International Reception of Keri Hulme's The Bone People

*The Bone People* won the Pegasus Prize, its first international recognition, in a context where it was seen as explaining culture to an overseas audience rather than evaluated in literary terms. By examining the motives behind the prize, the composition of its jury, and the novel's reception after winning the prize, I will argue that the Pegasus Prize was initiated in order to show a unified Māori culture to the world. Once it was awarded, the existence of Hulme's novel could be used — in somewhat circular fashion — to demonstrate the existence of that culture. The prize was awarded to bring Māori literature to the world; because the novel had won the prize, it was also taken as an example of Māori literature. This reading both ignored complicating factors and laid the groundwork for its future international success. It encouraged understanding the novel as representative of an unknown and static culture. By the time of its Booker win, the novel was read as a blending of metropolitan literature and minority experience.

The Pegasus Prize for Literature was an award for literature sponsored by the Mobil corporation intended 'to introduce American readers to distinguished works from countries whose literature too rarely receives international recognition.'[2] In 1985, Māori were selected by an international advisory committee as having a literature deserving of more international attention. This selection has been linked to Mobil's activities in the New Zealand economy and desire for popular support there.[3] I would also note Te Maori, an exhibition of traditional artwork and taonga which had toured the United States in 1984 to great acclaim and some controversy.[4] This was sponsored by Mobil as part of an international policy of 'sponsoring

2. Keri Hulme, *The Bone People* (Wellington: Spiral Collective, 1984; repr., New York: Penguin, 1986), n.p frontmatter.

3. Robin Truth Goodman and Kenneth J. Saltman, *Strange Love: Or How We Learn to Stop Worrying and Love the Market* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 95–96.

4. Conal McCarthy, *Museums and Māori: Heritage Professionals, Indigenous Collections, Current Practice* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2011), 59; Patrick Evans, *The Long Forgetting: Post-colonial Literary Culture in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2007), 98–100.

indigenous art in the countries the company does business in.'[5] Te Maori was an exhibition limited to works from before 1860. This implied a static and unchanging culture, as did the curator Hirini Mead's catalogue notes, which emphasised how contemporary Māori art was still modelled and judged on classical 'inspiration, forms and motifs.'[6] Paul Tapsell has argued that the exhibition suppressed differences between iwi[7] to support a bicultural national identity, while to Patrick Evans the exhibition as a whole reinforced a binary 'typical of post-contact experience; on the one hand a Western sentimentalisation and banalisation of the exhibition; on the other, a Māori affirmation of that pre-contact domain that is inaccessible to the European.'[8] The prize, meanwhile, was not intended so much to assist a Māori writer locally as to show their work to the world: 'in the year Hulme won, the Pegasus Award consisted of guaranteed publication in the US, cash of $4,000, and a trip to the US valued at one-and-a-half times the cash component.'[9] The cash value was secondary to the parts of the prize intended to expose the work to a United States audience.

The Pegasus Prize therefore was awarded at a time when there was a sense of a static and unitary Māori culture ready to be revealed to an overseas audience, and — as Appendix A shows — a growing awareness of indigenous issues both in New Zealand and overseas. It was linked to this cultural sense and to Te Maori by the common sponsor and the choice of 'Sid-

5. Jan Corbett, 'Te Maori and the Middle Ground,' *Pacific Arts Newsletter*, no. 26 (1988): 32; Philippa Jane Butler, 'Te Maori Past and Present: Stories of Te Maori' (master's thesis, Massey University, 1996), 8. During points out, discussing Te Maori's transformation of the sacred into simulacra, that Mobil became involved at the same time they 'were hoping to sign contracts with the New Zealand Government to construct a natural gas refinery' (Simon During, 'What Was the West?: Some Relations Between Modernity, Colonisation and Writing,' *Meanjin* 48, no. 4 [1989]: 769).

6. Sidney Mead, ed., *Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand Collections* (New York: Abrams, 1984), 23. See p. 75 for Mead's suspicion of any mingling of Māori and Pākehā art, an attitude which would and did exclude masterpieces like Cliff Whiting's Tahu Pōtiki and Rongomarearoa. An early collection of Māori creative writing is exclusively in English, except for a story by Mead demonstratively in Te Reo; see Alice Te Punga Somerville, 'Te Ao Hou: Te Pataka,' in *A History of New Zealand Literature*, ed. Mark Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 189–190 for a discussion.

7. Iwi are a unit of social organisation in Māori culture, often translated as 'tribe', although the international understanding of this word perhaps applies better to hapū, a smaller unit. See Angela Ballara, *Iwi: the dynamics of Maori tribal organisation from c. 1769 to c. 1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998) for a discussion of some of the complexities, although — given its timeframes — this text necessarily excludes a further complication in the New Zealand government's preference to negotiate with 'large natural groupings' in the Treaty settlement process.

8. Paul Tapsell, *The Art of Taonga*, Gordon H. Brown Lecture Series 9 (Wellington: School of Art History, Classics & Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 2011), 41; Evans, *The Long Forgetting*, 99. I was involved with an exhibition celebrating the original's anniversary (*Te Māori Lives On*, Whakatāne District Museum, 2011). This focussed on Ngāti Awa's contribution and some attempts at corrections of these tendencies; the experience confirmed Tapsell entirely, as well as providing strong examples of Evans' 'sentimentalisation and banalisation' among visitors and commentators, if not so much his 'Māori affirmation'.

9. Ben Holgate, 'The Fear of Solitude: How Marketing Makes Real Magic,' in *The Global Histories of Books: Methods and Practices*, ed. Elleke Boehmer et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 307.

ney' (that is, Hirini) Mead as chairman of the prize jury.[10] Mead in turn selected a jury which included only one critic, Terry Sturm, although the poet and teacher Arapera Blank also participated. All other jurors — excepting Erihapeti Murchie, a health researcher — were anthropologists or specialists in Māori Studies. This implies that a criterion for judges was their knowledge of Māori culture and that the prize winner was expected primarily to represent that culture overseas. When Hulme won the prize, the local media responded to this sense of the prize as a cultural rather than literary evaluation, meaning — as Hulme herself argued — that the novel was 'accepted as a Maori thing' 'regardless of how mongrel you are.'[11] *Every* article on Hulme in the New Zealand press identified her by her ethnicity and 40% of articles assumed that she wrote from personal experience, rather than creatively.[12] The Pegasus Prize win therefore solidified a sense of the novel as Māori literature despite its features familiar beyond indigeneity: 'the more or less familiar late twentieth-century (New Age) universalisms' gave it a strong case for "world literature' status precisely because they could be taken for world-readable signs of its legitimate Maoriness.'[13]

Shortly afterwards, however, the well-known critic C.K. Stead argued that the prize should not have been awarded to Hulme. To Stead, maintaining Mead's distinction between 'authentic' and contaminated work, the form of the novel written in English was itself not Māori.[14] Because — he argued — Hulme's own indigeneity was willed, and her form was foreign, *The Bone People* was 'a novel by a Pakeha which has won an award intended for a Maori.'[15] I will later discuss some of the very strong objections to this argument; for now, it is sufficient to note that this local criticism maintained the binary Māori/Pakeha, in a bicultural context where this was familiar.

The Pegasus Prize meant that Hulme's work began to be noticed overseas. It was published both in the US and UK. Before its appearance in the UK, Martyn Goff — then prominent in the book trade for two roles: as a reviewer of fiction, and as the administrator of the Booker Prize — gave the novel a laudatory review. Speaking at a memorial service for Goff in

10. English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 314.
11. Harry Ricketts, *Talking About Ourselves: Twelve New Zealand Poets in Conversation With Harry Ricketts* (Wellington: Mallinson Rendel, 1986), 24.
12. Michalia Arathimos, 'Fracture: The Reception of the "Other" Author in Aotearoa' (PhD diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2013), 44, 55.
13. English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 319.
14. C.K. Stead, 'Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* and the Pegasus Award for Maori Literature,' *ARIEL* 16, no. 4 (1985): 103.
15. Stead, 104.

2015, John Coldstream claimed that it was this review which encouraged Hodder & Stoughton to submit the novel for the Booker Prize, initiating a judgement process where Goff's views of the novel as representative of Māoritanga were likely to be influential.[16]

### 1.1.1 The Booker Prize

In this section, I discuss how *The Bone People* came to win the Booker Prize and become 'the one Maori novel in the world literature canon.'[17] The novel was championed as winner of the Booker Prize primarily by Norman St John-Stevas and Martyn Goff.[18] By reconstructing what they valued in it, I show it won the prize primarily because it conformed to their expectations of Commonwealth literature (and the Anglophone settler novels which were a subset of 'Commonwealth literature') as representational. I use archival evidence to show that the Booker Prize was predicated around the values of a metropolitan audience.

A minor point is worth noting: the judging procedure for the 1985 prize began with each judge being sent tranches of novels submitted by publishers. Each publisher could submit up to four works, but they could recommend four more; any judge could decide to call one of these in for consideration.[19] This system encouraged publishers to recommend their strongest names while reserving their submissions for less well-known writers. Since it was likely at least one judge would call in a figure like Doris Lessing, Cape — for example — could recommend her and submit a less prominent writer. In practice, this meant that the submitted lists had surprising numbers of non-British writers: Peter Carey replaced Lawrence Durrell; Brian Moore names like Brookner, Fowles, and Lessing.[20] Hulme's appearance on the submitted list can probably be explained in this way. Already, however, this meant her novel was considered among the exotic alternatives, among those the judges might not have otherwise read.

After these submissions and suggestions, the judging procedure began with a gruelling reading list, leaving Marina Warner feeling 'like Pacman, munching my way through.'[21] Each

16. Liz Thomson, 'Martyn Goff "always had a twinkle in his eye,"' *The Bookseller*, November 13, 2015, https://www.thebookseller.com/news/martyn-goff-always-had-twinkle-his-eye-316528.

17. English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 320.

18. The judging committee was chaired by St John-Stevas; other judges were Nina Bawden, Jack Lambert, Joanna Lumley and Marina Warner.

19. *Guidance to Judges of the Booker McConnell Prize for Fiction*, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library, 1985.

20. See the covering letters to judges in 'Papers of Book Trust' (BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library, 1985).

21. Marina Warner to Martyn Goff, 30 August 1985, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library

judge sent Goff a written shortlist before they met as a group to produce a collective shortlist of six novels for public release. There seems to have been only a loose scheme behind the initial, individual, shortlisting. Warner listed nine novels, St John-Stevas ten. Lumley gave six, adding 'I suppose it would only muddy the waters to say that I also considered' four more. She then gave these. Lambert gave a 'tentative short list' of six, and 'tacked on' six more 'quite good books more or less jostling' in a 'second list in case it's useful.'[22]

Figure 1.1 shows each judge's support for particular books based on these lists, with those novels eventually shortlisted marked with an asterisk. I have included those novels which gained the (full or partial) support of at least two judges; inclusion on a list of first choices is worth one point (making the bar longer), and on a second half a point. Sixteen novels which only had one judge recommend their inclusion on the shortlist are not represented here, because St John-Stevas as chairman refused to consider novels with only one supporter.[23]

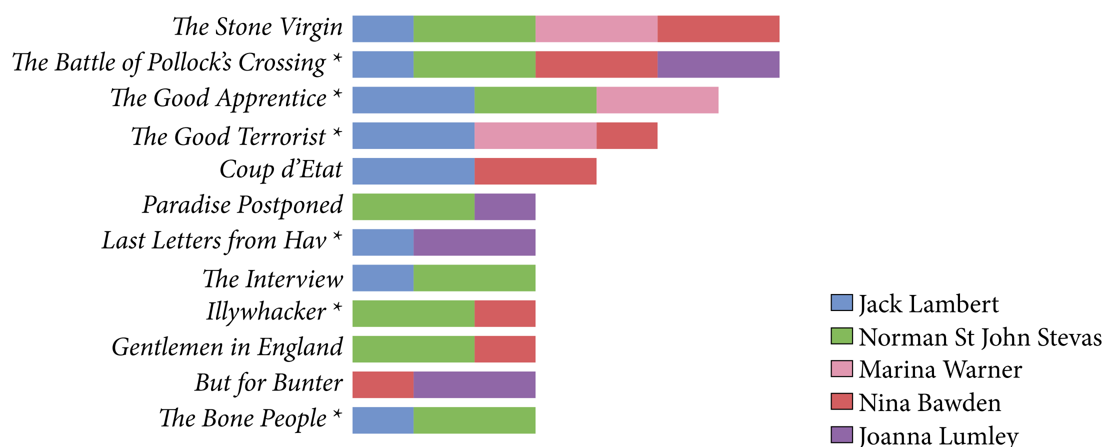


**Figure 1.1:** Initial Shortlist Preferences for 1985 Booker Prize

*The Bone People* seems an unlikely shortlisting. We know that 'Carey and Hulme provoked fierce battles,' especially since — as will be discussed later — Lumley and Bawden were opposed to the novel on ethical grounds.[24] Given Warner's later recollection that 'St John-Stevas

22. Marina Warner to Martyn Goff; Norman St John Stevas to Martyn Goff, 31 August 1985, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library; Papers of Book Trust, 2 September 1985, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library; Jack Lambert to Martyn Goff, 4 September 1985, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library.
23. Claire Tomalin, 'The rise and rise of the Booker prize,' *Sunday Times*, October 6, 1985, 44.
24. In Tomalin. This claim was probably sourced from either Lambert or Goff; Lambert was the former arts editor of the paper and had replied to Goff's letter offering him a role as a judge by winkingly claiming that he would *never* write about the judge's deliberations, 'even if, say, Booker Bros. quite wished for such a leak in the interests of advance publicity!' (Jack Lambert to Martyn Goff, 23 March 1985, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University

unexpectedly championed [*The Bone People*] throughout,' it seems likely that his view of the novel's merits was persuasive.[25] The final shortlist most resembles his preferences: each judge but St John-Stevas and Lambert had two of their initial preferences represented. Lambert additionally had three second choices appear on the shortlist; St John-Stevas had four of his initial choices represented. Goff too was (possibly covertly) a strong supporter of Hulme; interviewed years later he remembered how he reviewed the book after meeting Hulme in Canada and being 'absolutely knocked over by her', as well as how he convinced Norman St John-Stevas that the book wasn't 'rubbish' but 'well worth reading.'[26] Although Goff had no vote, he was present for all the judge's meetings and may have been able to influence them either directly or — as his account suggests — through particular judges.

It is possible to reconstruct the reasons behind the support of these two men for *The Bone People*. They show the tendency to view the work as representative or descriptive rather than creative which, I argue, is the common pattern of metropolitan reception of novels from settler states. Since their support drove its inclusion on the shortlist and eventually its surprise victory, its success, driven by its prizewinning status, can be traced back to its ability to be read in accordance with their understanding of successful settler literature.

Goff's review, later prominently displayed on the novels' dust jacket, argues that 'the power and feeling for nature and the more mystical sides of a dwindling people, the Maoris, will make it a gem providing a whole new range of experience.'[27] The value of the novel, therefore, is not in its literary features but its capacity to describe experience to a metropolitan audience. As the assumption — based on no evidence within the novel — of a dwindling Māori population shows, this experience to be revealed is not necessarily based on Māori as they are, but as Goff imagines them to be: mystical, with a power and feeling for nature. At the time of the review, the Māori population had been growing steadily for almost a century.[28]

St John-Stevas's similar attitude to the two Commonwealth entries on the shortlist — *The Bone People* and Carey's *Illywhacker* — can be recreated from his prize-night speech. He argued

Library)

25. 'Tears, tiffs and triumphs: 40 years of Booker prize judges dish the dirt,' *The Guardian* (London), September 6, 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/sep/06/bookerprize.40years.

26. Ion Trewin, 'Behind the Scenes: Ion Trewin interviews Martyn Goff,' in *Booker 30: a celebration of 30 years of the Booker prize for fiction 1969-1998* (London: Booker plc, 1998), 22.

27. Martyn Goff, 'Recent Fiction,' *Daily Telegraph* (London), July 5, 1985, 11.

28. Ian Pool, *Te iwi Maori: a New Zealand population, past, present & projected* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1991), 58.

for the Booker as a celebration of the English language and of English literature as 'the principal instrument' of 'our influence', the replacement for departed imperial power. The English language went out to Australia and New Zealand, was 'transubstantiated' by new experiences there, and returned to England in the form of novels for consumption by an English audience. Commonwealth writing, in his fairly conventional view, was about adapting the language and models of English literature to the explanation of new circumstances, so that, for example *Illywhacker*'s real subject — its 'real hero' — was Australia. The real question was how the particular circumstances of Australia, revealed in a novel, interacted with existing metropolitan literature.

National literatures might do as they liked in their own countries, but international recognition in the form of the Booker Prize was very obviously based on metropolitan audiences: '*We* have given the English language to Australia and New Zealand and *they* have given it back [my emphasis].'[29] *The Bone People* is therefore read as Hulme's transformation of *our* (English) literature based on *her* experience and culture. Its value lies in explaining this personal knowledge to us.[30]

### 1.1.2 International Critical Reception

The reception of the novel after its win shows that the same pattern — treating the text as explanatory rather than creative — continued in both the popular media and the international academic world and contributed to its global success.[31] International reviewers saw the novel

29. Norman St John Stevas, *The Lasting Crown: Language and Literature*, BP/1/17/1/1, Oxford Brookes University Library, 1985.

30. A sense of the prize as importing colonial material for consumption in the metropolitan centre comes through even in mundane administrative details. Anne Riddoch, the P.R. advisor for the prize, worked out detailed lists of journalists to invite months before the prize ceremony at the end of October. Despite Carey's presence on the shortlist, the first Australian journalist was only invited as a last-minute thought on October 22nd, months after the *Hampstead and Highgate Express* (Jane Eyre to Lorene Gibbons, 22 October 1985, BP/1/17/1/1, Oxford Brookes University Library). This might have been provoked by a letter to Riddoch from Martyn Goff, which — in rather parochial tones — deals with the requests of the New Zealand publishers of *The Bone People* to attend the ceremony — 'hardly your responsibility' — and the 'fervent plea for a ticket' by a journalist from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) producing a programme on the publishing industry of the UK, which 'devotes quite a lot of time to the Booker Prize' (Martyn Goff to Anne Riddoch, 18 October 1985, BP/1/17/1/1, Oxford Brookes University Library). Writing to a television journalist after the prize ceremony, Riddoch thought that 'despite the trauma of the Maori ladies [two of Hulme's publishers from the Spiral Collective], the programme seemed to go very well' (Anne Riddoch to Jamie Muir, 5 November 1985, BP/1/17/1/1, Oxford Brookes University Library).

31. Despite a popular conception of the novel as the unread Booker, 'by August 1998' it 'had sold 1.3 million copies in twenty-three editions in ten languages. Hulme has turned down over 300 offers to film the novel.' (Judith Dell Panny, 'Inside the spiral: Maori writing in English,' in *Towards a Transcultural Future: Literature and Society in a 'Post'-Colonial World*, ed. Geoffrey V. Davis et al., ASNEL Papers 2 [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005], 216) It remains 'in circulation as a favourite in postcolonial syllabuses.' (Eva Rask Knudsen, *The Circle & the Spiral: A Study*

as a 'union of "Maoritanga" (Maori culture) and the English language' or 'a shining example of the indigenization of English.' Hulme is almost invariably referred to as 'a Maori, or New Zealand native.' The novel succeeds because of its representative value: it is 'very Kiwi' and 'New Zealand's people, its heritage and landscapes are conjured up with uncanny poetry and perceptiveness' in this 'prose-poem about Maori myths,' (described with more gusto than accuracy: 'the bone people' are 'enchanted healers, ghosts of Maori ancestors so distant they encircle past and future.') Still, it doesn't 'solely draw on Maori lore — fertility legends and tales of charismatic helpers responding to those in extremity. It also contains, [Hulme] happily agrees, "a lot of allusions" to European literature.'[32] In other words, unchanging Māori knowledge is used to create a new form with debts to European precursors.

Despite Hulme's original argument that 'if you separate me out, this part's Maori, that part's *pakeha* (white), it's not right,'[33] much subsequent international criticism has been reluctant to explore Hulme's identity as mixed (or even as representing a culture that has changed in response to colonisation.) Instead, 'it appears that for many — if not most — Hulme's fictional novel was the definitive introduction and guide to Maoritanga.'[34] Rather than truly blurring the division between coloniser and colonised into a postcolonial third space, Hulme becomes a native informant explaining te ao Māori to a presumed audience of cultural outsiders — whose own explanations of Hulme's explanations, doubly removed, become confused at best, as in the essay which explains that in 'traditional Maori cosmology', 'canoes representing each whanau (extended family) and its own mauriora came to New Zealand.'[35] One

*of Australian Aboriginal and New Zealand Māori Literature*, Cross/Cultures 68 [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004], 129) By 2008, it was possible to turn to the index of Graham Huggan's *Interdisciplinary Measures* and find 'New Zealand literature, *see* Hulme, Keri' (Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures*, 214). The novel was 'without doubt New Zealand's most-read contemporary book' (Julian Murphet, 'Postcolonial writing in Australia and New Zealand,' in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, ed. Ato Quayson, vol. 1 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 477).

32. These quotations are taken from, respectively, Elizabeth Ward, 'A First Novel of Sweeping Power,' *Post* (Washington), December 1, 1985; Lorna Sage, 'Behind the lines,' *Times Literary Supplement* (London), November 22, 1985; Reuters, 'Booker win "flabbergasts" N.Z. writer,' *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), November 1, 1985; Philip Howard, 'Poetic Kiwi tale takes Booker Prize,' *Times* (London), November 1, 1985; Peter Kemp, 'Boy on the beach,' *Sunday Times* (London), October 27, 1985; Andrew Moncur, 'Novel no one wanted takes Booker prize,' *The Guardian* (London), November 1, 1985; Claudia Tate, 'Triple-forged Trinity,' *Times* (New York), November 17, 1985, BR11; Peter Kemp, 'Outsider takes all / Interview with Booker Prize winner Keri Hulme,' *Sunday Times* (London), December 1, 1985.

33. Rima Alicia Bartlett, '"The wonder of words winds through all worlds": Keri Hulme talks to Rima Alicia Bartlett,' *Wasafiri* 12, no. 25 (1997): 84.

34. Christina Stachurski, 'Formulations of New Zealand Identity: Re Reading *Man Alone*, *the bone people* and *Once Were Warriors*' (PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 2001), 98.

35. Gay Alden Wilentz, 'Instruments of Change: Healing Cultural Dis-ease in Keri Hulme's *the bone people*,' *Literature and Medicine* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 138.

critic informs us that:

> *The Bone People* recalls the ancient Maori proverb 'e gna iwi o gna iwi' in which the syntax unhinges referents – the proverb translates as 'the bone of the people' (ancestor or marrow) or 'the people of the bone' (descendants or new generation[36])

Putting aside that 'gna' for the plural definite article 'ngā' is a rather startling misquotation and that its presence means 'bone' should be plural, this is not a whakataukī (or 'ancient Māori proverb') and there is no indication in the text itself that this phrase is anything but what it appears to be: a pun attributed to Joe. Knudsen misreads here because she assumes that any phrase in Te Reo must be ancient wisdom from an unchanging culture. This tendency to read the novel as the representation of a static ethnic identity recurs in the critical literature, sometimes surprisingly. 'What about korero, Joe? What about our tribe's famous talk-it-out with all concerned?' is read by Elvira Pulitano as referring to an 'ancient Maori practice of korero or "talk-it-out",' when 'kōrero' is simply — as a verb — to talk, and as a noun, a story, conversation, or discussion.[37] Another critic relates Kerewin's thought 'Mere-Mere quite contrary ... Or is it Kere-Kere quite contrary?' to the quite distinct-sounding 'kekeri' (to fight or quarrel) but does not recall the nursery rhyme 'Mary, Mary quite contrary.'[38]

Antipodean critics have been suspicious of such approaches. To them, Hulme's work should be understood in a localised context — as a piece of *New Zealand* literature, a 'national epic in that it addresses primarily the people of the nation whose separate identity it wishes to announce and foster and in that it reflects the insular consciousness of that nation.'[39] As such

36. Knudsen, *The Circle & the Spiral*, 128.

37. Elvira Pulitano, '"In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Crossreading strategies in global literatures,' *World Literature Written in English* 39, no. 2 (2002): 63. Pulitano might dispute my characterisation of her work as focussed on indigeneity, since she positions herself as evading a Manichean discourse of Māori/Pākehā which she says critics such as Stead, Huggan and Williams have been reluctant to read beyond (Pulitano, 65–66). Her reading in fact reinforces the boundaries of such discourse and constructs Hulme as an Other explaining herself to the reader:

> the novel presents elements of Maoritanga that go beyond the use of Maori words and rewriting of Maori myths and tales [...] a reader entering the world of Hulme's narrative has to confront alternative ways of knowing and alternative discursive strategies (Pulitano, 62).

38. Susan Y. Najita, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction*, Research in Postcolonial Literatures (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 115.

39. The quotation is from Mark Williams, 'The Novel as National Epic,' in *The Commonwealth Novel Since 1960*, ed. Bruce King (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1991), 187. Related arguments are made in Mark Williams, *Leaving the Highway: Six Contemporary New Zealand Novelists* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990), 84–109; Simon During, 'Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?,' *Landfall* 39, no. 3 (1985): 366–380; Stead, 'Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* and the Pegasus Award for Maori Literature'; Sarah Shieff, '*the bone people*: Contexts and Reception, 1984-2004,' in *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australasian Literature*, ed. Sheila Collingwood-

it reflects both Māori and Pākehā preoccupations and traditions. To most critics, it became prominent because it was so acceptable to Pākehā audiences; in a stronger version of this argument, the novel enacts 'a form of liberal discursive violence by attempting to define and contain matters authentically Māori within a narrative that argues the shifts in balance and sensibility toward a Pakeha biculturalism.'[40]

For example, many of the novel's ideological statements, presented as being uniquely Māori, have precursors in the Pākehā literary tradition.[41] When Tiaki Mira laments that we 'forgot what we could have been, that Aotearoa was the shining land,' even as he promises that it might be so again, it is difficult not to think of Frank Sargeson, who ends a memoir by imagining, after the depredations of farming, a tree 'standing not for New Zealand as it is, but *New Zealand as it might worthily have been*.'[42] In the same passage Mira links this fall to a failure to 'nurture the land,' so that Joe a little later, recalling the death of this dream, thinks

> of the forests burned and cut down; the gouges and scars that dams and roadworks and development schemes had made; the peculiar barren paddocks where alien animals, one kind of crop, grazed imported grasses; the erosion, the overfertilisation, the pollution.[43]

The attitude expressed is very similar to Sargeson's, rather than being uniquely Māori.[44] Its re-presentation speaks to a literary tradition; one thinks of canonical figures, like John Mulgan's Johnson 'seeing a new country', with topdressing spread like butter, 'open out like the raw edges of a wound,'[45] or, especially, of Allen Curnow's rehearsal of New Zealand history:

> The pilgrim dream pricked by a cold dawn died

Whittick (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 143–164; Janet Wilson, 'Intertextual Strategies: Reinventing the Myths of Aotearoa in Contemporary New Zealand Fiction,' in *Across the Lines: Intertextuality and Transcultural Communication in the New Literatures in English*, ed. Wolfgang Kloos (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 275–278; Judith Dale, 'The Bone People: (Not) Having It Both Ways,' *Landfall* 39, no. 4 (1985): 413–28; Ruth Brown, 'Maori Spirituality as Pakeha Construct,' *Meanjin* 48, no. 2 (1989): 252–258.

40. Luke Strongman, 'The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire' (PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 1998), 119–120.

41. Other echoes can also be identified. For example, both *The Bone People* and an earlier novel, *Wednesday's Children*, begin with a woman living in isolation after winning a lottery (Robin Hyde, *Wednesday's Children* [Auckland: New Woman's Press, 1989], 36).

42. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 378; Frank Sargeson, 'Up onto the Roof and Down Again (concluded),' *Landfall* 5, no. 4 (December 1951): 250. See Lawrence Jones, '"New Zealand as It Might Worthily Have Been": Frank Sargeson and the "Pilgrim Dream,"' *JNZL*, no. 1 (1983): 87–99 for a discussion of the long afterlife of Sargeson's vision and the tradition it exemplifies. The emphasis is Sargeson's own.

43. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 385.

44. Williams observes something like this when he discusses how in Tiaki Mira's claims, 'Hulme has projected backwards into prehistory the familiar settler myth of New Zealand as a possible Eden' (M. Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 95).

45. John Mulgan, *Man Alone* (Hamilton: Paul's Book Arcade, 1960), 18.

> Among the chemical farmers, the fresh towns; among
> Miners, not husbandmen, who piercing the side
> Let the land's life [...][46]

### 1.1.3 John Mulgan's Man Alone

An enduring response to this settler myth is John Mulgan's *Man Alone*. This novel can be productively compared to Hulme's work, especially since it is obscure internationally but better-known locally. In this 'classic of New Zealand fiction [...] a set text in most New Zealand courses in universities,' Mulgan demonstrates the myth's failure but, like Hulme, suggests a return to Eden through the abandonment of individualism.[47] In this subsection, I show — by close reading and statistical analysis — that Hulme and Mulgan's works are very similar, raising the question of why Hulme — less celebrated in her own country — is better-known internationally.[48]

Although Hulme 'has denied any influence whatever on her own writing by previous Pakeha New Zealanders'[49], local critics have noted 'the strong indebtedness to the Man Alone theme' in *The Bone People*.[50] Williams even argues that Hulme can be read as writing a version of Mulgan. In both novels,

> there is a journey to the heart of the country by broken individuals who literally fall into the landscape and are subsequently restored, healed by notably similar figures of extreme isolation and priestly authority, and who emerge with a vision of social regeneration and a purified sense of connection to the landscape of New Zealand.[51]

Alistair Fox similarly argues that *The Bone People* has 'not one but three People Alone:

46. Allen Curnow, 'The Unhistoric Story,' in *The Auckland University Press Anthology of New Zealand Literature*, ed. Jane Stafford and Mark Williams (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2012), 339.
47. Vincent O'Sullivan, 'Mulgan, John,' in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, ed. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie, Oxford Companions Series (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), 386.
48. Mulgan's novel has not been reprinted overseas since its initial publication in October 1939, an event quickly followed by the destruction of all warehoused copies in the Blitz (Roland F. Anderson, 'The Rise and Fall of the "Man Alone"?,' *ARIEL* 16, no. 4 [1985]: 84).
49. M. Williams, 'The Novel as National Epic,' 191 A counterpoint is Hulme's argument that 'Nations develop their own traditions. When I wrote *the bone people* I didn't think it would go outside the country. All you can do is judge a New Zealand novel by a New Zealand tradition' (Bartlett, '"The wonder of words winds through all worlds,"' 85). The overwhelming tenor of her comment, however, goes in a different direction. For example, she denies any influence from James K. Baxter, and claims that before she read him she had no idea that a Pākehā literary tradition existed (Ricketts, *Talking About Ourselves*, 26). But Baxter's ideology of a return to Māori values to cure the sicknesses of Pākehā society, and his choice to identify himself with taha Māori, is an obvious antecedent; her vision, as Sarah Shieff notes, sits comfortably next to that of Baxter's Jerusalem (Shieff, '*the bone people*,' 161).
50. M. Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 106.
51. M. Williams, 23–24.

a part-Maori Woman Alone (Kerewin Holmes), a Maori Man Alone (Joe Gillayley), and a Pakeha Child Alone (Simon).' Janet Wilson finds a reshaped and regendered Man Alone in both Joe and Kerewin; to Judith Dale, Holmes is 'a new and more sophisticated version of the Godzone "man alone";' and so on.[52] Hulme's denials obscure the extent to which her putatively Māori vision is in accordance with a preceding Pākehā tradition, as do her rather violent claims about that tradition.[53]

At moments her novel echoes not only plot and theme, but even language, so that — to expand on Williams' example of the similar figures of extreme isolation — sentences from similar scenes in each novel could almost replace each other: in two closely parallel scenes in which the protagonist struggles out of the bush and into the hut of an old man, Mulgan's Johnson 'watched strangely and without feeling the old man taking his clothes and torn boots off his body,' while Hulme's Joe 'can feel the old man taking his boots off him'. As each old man talks, one 'stopped and lit his pipe with a burning ember from the fire,' the other 'reached across the still form in front of him, and removed a stick from the fire, and lit his pipe,' and so on.[54]

This debt can be quantified by looking past such linguistic echoes. *The Bone People* has been linked by a number of critics to a remarkably similar set of canonical metropolitan texts.[55] To show that *The Bone People* has quantifiably stronger links to a tradition of New Zealand writing — including that which might not considered to be postcolonial — than to these metropolitan texts, I obtained electronic copies of these texts, together with *Man Alone* and Bill Pearson's *Coal Flat*, another novel about race relations and child abuse set on the West Coast.[56] I have also included three New Zealand texts intended to present other possible parallels: Fiona Kidman's *A Breed of Women*, another feminist novel of the 1980s, and Witi Ihimaera's *Pounamu Pounamu* and Patricia Grace's *Dogside Story*, other texts of the Māori Renaissance. A 'widely

52. Alistair Fox, 'Inwardness, insularity, and the Man Alone: Postcolonial anxiety in the New Zealand novel,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45, no. 3 (2009): 268; Wilson, 'Intertextual Strategies,' 278; Dale, 'The Bone People,' 415. See also Davinia Thornley, 'Breaking with English: the nation as ethnoscape,' *National Identities* 6, no. 1 (2004): 70–71; Christina Stachurski, *Reading Pakeha?: Fiction and Identity in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 37–38.

53. Hulme has said that what she would like to do with 'that whining little shit Johnson,' the (notably stoic) protagonist of *Man Alone*, 'is throw him into the nearest steel trap!' (Sue Kedgley, ed., *Our Own Country: Leading New Zealand writers talk about their writing and their lives* [Auckland: Penguin, 1989], 99)

54. Mulgan, *Man Alone*, 150, 156; Hulme, *The Bone People*, 350, 345.

55. Tolkien, Lewis, Woolf and Joyce are constants, with other names occasionally added; see Ankhi Mukherjee, *What is a Classic? Postcolonial Rewriting and Invention of the Canon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 130–131; Erin Mercer, '"Frae ghosties an ghoulies deliver us": Keri Hulme's *the bone people* and the Bicultural Gothic,' *JNZL*, no. 27 (2009): 112; M. Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 86.

56. As Woolf's work is mostly still in copyright, *The Voyage Out* has to represent her work as a whole.

used and accepted method' to test quantifiable similarity is Burrow's Delta.[57] This 'has been seen as a successful algorithm for many years, as validated in several studies.'[58] I used its implementation in the *stylo* package for the statistical language R to calculate the delta measure between these texts.[59]

In the unclustered results, the closest single text to *The Bone People* is *Ulysses*. This result recalls Stead's argument that 'Kerewin strikes me as more Irish than Maori, word-obsessed, imaginative, musical, unstable, something of a mystic, full of bluster and swagger, charm and self-assertion.'[60] However, we are interested not in the relationship between individual texts but in the clustering of texts into groups to identify possible lines of influence. Figure 1.2 shows the results of clustering these texts together using Ward's method to minimize total in-cluster variance. It shows a clear distinction between a cluster of New Zealand texts and the international comparisons (within which Joyce's works are something of an anomaly.)

These similarities are — to be clear — stylistic rather than based upon subject matter or vocabulary. But where a close reading shows similarities of thought — as in the case of Mulgan and Hulme — it is difficult not to conclude (since both style and argument are similar)

57. Stefan Evert et al., 'Understanding and explaining Delta measures for authorship attribution,' *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 32, no. Supplement 2 (2017): ii6. Rather than measuring direct echoes, Burrow's Delta uses the relationship between word frequencies across text: 'the mean of the absolute differences between the z-scores for a set of word-variables in a given text-group and the z-scores for the same set of word-variables in a target text' (John Burrows, ''Delta': a Measure of Stylistic Difference and a Guide to Likely Authorship,' *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 17, no. 3 [2002]: 271). For clarity we will call this given text-group $a$ and the target text-group $b$.

Texts are treated as a bag of words. A given number of words (usually the *n* most frequent across the whole corpus) are used as features. For a feature $i$, the frequency ($f$) of its use across each text $t$ is calculated as a percentage. The mean and standard deviation of frequency across all texts for each feature are used across the whole corpus.

The frequencies are then normalised using a z-score: i.e. the frequency of a word minus the mean frequency of the word across the corpus divided by the standard deviation:

$$Z_{a(i)} = \frac{f_i - \mu_i}{\sigma_i}$$

The delta score is then calculated as the sum of the average of the absolute value of the differences between the z-scores across $a$ and $b$ for each feature; i.e. the Manhattan distance (Shlomo Argamon, 'Interpreting Burrows's Delta: Geometric and Probabilistic Foundations,' *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 23, no. 2 [2008]: 132). This gives a single number; the closer it is to zero, the more similar $a$ and $b$ are.

Although this method has been valuable in authorship attribution, whatever characteristics it serves as a proxy for are likely to be attenuated when used to establish similarity across groups of authors. A similar method has, however, been successfully used to identify genre in a corpus of novels (Matthew L. Jockers, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History* [Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013], 70–71). Although Burrow's original proposal is quite clear that there is no reason not to use the same methodology for 'tasks of non-authorial classification such as the differentiation of genre or era' (Burrows, ''Delta',' 271), some experiments have shown that it is difficult to attribute a given variance either to authorial distinctions or to those based on genre (Jockers, *Macroanalysis*, 70).

58. Martin Paul Eve, 'Close Reading with Computers: Genre Signals, Parts of Speech, and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*,' *SubStance* 46, no. 3 (2017): 82.

59. Maciej Eder, Jan Rybicki, and Mike Kestemont, 'Stylometry with R: a package for computational text analysis,' *R Journal* 8, no. 1 (2016): 107–121, https://journal.r-project.org/archive/2016/RJ-2016-007/index.html.

60. Stead, 'Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* and the Pegasus Award for Maori Literature,' 185.

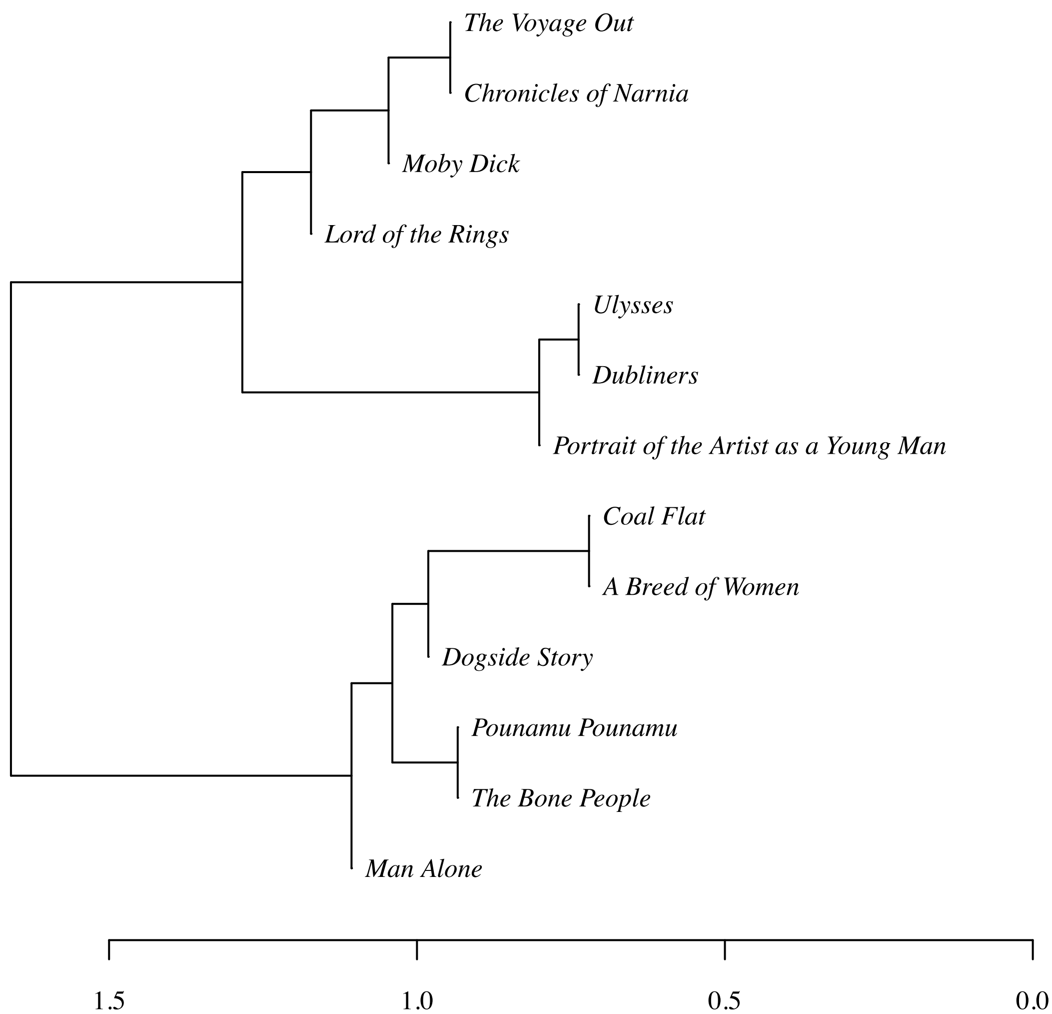


**Figure 1.2:** Stylometric Analysis: Burrow's Delta, 2000MFW, clustered using Ward's Method

that a pre-existing pattern of thought and expression is being granted further authority by appealing to the primacy or greater legitimacy of indigenous ideas.[61] This calls into question exactly what drives the global success of a text like *The Bone People*: is it the novel's ability to reveal culture to the world, or its ability to justify itself by an appeal to culture?[62]

A novel like *Man Alone* is more likely to be acknowledged as the product of transnational ideologies. International criticism has certainly not taken it up as an example of the rather

61. There is something apt in the way Stead's notorious article was preceded by a discussion of the long history of the 'man alone' motif which concluded in doubt about its future; its future was being critiqued on the next page (Anderson, 'The Rise and Fall of the "Man Alone"?').

62. One answer comes from the bitter argument of the Québécois poet Octave Crémazie, who argued of his own literature that it would always be outcompeted by the greater exoticism of indigeneity: 'One would swoon over a novel or poem translated from Iroquoian while not troubling oneself to read a book written in French by a colonist of Quebec or Montreal.' (Octave Crémazie, 'Lettre á l'abbé Casgrain du 29 janvier 1867', in *Oeuvres completes* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1896) Qtd. in Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 157)

generic postcolonialism for which Hulme is sometimes an exemplar, but it can be read, in its focus on the processes of settlement and settler communities, alongside Canadian and Australian examples. We learn about clearing land, Depression riots, the power of the uncleared landscape; all the common tropes of early cultural nationalism.[63] (There are close parallels, in numerous instances of Depression-era Canadian fiction, to Mulgan's account of alienation in landscape, participation in the Queen Street riot, new social consciousness and the discovery of meaning in participation in the Spanish Civil War as a symbol of socialist redemption. A more recent example, Terrence Heath's *Casualties*, has its characters endure the Regina Riot before finding new meaning in the Spanish Civil War.[64] Another novel, Hugh MacLennan's perhaps better known *The Watch That Ends The Night*, repeats Mulgan's pattern of participation in clarifying riot followed by redemption in Spain, though with a much greater degree of scepticism.[65] Appendix A gives details of similar riots in Australia and Canada in the same period.)

But if Hulme and Mulgan have produced substantively similar novels, it should be equally possible to read Hulme's work in the settler context within which we can approach Mulgan. This avoids both reducing her to only a purveyor of Māori wisdom to the colonial centre, there to be interpreted according to theoretical presumptions of indigeneity, or arguing that she is only Pākehā, produced by a set of cultural positionings unique to New Zealand and for New Zealand. My own position is rather that, as Philip Armstrong has argued, a reading requires

> the serious, detailed, and ethical examination of the discursive and rhetorical regimes of settler culture, and Western epistemology, as these impact on the writing and reading of a novel such as *The Bone People*.[66]

Much that has been treated as distinctive in *The Bone People* can be successfully examined using the reading strategies developed for settler literature as a whole, as the next section will demonstrate.

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63. Janet Wilson has noted the similarity of the Man Alone myth to 'other myths associated with frontier societies' (Wilson, 'Intertextual Strategies,' 278).

64. Terrence Heath, *Casualties* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2005).

65. Hugh MacLennan, *The Watch That Ends The Night*, ed. Michael Gnarowski (1958; Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009). W.H. New has produced a very interesting comparison of *Man Alone* and MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (W.H. New, 'The great-river theory: Reading MacLennan and Mulgan,' *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 56 [Fall 1995]: 162–182). He argues that both, trapped in a European concept of nationalism outside Europe, embark on a doomed project of trying to generalise a homogenous national culture which does not exist.

66. Philip Armstrong, 'Good-Eating: Ethics and Biculturalism in Reading "The Bone People,"' *ARIEL* 32, no. 2 (April 2001): 24.

## 1.2 *The Bone People* as settler literature

### 1.2.1 Introduction

I position myself between an argument that Hulme should be considered as producing literature based on a static Māori identity and the argument, represented by Stead and Williams, that she should be considered as producing literature best understood in terms of uniquely New Zealand experience. This synthesis is anticipated by James F. English.[67] But where English is particularly interested in the commodification of indigeneity as a globally-exportable and interpretable product — that is, the ways already discussed in which complications of Hulme's identity have been smoothed away by global marketing and prize wins — I examine here features of the novel which remain to trouble such a commodified reading. I interpret them with regard to a transnational settler experience rather than treating authenticity as a useful ground for argument. Such an approach opens up new reading possibilities and suggests that Hulme is neither purely representing Māoridom nor best explained by reference to New Zealand history and culture alone. Instead, her novel both reveals transnational patterns and is helpfully further interpreted by reference to them. I look at how a problem identified by critics — the novel's attitude to state care — can be best interpreted by referring to the transnational phenomenon of state care in settler states as an assimilatory programme. This is commonly recognised in both Canadian and Australian criticism, but not in New Zealand. I use these critical exemplars to unlock a feature of a New Zealand text which has often confounded critics or led to unconvincing explanations. I then move to examine how reading the novel in the light of some approaches to settler literature complicates representative readings, focussing first on Terry Goldie's concept of indigenization and then on the idea of settler ambivalence.

### 1.2.2 Common History: Child Abuse

If literature responds to cultural and social conditions — that is, is amenable to symptomatic readings — the cultural and historical similarities between the classic triad of settler states (Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) — as well as, to a lesser extent, South Africa — are so obvious and sustained (as the attached chronology shows) as to suggest that literary similar-

67. English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 319–320.

ities should also be anticipated. Each state must deal with the conflicting cultural authorities of Europe and the indigene, and reckon with the wrongs of settler colonialism.

The unexpected figure of Joanna Lumley provides a starting point for exploring the consequences of these links. Lumley was not present for the Booker judges' final decision and so sent Martyn Goff a letter setting out her views on the shortlist. Comments on each book were followed by final thoughts:

> Which only leaves the *Bone People*. This is over-my-dead-body stuff for me: I can't bring myself to applaud any of it; its poetry (to me) is whimsy, and its subject matter finally indefensible. We can't have a book on childbattering, no matter how lyrically observed, carry off the gold.[68]

According to Marina Warner, Nina Bawden — who shared Lumley's doubts — was outvoted.[69] 'Childbattering' perplexed and frustrated both these judges and later critics. Joe viciously beats Simon (sometimes with Kerewin's implied permission and once to a point near death); but the novel appears to treat this as a minor failing and celebrates Simon's return to Joe from state care. Among early commentators, D.J. Enright called the novel's attitude to child abuse 'positively immoral.'[70] C.K. Stead found 'something black and negative deeply ingrained in its imaginative fabric;' he suspected that this was linked to the way it 'presents extreme violence against a child, yet demands sympathy and understanding for the man who commits it.'[71] Hulme's charity here shades into 'imaginative complicity.' This argument is adapted by Suzanne Keen, who instead describes an empathetic distress when Hulme's empathy for Joe is shared with her readers.[72] Reading in structural rather than ethical terms, I agree with Ato Quayson that the narrative has 'to fall apart' despite its intent to provide a redemptive conclusion, because there is no way to respond to Joe's violence with redemptive action.[73] But, by reading *The Bone People* in the transnational context of state care for children across Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, this structural failure can be contextualised by

68. Joanna Lumley, Joanna Lumley to Martyn Goff, 28 October 1985, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library.

69. *The Guardian*, 'Tears, tiffs and triumphs.' In Goff's contrasting version, all present 'were very much in favour and very persuasive.' (Trewin, 'Behind the Scenes,' 22) (One wonders whom they were persuading.) Warner's own doubts at the time, diminished by listening to a discussion by John Carey and Germaine Greer, are indicated in a later letter (Marina Warner to Martyn Goff, 1 November 1985, BP/1/17/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library).

70. D.J. Enright, 'Worlds of Wonder,' *The New York Review of Books* 33, no. 3 (February 27, 1986): 16, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1986/02/27/worlds-of-wonder/.

71. Stead, 'Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* and the Pegasus Award for Maori Literature,' 108.

72. Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 132–134.

73. Ato Quayson, *Calibrations: Reading for the Social* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 121.

explaining why Hulme as an implied author might so strongly support Joe.[74]

To Clare Barker, the novel critiques 'monocultural and spiritually lacking care services in New Zealand.' An abusive parent who nonetheless embraces tikanga Māori (or, in her terms, 'Māori epistemologies') is justified because the state care system had not, in its development of biculturalism, yet established 'the value of Māori ways of living that were then lacking in New Zealand institutions.'[75] This critique of state care can be expanded using the novel's settler positionality. Anthony Armitage has shown that settler attitudes towards child welfare — with a particular emphasis on assimilatory removal to state care — come from a common source in the recommendations of the 1837 House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines.[76] They then developed in parallel, with separate legislative enactments reflecting local differences caused for example, by New Zealand recognition of Māori as citizens, or the initial Australian refusal to recognise indigenous land rights.[77]

The result was similar: 'The similarities in the main policy themes are strong and recurrent, while the differences are more often a matter of emphasis and degree rather than of kind.'[78] Indigenous children in all three countries were far more likely to be separated from their parents and taken into state care.[79] The underlying assumption was that children and the state would benefit from a state care system which assimilated indigenous children into

74. Alternative explanations are that the novel resists simple explanations but avoids complicity in violence (Otto Heim, *Writing Along Broken Lines: Violence and Ethnicity in Contemporary Maori Fiction* [Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998], 61–63) or that it should be read as archetypal or allegorical violence in various, sometimes vague, forms (Knudsen, *The Circle & the Spiral*, 158; Phillip Raymond O'Neill, 'Unsettling the Empire: Postcolonialism and the troubled identities of settler nations' [PhD diss., New York University, 1993], 246; Michelle Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the Body* [New York: Routledge, 2005], 103). A different allegorical reading identifies Simon as a symbol of whiteness, arguing that the 'violence the child suffers suggests that whiteness must be punished in order that Maoriness can regain pride of place in New Zealand.' (Antje M. Rauwerda, 'The White Whipping Boy: Simon in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*,' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 40, no. 2 [2005]: 23)

Rauwerda's allegory is more convincing, simply because there is no broad pattern of historical or social Māori abuse of Pākehā, so the novel must be an allegory of something desired rather than historically true. I nonetheless find an allegorical reading of a particular fragment which contrasts with the novel's favourable view of Pākehā inheritance of Māori 'rites' unsatisfactory, instead agreeing with Clare Barker that the novel depicts child abuse 'in realist (rather than allegorical) terms as being motivated by disabling social conditions of enforced conformity and Māori disempowerment.' (Clare Barker, 'From Narrative Prosthesis to Disability Counternarrative: Reading the Politics of Difference in *Potiki* and *The Bone People*,' *JNZL*, no. 24 (2006): 139).

75. Clare Barker, 'Disability and the Postcolonial Novel,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Postcolonial Novel*, ed. Ato Quayson, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 109.

76. Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 189–90.

77. See also Gillian Whitlock, 'Active remembrance: testimony, memoir and the work of reconciliation,' in *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa*, ed. Annie Coombes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 24–44. Many of these developments are tracked in Appendix A.

78. Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation*, 217.

79. Armitage, 205.

settler society. By the time Hulme's novel was published, almost eighty percent of children in state institutions in Auckland were Māori.[80] The removal of Māori children from their whānau and subsequent non-kin placements caused significant anguish, especially since 'authorities often sent Māori and Pasifika children to Pākehā parents, or fast-tracked them to institutions.'[81]

In both Australia and Canada, national inquiries and government apologies have brought these issues to prominence and in turn to the attention of critics, as the appendix shows.[82] Although an influential report into racism in the Department of Social Welfare completed soon after Hulme's novel (1986) indicted state welfare as a racist system derived from 'a profound misunderstanding or ignorance of the place of the child in Maori society and its relationship with whanau, hapu, iwi structures,'[83] the New Zealand Government only announced a royal commission of inquiry in 2018. Its final report is not due until 2023.[84]

Like their government, New Zealand critics have shown relatively little interest in state care, despite its examination in novels like (in reverse chronological order) *Once Were Warriors*, *Coal Flat*, *The God Boy*, and *The Hunted*.[85] But Barker's reading is supported by borrowing the Canadian and Australian awareness of state care as an issue important to settler literature. The 'message' of the novel about the importance of culture must necessarily outweigh any qualms about celebrating the return of a child to his (changed) abuser, because what he would lose in culturally genocidal institutions is, to the novel, greater. This realisation depends upon understanding the settler context in which the removal of children from their parents is less likely to be benign.[86]

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80. Elizabeth Stanley, *The Road to Hell: State Violence against Children in Postwar New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2016), 38.

81. Stanley, 35.

82. Rosanne Kennedy, 'Australian Trials of Trauma: The Stolen Generations in Human Rights, Law, and Literature,' *Comparative Literature Studies* 48, no. 3 (2011): 333–355; Cecily Devereux, 'Are We There Yet? Reading the "Post-Colonial" and *The Imperialist* in Canada,' in Moss, *Is Canada Postcolonial?*, 177–189.

83. Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, *Puao-te-Ata-Tu: The Report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare* (Wellington, 1988), 7.

84. *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions Order 2018* (Wellington, 2018), https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Documents/Terms-of-Reference/Terms-of-Reference-Full-version.pdf.

85. Alan Duff, *Once Were Warriors* (Auckland: Tandem Press, 1994); Bill Pearson, *Coal Flat* (Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963); Ian Cross, *The God Boy* (London: Deutsch, 1960); John A. Lee, *The Hunted* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1936).

86. See John McLeod, 'Adoption Studies and Postcolonial Inquiry,' *Adoption & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2018): 206–228. McLeod sensitively discusses adoption in the novel but misses the system's assimilationary aspects when he fails to inquire into why 'adoptions have usually happened ...with Māori children entering Pākehā families.' (McLeod, 224)

*The Bone People* is clearly suspicious of bringing the 'fuzz into family affairs' as an instrument of cultural assimilation.[87] A long and narratively pointless episode (which, in terms of plot, shows only that he has escaped) emphasises again and again the incompatible differences between Simon and a possible foster father who is otherwise admirable.[88] Simon is in state care partly because he is culturally Māori; the state care system cannot deal with his Māoriness ('He'll rot there') but refuses to return him to Māori, and so his only option to retain his cultural identity is escape.[89] Although Simon is tauiwi, the next section examines why culture might be so important a determinant, even over ethnicity. This includes an exploration of why Hulme as a Māori author might have been so sensitive towards questions of cultural loss.

### 1.2.3 Indigenization and Authenticity

#### Introduction

In this section, I explore how *The Bone People* corresponds to Terry Goldie's concept of indigenization. I first discuss the conflict over Hulme's right to present herself as Māori. I argue that the settler longing for authentic indigeneity shapes textual features which have been taken as signs of indigeneity or, conversely, inauthenticity. I move on from this to argue against authenticity as a mode of analysis.

Indigenization prefigures Homi Bhabha's third space. To Goldie, the white inhabitants of a settler colony feel the need to belong there, but this belonging is threatened by indigenous presence. In a pattern he uses to illustrate all the settler colonies, later echoed by Stephen S. Turner's[90] very similar argument:

> The white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada?[91]

In response, he argues, the settler, desiring to belong, can either attempt to destroy the

87. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 286.
88. Hulme, 401–405.
89. He cannot go to Joe's relatives 'because we haven't got much money *and we're Maori* [my emphasis] and we're not *really* relations and we got four kids already and another one on the way' (Hulme, 393).
90. Stephen Turner, 'Being Colonial/Colonial Being,' *JNZL*, no. 20 (2002): 39–40.
91. Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 12.

native, or, more commonly, somehow become native themselves, in what he calls 'indigenization': 'the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous.'[92]

This conception of settler literature might seem incongruous when applied to the Māori Keri Hulme. However, the rigidity of the settler sign of the indigene affects even indigenous writers so that the 'authentic' native, for example, is a symbol of wisdom in both settler and Native texts.[93] Katherine Mansfield's famous appearances provocatively dressed 'more or less Maori fashion' in London may recall the equally deliberate spectacle of Keri Hulme 'jerkined, sandalled and taiaha'd' at a conference there.[94] The question this presents is not whether such performative Māoriness is 'authentic' but what possibilities for reading this creates.

### Hulme and Authenticity

After *The Bone People* won the Pegasus Prize, C.K. Stead would infamously argue that there were grounds for disquiet in the 'babble of excited voices in public places' after the novel's publication. To him, Hulme was a Pākehā writer who willed herself to be Māori with results that were 'not entirely authentic' even compared to a Pākehā author like James K. Baxter; only one of her great-grandparents was Māori and Hulme grew up disconnected from kaupapa Māori and Te Reo before turning to them in later life.[95] This provokes the question, as Margery Fee has pointed out, of precisely how many great-grandparents are needed for authenticity, but it does stimulate questions even if his thesis is provocative — or, as Dougal McNeill puts it, is 'unpleasant jibing.'[96]

Stead's description of Hulme's racial antecedents is only roughly correct. A simplified version of Hulme's whakapapa is set out in Figure 1.3.[97] If accepted, there is — to be clear — ab-

92. Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 13.
93. Goldie, 218.
94. Jane Stafford and Mark Williams, *Maoriland: New Zealand Literature 1872-1914* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006), 163; Bartlett, '"The wonder of words winds through all worlds,"' 83 A taiaha is a weapon which might be used by men for ritual challenges; historically, it would not be carried by a woman or used as a prop while speaking. (Its unprecedented use by a woman is a major plot point in Ihimaera's *Whale Rider*; see Pascale De Souza, '*Maoritanga* in *Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors*: a problematic rebirth through female leaders,' *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2007): 19–20 for a discussion.) Perhaps in recognition of this, a later reprint of the same interview makes an unacknowledged change from taiaha to tokotoko (Rima Alicia Bartlett, 'Keri Hulme with Rima Alicia Bartlett,' in *Writing Across Worlds: Contemporary Writers Talk*, ed. Susheila Nasta [Abingdon: Routledge, 2004], 208).
95. Stead, 'Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* and the Pegasus Award for Maori Literature,' 101–102.
96. Margery Fee, 'Why C.K. Stead didn't like Keri Hulme's *the bone people*: Who can write as Other?,' *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, no. 1 (1989): 12; Dougal McNeill, 'Hard experience, missed meaning,' *New Zealand Review of Books / Pukapuka Aotearoa*, no. 89 (2010), https://nzbooks.org.nz/2010/non-fiction/lume_of_bees/
97. Compiled from an interview with Hulme in Celine Kearney, 'Southern Celts: an investigation of how people

solutely no reason to consider Hulme, as Stead did, as somehow not Māori. Hulme descends from her great-great-great-grandmother Motoitoi and her great-great-grandmother Piraurau, even if she is not, like Holmes, one-eighth Māori by descent, as critics have assumed. Although this is a distant relationship, there is no reason not to assume that aspects of culture can be passed down through generations. We might even consider Stead's argument as reflecting Goldie's first option: by denying legitimacy, Stead can indigenize himself by demonstrating that no authentically Māori voices exist, strengthening his version of New Zealand literature's claim to authenticity.[98]

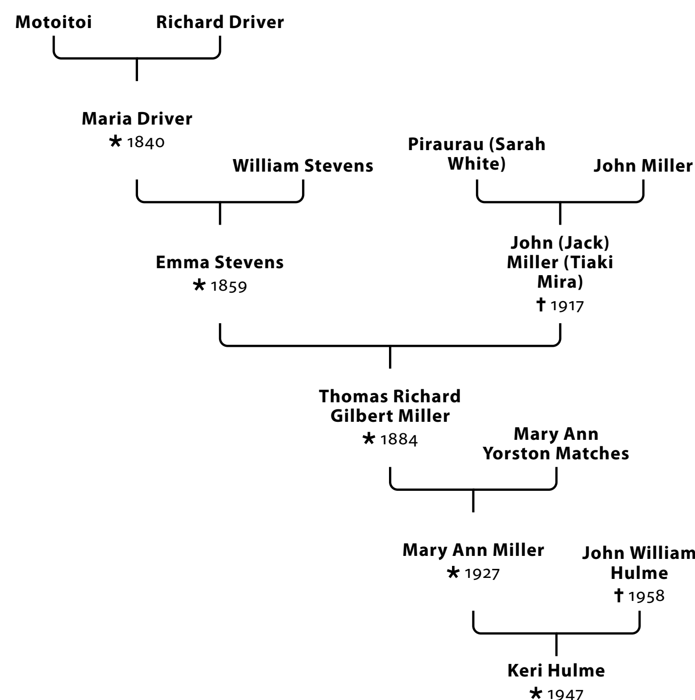


**Figure 1.3:** Keri Hulme Whakapapa

But it is also obvious that Hulme is not *only* Māori, but what she once described as 'bicultural': 'of double beginning, inhabiting both Te Ao Maori and Te Ao Pakeha, but writing

with a Celtic/Gaelic background live out their traditions in Aotearoa New Zealand' (PhD diss., Victoria University [Melbourne], 2015), 79–85 and from Keri Hulme, 'Uncle Bill's Predictions,' *Te Karaka* (Christchurch), no. 40 (September 2008): 10, 66. This is supported by an early poem, which describes 'Motoitoi, who joined with a sailor / until her bruises broke her heart / Emma who drew a plough / where a horse should be' (Keri Hulme, 'Nga Kehua,' in *The Silences Between (Moeraki Conversations)* [Auckland: Auckland University Press / Oxford University Press, 1982], 27)

98. Stead's thought has historical precedent and significance: the colonial process in New Zealand anticipated that 'the disappearance of Māori was not to be the kind of extinction seen elsewhere, but one specified in the discourses of racial amalgamation: intermarriage and inclusion would slowly but surely erase racial difference, and natives would be absorbed by the white race' (Damon Salesa, *Racial Crossings: Race, Intermarriage, and the Victorian British Empire*, Oxford Historical Monographs [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 244).

for Te Ao Hou.'[99] Her biography nevertheless shows deliberate attempts to indigenize herself. She makes a strained and ahistorical attempt to indigenize her ancestry by identifying Irish and Scots immigrants to New Zealand as being on the side of Māori, as being practically Māori themselves as a result of intermarriage.[100] Chris Bongie identifies a related shift in the description of Hulme across editions of *The Bone People*: 'in the former, she is someone who has "Kai Tahu, Orkney Island and English ancestry," in the latter she has become simply a "Maori writer".'[101] This is unlikely to be the result solely of marketing considerations: over this period, Hulme shifted away from a 'double beginning' to instead identify 'as a Maori writer rather than Pakeha... that's the strong and the vivid and the embracing, the good side of things.'[102] Bongie argues convincingly against this simplicity of identification and chooses instead to explore the 'uncomfortable, interstitial space' between Hulme's identities. The Pākehā antecedents of the novel may not be deliberately chosen but only ghosts of the culture Hulme grew up in, but 'any reading that ignores the centrality of this admixture to Hulme's novel is seriously incomplete.'[103]

### Examples of Indigenization

This interpenetration means that Hulme's work can be read not only as part of a Māori cultural formation but also as part of a Pākehā one. Intermingled authorities and the damage of colonisation leave Hulme necessarily and deliberately attempting to reconstruct a Māori identity while still influenced by a Pākehā identity. I read the novel here to discover evidence of the indigenization which is apparent in Hulme's life: in its emphasis on ancestry, its manipulation of the environment and its attitude to pounamu.[104] This indigenization overwhelms mixed identities and can be read as replacing Māori values in instances where specific knowledge has been lost.

99. Keri Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand,' in *Only Connect: Literary Perspectives East and West*, ed. G. Amirthanayagam and S.C. Harrax (Adelaide: Centre for Research in the New Literatures in English, 1981), 296.
100. Kearney, 'Southern Celts,' 84.
101. Chris Bongie, 'The Last Frontier: Memories of the Postcolonial Future in Keri Hulme's *the bone people*,' in *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*, ed. Rob Wilson and Arif Durham Dirlik (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 233.
102. Kim Worthington, 'Hulme, Keri,' in Robinson and Wattie, *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, 247.
103. Bongie, 'The Last Frontier,' 233–234.
104. Greenstone, a hard jade-like stone found in the South Island. It is culturally significant for its value and beauty in making tools, weapons and taonga (treasures) like hei-tiki.

Like Hulme, Kerewin Holmes chooses to emphasise being Māori over being Pākehā by referring to ancestry.[105] This project occasionally strains the logic of the text, as when she is

> revelling in the knowledge of my whakapapa and solid Lancashire and Hebridean ancestry. Stout commoners on the left side, and real rangatira on the right distaff side. A New Zealander through and through. Moanawhenua bones and heart and blood and brain. None of your (retch) import Poms or whateffers.[106]

A Lancastrian ancestor here has to become not an 'import Pom' (English) but a 'New Zealander through and through;' or, rather, from 'moanawhenua.' This is not a meaningful word but 'sea-land': a translation of (Nieuw) Zeeland into Te Reo which acts to diminish the colonising nature of that label, when even to call the country 'New Zealand' is to think of it in colonising terms.[107] The term associating Holmes' ancestors with colonisation is shifted into a marker of locality by translating it, even if this changes nothing in practical (as opposed to rhetorical) terms. Similarly, the kaumatua who represents indigeneity in this novel — who guards the very heart of not Moanawhenua Hou but Aotearoa — is, like Hulme's great-grandfather, named Tiaki Mira. Mira exists in Te Reo only as a loanword from 'mill'; the (as is emphasised) pure-blooded keeper of ancient secrets could only be called that as an adopted name. Perhaps it would be more sensible not to read the name as performing a narrative function, but a psychological function for the novel's author: her great-grandfather's name becomes a symbol of truly belonging. By linking him to indigeneity, she becomes more indigenous herself.[108] In this context, Kerewin Holmes as a name does not seem implausibly read as a desire for Keri to win a home.

The novel's depiction of the environment also emphasises an indigenous claim, as when the sea welcomes Kerewin on holiday at Moerangi.[109] 'The cribs and the beach at Moerangi, which is actually Moeraki,' Hulme explains, 'are exactly as they are described, except that I've turned them back to front.'[110] Watching Simon walk there, Kerewin briefly imagines a threat from the place itself, then as quickly dismisses it: 'a mad sheep, woman? Don't be barmy!'[111]

105. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 112, 62.
106. Hulme, 99.
107. During, 'Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?,' 370.
108. The idea may have begun with a pun; he claims to 'think of myself as the keeper (Hulme, *The Bone People*, 345) 'Tiaki' is to keep or guard. Otto Heim unconvincingly finds a 'barely hidden intertextual allusion,' a reference to Tiaki Mitira, the author of *Takitimu* (Heim, *Writing Along Broken Lines*, 222).
109. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 107, 163.
110. Gerry Turcotte, 'Reconsidering *The Bone People*. An Interview with Keri Hulme,' *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, 12 1994, 141.
111. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 167.

This attitude replaces Hulme's reluctance to go near certain tapu places at night, where the dead were buried.[112] The existence of urupa and other wāhi tapu, a source of ongoing conflict based on differing conceptions of land use and value,[113] is transformed into yet another means of belonging, a place for Simon to walk.

Similarly, the indigenization that pounamu represents conflicts with Māori values, since it becomes — as when Kerewin is *given* a piece of pounamu by the sea — a symbol of belonging. Kerewin has a chest of hoarded pieces she has bought, something not especially culturally coherent.[114] As Bongie argues, 'Kerewin's 'hoard' of Maori jade, like the collection of Maori myth with which Hulme lards the novel, signals a proprietary, indeed colonial, dimension to this project that Hulme criticizes and yet cannot help engaging in.'[115] This culturally-inappropriate hoarding may only be an expression of Kerewin's alienation from her own culture, but there are other strange moments.[116] Joe, for example, finds a pendant on the beach which Kerewin secretly thinks came from a grave. She does not tell him this, 'because the old ones might have given it to him. They gave mine to me.'[117] A useful comparison — Patricia Grace's *Mutuwhenua* — explores conflict over pounamu found by children playing. This might have been washed out of a grave and so must be returned to the hills: 'You can't steal from the dead without harming the living. It wasn't ours, or his, to have.'[118] In Hulme's presentation of the same problem, specifically Māori values are elided to create a sense of indigenous belonging.

### Against Authenticity

This erasure makes an unquestioning acceptance of Hulme's ability to speak without ambivalence problematic. But — as has been persuasively argued — it is important not to turn

112. Keri Hulme, 'A bach upon a beach,' *Te Karaka* (Christchurch), no. 65 (March 2015): 45.
113. See Robert Joseph, 'Legal challenges at the interface of Maori custom and state regulatory systems: Wahi Tapu,' *Yearbook of New Zealand Jurisprudence* 13/14 (2012): 160–193.
114. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 33, 313.
115. Bongie, 'The Last Frontier,' 237.
116. Simon notices something odd in her attitude towards her pieces (Hulme, *The Bone People*, 233). Judith Dell Panny reads the disjunction between Kerewin's thought that 'you wouldn't keep a named heirloom if it didn't belong in your family' and that she has in her chest 'two meres, patu pounamu, both old and named' as an example of her sickness of spirit (Panny, 'Inside the spiral,' 216); c.f. the identification of these 'alienated objects' as 'themselves symptoms of genealogical alienation, the absence of relations through which objects sustain their mana.' (Najita, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific*, 116)
117. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 253.
118. Patricia Grace, *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps* (Auckland: Longman, 1978), 151. See also Ihimaera's 'The Greenstone Patu.' (Witi Ihimaera, *The new net goes fishing* [Auckland: Heinemann, 1977], 107–118)

Hulme into a purely Pākehā figure.[119] What Gareth Griffiths has called the 'mythologized and fetishized sign of the 'authentic'' seems a dangerous standard by which to judge works.[120] The majority idea of 'authenticity' will always reflect that which the majority wishes authenticity to look like. The lines, in a settler society, can always be drawn more narrowly, until no-one is 'authentic'. Of the two examples of a differing attitude to pounamu given above, Patricia Grace had a Pākehā mother; Witi Ihimaera comes from a landowning family, the Smilers, and changed his name; neither grew up with te reo; and so on. As Mark Williams puts it, 'after 150 years of cohabitation, after having been so long and so intimately, albeit unwillingly, intertwined, the two cultural presences [of Māori and Pākehā] cannot be neatly separated.'[121] To Sandra Tawake, giving examples, 'not a single one of the writers of recent fiction from the Pacific is positioned 'inside' a single fixed cultural community.'[122] Trying to police such borders is foolish, and would not result in 'authentic' voices but in constraining all discourse to the Pākehā majority; as Diana Brydon asks:

> Whose interests are served by this retreat into preserving an untainted authenticity? Not the native groups seeking land rights and political power.[123]

This presents something of a problem. How can we read Hulme in a way that recognises her indigeneity *and* successfully identifies a settler tradition which mimics indigeneity? It seems unlikely that these different aspects of the divided self can be separated into 'pure' and 'impure.' Following Chris Prentice, I doubt that this is a useful distinction to attempt to draw. Since chosen positionalities are both effective and yet also artificial 'in the settler post-colonial cultural context,'[124] she argues not for a simple materialist postcoloniality, driven by ideas of the resistant self, but for a

119. Julian Murphet notes 'the radical absence of any 'authenticity'' but argues texts like Hulme's are postcolonial precisely because of their 'interpenetrated and mutually implicative' nature (Murphet, 'Postcolonial writing in Australia and New Zealand,' 477–478); Fee accepts that Hulme's identity is willed and rediscovered but argues that it is 'ironic at best', given the success of majority attempts at deculturalisation of indigenous groups, for critics like Stead to then argue that they are not indigenous enough when they attempt to recover or recreate lost indigeneity. Attempts to delineate authenticity in this process deny the ability of indigenous cultures to change (Fee, 'Why C.K. Stead didn't like Keri Hulme's *the bone people*,' 18).

120. Gareth Griffiths, 'The Myth of Authenticity: Representation, discourse and social practice,' in *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and textuality*, ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 71.

121. M. Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 98.

122. Sandra Tawake, 'Transforming the insider-outsider perspective: postcolonial fiction from the Pacific,' *The Contemporary Pacific* 12, no. 1 (2000): 166.

123. Diana Brydon, 'The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as a Literary Strategy,' in Sugars, *Unhomely States*, 99.

124. Chris Prentice, 'Some Problems of Response to Empire in Settler Post-Colonial Societies,' in Tiffin and Lawson, *De-Scribing Empire*, 55.

> formulation of subjectivity which problematizes the assumption of epistemological innocence of the 'self', and which negotiates the necessity of foregrounding the site of enunciation as constitutive of meaning—in other words which harnesses the efficacy of a politics of identity—but which relinquishes its dependence upon a belief in the purity of its discourse.[125]

Griffiths similarly argues that when 'authentic speech' is 'conceived not as a political strategy within a specific political and discursive formation but as a fetishized cultural commodity' it may 'enact a discourse of "liberal violence", re-enacting its own oppressions on the subjects it purports to represent and defend,' primarily by denying opportunities for hybridity and mimicry.[126] Texts which appear to create a sense of authenticity do not — unlike those which disrupt claims to purity — show how

> the contemporary dominant discourse replicates its own divisions through the construction of myths of purity and authenticity which then enable the continuity of the idea of a stable dominant discourse even at the very moment it appears to 'recognize' the existence of the other as 'authentic'. In fact in practice such recognition frequently disables the 'recognized', limiting their representation to little but a counterpoise within the discursive economy of the speaker.[127]

*The Bone People* can be read on either side of Griffith's division. Its focus on 'double beginnings' might be seen as disrupting a sense of authentic indigeneity in favour of a willed one. A Stead-ian complaint about inauthenticity is then a way of silencing this voice. (This is the position of Patrick Evans, who celebrates Hulme as a 'postmodern Maori' deliberately constructing an identity.[128]) But if this willed identity is based on Pākehā ideals of indigeneity, it in fact replicates rather than disrupts the dominant discourse. This, in a New Zealand context, is what Witi Ihimaera has called Pākehā-style biculturalism, where what appear to be statements of independence from the dominant culture in fact reflect its preconceptions. As Evans puts it — although he does not include Hulme in this group except as someone whose reception rather than intent shows 'the risk of becoming reified as "Maori" and "indigenous" in global terms'[129] — this acts as a way of

125. Prentice, 'Some Problems of Response to Empire in Settler Post-Colonial Societies,' 56.
126. Griffiths, 'The Myth of Authenticity,' 77.
127. Griffiths, 77.
128. Evans, *The Long Forgetting*, 199. See also his discussion of Hulme's sense of biculturalism as a 'both-and' rather than an 'either-or' (Patrick Evans, '"Pakeha-Style Biculturalism" and the Maori Writer,' *JNZL*, no. 24 [2006]: 26–27). This reading seems to evade Hulme's tendency to slip from acknowledging biculturalism into a purely Māori identity.
129. Evans, 25.

> encouraging Maori writers to create and inhabit their own version of the dominant culture's sublime picture of them, and — ironically — drawing Maori writers themselves, in effect, into that predominantly-Pakeha culture's own yearning for indigeneity.[130]

A willed indigeneity that creates an apparent authenticity while reinforcing Pākehā cultural presumptions then, as Griffiths suggests, turns displayed authenticity into a form of silencing of the subaltern. As I understand him, the implications of this are that the false category of authenticity — how many great-grandmothers does Hulme have? — should be replaced by 'an analysis which seeks to register the political context within which their evaluation as effective inscriptions of actual historical struggles needs to be made.'[131] One path forward is to abandon binary categorisation, on the grounds that even 'displacement or reversal of the colonizer/colonised binary effectively re-inscribes the oppositional pattern and does not challenge discursive colonization.'[132] Discussing *The Bone People* in these terms, Graham Huggan presents an alternative he calls creolization, a process which neither perpetuates ex-colonial or recuperates indigenous values but eludes or works against the 'binary structures (white/black, master/slave) which inform colonial discourse but which have also survived in modified or transposed forms in the aftermath of the colonial era.'[133] He argues that Kerewin may show the 'reactionary process of negative creolization: mainly European, part Maori, she appears to disclaim the former in order to recuperate the latter but actually assimilates the latter within the former.'[134] Crucially, he suggests this process cannot be understood using 'an inherited Eurocentric vocabulary' of post-structuralism and that this vocabulary actually works against the interrogative practices of the text.[135] In other words, deconstructing the text to re-establish a Māori/Pākehā binary prevents the emergence of 'an emancipated post-colonial voice.'[136]

The next section explores the implications of this argument by looking at the notion of settler ambivalence, exploring how *The Bone People* exists in the space between these binaries

130. Evans, '"Pakeha-Style Biculturalism" and the Maori Writer,' 19.
131. Griffiths, 'The Myth of Authenticity,' 85.
132. Wilson, 'Intertextual Strategies,' 275. See also Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin, *Decolonising Fictions* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1993), 78 for a similar argument: that decolonisation should not be a simple reversal of centre and periphery but a dismantling of such concepts.
133. Graham Huggan, 'Opting out of the (Critical) Common Market: Creolization and the Post-Colonial Text,' *Kunapipi* 11, no. 1 (1989): 31.
134. Huggan, 34.
135. Huggan, 38.
136. Huggan, 36.

and arguing that — viewed in Griffiths' terms — the apparent authenticity of the novel obscures its political quiescence. In this we see, as English and Huggan would later argue, how 'prizes like the Booker might work to contain cultural (self-)critique by endorsing the commodification of a glamorised cultural difference.'[137]

### 1.2.4 Ambivalence

One of the most prominent distinguishing features of settler literature is its position of 'radical ambivalence.'[138] To Slemon, the distinction between Second-World (i.e. settler) and Third World writing — as Hulme perhaps demonstrates — 'is that the illusion of a stable self/other, here/there binary division has never been available' and as a result 'the ambivalence of literary resistance itself is the "always already" condition of Second-World settler and post-colonial literary writing.'[139] Alan Lawson further expands on this argument to suggest that the ambivalence of settler culture comes from its place between two kinds of authority and two kinds of authenticity: that of the imperial enterprise and culture, and that of the Indigene and the land.[140] This leads to what he calls three tripled settler dreams: indigenous effacement, appropriation of indigenous authority and 'the desire to inherit the Natives' spiritual "rites" to the land.'[141] The desire to suppress is balanced with the desire to become.

> The text is thus marked by counterfeitings of both emergence and origination. The settler subject-position is both postimperial and postcolonial; it has colonized and has been colonized: it must speak of and against both its own oppressiveness and its own oppression [...] as empire's supplement, the settler 'subject-effect' will, in any figural or textual location, have its unavoidable ambivalence exposed.[142]

Texts will both imitate indigeneity and imperiality, oscillating between the two and modifying each in the light of the other. Simon During's influential reading of Hulme's novel as Māori content in a European form demonstrates this. Crucially, he differs from St John-Stevas

137. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, 200. For a more recent example of the same point, see the discussion of Kiran Desai's Booker win in Rosenberg, 'Promoting the Exotic? – the Ideological Mechanisms of Literary Prizes,' 139–140.
138. Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire,' 40.
139. Slemon, 38.
140. Compare During's argument that New Zealand culture is defined by the balance between postcolonising and postcolonial forces, where postcolonised voices have a discursive authority based on authenticity (During, 'Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?,' 370–371).
141. Lawson, 'Postcolonial theory and the "settler" subject,' 26.
142. Lawson, 27.

in that to him the form overrides the content. He draws a distinction between postmodernism and postcolonialism, which acts 'by accepting and using those practices and concepts (representation, history, evaluation) which postmodernism most strenuously denies.'[143] The text's postmodern and parodic instincts draw that which it wishes to establish as other, taha Māori, into (post)modernist forms which destroy its otherness. Despite what he calls the desire for 'a postcolonial identity given to it in Maoriness,'

> against its own wishes, the text provides precisely the final seal in the destruction of that culture. For its own structure and presuppositions are borrowed from modernity. Its psychologisation of the characters, its symbolism and most importantly, the overarching narrative frame which tells of voyages through and beyond death to regeneration are exactly modernist [...] Maori culture is absorbed and controlled by its profoundly Occidental narratives.[144]

Fee gives a more convincing reading than others who have argued against During.[145] To her, the novel plays with the 'powerful fantasies of Western culture', laying them out and then subverting them so that their 'conclusions are either dropped, reshaped or awkwardly rushed.'[146] Hulme *does* adopt modernity's presuppositions, but only to show their inadequacy. She has, to Fee, little choice but to do so: her reading of During is that he assumes a pure Māori culture, when in fact 'any conventions of use to Maori in the present can be created only by struggling with the mainstream normative conventions of the Pakeha.' In the struggle between postcolonialism and postmodernism, Hulme is 'a postcolonial writer who uses postmodernist techniques only to help her undermine the powerful discursive formations she is of necessity writing within.'[147] This is persuasive but somewhat paradoxical. If there is no surviving 'uncontaminated' Māori culture sufficient to provide its own conventions, as Fee assumes, then

143. During, 'Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?,' 369. This argument has attracted some comment; the next chapter, on Australia, further explores the implications of a conflict between postmodernity and postcolonial desires.
144. During, 373–374.
145. Knudsen inadvertently reinforces During's argument when she claims that, instead of repeating 'the familiar voyage from ignorance and darkness towards knowledge and light,' that the novel's form is 'far more complex', replicating traditional Māori conventions 'in a journey away from common enlightenment and accepted European knowledge (epitomized in the Imperial Canon to which the novel repeatedly alludes) towards gloom and insanity, at which point the path leaps away from common ground and curves into the indigenous realm of void' (Knudsen, *The Circle & the Spiral*, 144). This is not incompatible with During's argument of a voyage from ignorance to death to regeneration. Ignorance may have become European and knowledge Māori, but the form has not. In fact, the words Knusden uses to describe the end of this quest — 'from 'Te Kore' [the void] the path leads on to 'Te Po' [the night] and ends in 'Te Ao Marama' — can be translated, as she does, as the world of light (Knudsen, 144).
146. Fee, 'Why C.K. Stead didn't like Keri Hulme's *the bone people*,' 20.
147. Fee, 22.

what is the source of Hulme's 'struggle' against conventions except an imagined identity constructed by those conventions?[148]

That which Fee interprets as a deliberate choice can instead be read as ambivalence. The text wants to adopt both European and Māori authority at the same time, so that at one moment fantasies are adopted and at another dropped; sometimes Simon is a Celtic marvellous stranger and sometimes he is Maui. Kerewin can both achieve the European dream of self-reliance and need to adopt a commensalism — to use a term important in the novel — lifted from te ao Māori. This approach allows us to recognise the novel's structure as neither European nor indigenous. Instead, it reflects a settler desire for indigeneity gained by the use of settler forms to explore indigenous content. In this reading, form does not overwhelm content but nor does the text — paradoxically — have to challenge (post)modernism by adopting it. Goldie identifies (*obiter dicta*) *The Bone People* as following a common pattern of settler literature — especially pertinent examples are 'Atwood's *Surfacing* and Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* in Canada and B. Wongar's *The Trackers* [...] in Australia.'[149] — in which individuation is achieved by an excursion into the wilderness which (possibly 'in some association with indigenes') removes the taint of civilization and re-establishes them as related to the land.[150] He compares the way both *Surfacing* and *The Bone People* justify their 'deviant form' by description of indigenous designs — the spiral for Hulme,[151] rock paintings for Atwood — to 'attempt to indigenize form.'[152] The voyage into nature where a struggle with death is followed by regen-

148. This distinction between the postmodern and the postcolonial will be revisited in later chapters.

149. Wongar and Hulme's differing levels of 'complicity in the reader's conflation of the author as writing subject with the 'identity' of the text' have been very interestingly discussed (Chris Prentice, 'Grounding Postcolonial Fictions: Cultural Constituencies, Cultural Credentials and Uncanny Questions of Authority,' *SPAN*, no. 36 [1992]: 100–112); in *Gone Indian*, ethnic essentialism (or any sense of stable ethnicity) is disrupted by an American graduate student's adoption of performative indigeneity; see Justin Edwards, 'Going Native in Robert Kroetsch's *Gone Indian*,' *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 26, no. 1 (2001): 84–97 for an argument which strongly recalls During's sense that *The Bone People*, in reconciling 'postcolonising and postcolonised discourses' destroyed differences between them and ended indigenous otherness (During, 'Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?,' 374).

150. Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 46.

151. A good overview of the use of the spiral in structuring the novel is Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*, 122–123. This does not examine the sources of the spiral motif in detail; Luke Strongman has in fact argued that Hulme overdetermines the symbolism of the spiral in Māori culture and ignores its figurative quality (Strongman, 'The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire,' 122). A comparative reading of a well-known New Age text, Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance*, alongside Hulme's work shows strong similarities in the significance of the spiral (Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979]).

152. Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 46–47 Atwood and Hulme noticeably rely on conceptions of Canada and New Zealand as more native, more in touch with the land, than — respectively — the United States and Australia in order to carry out their nation-building project. In *Surfacing*, the Canadians who kill a heron are thought of as Americans and are pleased to meet the 'real native' protagonists; to *The Bone People*'s Australians, New Zealanders 'get round with bloody Mahries and behave worse than they do.' (Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 141; Hulme, *The Bone People*, 293) Williams notes the significance of the description of Australia as

eration perhaps better maps onto this pattern than to During's purely imported form while also preserving the possibility of indigeneity. It also closely follows the plot of *Man Alone*.

Rather than focussing on all possible examples of such ambivalence, I restrict myself here to an exploration of how the Māori aspects of the novel draw from and are used to validate colonial concepts in an ambivalent intermingling of authority.[153] Williams, for example, argues that it is impossible for there to be such a thing as a mauri for the whole of New Zealand.[154] There was no pre-colonial conception of New Zealand, Māoridom or Māori as a unified entity.[155] (Aotearoa, the name the novel uses, applied only to the North Island.) Hulme has conceded in an interview that there is no 'mauri of the heart of New Zealand,' arguing instead that the conceit 'emphasizes that part of Maori tradition which does continue, which is still alive and very real, and that's the spiritual world.'[156] In other words, the core of the novel relies on an appeal to an absent indigenous authority to validate a claim developed in dialogue with the European invention of New Zealand. The symbol the novel uses to resist colonisation can only be a colonial concept; its very resistance is ambivalent.

This pattern recurs in Hulme's gloss of 'mauri', often returned to by critics. 'Mauri,' she tells the reader, is the 'life principle, thymos of humans; talisman or material symbol of that secret and mysterious principle protecting the mana (power/vitality) of people, birds, land, forests, whatever.'[157] This is a modified version of an (unacknowledged) dictionary definition in turn derived from the self-trained Pākehā ethnographer Elsdon Best: 'of man' becomes 'humans', 'etc' becomes 'whatever' and so on, without fundamental changes.[158] The textual

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'dead-hearted,' compared to New Zealand with a mauri at the heart of it (M. Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 97).

153. A complicating factor is the disruption of oral traditions, so that 'non-oral texts became important media for disseminating a wide range of knowledge, including whakapapa.' (Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2002], 132) For Hulme's iwi, Kai Tahu, the change began very early (Tony Ballantyne, 'Paper, Pen, and Print: The Transformation of the Kai Tahu Knowledge Order,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 2 [2011]: 232–260). Māori identity became a partly textual identity. The texts available for someone like Hulme, in an almost exclusively Pākehā environment, must have been influenced by Pākehā ideologies and desires, especially since 'the textualisation of Māori culture was a crucial component of the colonising process.' (Otto Heim, '"To be true one must find one's kaupapa": Moments of agency in Maori fiction,' *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies* 19, no. 2 [1997]: 7) To determine a Māori identity in a Pākehā society Hulme had to read about it in published texts inevitably shaped by Pākehā ideas of Māoriness. I do not attempt to unravel this further complication; my purpose here is only to demonstrate the ambivalence of the novel's approaches.

154. M. Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 100.

155. Otto Heim disputes this, arguing that Māori certainly knew of the country as a geographic entity; this seems to miss Williams' point (Heim, *Writing Along Broken Lines*, 220).

156. Turcotte, 'Reconsidering *The Bone People*. An Interview with Keri Hulme,' 140.

157. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 363.

158. Herbert W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, 6th ed. (Wellington: R.E. Owen, Government Printer, 1957) This disguise casts doubt on Heim's claim that the novel does not attempt to repress patterns and

authority of Best overwhelms any other means of defining mauri even as Hulme attempts to escape European influence and present an alternative worldview.[159]

The canoe which bore this mauri shapes the central myth of the novel, the centrality of, as Joe puts it, 'nine canoes' to the 'possible new world, the impossible new world' of the novel's vision of a bicultural New Zealand.[160] This is the only mention of nine canoes, but they are presumably the 'founding canoes' Joe tries to find out more about by correspondence with 'several North Island elders and two libraries.'[161] Joe assumes that he has become a guardian of one of these. In this too, an attempt at resistance collapses into ambivalence.

'Nine founding canoes' recalls a familiar narrative of New Zealand settlement, that of 'Kupe, Toi and the Fleet.'[162] Two explorers were followed by a great fleet of seven more waka from which Māori descend.[163] However, as has been demonstrated in detail over the past fifty years, this narrative is a myth constructed by Pākehā ethnographers for their own purposes; most importantly, it challenges the claim of tangata whenua to special treatment by emphasising similarities between European and Māori arrivals.[164] Incorporating it into *The Bone People*

influences (Heim, *Writing Along Broken Lines*, 220).

159. Williams has similarly traced Tiaki Mira's teachings to Best. He argues that 'The Maori spiritual material in *the bone people* is not pure and unmediated, a direct link back to the source. It bears the imprint of the Pakeha reception and interpretation of that material' (M. Williams, *Leaving the Highway*, 100). This point also supports During's argument that the existence of the glossary is in fact a denial of Māori otherness — everything is translatable and will be translated (During, 'Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?,' 374). Perhaps in response to his reading of Hulme, Stead's novel *The Singing Whakapapa* contains a glossary of Māori words helpfully labelled, in very Stead-ian style, 'for Australians'; New Zealanders in the world of *The Bone People* would not need a glossary but would know it all already. Stead repeats the joke (a 'Glossary of Maori Words for non New Zealand Readers') in a later, unpleasant, novel of revenge against Dan Davin (C.K. Stead, *Talking About O'Dwyer* [London: Random House, 2003], 145–146).

160. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 377.

161. Hulme, 382.

162. D. R. Simmons, 'A New Zealand Myth: Kupe, Toi and the "Fleet,"' *New Zealand Journal of History* 3, no. 1 (1969): 16.

163. Te Rangi Hīroa (Peter Buck) is the most likely source for Hulme's particular version. For a discussion of Hīroa's adaptations for a Pākehā audience, despite his reservations about the fleet myth, see Rawiri Taonui, 'Nga Tatai-whakapapa: Dynamics in Maori Oral Tradition' (PhD diss., University of Auckland, 2005), 54–57. Textual evidence shows that Hulme had read Hīroa's *The Coming of the Maori*. Kerewin's explanation of Māori ideas of gifts names him (Hulme, *The Bone People*, 66; Te Rangi Hīroa, *The Coming of the Maori* [Wellington: Maori Purposes Fund Board, 1949], 421). He also translates a lament: 'These were the canoes of my ancestors / In which they paddled / Across the Great Ocean of Kiwa (Hīroa, *The Coming of the Maori*, 40) Thinking of the canoe in question, Joe imagines 'one of the fartravelled saltsea ships, that knifed across great Kiwa centuries ago' (Hulme, *The Bone People*, 366). Hulme misreads Hīroa's translation of te moana nui a kiwa as 'the great ocean Kiwa,' not the great ocean *of* Kiwa, so that she glosses 'Kiwa' alone as both a god (Kiwa is a local deity from the east coast) and, incorrectly, as a name for the Pacific. See also the phrases, glosses, and in-text translations centred in the same passage around the idea of 'tauranga atua', which come directly from Hīroa and his quotation of Best (Hīroa, *The Coming of the Maori*, 471).

164. Note that M.P.K. Sorrenson and Rawiri Taonui have both argued that Māori agency should be recognised in the creation of this myth (M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations: The Genesis of Some Pakeha Myths and Legends* [Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1979], 50, 85–86; Taonui, 'Nga Tatai-whakapapa,' 44–63); others argue that if it is accepted by Māori as true even if they would not once have done so, its truth-value is immaterial (Allan Hanson, 'The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic,' *American Anthropologist* 91, no.

shows an ambivalent switching between Pākehā and Māori authority rather than a special knowledge.

The idea of Māori cannibalism, used as a justification for colonialism, is treated with equal ambivalence. The historiography of kai tangata has been a scene of fierce debate. The extent to which cannibalism (as distinct from anthropophagy) was either created by or understood in terms of European anticipations of it is uncertain, with correspondingly differing interpretations of the available evidence.[165] Among New Zealand historians, there is a general consensus that anthropophagy was practiced in specific circumstances; the exact circumstances are a matter of dispute, and (suggests Alex Calder) are irrecoverable.[166] But it *is* generally agreed that 'to use the jargon, the Maori were exo- rather than endocannibals.'[167] Anthropophagy was an act of contempt or revenge targeted at outsiders. The idea of a savage cannibality — an eating of people without specific reason — is therefore no longer taken seriously. It is seen as a product of the European imagination, which, anticipating cannibalism, found it. This imagination influences the depiction of Tiaki Mira, who is regularly labelled as 'the last of the cannibals.'[168] His grandmother instructed him 'to eat part of the corpse' after she died, a ritual with which the novel seems to agree.[169] This is culturally incoherent; it comes from a loose association of Māori with cannibalism, rather than any sense of anthropophagy as an expression of contempt.[170] The novel's presumed authenticity therefore reinforces distorted ideas

4 [1989]: 898; Margaret Orbell, *Hawaiki: A New Approach to Maori Tradition*, University of Canterbury Publications 35 [Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1985], 60–66; Anne Salmond, *Hui: A Study of Maori Ceremonial Gathering* [Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1975], 10). To During, however, the 'purpose was explicitly political,' and should be understood as such (During, 'What Was the West?: Some Relations Between Modernity, Colonisation and Writing,' 765).

165. International scholars have argued that cannibalism in New Zealand was a product of European encounters and largely a European fantasy, or a hoax perpetrated upon them, as in Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 57–87. To New Zealand historians, anthropophagy was a rarer, ritualised activity aimed at the mana of defeated opponents. In the most recent generally accepted incident, Kereopa Te Rau, for example, swallowed the eyes of an executed spy in 'a ritualised and symbolic act of contempt' (Vincent O'Malley, 'Frontier Justice? The Trial and Execution of Kereopa Te Rau,' *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 120, no. 2 [2011]: 183). When Kereopa was pardoned, both the Crown and Ngati Rangiwewehi acknowledged that this anthropophagy occurred (Ngāti Rangiwewehi and Te Tahuhu o Tawakeheimoa Trust and the Crown, *Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims* [December 16, 2012], 12, https://www.govt.nz/dmsdocument/5578.pdf).

166. Calder, *The Settler's Plot*, 52.

167. Ross Bowden, 'Maori Cannibalism: An Interpretation,' *Oceania* 55, no. 2 (December 1984): 82.

168. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 335.

169. Hulme, 353.

170. Hulme, after years of fame, would ask a journalist who had displeased her 'Do you realise you have arrived among a family of cannibals?' (Ali Ikram, 'Ali Ikram's Brief Encounter with Keri Hulme,' *The Spinoff*, November 23, 2015, https://thespinoff.co.nz/featured/23-11-2015/books-the-monday-extract-i-ali-ikrams-brief-encounter-with-keri-hulme/)

of savagery rather than challenging them.[171]

The simultaneous and contradictory ambivalences of the novel come through most strongly, however, in its spiritual beliefs. These are not solely Māori. Kerewin ('all Maori' 'by heart, spirit, and inclination') accepts without murmur Simon's ability to see auras, believes that gemstones each bestow a 'particular virtue,' takes 'an eclectic range of religious writing' heavy on mysticism on her journey to death, thinks 'Vitamin E and C and Laetrile' are *conventional* cures for cancer, and has devoted enough time to aikido — 'a kind of super-karate, the ultimate kung fu' — that although, 'I didn't stay that long, not long enough to become really expert [...] I can handle six ordinary attackers at once quite comfortably.'[172] As Witi Ihimaera once delicately put it, 'Keri's supernaturalism is also sourced from other traditions.'[173]

I do not intend to claim that these rather conventionally New Age beliefs are incompatible with being Māori but that these beliefs and the version of Māoridom presented by the novel are closely intertwined. The novel's Māoritanga is seamlessly compatible with the esoteric beliefs of the novel's era; to be Māori gently elides into believing in the powers of gemstones. Such approaches may have more to do with external perceptions of exotic indigenous wisdom than with any cultural formation on its own terms.[174] If we accept the notion of a doubled authority in the settler states, where ideas are supported by reference either to Europe or to the indigene, it is quite possible to read their ascription to Māori as the result of a process by which a desired idea which is not European must then be Māori.[175]

In fact, it is possible to go further. Allan Hanson has argued that the modern role of Māori tradition relies on an image of New Zealand as a bicultural society.

> To promote that image, it is necessary to stress the unique contribution that Maori

171. Philip Armstrong, complicating the situation, recognises the 'horrifying breach of tapu' involved in eating one's own kin, but draws upon an anecdote of filial cannibalism as a mark of respect in Cowan to suggest that the novel recognises an ambiguity (Armstrong, 'Good-Eating,' 20). He notes Barry Mitcalfe's argument that Cowan was misled by a joking informant. Cowan himself calls this a singular case, the only one of which he knows (James Cowan, *The Maoris of New Zealand*, The Makers of Australasia [Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1910], 241). I do not think this single (North Island) account of dubious reliability is enough to overturn an otherwise universal understanding.

172. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 61, 93, 291, 329, 417, 198–199.

173. Paul Sharrad, 'Listening to One's Ancestors: An Interview with Witi Ihimaera,' *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, no. 8 (1992): 100.

174. See Tipene O'Regan, 'Old Myths and New Politics: Some Contemporary Uses of Traditional History,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 26, no. 1 (1992): 23 for an excellent discussion of this process in New Zealand.

175. Similarly, Laura Wright has noted the discrepancy between historical Māori attitudes to the environment and those presented as Māori in the novel (Laura Wright, 'Diggers, strangers, and broken men: environmental prophecy and the commodification of nature in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*,' in *Postcolonial Green: environmental politics & world narratives*, ed. Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt, Under the sign of nature: explorations in ecocriticism [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010], 64–79).

> culture has made to national life — different from but no less valuable than the Pakeha contribution. Thus, the Maori tradition that Maoritanga invents is one that contrasts with Pakeha culture, and particularly with those elements of Pakeha culture that are least attractive.[176]

In these formulations, being Māori is reduced to being that which Pākehā wish they were. There is reason to doubt that this is a harmless or politically innocent process.[177] Authorial temptation 'to find in the Maori the virtues that are missing in the Pakeha and to use him as a criticism of Pakeha society' was noted early on.[178] Such valorisation of specialness and spiritualism justified material differences:

> When he praises their 'cheerful neglect of material surroundings' he is making squalor seem charming. He is persuading us that one-eighth of Maori houses, the huts and baches and whares, are all right: they like to live like that; good housing would spoil them.[179]

Ruth Brown in turn argues that the Maori spirituality of *The Bone People* is 'a sentimentalised perversion of English Romanticism in ethnic dress.' By asking nothing of Pākehā but to wait, and reassuring them that Māori retain a special connection to the land, issues like the fact that their land — spiritual connection or no — was taken by colonizers are elided. 'This act of cultural ventriloquism projects 'spirituality' onto the Maori and leaves everyday 'non-spiritual' Western entrepreneurial practices unimpaired.'[180] Sarah Shieff follows Pearson's argument against this 'fantasy of spiritual healing,' arguing that 'its message of reconciliation might offer substantially more solace to pakeha than to Maori.'[181] By replacing history with felt and performative identity, any responsibility for historical injustice can be transcended and nothing about the settler state needs to change. This too can be understood as a form of ambivalence, a welcoming of two different authenticities and authorities.

176. A. Hanson, 'The Making of the Maori,' 894.
177. Worries about it were sufficient to stop Witi Ihimaera writing for a period (Lydia Wevers, 'The Novel, the Short Story, and the Rise of a New Reading Public, 1972–1990,' in M. Williams, *A History of New Zealand Literature*, 247).
178. W.H. Pearson, 'Attitudes to Maori in Some Pakeha Fiction,' *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 67, no. 3 (September 1958): 122.
179. W. Pearson, 226.
180. R. Brown, 'Maori Spirituality as Pakeha Construct,' 253–254. See also Thomas E. Benediktsson's similar argument, and Laura Wright's examination of the same phenomenon in terms of environmental destruction (Thomas E. Benediktsson, 'The Reawakening of the Gods: Realism and the Supernatural in Silko and Hulme,' *CRITIQUE* 33, no. 2 [1992]: 127; Wright, 'Diggers, strangers, and broken men,' 66)
181. Shieff, '*the bone people*,' 157.

The novel can then be read as simultaneously claiming spiritual pre-eminence for Māori values and at the same time accepting the political and legal authority of Western capitalism, and even of colonial versions of history. It accepts a set of claims from each position and moves inconsistently between them, with results that need to be confronted.

## 1.3 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to show how a consideration of a particular Booker Prize-winning text can, first, show that the Booker Prize rewards a presumed exoticism over similarity; second, that similar texts nonetheless exist, but have not been able to circulate transnationally with the same success; and, third, that reading strategies derived from the distinctive experience of settler colonialism — both in its history, as in the case of assimilatory policies of state care for children; and in its theorisation, as in the readings derived from Slemon and Lawson on ambivalence and Goldie on indigenization — can be successfully used to produce new readings.

The following chapter moves to Australia while looking again at both the desire for indigeneity and belonging identified in *The Bone People* and a settler sense of cultural inadequacy or inferiority, but it also takes a different angle. It takes two contrasting examples of Australian postmodernism, by Peter Carey and Gerald Murnane, and explores their understanding of what it might mean to belong in the Victorian landscape despite not being indigenous. To this end, it examines the relationship of white Australian culture to the so-called British metropole, especially through a consideration of cultural cringe and assumed English intellectual authority.

# Chapter 2

# Australia

## 2.1 Introduction

The drive from Bacchus Marsh, 'tucked down at the bottom of Anthony's Cutting' thirty-three miles from Melbourne, to Coburg, a suburb of Melbourne, would take perhaps a little under three-quarters of an hour.[1] Melbourne airport lies between the two. A flight from there to New York would take more than a day. The distance to be covered is a little less than that from Adelaide to New York, or from Auckland to London, but still leaves the district — as a fictional artist from Bacchus Marsh puts it — on 'the edge of the world.'[2] From Coburg to the township of Goroke, on the other hand, is a drive of about four hours.

The interest of this chapter lies, in part, in the processes that led Peter Carey (b. 1943) from birth in Bacchus Marsh (where two of his siblings remain) to international celebrity in New York, and Gerald Murnane (b. 1939) from birth in Coburg to relative obscurity in Goroke. It explores how these divergent pathways have played out in international reception and prize culture, in particular in Carey's two Booker wins. Both men were born at almost the same time as part of a Catholic minority of Irish descent, in the same Melburnian orbit and are therefore — unlike Hulme — unquestionably settler writers. Both have achieved some degree of acclaim as writers of postmodernist fiction often dealing with the Victorian landscape or with the suburbs of Melbourne and with questions of cultural cringe, isolation, and identity. The chapter begins by discussing cultural cringe; it does not, however, attempt a

1. Peter Carey, *A Long Way from Home* (London: Faber and Faber, 2018), 119

2. At least to those for whom New York is the centre of the world. The quotation is from Peter Carey, *Theft: A Love Story* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), 144; Bacchus Marsh has been a recurring presence in his fiction.

final definition of the postmodern, a project perhaps impossible. As a working definition, however, postmodernity should be understood as emphasising intertextuality and parody (as in Carey's use of *Tristram Shandy* or *Great Expectations*, or Murnane's use of Hungarian texts); metafiction and unreliable narration (consistent across the corpus of both writers); a rejection of realism; and, of course, an incredulity towards metanarratives. In an Australian context, this includes a suspicion of historical narratives of Australian colonisation, identity and nationalism — what Carey has called 'the lies we've told and told'[3] and Murnane calls Paraguay — which may extend so far as rewriting or rejecting them. However, as will be discussed, this suspicion or rewriting does not necessitate a complete rejection on Carey's part. The chapter explores this by examining the eventual commercial success of both writers, which has been as different as their intentions appear to be: not least because one has been consecrated with the award of the Booker Prize, and one has not.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, neither appears to think much of the other's literary project; Murnane 'seems to loathe Peter Carey,' says Christian Lorentzen, and is reported to have, among his extensive archives, a file headed 'Peter Carey exposed at last';[4] Carey, apparently thinking that Murnane is dead, denigrates the writer who would

> live like the Australian writer Gerald Murnane who lived all his life and never left Melbourne. In a way it's like fishing the same stretch of river, you only get to know that bit of river very well.[5]

This chapter explores the response of both Carey and Murnane — as Australian postmodernists — to features of settler identity. This contrasts with the previous chapter, which dealt with readings of Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*. That chapter suggested that Hulme's novel was best read both in dialogue with a precursor, John Mulgan's *Man Alone*, and with reading strategies derived from an awareness of critical identifications of specifically settler concerns — especially ambivalence and a desire for indigenization — together with an appreciation of the similarity of assimilatory child welfare policies throughout settler colonies. It emphasised the need to read *The Bone People* as a product of ambivalence and the desire for indigenization rather than

3. Andreas Gaile, 'The "contrarian streak": An interview with Peter Carey,' in *Fabulating Beauty: Perspectives on the Fiction of Peter Carey*, ed. Andreas Gaile, Cross/Cultures (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 3.

4. Christian Lorentzen, 'I had no imagination,' *London Review of Books* 41, no. 7 (April 4, 2019), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v41/n07/christian-lorentzen/i-had-no-imagination; Mark Binelli, 'Is the Next Nobel Laureate in Literature Tending Bar in a Dusty Australian Town?,' *New York Times*, February 27, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/magazine/gerald-murnane-next-nobel-laureate-literature-australia.html.

5. Laura Moss, 'Car-Talk: Interview with Peter Carey,' *ARIEL* 32, no. 4 (2001): 97.

as a purely indigenous work uninfluenced by the processes and ideologies of settlement.

Where that chapter focussed on the fraught relationship between settler belonging and the claim to a perhaps more significant indigenous belonging, this chapter, focused on Australia, is especially interested in the cultural relationship between settler and metropole, including the Booker Prize, as represented in these two significant but very different writers. Murnane and Carey are examined as Australian and settler writers to whom indigenization has not been so easily available an option, but who are marked out, in their international reception, as members of a different culture. The chapter argues that their work originates in a response to shared problems, in particular, the infamous cultural cringe: a presumption of cultural inferiority explored throughout this chapter and defined below. But these shared origins develop into incompatible forms of what I term settler postmodernism.

The chapter will suggest that whereas Carey's postmodernism has the capacity to achieve popular readership and circulate internationally, it — attempting to meet the incompatible needs of multiple audiences in engaging with cultural cringe — has to emphasise representation and the depiction of the real. Murnane's work does not engage so directly with the cringe phenomenon but can instead in part be read as a sly commentary upon it. It escapes the issue of the cultural worth of groups by emphasising instead the divergences of individual perception and interpretation, and therefore does not make the same effort to represent the real as Carey does. Instead, a fantasy or fable is offered, emphasising the individual consciousness and subjective interpretation of reality over collective identity and an objective real. Because such an approach ceases to be readable as representative of either an exotic geography or unique group, it loses many of the advantages which would allow it to circulate more broadly internationally or in prize culture. However, Murnane's work can still be read for settler commonalities. This is because it allows for the existence of common cultural backgrounds across the settler-metropole relationship that influence individual sensibilities similarly. In contrast, in his engagement with cultural cringe Carey needs to establish Australian distinctiveness from both a British source population and from other settler populations.

The chapter begins by defining and exploring cultural cringe and its corollaries. It then explores the divergent responses of Carey and Murnane, suggesting that Carey's work is deeply concerned with such questions. This leaves him in a paradoxical position: the use of postmodernist irony and historiographic metafiction in a novel like *True History of the Kelly Gang*

allows writing back against the imperial narratives that developed cultural cringe, but unrestrained irony and fictionality would leave no identity to be asserted against cultural cringe. Furthermore, metropolitan interest — as the example of his *The Unusual Life of Tristran Smith* shows — relies upon apparent representative value. This conflict between postmodernism and postcolonialism has been discussed before, including in the context of a settler identity. I argue that Carey resolves the problem by adopting similar techniques to those which have been called Canadian postmodernism, protecting the quiddity of Australia and Australian identity from doubt while questioning the veracity of narratives derived from cultural cringe. These conflicting motives require him to emphasise Australian uniqueness over possible settler commonalities.

## 2.2 Cultural Cringe

Philip Steer begins his conclusion to *Settler Colonialism in Victorian Literature* with an epigraph from Edward Gibbon Wakefield's *A Letter from Sydney*: 'There is a great difference, in short, between looking *to* a place and looking *from* it.'[6] Steer uses this observation to begin a discussion of 'located thinking', suggesting, among other examples, that his own work was influenced by arriving for 'graduate school in the United States, a long way from home [...] and sensing those powers of distance but also realising that being in the metropole didn't mean you could see everything.'[7]

There is, as Steer is well aware, a great deal of embedded irony in this position. Most importantly, Wakefield here acts both as the source of the argument and as an example of 'looking to': he fabricated his letter from Sydney while imprisoned in England, describing in exhaustive and often misleading detail a place he had never seen. Even while fantasising in a prison cell, Wakefield's metropolitan position gives him more credence than those 'looking from,' in the same way that — only a little later — Charles Dickens' imagined depictions of Australia and Australians became key texts in the metropolitan imagination.

Steer's argument here can be understood as a knowing interpretation of a phenomenon visible (together with oppositional responses) across the settler states, but first formulated

6. Steer, *Settler Colonialism in Victorian Literature*, 202. This distinction will recur shortly in a discussion of Sheila Watson.

7. Steer, 202.

as uniquely Australian: the idea of cultural cringe. This section explores this concept, pervasive in Australian cultural discourse. It argues for its rejection as well as enduring presence in the work and critical discussion of Peter Carey. Domestically, Carey's work and public statements can clearly be seen as rejecting cultural cringe. Internationally, its management and implicit acceptance — in an argument following Karen Lamb — can be seen as driving his Booker Prize wins and other settler transnational literary successes in prize culture. These other texts and Carey's work are then interpretable as reinforcing metropolitan cultural authority even as they appear to reject it. The section therefore does not suggest that a literary work must be either an expression of cultural cringe or cultural pride. Instead, it is suggested that the two are inter-related and difficult to extricate from one another. This leaves open the question — explored further in this chapter — of what strategies, omissions or readings manage the apparent contradiction in Carey's work. A further question is whether there are alternative ways, in Murnane's work, to escape the binary without paying the price for that success in prize culture.

A.A. Phillips first identified cultural cringe as an 'assumption that the domestic cultural product will be worse than the imported article' soon after the war.[8] A preoccupation with it, together with its denunciation both by Europeans and by Australians, recurs throughout Australian cultural history, and, for this study, is especially evident in the fiction of Peter Carey. Manifestations can be found as early as Trollope's *Australia and New Zealand*, where he identifies how Australian colonists are 'pervaded by a certain sense of inferiority which is for the most part very unnecessary. But it exists.'[9]

Such ideas are in no way unique to Australia: a desire to escape Pākehā culture has already

8. A.A. Phillips, 'The Cultural Cringe,' *Meanjin* 9, no. 4 (1950): 299.

9. Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 1 (London: Chapman & Hall, 1873; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 117. It may here be worth clarifying that my argument here assumes a sense of cultural but *not* racial inferiority. The opposing argument is not unknown — Edward Said, for example, claims that 'Australians remained an inferior race [in the European imagination] well into the twentieth century,' or, restated, that "White' colonies like Ireland and Australia too were considered made up of inferior humans.' (Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* [New York: Vintage, 1994], 106, 134). However, it seems obvious that Australians continued to believe themselves to be British, and there is little evidence beyond Said's example of Magwitch to suggest the metropole differed. I would suggest instead that Dickens himself could be understood as assuming only moral or cultural inferiority: Micawber as a presumably-inept magistrate might be a better example of his views than Magwitch. This interpretation is supported by Dickens' habit of sending his less successful sons to Australia (See Robert Gottlieb, *Great Expectations: the Sons and Daughters of Charles Dickens* [New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012], 90–97, 119–130). These emigrations preclude perceptions of Australian racial inferiority — they are quite literally Dickens' kin, not just the Dickensian Magwitch — but do not prevent eventual perceptions of personal and cultural inferiority.

been discussed in Hulme, although with the variation that indigeneity rather than cosmopolitanism was valorised as a replacement. Similarly, the first settler novel to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize came from Canada, not from Australia or New Zealand. But this novel — Mordecai Richler's *St Urbain's Horseman* — still contains a very recognisable description of the same phenomenon among Canadians in London:

> They had emerged, *pace* Auden, from *tiefste Provinz*, a place that had produced no art and had exalted self-deprecation above all. They were the progeny of a twice-rejected land [...] reared to believe in the cultural thinness of their own blood. Anemia was their heritage. [...] Their only certitude was that all indigenous cultural standards they had been raised on were a shared joke. No national reputation could be bandied abroad without apology.[10]

But ideas of cultural cringe in practice also prompt their seeming opposite, a reaction of cultural pride or denunciation of the metropole, a phenomenon Phillips calls the cultural strut. Later in the novel, Jake, the protagonist, thinks of London as almost his home, but has mixed feelings recalling Steer's: 'in the provinces' London can be revered 'with impunity'; with real experience, it is 'considerably less than excellent', and the despised original culture, 'culpable for all his discontents', begins to seem despised only because it was blamed for personal inadequacies.[11] And yet Jake can only doubt London's role as a 'cultural fountainhead' because he is living there: and he is living there only because of its assumed cultural superiority. This pattern of cultural cringe becoming its opposite, and vice versa, recurs. In fact, as soon as Trollope identified an Australian feeling of inferiority, he also concluded that

> this very feeling produces a reaction which shows itself in boasting of what they can do. And soon the boast becomes much louder than the apology, — and very much more general. It arises, however, as does all boasting, from a certain dread of inferiority.[12]

In a classic example of cultural cringe, A.D. Hope's 'Australia', the same doubled attitude emerges even in what seems to be an unambiguous critique of Australian cultural inferiority. The poem moves from identifying Australia ('without songs, architecture, history') as

10. Mordecai Richler, *St. Urbain's Horseman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 209.
11. Richler, 301–302.
12. Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, 117 Jan Morris, a century later, similarly identified among Australians an 'ancient sense of inferiority,' but thought they therefore 'coped with their self-doubts partly by virile postures.' (J. Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets*, 322)

> a vast parasite robber-state
> Where second-hand Europeans pullulate
> Timidly on the edge of alien shores

to predicting the emergence of a spirit

> which escapes
> The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes
> Which is called civilization over there.[13]

A cringe at a false culture in a new environment transforms itself to a claim that because Australia is a cultural desert, then — 'if still from the deserts the prophets come' — it will eventually form a more authentic spirit than the cultured metropole and the 'lush jungle of modern thought.'[14]

These postures in turn, however, indicate the ongoing power of cultural cringe, as will be seen in the next section's discussion of *True History*. A theatrical defiance of metropolitan opinion implicitly recognises the continued attention paid to that opinion, and therefore the ongoing cultural significance of the metropole and attention paid to its evaluations over those 'looking from.' The reader's experience of this back-and-forth is almost fractal; for example, it can be clearly seen in Carey's novel most overtly concerned with cultural cringe, *Theft: A Love Story*. In this work, the contemporary art market is satirised from an Australian perspective (or, perhaps, from an antipodean perspective, since its protagonist's work bears a strong resemblance to that of Colin McCahon). The work is driven by an anger derived from exclusion, a passionate rebuttal of cultural cringe which nonetheless depicts a world of culture that exists outside Bacchus Marsh, hometown of both its fraternal protagonists and Carey. In this town, Butcher Boone, born in the same year as Carey, 'hadn't seen an original painting before I turned sixteen.'[15] This echoes closely Carey's own (rather unlikely, given the prestige of his schooling) claim not to have read a book before the age of eighteen.[16] Boone feels of someone he assumes to be American that 'I was a hick and she was from the centre of the fucking universe',[17] explaining to her that:

13. A.D. Hope, 'Australia,' in *Collected Poems: 1930-1970* (1939; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), 13.
14. This chapter will soon discuss Gerald Murnane's *The Plains*, which plays with similar arguments against 'coastal districts' 'where truly Australian customs were debased by contact with the Old World' in what is likely an allusion to Hope (Gerald Murnane, *The Plains* [1982; Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books Australia, 1984], 33).
15. Carey, *Theft*, 26.
16. Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Peter Carey: A Literary Companion* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2010), 6.
17. Carey, *Theft*, 27.

> If you are American you will never understand what it is to be an artist on the edge of the world, to be thirty-six years old and get an ad in Studio International. [...] Do you understand? I mean—how far this was from the life of reproductions taped to the sleepout wall? From Bacchus Marsh? From the life of a celebrated Sydney painter?[18]

Boone's exposure of machinations, manufacture and theft in the art world is possible precisely because that world is viewed from a stable outsider perspective, 'born walled out from art' and so more truly appreciative of it. But in making the case that antipodean art is possible, and as or more true than the manufactured works celebrated in the imperial centre, the novel paradoxically reinforces the concept of cultural inferiority it argues against, indicating an 'acceptance of the idea of derivativeness associated with Australian cultural identity and the realistic tradition of its art.'[19] The value of Butcher Boone's work — seemingly a close analogue to Carey's own — is that it contains some degree of reference to the outside world or Australia. This is in contrast to academic fashions that wish his work to be otherwise and free 'from any reference to the world itself'.[20]

But to make the point that Australian culture exists and has value, the terms of Carey's argument also require him to imply that Australian culture does not exist in as much depth as elsewhere (since it is its lack of depth which gives Boone his evaluative capacity). This divide is apparent in the distinction between the narration of Butcher Boone, an arrogant genius, and his brother Hugh, who is in some unspecified manner mentally impaired but is irrevocably attached to his brother, just as Carey cannot escape Australia. Hugh's life in New York is not that far from external stereotypes of Australia; a closer referent than, say, Arthur — in *The Solid Mandala* — is Crocodile Dundee: a crass, crude and comically uncouth outsider who does not appreciate the shallow sophistication of New York.

Facing a painting in the Museum Ludwig, Butcher and his brother are uncouth, 'large men' 'galloping through the galleries.' Butcher 'poked his sunburnt nose right into it' and his brother is 'concerned I was about to LET ONE OFF', two men from a lesser culture admiring the higher. But hanging opposite is a fake produced by Butcher; his assessment of its worth is 'a laugh right through his shiny nose,' something more accurate than its assessed price

18. Carey, *Theft*, 144.
19. Jaroslav Kušnír, 'Lives of Artists, Identities of Countries: Dependence, Displacement, Identity and Australia in Peter Carey's *Theft*,' in *Engaging with Literature of Commitment*, ed. Gordon Collier et al., vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 253.
20. Carey, *Theft*, 39.

of $3.2 million.[21] The novel leaves itself able to be read in one of two directions at once: to a marginal audience it reads as a powerful validation of marginality, while to a metropolitan audience it does not necessarily disrupt pre-existing views of the marginalised as uncouth and uncultured, a people

> born walled out from art, [who] had never guessed it might exist, until we slipped beneath the gate or burnt down the porter's house, or jemmied the bathroom window, and then we saw what had been kept from us, in our sleep-outs, in our outside dunnies, our drafty beer-hoppy public bars, and then we went half mad with joy.[22]

As James Wood has said,

> The danger with Carey's last two books is that the distinction between exploring or dramatising the condition of Australian cultural self-hatred and rather awkwardly embodying it can look thin. The real Bob McCorkle, after all, is a genius poet but also a monster, a 'brutish genius'; Butcher Bones, the once famous and famous again painter, is another brutish genius, but he owes his later success to his own criminality. Among a heap of Calibans, the Prosperos can be hard to find.[23]

These broad patterns can apply even at the level of a single line: Boone explains his 'paint was from Raphaelson's, a small Sydney outfit who are amongst the best pigment makers in the world'.[24] Here, one can simultaneously observe strut and cringe. The best paints in the world come from Sydney, to be used by Carey's narrator, the great artist Butcher Boone. (Trollope: 'You are told constantly that colonial meat and colonial wine, colonial fruit and colonial flour, colonial horses and colonial sport, are better than any meat, wine, fruit, flour, horses, or sport to be found elsewhere.'[25]) But if this boast were completely whole-hearted, why affiliate to a metropolitan tradition with the obviously symbolic 'Raphael*son*', and why not use a real Australian pigment maker?[26]

This ambiguity of response can be seen in Carey's (immensely successful) marketing of his works as well as the works themselves. For example, an interviewer can focus on Carey's Australian accent and treat as somehow plausible the suggestion of the '58-year old author' that he might 'trash the lobby' of his Canadian publishers, because, to the interviewer,

21. Carey, *Theft*, 268.
22. Carey, 228.
23. James Wood, 'Damaged Beasts,' *London Review of Books*, June 8, 2006, no. 11, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v28/n11/james-wood/damaged-beasts.
24. Carey, *Theft*, 34.
25. Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, 117.
26. It could, however, be observed that the names of the most prominent Sydney producer, Derivan, and their 'Matisse' range of artist's acrylics, might have led to the same problem.

> the Aussie macho thing, whereby a direct and rough-hewn mateyness — with its intimations of physical prowess and even fighting ability — is de rigueur.[27]

Here Carey — who does not appear to have trashed a publisher's lobby yet — is performing the same response to assumptions of Australian cultural inferiority as Boone. Assuming that no matter what he does he will be judged inferior, Boone's response is to turn such assumptions to his own ends:

> I had no choice but to play the cards I had been dealt, and I tried to make a virtue of them, deliberately arriving at life class with blood on my hands. For what was I judged to be but a raging pig?[28]

But this leaves Boone at the same time both denouncing 'cringing shit' and the cultural wasteland of Bacchus Marsh in a set of awkward self-contradictions.[29] Meanwhile, Carey himself publicly denounces Australian cultural cringe, but seems to do so from a platform gained at least in part by accepting it, perhaps because it is easier to work with such presumptions than against them.

A similar process can be seen in an essay by Andreas Gaile; beginning by reading Carey as a purveyor of myths to combat cultural cringe, he concludes with a series of unconscious reiterations of the points he reads Carey as arguing against: he suggests that Carey is 'translating the sometimes ungraspable Antipodean reality into more familiar terms,' as if he is not writing for Australians at all, and, in his final sentence, embraces the belief that Australians have yet no culture of their own. Carey's novels, including *True History*, are 'a narrative treasure trove which will eventually provide Australians with the material they need to celebrate their Antipodean existence.'[30] In conversation, Carey and Gaile agree that Australians *should* have cultural cringe, because they have 'only had 200 years to invent' themselves, and that the Booker Prize's reiteration of 'older patterns of cultural control' 'isn't imposed, it's invited. And [...] sometimes it's still necessary.[31] This allows him and Gaile to see the importance of his work as in its invention of the nation through a culture currently only nascent.

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27. John Bemrose, 'Dialogue with a desperado,' *MacLean's* (Toronto), February 26, 2001, https://archive.macleans.ca/article/2001/3/26/dialogue-with-a-desperado.
28. Carey, *Theft*, 229.
29. Carey, 144.
30. Andreas Gaile, 'Introduction,' in *Fabulating Beauty*, 49.
31. Gaile, 'The "contrarian streak": An interview with Peter Carey,' 15, 13.

It is in this context, and in the same volume, that Karen Lamb makes an intriguing argument about Carey's Booker Prize wins.[32] She argues that the Booker Prize is 'the representative product of a certain set of British literary and cultural values' which works to encourage readings compatible with those values.[33] She quotes Graham Huggan (whose notion of the postcolonial exotic recurs throughout her argument) to suggest that 'Carey has fallen prey to the "conflicted relationship between the oppositional politics of postcolonialism and the assimilative machinery of the 'global' prize" — and he appears to know it.' As a result, Carey has 'put Australian history and mythology back into the possession of the 'home country'.'[34] This echoes Slemon's earlier argument that settler texts regularly entangle anti-colonial resistance with 'the colonialist machineries they seek to displace'.[35] To set out an argument against British cultural dominance, Carey needs to produce work which can circulate through networks and a prize culture created by that dominance.

This entanglement can be clearly seen in Carey's own discussion of the Booker Prize and *True History*. Responding to a question about patterns of cultural control in the prize, he argues:

> Of course it's disgusting that this cultural power is still exerted, but it's only going to be important in Australia if Australia wants it to be important. So it isn't imposed, it's invited. And, although I'm surprised to find myself saying it, sometimes it is still necessary. When I recall the initial response to *True History of the Kelly Gang* in Australia, it seems truly pathetic. I mean, it seemed like no-one was capable of making an independent judgement. That was in the very beginning, in the first big reviews. No-one had any fucking idea — *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Melbourne Age*, *The Australian*, *Adelaide Advertiser*. Later there were more nuanced appreciations. But, God help me, here are sentences that have never existed in the language, in the Australian language, or in literature before, and the novel was reported respectfully — this was the national story — but as for understanding, they displayed none. So I feel like I needed someone from outside of the culture to at least partially see the book. So, if that's cultural control, I have to admit I'm

32. Karen Lamb, 'Bringing Australia Home: Peter Carey, the Booker, and the Repatriation of Australian Culture,' in Gaile, *Fabulating Beauty*, 17–31.

33. For a more recent argument that the structure of the Booker Prize reflects British cultural domination and excludes most Commonwealth literary production, see P. Morris, 'The "leftovers of empire."' Morris, writing after Lamb, quotes a speech by Carey which supports Lamb's view. Arguing against the consideration of American writers in the Booker Prize, he ascribes the worth of a British prize to Commonwealth authors to 'a family connection, a cultural connection that really does mean something.' (269)

34. Lamb, 'Bringing Australia Home: Peter Carey, the Booker, and the Repatriation of Australian Culture,' 27, 29.

35. Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire,' 39.

grateful.[36]

Here, Carey's apparent rejection of cultural cringe in fact supports it: Australian cultural institutions do not have the evaluative capacity of the metropole, and to truly understand Australian culture, authoritative outside voices (not obviously, despite Carey's claims, invited) are required. This provokes a return to Lamb's argument. *Illywhacker*, in her view, did in some ways question 'caricatures of Australianness' but did so in a fantastical mode which 'simultaneously accommodated clichéd English projections of what constitutes Australian 'history' or Australian 'character''.[37] (These projections will become important in later discussion of the relative success of Murnane, whose work struggles to accommodate them, and *True History*, which does so with ease.) Although her reading of the reception of *True History of the Kelly Gang* emphasises the novel's reinscription of 'the clichés of received history', the general thrust of her argument can also apply to a reading seeing Kelly as an appealing failure who does not challenge British cultural hegemony.[38] One can certainly see how this might be more attractive to a prize jury than — as will be discussed — Murnane's oppositional depiction of a cultural autarchy which flourishes the further away from the Australian coast and contact with the outside world it goes.

A final complication, already seen in Gaile, might be termed cultural swagger. If cultural cringe means an acceptance by the settler that metropolitan cultural production is superior, it must also imply some degree of acceptance of superiority by the producers and dispersers of that culture, whether historically or in the present.[39] One thinks of the taxi driver who asked Carey, arriving in London to win the Booker Prize, 'You over here for the culture?'[40] The phrase of Auden alluded to by Richler is another obvious example:

> The dominions, on the other hand [as compared to Europe], are for me *tiefste Provinz*, places which have produced no art and are inhabited by the kind of person with whom I have least in common.[41]

36. Gaile, 'The "contrarian streak": An interview with Peter Carey,' 13.
37. Lamb, 'Bringing Australia Home: Peter Carey, the Booker, and the Repatriation of Australian Culture,' 24.
38. Lamb, 25.
39. I think it reasonable to assume that residual social formations could remain even if imperial amnesia removes a dynamic of explicit superiority.
40. Lara Cain, 'Reading Australia: the translation and transfer of Australianness in contemporary fiction' (PhD diss., Queensland University of Technology, 2001), 212.
41. W.H. Auden, 'Going into Europe,' *Encounter*, no. 112 (January 1963): 54. This is explicitly because Auden is 'High-Brow': for his imagined 'Low-Brow', the 'Dominions are inhabited by their relatives and people like them-

The reception of the Booker Prize is then understood, as elsewhere in this thesis, not just as a settler acceptance of a superior evaluative capacity on the part of British judges (as in Carey's contention above) but also a claim on the part of the judges to possess such a capacity. Although such a claim has not been made explicit, it can be seen in acts of omission, such as a lack of interest in the persistent divergence between winners of the (regionally judged) previous form of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the Booker, even though both supposedly rewarded the 'best' literature from the Commonwealth.[42]

The assumption of superiority and implicit knowledge means that work from settler states, presumed inferior, can find alternative worth (in competition with metropolitan texts, and in the eyes of these judges) in part through a capacity to describe from within a distinct culture or landscape, a project with which rival texts from elsewhere cannot compete (and which has already been discussed in the case of Hulme and of Carey in the 1985 Booker Prize). However, a cringing Australian acceptance of Wakefield's arguments — important in the development of South Australia — must be matched by Wakefield's swaggering belief that, writing in his London cell, he really can identify fundamental truths about Australia as well or better than an Australian could; he is, in *A Letter from Sydney*, quite clear that his ideas have more authority than those of the Australians he describes because he 'scribble[s] with the impartiality of a cosmopolite.'[43] That Wakefield still felt it necessary to disguise his lack of specific knowledge by pretending to be a gentleman settler in Australia weakens but does not entirely undermine this point. It rather suggests an assumption that Australia, settled by the notionally British according to the enduring principles of British settler colonialism, is fundamentally known even if specific details are not. This complicates the simple depiction of the settler exotic; it must not only describe difference, it must describe difference in terms which are already anticipated by a metropolitan presumption of partial knowledge (as Lamb's argument has already

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selves, speaking English, eating English food, wearing English clothes and playing English games.' The response to Auden, incidentally, shows many of the same paradoxes already discussed: a number of Richler's works contain allusions to his line, but the only other quotations I have encountered are by the New Zealander James Bertram and the Canadian John Metcalf (James Bertram, *Flight of the Phoenix: Critical Notes on New Zealand Writers* [Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1985], 76; John Metcalf, *An Aesthetic Underground: A Literary Memoir* [Windsor: Biblioasis, 2014], 74). Settler attention to an essentially throwaway line by Auden, even if motivated by a desire to critique it, indicates a disproportionate attention to metropolitan opinion and an ongoing sense of cultural authority. Auden, it should be noted, is here presenting a common view, rather than taking a particularly unusual line; the conclusion to this thesis will, for example, present T.S. Eliot making a similar argument.

42. The only novels to win both prizes were J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*. National literary prizes similarly diverge.

43. Robert Gouger, ed., *A Letter from Sydney: The Principal Town of Australasia: Together with the Outline of a System of Colonization* (London: Joseph Cross, 1829), 141.

suggested) — or as has been suggested of writers from the periphery more broadly:

> they need to situate themselves at just the right distance from their judges: if they wish to be noticed, they have to show that they are different from other writers — but not so different that they are thereby rendered invisible.[44]

Putting these points together leaves settler writers in general but Australian writers in particular in an unenviable position, perhaps explaining Carey's own contradictory positioning.[45] They are likely to desire metropolitan validation through cultural institutions like the Booker Prize, both for its own sake and because of its effect on international audiences as well as local audiences influenced by cultural cringe.[46] Australian audiences (and state institutions) will meanwhile wish for cultural assertion against the metropole in a reaction against cultural cringe. Such assertion emphasises the importance of 'looking from' in a way which emphasises local details and sometimes implies that what is held in common is actually unique, as well as anticipating a distinction between Australian and British identity (as well as New Zealand or Canadian). As a young man, for example, Carey

> had a disagreement with *Meanjin* over *Peeling* [an early short story] because they wanted me to change all the place names to Australian names and I wouldn't. I'd been living in London and I'd just got back to Australia, but it was triggered by something I'd seen in London. Clem Christensen wanted to change the place names, to make it into 'Australian Literature'[47]

44. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 156.

45. Just how unenviable a position can perhaps be seen in the strong tendency of modern Australian writers, such as Hannah Kent, to write about other cultures and times instead. A long series of Australian literary hoaxes in which white Australians present themselves as being of some other culture — be that Ukrainian or Aboriginal — might also indicate an attempt at escape. Such hoaxes have been interestingly observed, from a Canadian perspective, as examples of a settler sense of cultural inferiority in Terry Goldie, 'On Not Being Australian: Mudrooroo and Demidenko,' *Australian Literary Studies* 21, no. 4 (Who's Who? Hoaxes, Imposture and Identity Crises in Australian Literature 2004): 89–100.

46. Without going into detail here, these points also apply to Canadian and New Zealand writers. However, they are especially strong in Australia because it seems to have a less positive place in the English imagination. A further complication may be the political traditions of each state; as the next chapter, discussing Canada, will touch upon, Canada and New Zealand have often been seen (including after deliberate state manipulation of opinion) on the metropolitan left as 'better Britains'. (For a discussion of the Canadian case, see Cynthia Sugars, 'Noble Canadians, Ugly Americans: Anti-Americanism and the Canadian Ideal in British Readings of Canadian Literature,' *American Review of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 1 (1999): 93–118) . A similar phenomenon occurred in the adulation of New Zealand responses to coronavirus. In contrast, Australia — with a less progressive political culture — has not been presented as a model to follow in the same way.

47. Candida Baker, *Yacker: Australian Writers Talk About Their Work* (Sydney: Picador, 1986), 75. The next chapter will touch upon a remarkably close Canadian parallel in Margaret Atwood's disguise of Toronto. Similarly, Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* was not published in Australia. Initial plans to set it there in Australia were abandoned under commercial pressure from her American publishers. Angus & Robertson tentatively supported the idea of an alternative edition set in Australia for their Australian audience, but when this did not appear chose not to publish the American version (Hazel Rowley, 'Christina Stead: Un-Australian?,' *Southerly* 53, no. 4 [1993]: 54). Later, she was refused a literary prize because it was doubtful that her 'contribution to literature

Meanwhile, the metropole, 'looking to,' will want to read the Australian as native informant, with specific knowledge, rather than as a cultural equal, but will simultaneously assume their existing knowledge or their interpretation of it to be correct and claim large parts of any given work to in fact reflect the influence of the metropole: a complicated attitude, but one perhaps familiar: 'What do they know of England, who only England know?'

Much Australian literature circulating transnationally — at least that which attempts to sell in Australia as well[48] — can therefore be interpreted as overtly oppositional to the metropole in order to maximise its domestic audience, while (less overtly) continuing to ascribe significance to metropolitan culture and evaluation both because of domestic cultural cringe and international condescension.

To illustrate this point, three settler novels dealing with Charles Dickens can be considered: Carey's *Jack Maggs*, Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* and Lloyd Jones' *Mister Pip*. All three were shortlisted for or won major international prizes, including, for Jones, a Booker shortlisting.[49] It is hard not to suspect — given that these are the *only* settler novels dealing with Dickens of which I am aware[50] — that an intertextual relationship with Dickens therefore helped win international prizes by continuing to assert the importance of metropolitan culture.[51] Jones treats Dickens relatively favourably; to Janet Wilson, *Mister Pip*, in contrast to *Jack Maggs*, does not 'write back' but 'demonstrates the opposite, homologous practice of reinforcing textual continuity with its European source by constructing a reverential relation-

was of sufficient and specific relation to Australia.' (Rowley, 'Christina Stead: Un-Australian?,' 50–51). Michael Ondaatje and Mavis Gallant's similar experiences in Canada will be discussed in the next chapter. For a domestic audience, then, what mattered was not so much the quality of Stead's writing but its capacity to reflect Australia rather than continue to cringingly regard other places as a suitable topic.

48. Stead, among others, appears to have decided against trying. Simon During, however, argues that this occurred in part because of circumstances unlikely to now be replicated: 'UK conventions meant that she only received half copyright on Australian sales so that there was no financial reason for her to Australianize her writing.' (Simon During, *Exit Capitalism: Literary culture, theory, and post-secular modernity* [London: Routledge, 2010], 79) In contrast, 'Peter Carey pioneered the approach of not giving the English world rights.' (Alex Miller, 'Playing the Ancestor Game: Alex Miller interviewed by Simon Caterson,' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 29, no. 2 [1994]: 6)

49. Carey's Booker winning *Oscar and Lucinda* can also be read as a response to *Father and Son* or — less likely — *Daniel Deronda*.

50. They are also the only three mentioned in Regenia Gagnier, 'Dicken's Global Circulation,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Charles Dickens*, ed. Robert L. Patten, John O. Jordan, and Catherine Waters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 728.

51. This is especially likely to be the case since other work by Jones has not received similar international attention; the primary exception — ignoring the brief controversy over *Biografi* — is his *The Book of Fame*, a novel which won a prize open to Pacific writers only after most of the competition (including Flanagan) withdrew (Raymond Bonner, 'Tasmanian Literary Prize Shunned by Its Originator,' *New York Times*, April 22, 2003, E3, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/22/books/tasmanian-literary-prize-shunned-by-its-originator.html).

ship to the Dickensian parent.'[52] Flanagan and Carey meanwhile appear, as their Australian audiences might desire, more overtly oppositional towards Dickens: Jack Maggs has been called 'a pure and perfect example of the writing-back paradigm'.[53] But this confrontation does not diminish, for metropolitan readers, an enduring sense of Dickens' importance — even Australians, they might think, write novels about him. Apparent opposition is then less simple.

Cultural cringe can therefore be understood both as a phenomenon enabled by metropolitan willingness to assume cultural superiority and a (perhaps even stronger) reaction among settlers in general and Australians in particular against it. It puts pressure on a cultural production to be representative of a group: in order to allow marketing exoticism to an otherwise disdainful metropole, or in order to support the identity threatened by cultural cringe in an expression of cultural strut or emphasis on alternative superiorities. It also strongly encourages the establishment of distinctions between British and Australian identity and experience.

While Carey clearly wishes to engage with cultural cringe — and does so explicitly in novels like *Theft* and *My Life as a Fake* — Murnane attempts to avoid cultural cringe by emphasising the individual consciousness over the collective identity. However, his doing so leads to difficulty in reading his work as representative of Australian identity, or of any particular paradigm. This appears to have precluded international success until relatively recently, and perhaps even then. His interpretation of consciousness and reality as formed in part by literature and individual and cultural interpretation rather than as an objective real allows for the identification of settler commonalities derived from cultural commonalities. This contrasts with Carey's need to emphasise Australian uniqueness because of his engagement with cultural cringe.

52. Janet Wilson, 'Antipodean rewritings of Great Expectations: Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2007),' in *The Shadow of the Precursor*, ed. Diana Glenn et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 221.

53. Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp, 'The Writing-Back Paradigm Revisited: Peter Carey, *Jack Maggs*, and Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*,' in Gaile, *Fabulating Beauty*, 248.

## 2.3 Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*

It seems as if the desire for international success — conditional upon stereotypes of Australian inferiority and the apparently accurate depiction of an exotic location — and the desires of domestic readers influenced into cultural pride will work against one another. And yet, in *True History of the Kelly Gang* if not necessarily in other works, Carey clearly succeeded in meeting the desires of both audiences. As well as the international success following its Booker win, in Australia it 'dramatically outsold normal sales figures for Australian fiction,' selling 250 000 copies in a year and circulating 'far beyond the usual literary audience.'[54]

This section will discuss the interaction of cultural cringe with the international *and* national commercial success of *True History*. It argues that Carey uses a particular form of postmodernism to meet the contradictory desires of national and international audiences. It begins by looking at some comparators to suggest that the problem of dual appeal is a genuine one which other texts have failed to successfully manage, as well as to further delineate — by looking at what they lack — what might have been required of *True History*. It then moves to discuss reasons for the novel's Booker success, followed by examination of the novel's attitudes to language and history.

### 2.3.1 Comparators

As the previous chapter showed, a desire for the postcolonial exotic will also encourage treating cultural productions as representative of difference rather than similarity, and of a particular group rather than an individual. This was seen clearly in Carey's own case, in his 1985 Booker shortlisting. However, this difference needs to be translatable into understandable terms to achieve commercial success. This encourages the interpretation of texts according to pre-existing paradigms. In the case of *True History*, it will be argued, that paradigm appears to be the more familiar Irish experience of English colonisation and oppression laid over Australian experience. The changes necessary to support this overlay can remain successful even among a domestic audience influenced by cultural cringe by emphasising a distinction between Australian and British identity (through showing British domination over a distinct Irish/convict/selector population), and so displaying Australian moral superiority.

54. Nathanael O'Reilly, "The Influence of Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*: Repositioning the Ned Kelly Narrative in Australian Popular Culture,' *Journal of Popular Culture* 40, no. 3 (2007): 490.

Both of these sites of success rely upon establishing a particular Irish Australian identity as unchallenged by postmodern techniques, even in the midst of obvious historiographic metafiction.[55] Looking at three closely comparable texts, two of which fail to present an apparent quiddity and the other of which fails to sufficiently manipulate the historiography, clarifies this point and the desires of international audiences.[56]

### **Robert Drewe's** Our Sunshine

Robert Drewe's *Our Sunshine*, another Australian novel about Kelly, was not much reviewed after a delayed publication in the United Kingdom. (Originally published in 1991, its overseas publication came after the positive reception of a later novel.) Generally respectful, but very brief, reviews praised the quality of its language: 'Drewe's language is, as ever, astonishing, with every one of his sentences containing a shiver of exactness and immediacy,' said the *New Statesman*.[57] However, it does not appear to have sold well or attracted much attention. Reviews strongly suggest that this was because of its deliberate focus upon language over verisimilitude. D.J. Taylor thought it 'without much to grab hold of'; the *Sunday Times* found it 'not very convincing as a realistic picture of Kelly, but, to be fair, Drewe's aims seem to be on a higher writerly plane.'[58] The quality of its language alone, without apparent historicity (Drewe's Kelly has, for instance, captured a symbolically-valuable circus and uses very powerful language), was evidently not sufficient to achieve the same success as would soon be had by Carey's presentation of the same story.[59] This suggests the necessity of apparent historicity and national significance as well as literary quality in order for a postmodern account of Kelly to successfully circulate transnationally.

55. Graham Huggan and Carolyn Bliss argue otherwise, identifying various failures of Irishness for Kelly (Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures*, 187; Carolyn Bliss, '"Lies and Silences": Cultural Masterplots and Existential Authenticity in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*,' in Gaile, *Fabulating Beauty*, 295). At moments, characters also argue against a wholesale importation of Irish ideas (Peter Carey, *True History of the Kelly Gang* [2000; London: Faber, 2001], 196, 247, 274, 278) A counter-argument is that these are failures of pure Irishness, not of the new Irish Australian identity developed in the Australian landscape.

56. I use here the term 'quiddity' for the, from the Latin, 'whatness' of a thing because it is similarly used in Joycean and modernist criticism, as well as some Canadian thought soon to be discussed; perhaps, however, with greater accuracy but at the loss of some familiarity, haecceity would be a more appropriate term. In any case, I mean those assumed distinguishing features which are taken as characteristic of a distinct Australian-ness.

57. Maggie O'Farrell, 'Our Sunshine,' *New Statesman*, July 24, 1998, no. 514, 48.

58. D.J. Taylor, 'Our Sunshine,' *Mail on Sunday*, October 4, 1998, 37; Phil Baker, 'Our Sunshine,' *The Sunday Times* (London), September 6, 1998, 14.

59. The two novels are compared in Graham Huggan, 'Cultural memory in postcolonial fiction: the uses and abuses of Ned Kelly,' *Australian Literary Studies* 20 (3 2002): 142–154, reworked in Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures*.

**Peter Carey's** The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith

The commercial failure of Carey's *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* emphasises the same point. Carey describes the novel as having 'as they say, sailed right through to the keeper'.[60] Unlike his other novels, it did not receive metropolitan prizes and its reviews were mixed. His Australian publisher lists it along with *The Tax Inspector* as one of his novels 'not so warmly received, especially by readers' with sales that 'suffered accordingly,' in contrast to the 'astronomical sales' of *True History of the Kelly Gang*.[61] Looking into the sales of recent Booker Prize winners in September 1996, *The Times* found that its UK sales in the previous month were 153 copies, the lowest of all former winners.[62]

The critical consensus on this novel has tended towards arguing that Carey is engaged in a restatement of existing cultural positions on a fictional ground. In the novel, Carey rewrites and reshapes the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa into the fictional nations of Voorstand and Efica. Efica appears to stand for New Zealand in relation to Australia, and Australia in relation to the United States, while Voorstand is a Dutch-inflected version of the United States.[63]

It is then possible to read, as various commentators have done, *Tristan Smith* as reflecting Australian concerns.[64] But even if international audiences and prize juries are willing to reward the *explicit* exploration of Australia, as in the case of Carey's other work, *Tristan Smith*'s form of postmodernism, with its implicit exploration, appears to go too far. Its abstraction of Australian concerns into a generalised form — as we might find them in other settler states — lacks the popular appeal of an exploration of a particular history. This may be because readers simply do not recognise it as such — *The Sunday Telegraph* described it as a forsaking of Australia[65] — but it is more likely to be that the novel claims an abstracted truth but not quiddity, and that, for whatever reason, this is less likely to find metropolitan audiences. A possible rea-

60. James Kidd, 'Peter Carey on his thought process that results in a novel like Amnesia,' *The National*, November 2014, https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/peter-carey-on-his-thought-process-that-results-in-a-novel-like-amnesia-1.472129.

61. Lamb, 'Bringing Australia Home: Peter Carey, the Booker, and the Repatriation of Australian Culture,' 20.

62. 'Do Booker winners still sell books?,' *The Times* (London), September 7, 1996, 64.

63. Although, complicating matters further, the French patois of the novel is strongly reminiscent of québécois.

64. James Dahlstrom, 'The Unusual Life of Gough Whitlam: Peter Carey's *Tristan Smith*,' *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture* 62, no. 1 (2015): 34; Michael Heyward, 'Parallel Universes,' *The New Republic*, April 10, 1995, 38; Bill Ashcroft, 'Simulation, Resistance and Transformation: *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*,' in Gaile, *Fabulating Beauty*, 199–214.

65. David Holloway, 'The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith [review],' *Sunday Telegraph*, August 6, 1995, 32.

son is a preference towards reading an Australian cultural production for its purported factual qualities, or its ability to describe the new nation — in what Elleke Boehmer, in a related argument, calls a tendency to 'read illustratively or symptomatically' — over its aesthetic merits.[66] This would then be a similar situation to, as will be discussed, that of Gerald Murnane's work.

#### **George Bowering's** Shoot

These two comparators strongly suggest the necessity of apparent quiddity; but a Canadian counterexample suggests quiddity alone is insufficient. George Bowering's *Shoot* tells the story of the McLean gang, a story of métis British Columbian outlaws with very close parallels to Carey's depiction of the Kellys.[67] The question then provoked is why Bowering's postmodern retelling has not attracted the same attention as Carey's story of similar outlaws, especially since Bowering is hardly an unknown writer.

To Sherril Grace, Bowering acknowledges the gang's violence, destruction and murder.[68] But he also makes the effort to acknowledge that this is not the whole story: they were the products of a racist society that attempted to repudiate them and their ambiguous cultural position.[69]

This makes the novel morally complex, seemingly unsatisfyingly so. One of very few American reviews criticises the novel because 'the younger McLean boys dream of gaining notoriety as outlaws rather than as brothers united to avenge a sister's honor,' while Allen, the oldest, 'is less a man led by a spirit guide than a schizophrenic listening to the voice of madness.'[70] This appears to be a clear desire for the novel to be less historical — to change historical fact in accordance with narrative desires. In contrast, *True History of the Kelly Gang*, in the same publication's view, could be recommended five years later because it 'expressed the rage felt by

66. Elleke Boehmer, *Postcolonial Poetics: 21st-Century Critical Readings* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 3. See also Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 21; Eli Park Sorensen, *Postcolonial Studies and the Literary: theory, interpretation and the novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xi; Ben Etherington, 'What Is Materialism's Material? Thoughts toward (actually against) a materialism for "world literature,"' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 5 (2012): 541–544

67. See Mel Rothenburger, *The Wild McLeans* (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1993).

68. Sherrill Grace, 'Calling Out the McLean Boys: George Bowering's *Shoot* and the Autobiography of British Columbia History,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 184 (2005): 12–13.

69. S. Grace, 22. Interviewed, Bowering has made a similar point: the hardest part of writing was 'making sure that I really paid attention to the bad things they did, without making the retribution against the whites who had oppressed them overcome the awfulness of their crimes. I tried to make people sympathetic to them, but also show the terrible things they did.' ('Don't let facts get in the way of well-aimed bullets: George Bowering makes B.C. outlaws dance to his own tune in the novel Shoot!,' *Vancouver Sun*, October 20, 1994, C4)

70. 'Shoot!,' *Kirkus Reviews*, November 15, 1995, 304.

many poor Australians, especially those who were, like Kelly, descended from Irish convicts, against English political and economic oppression' and described a 'basically good-hearted Ned' who could be understood as a hero.[71]

In sum, these comparators' equal lack of success implies a contradictory desire in audiences and prize culture for apparent veracity and quiddity but – equally — a desire for cultural distinctiveness and familiar patterns even if these would conflict with historical accuracy. In their relative commercial failure, they already begin to clarify what Booker judges might have desired to reward. The next subsection will explore this point further.

### 2.3.2 Grounds for success in prize culture

From an antipodean perspective, Ned Kelly (or Australian culture generally) seems pervasive and familiar. But if I try to imagine myself in the position of a Booker prize judge soon after the 2000 Sydney Olympics, reading *True History*, the picture shifts. I would have known that Carey had already won the Booker, with a novel lauded for its invention of a nation. What might I have known of Kelly and Australia?

I would probably have seen at least some of the Olympics; perhaps I would have noticed Kelly represented in their opening ceremony. Maybe I would, that year, have seen something of the 'cast of hundreds' of Australian cultural, business and government figures who descended upon London to celebrate the centenary of confederation and promote a newly mature Australia, free of cultural cringe. (Perhaps I would not have asked why they then needed to come to London.) I might even have seen, as part of this programme, 'internationally-acclaimed Australian writers including Peter Carey, Kate Grenville, Germaine Greer and Tim Winton,' 'at London's South Bank for a series of readings and round table discussions.'[72]

Almost certainly, I would have been at least vaguely aware of the recent Australian referendum on the monarchy and the constitution; if reviews of Carey's novel are anything to go by, I would, reading of Kelly, find myself comparing his voice to the Irish-influenced sound of Paul Keating, and have a sense that Australia was somehow Irish as well as English and not entirely a dutiful daughter to the colonial mother any more, perhaps because of something to do with convicts.

71. 'The True History of the Kelly Gang,' *Kirkus Reviews*, November 15, 2000, 352.

72. Simon Mann and Kendall Hill, 'All grown up: now Australia goes home to mother,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 28, 2000, 1.

Judges would, in other words, have been very much primed to anticipate an Australian novel to emphasise cultural divergence from Britain and to be in some part about nation-building, or, intriguingly, the creation of a national language in a place assumed to have less culture and less identity. For example, one of the judges, Philip Hensher, would later claim Carey's work to be 'a great Australian national epic in prose [...] no one can doubt that one day Australian children will recite the Kelly Gang as children in Italy do Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*.'[73] (The subtext here is Manzoni's contribution to the standardisation of Italian.) Perhaps more interestingly, another judge, Roderick Watson, had argued in an examination of Scottish literature that the Booker Prize could (in celebrating the distinct languages of the culturally-colonised) encourage a polyphony which was not necessarily decolonising so much as destabilising in a creatively productive way.[74] At the same time, judges would not necessarily possess specific knowledge; a novel would need to explain distinctiveness before it could be rewarded for doing so, even if they assumed — based on recent cultural events — that distinctiveness to exist and anticipated its explanation.

The chair of the Booker judges that year, Lord Baker, announced at the ceremony that

> The judges chose Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* because it is a magnificent story of the early settler days in Australia, expressed through the unforgettable voice of a vilified man who came to stand for more than he knew.[75]

This reiterates patterns of judgement already becoming familiar: the novel is simultaneously rewarded for its narrative value ('a magnificent story') but also takes on a significance based on difference from English models (hence 'vilified') which stands not just for itself but as representative of a (possibly nascent) broader Australian identity — just as fifteen years earlier, Carey's real subject was declared to be Australia. The next subsection will explore the implications of Kelly's 'unforgettable voice' a little more. Doing so allows the tracking of a conflict between cultural glorification and abnegation, since the expectations of readers arguably work to limit Kelly's language and limit recognition of his linguistic skill.

73. Philip Hensher, 'A furious piece of work,' *The Times* (London), September 20, 2003, 15.
74. Roderick Watson, 'Postcolonial Subjects? Language, Narrative Authority and Class in Contemporary Scottish Culture,' *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 4, no. 1 (1998): 21–38.
75. Erica Wagner and Dalya Alberge, 'The tale of two storytellers,' *The Times* (London), October 18, 2001, 15.

### 2.3.3 Limitation of language and narrative voice

The narrative voice of *True History* is often seen as 'true to the original.'[76] As Baker said, such a view — identifying 'a direct, vigorous vernacular' — directly contributed to the judges' decision. It is also regularly mentioned in contemporary reviews.[77] David Robinson, for example, thought that

> Carey based his style entirely on an existing letter that Ned Kelly wrote […] its raw Irish prose is utterly convincing […] Without the slightest whiff of condescension, Carey shows the unconscious poetry in an uneducated man's speech. As an act of literary ventriloquism, it is in a class of its own.[78]

In general, I would instead argue, Carey's imitation of Kelly's voice (derived from his Jerilderie letter) reinforces the apparent inferiority of Australian culture by decreasing linguistic sophistication in order to comply with audience expectations. To take one example, the absence of commas in the narrative is also frequently mentioned admiringly, including by Robinson. Kelly himself (or his scribe, Joe Byrne) was perfectly capable of using commas, and did so. Similarly, Carey's Kelly consistently uses 'were' for 'was', an error Kelly does not always make in the Jerilderie Letter.

Beyond these grammatical and syntactical changes, Carey also arguably reduces Kelly's linguistic sophistication. For example, the historical Kelly describes his fight with the hawker McCormick in a way which must be intended to be comic aureation — akin to his claim that as a stock thief, he engaged in 'wholesale and retail horse and cattle dealing'[79] — since he goes on to explain baldly to a police constable that 'I hit him':

> He said I was a liar and he could welt me or any of my breed.
> […]
> [I was] dismounting when Mrs McCormack struck my horse in the flank with a bullocks shin it jumped forward and my fist came in collision with McCormack's nose and caused him to lose his equilibrium and fall prostrate.[80]

Carey takes the same event but edits the scene so that Kelly is not in the process of dismounting but dismounted and pulled forward by the reins he is holding, while Kelly's use of

76. Bruce Woodcock, *Peter Carey*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 138.
77. Dalya Alberge, 'Ned Kelly wins the Booker for Carey,' *The Times* (London), October 18, 2001, 1.
78. David Robinson, 'Booker Award Goes to Peter Carey,' *The Scotsman*, October 18, 2001, 3.
79. Ned Kelly, *The Jerilderie Letter*, with an introduction by Alex McDermott (London: Faber, 2001), 21.
80. Kelly, 5–6.

'I was' is changed to 'I were'.[81] This takes away the irony with which Kelly describes an action which could well be voluntary, shifting sardonicism into grandiosity.

> he said I were a coward and were hiding behind my mother's skirt.
>
> At this insult I dismounted. Mrs McCormick then struck my horse on the flank with her impertinent weapon and the horse jumped forward and as I were holding the rein it caused my fist to come into collision with McCormick's nose and he lost his equilibrium and fell prostrate.[82]

The issue here is that to emphasise Kelly's suffering, encouraging cultural pride and distinction while anticipating international expectations of his language, Carey has to simultaneously also enact cultural cringe.[83] A similar problem can be seen in a piece of subtle editing. In the Jerilderie Letter, Kelly writes:

> all of true blood bone and beauty, that was not murdered on their own soil or had fled to America or other countries to bloom again another day, were doomed to Port McQuarie, Toweringabbie Norfolk Island and Emu plains. And in those places of tyranny and condemnation many a blooming Irishman rather than subdue to the Saxon yoke, were flogged to death and bravely died in servile chains, but true to the Shamrock and a credit to Paddys land[84]

Russell Ward points out that Kelly's narrative of Irish oppression there takes its place names from the convict ballad 'Moreton Bay.'[85] (This ballad commemorates the death of the same Captain Logan who appears flogging the protagonist in *Jack Maggs*.) The ballad, also mentioning 'condemnation' and 'tyranny,' runs:

> I've been a prisoner at Port Macquarie, Norfolk Island and Emu Plains,
> At Castle Hill and cursed Toongabbie, at all those settlements I've worked in chains

Kelly here uses the sentimental language of ballads to condemn Irish policemen for serving the same institutions that destroyed Irish independence, or — in his words — 'who for a lazy,

81. This, as Kelly did not deny in court, was not the case ('Wangaratta Police Court,' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, November 12, 1870, 3)

82. Carey, *True History*, 159.

83. This limitation of Kelly's language or ability to speak is a persistent theme of the novel; in a very early scene, Kelly's pencil is stilled by an identity-challenging tale of Ireland, and another where Kelly's desire to be an 'ink monitor' at school is long delayed by his Irishness (Carey, 11, 28). Kelly is 'hedged around by people who want to write him into metanarratives of their own choosing,' while his own voice cannot break through (Bliss, '"Lies and Silences": Cultural Masterplots and Existential Authenticity in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*,' 293). Each letter he sends is suppressed; each time he tries to speak, authority and the media do not hear him: 'I wished only to be a citizen I had tried to speak but the mongrels stole my tongue when I asked for justice they give me none.' (Carey, *True History*, 328)

84. Kelly, *The Jerilderie Letter*, 68.

85. Russell Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966), 55.

loafing, cowardly bilit left the ash corner deserted the shamrock, the emblem of true wit and beauty, to serve under a flag and nation that has destroyed, massacred, and murdered their fore-fathers by the greatest of torture.'[86]

To make this point in late-nineteenth century Victoria, he cannot rely upon the direct experience of his intended audience, or even of the generation before, since he is referring to the rebels of 1798 and a harshness of convict treatment much ameliorated in later years.[87] Instead he has to rely upon a folk memory and refer to songs that preserved the experience within an oral tradition; this is made clear by his interpolation of 'in servile chains,' which is likely to come from a similar but distinct *Scottish* tradition, as well as by the corruption of Toongabbie.[88]

Carey incorporates these lines into his text, but by correcting the spelling of Toongabbie, removing 'servile chains' and adding 'Van Diemen's Land' (where Kelly's father had been a convict labourer and servant) and 'our parents' he shifts the emphasis away from an appeal to an oral tradition of convicts in New South Wales and into a much closer recollection of bare historical fact.[89] On the one hand, this re-emphasises his postcolonial interpretation of Kelly and asserts Australian identity as distinct from British; on the other, it reduces Kelly's sophistication of language and allusion, and separates him from the oral tradition he is working in, limiting recognition of that identity even as it appears to celebrate it.

Carey's Kelly is granted physical courage in abundance, but because of such changes to his language he can be read alternately as being kept inarticulate and denied a culture of his own, or the reverse. What appears to be an act of anti-imperialism does not always conflict with metropolitan stereotypes, and in fact — despite its apparent resistance — could be read as keeping cultural and linguistic authority in British hands. For example, Kelly is presented as victim and denouncer of a continuing English class system when he is unfamiliar with Shake-

86. Kelly, *The Jerilderie Letter*, 67.

87. Kelly's father, serving his time for pig-stealing (not, as Carey has it, for participation in the fictional Sons of Sieve), could serve 'his sentence without ever being flogged;' a more typical punishment of his time was his fine of five shillings for being 'drunk and disorderly' while working as a servant (Bob Reece, 'Ned Kelly's Father,' in *Exiles from Erin: Convict Lives in Ireland and Australia*, ed. Bob Reece [Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1991], 238).

88. Burns' 'Bruce's Address to his troops, at the Battle of Bannockburn', better known as 'Scots wha hae' (Robert Burns, *Selected Poems and Songs*, ed. Robert P. Irvine [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 214). Burns circulated widely in Victoria, including as a symbol of a distinctly non-English identity; see Alex Tyrell, '"No common corrobery": The Robert Burns Festivals and identity politics in Melbourne, 1845-59,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 97, no. 2 (2011): 161–180. For a discussion of Kelly's proficiency in oral traditions, and deliberate exploitation of them, see Alex McDermott, 'Who said the Kelly letters? The question of authorship and the nature of wild language in the Cameron and Jerilderie letters,' *Australian Historical Studies* 33 (2002): 258–272.

89. Carey, *True History*, 34.

speare and so treated by the schoolteacher Curnow as if 'I were an oaf in muddy boots tracking across some oriental rug';[90] but later Curnow uses Kelly's response to Shakespeare to manipulate him into his own destruction.

As this example suggests, Carey is deft enough to avoid leaving himself entirely committed to one group or the other. Instead, he manages contradictions through layers of irony and overt metafiction (like those around Shakespeare) which allow multiple readings.

An informed reader can then interpret Kelly's descriptions as reflective of Kelly's own ignorance of the convict experience, as when he himself admits 'I do not know what was done to him he never spoke of it' or when he interprets his father — who 'could hardly raise his head to sip the rum' — as dying of 'all the poisons of the Empire' instead of an alcoholism obvious to the reader.[91] This prompts a reading of Carey's Kelly's account with a typically postmodern doubt, as only one of a competing set of subjective narratives rather than evidence for a metanarrative of postcolonial resistance. But — crucially — to do so the reader must have some degree of historical knowledge already, so that — as Susan K. Martin has suggested — a distinction develops between international readers and Australian readers who 'may have a notion of the 'authentic' against which to judge this re-presentation' of Kelly.[92]

A less informed reader can see an anticipated pattern, as many did. One critic directly uses Carey's altered lines from the ballad to identify 'an unequivocal parallel between the old penal system and the present convict free Victoria.'[93] A careful reader like John Updike (originally writing in the *New Yorker*) can think the novel showed 'the English were the warders of the Irish, their floggers, their executioners, and, under the system of convict slavery that existed, their economic masters.'[94] (To be clear, Victoria was not a penal colony, and the Irish were only ever a substantial minority.) Inevitably, such readers will find a particularly *Australian* story in this emphasis on Irish convict labour, since Canada and New Zealand do not have the same associations. This obscures underlying commonalities, such as that in all three countries land was transferred from indigenous to Crown ownership to freehold tenure, in recurring patterns

90. Carey, *True History*, 337.
91. Carey, 34.
92. Susan K. Martin, 'Dead White Male Heroes: *True History of the Kelly Gang*, and Ned Kelly in Australian Fictions,' in Gaile, *Fabulating Beauty*, 308.
93. Pablo Armellino, *Ob-Scene Spaces in Australian Narrative: An Account of the Socio-Topographic Construction of Space in Australian Literature* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2012), 38.
94. John Updike, 'Both Rough and Tender,' in *Due Considerations: Essays and Criticism* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007), 349.

and with similar conflicts; or that conflict developed between continuing senses of Britishness and new national loyalties.[95] As a result, although it seems otherwise natural to compare the Kelly story with parallels like the fictional treatment of James Mackenzie by James McNeish, comparison becomes less likely.[96]

### 2.3.4 Settler postmodernism

The use of postmodernist irony and historiographic metafiction then allows continued resistance to cultural cringe within the nation, while not necessarily alienating international readers. (As *True History* makes clear in its emphasis on the limitations of Kelly's voice, it is difficult to disrupt cultural cringe from within the dominant imperial narratives that constructed it.) But an entirely unrestrained irony and fictionality would leave no identity to be asserted against cultural cringe once they were applied to it, negating the whole project. The situation can be clarified by identifying the desire to disrupt metanarratives of cultural cringe caused by colonisation as postmodern, and the desire to assert a distinct cultural identity against colonisation and cultural cringe as postcolonial. Applying these labels places Carey's dilemma into a recognisable context (already touched upon in earlier discussion of Hulme) and helps to identify his solution. His postmodernism is close to what Linda Hutcheon has labelled the Canadian postmodern.[97] Here, national myths and ex-centric positioning retain importance even as material from these myths and from the metropole is self-reflexively and ironically parodied and transformed. The case most specifically relevant is her definition of historiographic metafiction, a parodic mimesis in which ironic repetitions of national history engage with mythic narratives. This definition — much applied to Carey's work[98] — acts (as Christian Bök has suggested of Canadian parallels) to 'convert postmodernism into a genre of un-

95. See John C. Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003) for a close examination of commonalities in changes in land tenure and attitudes to land both in these three states and in South Africa and the United States. Some key pieces of legislation are highlighted in the appendix.

96. James McNeish, *Mackenzie* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970) Mackenzie was a Gaelic-speaking shepherd in the South Island of New Zealand who (along with his dog Friday) became a folk hero after being caught with a thousand stolen sheep in a pass leading to new pastoral land (now known as the Mackenzie country). His crime came in the context of a similar dispute over squatting or closer settlement in Canterbury only resolved in the 1890s (Cathy Marr, 'Mackenzie, James,' in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, ed. W.H. Oliver, vol. 1 [Allen & Unwin / Department of Internal Affairs, 1990], https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1m30/mackenzie-james).

97. See Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*.

98. See, for example, Lisa Fletcher and Elizabeth Mead, 'Inheriting the Past: Peter Corris's *The Journal of Fletcher Christian* and Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*,' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 45, no. 2 (2010): 198; Sarah Zapata, 'Revisiting Australia: Historical Fabrications, Telling Histories/Stories, and Other Colonial Delusions in Peter Carey's *My Life as a Fake*,' in O'Reilly, *Postcolonial issues in Australian literature*, 223

realistic, but verisimilar, realism.' Bök's description of the consequences is worth quoting in full:

> Most examples of metafictive historicism, heretofore considered postmodern in this country, do not in fact question the quiddity, so much as they question the veracity, of our history. Such narratives do undermine the disparity between what is factual and what is fictive, and they often do so by way of unreliable raconteurs who narrate our mythic legacy from a variety of multifarious perspectives, all of which contradict each other, all of which relativize each other, but all of which, nevertheless, still use realist tactics to contrast canonical accounts with other subaltern variants.[99]

Simon During's reading of Hulme — discussed in the previous chapter — is influenced by his earlier thought on a similar issue. If postmodernity challenges notions of a fixed and stable identity, During concludes, it must also mean that what he calls 'the concept postmodernity has been constructed in terms which more or less intentionally wipe out the possibility of post-colonial identity.'[100] Reading as the postmodern is a valuable strategy for asserting a marginalised identity up until the point that identity itself is threatened by the presumptions of postmodernity. The 'Canadian postmodern' — which on this basis I would instead call a 'settler postmodern' — can then be understood as a limited postmodernity intended to avoid the problem identified by During. Assumptions about settler history or identity are placed in opposition to the claims of the metropole or the prevailing narrative by parodying, rewriting, and doubting metropolitan claims using the tools of the postmodern. These postmodern approaches, are not, however, applied to the identity which is being reasserted.[101] Slemon summarises the problem clearly:

> Whereas a postmodernist criticism would want to argue that literary practices such as these [disidentifactory reiteration] expose the constructedness of all textuality and thus call down "the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another" [...] an interested post-colonial critical practice would want to allow for the positive production of oppositional truth-claims in these texts. It would retain for post-colonial writing, that is, a mimetic or referential

99. Christian Bök, 'Getting Ready to Have Been Postmodern,' in *RE: Reading the Postmodern: Canadian Literature and Criticism after Modernism*, ed. Robert David Stacey (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 93–94.
100. Simon During, 'Postmodernism or post-colonialism today,' *Textual Practice* 1, no. 1 (1987): 33.
101. It is also important to note Hutcheon's argument that the Canadian postmodern reinscribes the attitudes it opposes.

> purchase to textuality, and it would recognize in this referential drive the operations of a crucial strategy for survival in marginalized social groups.[102]

This union of the (settler) postcolonial and postmodernism can be clearly identified in Carey's fiction beyond *True History*.[103] Indeed, in — for example — the opening pages of *Illywhacker* or the title of his *30 Days in Sydney: A Wildly Distorted Account* he is quite explicit that he intends to use such a mingling of the factual and fictive in order to reassert the marginalised culture of Australia (the underlying truth) and combat cultural cringe, so that the reader is advised 'not to waste your time with your red pen, to try to pull apart the strands of lies and truth, but to relax and enjoy the show'.[104] A novel like *Jack Maggs* contrasts the canonical *Great Expectations* with an account from Australia which contradicts and manipulates the 'mythic legacy' of Dickens' work while bringing the factual — a novelist who resembles Dickens — into the fictive master narrative. But it does not question the concept of writing back in this way from Australia, and — therefore — does not question the quiddity of Australia so much as the veracity of Dickens' account. In this way, *Jack Maggs* is postmodern in its approach to Dickens and to Victorian England, but not towards Maggs' Australia, the implied perspective from which it is written. As a result, Carey can present himself as both a postmodern writer and one for whom, in his own words, 'almost everything I have ever written has been concerned with questions of 'national identity", or one whose 'fictional project has always been the invention or discovery of my own country.'[105]

On this basis, we should dispute the claim of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* that

> Carey's interest in fictionality extends to history, which he sometimes presents in alternative 'fantastic' versions, implicitly suggesting the constructed quality of all

102. Slemon, 'Modernism's Last Post,' 8.

103. Graeme Turner usefully discusses how Carey can both be seen as an internationalist rather than nationalist writer in Australia and abroad, in part because of his use of American (i.e. postmodernist) forms. However, these forms are also used to establish a myth of resistance to colonisation 'powerful within and appropriate to an Australian cultural context.' (Graeme Turner, 'American Dreaming: The Fictions of Peter Carey,' *Australian Literary Studies* 12, no. 4 [October 1, 1986]: 440). Incidentally, as Turner's education at Queen's and reference to discussions with Slemon might suggest (431), this reading can usefully draw upon Canadian parallels; one thinks, for example, of the Tish poets.

104. Peter Carey, *Illywhacker* (London: Faber & Faber, 1985), 11; Peter Carey, *30 Days in Sydney: A Wildly Distorted Account* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)This is, of course, not a criticism of Carey, who can approach Australian history however he chooses. The implications are for critical discourse, in that he should not be seen either as a source of uncontested truth or entirely divested from fact.

105. Qtd. in Gaile, 'Introduction,' xxi, n10; Xavier Pons, 'The Novelist as Ventriloquist: Autobiography and Fiction in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*,' *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies* 24, no. 1 (2001): 72.

> 'objective' historical narrative and the partiality of all explanations of events.[106]

His commercially-successful fiction certainly rewrites and reconstructs history, but does not rewrite 'all' history or recognise the 'partiality of all explanations of events'; instead, a certain (Australian) base of language and assumption is required to rewrite from to reconstruct, in his words, 'true' history and 'untangle all the lies we've told and told' in an act of resistance to cultural cringe.[107] Paul Eggert can therefore argue what would otherwise seem to be two contradictory claims: that *True History* is both 'postmodern-quotational' and 'an act of engagement with a significant past,' in which 'Carey's providing a statement of sources at the end of the novel implies a genuine act of historical reference.'[108] Graham Huggan observes a similar process when he suggests that 'Carey's work is arguably less concerned with reinventing Australia than with altering the mythic constructs that underpinned previous inventions.'[109]

Conversely, Murnane's short story 'The Battle of Acosta Nu', best understood as being narrated by an Australian who believes he is a Paraguayan who believes he is an Australian, also plays with national identity.[110] As we will shortly see, 'The Battle of Acosta Nu' shows a typically postmodern scepticism towards grand projects, such as the utopic 'New Australia,' a socialist colony in Paraguay,[111] but goes further than Carey in applying them to the nation in ways which challenge its self-conception: what makes Australia not Paraguay, or the project of Australia different from the failure of New Australia? Where Carey rewrites his intertexts from a stable cultural position as an outsider, Murnane problematises his own cultural positioning, with even less commercial success than *Tristan Smith*.

If we accept Carey's work as uniting what Mark Twain called the 'beautiful lies' of Australian history (quoted by Carey as the epigraph for *Illywhacker*) with a claim to quiddity and a simultaneous use of postmodernist disruptions of metanarratives, we open up the possibility of multiple layers of reading. Carey's text serves different audiences in a way comparable texts have not in order to simultaneously engage with domestic desires to resist cultural cringe and

106. William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton, and Barry Andrews, eds., *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 151.

107. Gaile, 'The "contrarian streak": An interview with Peter Carey,' 3.

108. Paul Eggert, 'The Bushranger's Voice: Peter Carey's "True History of the Kelly Gang" (2000) and Ned Kelly's "Jerilderie Letter" (1879),' *College Literature* 34, no. 3 (2007): 122.

109. Graham Huggan, *Peter Carey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85.

110. Gerald Murnane, *Landscape with Landscape* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987), 71–122.

111. See Jason Rudy et al., 'Australia to Paraguay,' in *Worlding the South: Nineteenth-century literary culture and the southern settler colonies*, ed. Sarah Comyn and Porscha Fermanis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 139–158.

metropolitan desires for exoticism (which may in turn reinforce cultural cringe). I will now move to discuss the further application of this argument to *True History*'s use of history.

### 2.3.5 Manipulation of history

Several commentators have explained that the 2000 novel's historicity encourages their teaching of it in an academic context, and therefore its international canonisation.[112] Unfortunately, many of their specific claims about its historical content are only doubtfully true, or true in a way which must be hedged with caveats. These readings are, however, encouraged by the novel. One common theme, for example, is an emphasis on how 'Ned Kelly and his family were victims of the nineteenth-century pastoral system of land reform, which pitted the wealthy and powerful landowners against the poor selectors.'[113]

True, land was a major source of conflict in Victoria, and there was a struggle between pastoral farming and closer settlement. But land reform reflected the growing power of urban workers and rural selectors, and encouraged — fitfully, and painfully — the breaking up of squatters' pastoral runs on Crown leases in favour of smaller selections of land which would eventually become freehold.[114] Kelly and his family were not victims of land reform, but its beneficiaries; Carey almost reverses the facts of this struggle when he describes 'men who witnessed their hard won land taken up by squatters.'[115] (Selectors, of course, would select land from the pastoral runs of squatters.)[116] But it is not necessary to go into great detail here about such transformations of history, only to note that they occur throughout the novel, consistently re-establishing a binary of Irish/English, Catholic/Protestant, selector/squatter, and convict/free settler which blurs into a single distinction between the oppressed and powerful.

Despite Carey's depiction of a strict division between Englishmen and an oppressed group-

112. e.g. Nathanael O'Reilly, 'Mythology, history, and Truth: Teaching Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*,' *Antipodes* 29, no. 1 (2015): 71; Lyndall Nairn, 'What's a Bad Boy like You Doing in a Nice Place like This? Ned Kelly Faces Off against American College Freshmen,' *Antipodes* 30, no. 2 (2016): 408

113. Nairn, 'What's a Bad Boy like You Doing in a Nice Place like This? Ned Kelly Faces Off against American College Freshmen,' 408.

114. Paul Strangio, 'Broken heads and flaming houses: Graham Berry, the wild colonial,' in *The Victorian Premiers 1856-2006*, ed. Paul Strangio and Brian Costar (Sydney: The Federation Press, 2006), 58.

115. Carey, *True History*, 328.

116. Similarly, a political crisis developed when the liberal Berry government attempted to break the power of squatters; when the upper house rejected an appropriation bill, the executive began dismissing public servants in January 1878 in order to force a resolution. (Ian Jones, *Ned Kelly: A Short Life* [Port Melbourne: Thomas C. Lothian, 1995], 108). Although prisons continued to be funded, the novel instead presents this attempt to *support* Kelly's class as another instance of oppression, making his brother Dan suffer in an unfunded prison (Carey, *True History*, 223).

ing of Irish and convicts, convicts were 'socially indistinguishable from the free immigrants.'[117] It was entirely possible for an emancipated convict, even one of very low birth, to become a magistrate or a chief constable.[118] Even within Carey's corpus, there is contradictory evidence in the form of Jack Magg's success on his return to Australia.[119] Irish and English divides were also less uncrossable than Carey depicts, especially in terms of political power: united in a settler-colonial project, differing ethnic groups were 'trying to put their northern-hemisphere politics behind them. The imperial imperative gave them notions of a shared identity, the idea of being British.'[120] There were two Irish Catholic premiers in Kelly's lifetime, John O'Shanassy and Charles Gavan Duffy, and another — Bryan O'Loghlen — succeeded the government in office at his execution. Meanwhile, 'half of Victoria's cabinet ministers came from Ireland.'[121] Duffy had even taken part in armed insurrection in Ireland in 1848, and while in Australia saw himself, in his parliamentary work, as continuing to work towards Irish self-government.[122] In his extra-parliamentary life, he claimed 'I am still an Irish rebel to the backbone and to the spinal marrow,' while acknowledging that 'this was not Ireland but Australia — Australia, where no nationality need stand on the defensive, for there was fair play for all.'[123] In contrast to Carey's frequent depiction of English police,[124] 82% of the Victorian police were Irish, drawn from a group which made up only 12% of the male population.[125] Most of these Irish police were also landless Catholics, since the (Catholic) premier and (Catholic) head of the police force had previously maintained a special list of applicants who received 'almost immediate appointment,' most of whom were Catholic.[126] In the legal system, 'a succession of Irish lawyers held the posts of Attorney-General and Solicitor-

117. Marian Quartly, 'Convicts,' in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, rev. edn, ed. Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 157.

118. J.B. Hirst, *Convict society and its enemies: A history of early New South Wales* (Sydney: George Allen & Uniwin, 1985), 153–154; Douglas Pike, ed., 'Barrington, George (1755–1804),' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1 (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1966), 62–63.

119. Stuart MacIntyre, on the other hand, argues that 'an indelible stigma' persisted from 1800 'into the next generation and beyond until the numbers and attitudes of the 'native born' finally prevailed (Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 3rd ed. [Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 44). This does not seem to apply to Kelly, seventy years later.

120. Kelly, *The Jerilderie Letter*, xxx.

121. Ann Daniel, 'Undermining British Australia: Irish Lawyers and the transformation of English Law in Australia,' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 84, no. 333 (1995): 64.

122. See J.E. Parnaby, 'Charles Gavan Duffy in Australia,' in *Irish Culture and Nationalism, 1750-1950*, ed. Oliver MacDonagh, W.F. Mandle, and Pauric Travers (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983), 56–58.

123. Charles Gavan Duffy, *My Life in Two Hemispheres*, vol. 2 (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898), 133.

124. Carey, *True History*, 8, 11, 14, 136, 137.

125. Robert Haldane, *The People's Force: A History of Victoria Police*, 3rd ed., EPUB (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017), chap. 3, table 2.

126. Haldane, chap. 2, s. 4.

General' and until 1935, all Chief Justices of the Victorian Supreme Court were Irish, if often Protestant.[127]

One Supreme Court judge was Redmond Barry: 'the same man,' Carey's Kelly tells us 'who wished to hang the rebels at Eureka the same man who sentenced our Uncle James to death for burning down the house.'[128] Whatever Barry's approach to the Kelly family — he would later sentence both Kelly and his mother — this seems an attempt to link Kelly to a tradition of Irish resistance to English power by calling up the ghosts of Eureka, while depicting Barry as 'a power-crazed sadist [...] like a creature out of a gothic novel'.[129] But Barry is almost universally seen as treating the Eureka rebels with respect and fairness.[130] There is simply no evidence that he 'wished to hang the rebels' and, in his summing-up, he gave his opinion as for acquittal.[131]

Similarly, among other examples, the novel presents James Whitty as an implacable enemy of Kelly, an immensely rich and areligious squatter. Whitty was, in fact, a devoutly Catholic 'illiterate bounty migrant.'[132] He was not a squatter, but a 'boss cockie' who rented bank lands at a much more substantial rate (what Kelly, in the Jerilderie letter, calls a 'heavy rent') than would have been available under a Crown lease.[133] In the novel, he is contrasted with the poor selectors of Kelly's family. But Carey does not mention that Kelly's grandfather John Quinn *was* a squatter and claims that he had twenty times less land than he did, while in turn increasing Whitty's landholdings.[134] (Similarly, he exaggerates the number of stock Whitty ran far

127. Daniel, 'Undermining British Australia: Irish Lawyers and the transformation of English Law in Australia,' 64–66.
128. Carey, *True History*, 230.
129. Laurie Clancy, 'Selective History of the Kelly Gang,' *Overland*, no. 175 (2004): 57.
130. John N. Molony, *Eureka* (1980; Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 200; Peter Ryan, 'Barry, Sir Redmond (1813–1880),' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ed. Douglas Pike, vol. 3 (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1969), http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barry-sir-redmond-2946.
131. *State Trials: Queen v. Hayes, Queen v. Joseph; proceedings of the trials of these informations in the Supreme Court of the Colony of Victoria* (Melbourne: John Ferres, 1855), 142, https://courts.sdp.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/search/asset/60625/0.
132. I. Jones, *Ned Kelly*, 12.
133. Kelly, *The Jerilderie Letter*, 21.
134. Carey has Quinn 'purchasing 1,000 acres at Glenmore'; in fact Glenmore was 25 000 acres of admittedly rough country (R.V. Billis and A.S. Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip* [Melbourne: MacMillan, 1932], 190; John N. Molony, *Ned Kelly* [1980; Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2001], 18). Specifically, the Glenmore run was leased to 'James Quin' [sic] for (in 1874) £33 6s 8d every six months. Evidence for the poor quality of the land is that rent was calculated at 'eightpence for every sheep or four shillings for every head of cattle which it shall be determined to be capable of carrying' per year ('Rents of Runs for the First Half of 1874,' *Victoria Government Gazette*, June 12, 1874, no. 40, 1118). Although this is only a few stock units per acre, the sheer size of the landholding meant that its capacity was substantially more than anything available to Whitty. The stock advertised in the sale of Whitty's estate, described as the whole of the stock and chattels, was, after two good years rather than two years of drought (for climactic details, see Linden Ashcroft, David John Karoly, and Joëlle Gergis,

beyond what Kelly says, so that his Kelly steals fifty horses, not eleven.[135])

The overall effect of these changes is to cast Kelly's struggle into colonial terms, rather than as occurring in a settler context (and, incidentally, in the middle of a stupendous boom in which Melbourne was becoming one of the most important cities in the empire).[136] The novel treats the Irish in Victoria as victims of British colonisation and recounts 'the injustice we poor Irish suffered in this present age' rather than presenting them as settlers engaged in their own process of colonisation. This occurs despite a historical consensus that Kelly's appeals to an Irish identity should be understood as an inherited form of expressing concerns particular to Victoria in which 'the atmosphere of the Kelly outbreak is Irish, its grievances and conditions local.'[137]

### 2.3.6 Aboriginal absence

Realisation of this transformation strongly suggests an important role for reading strategies which are aware of the novel's move away from a settler context. For an international audience, treating Kelly as Irish and colonised takes events in a far-away land and makes them comprehensible according to meta-narratives of postcolonial thought: rather than having to confront the problems of settler colonialism as a distinct entity, Irish Australians can be read

'Southeastern Australian climate variability 1860–2009: a multivariate analysis,' *International Journal of Climatology* 34, no. 6 (2013): 1934), 20 bullocks, 30 milch cows, 100 mixed cattle, 7 brood mares, 4 draught horses, 8 four-year-old horses, and 21 three and two-year old horses ('Unreserved Sale [Advertisment],' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, September 23, 1883). For comparison, at death Quinn's personal property included 150 cattle and 15 horses; however, this is unlikely to be the total of stock on the land, since he was sharing the run with his sons ('James Quinn: Grant of administration' [VPRS 28/P0002, 11/332, Public Record Office Victoria]). Against this, it is claimed that Quinn 'died heavily in debt.'(I. Jones, *Ned Kelly*, 36) However, no source is given for this claim, and the assessment of his estate cited above says he had no debts.

When Power tells Kelly that Whitty had 10 000 acres (Carey, *True History*, 77), he and his family members in fact had 535 ('Title Deeds,' *Victoria Government Gazette*, April 8, 1864, no. 36, 840). These selections must have been tenuously held: his lease on some of them fell into arrears in 1873 ('Notice to Lesses under Sec. 12 of 'The Amending Land Act 1856' in Arrear,' *Victoria Government Gazette*, June 6, 1873, no. 44, 1014).

Ian Jones has him later owning 12000 acres, bought at auction in February 1877, and leasing 12000 more (I. Jones, *Ned Kelly*, 94), but this appears to be a confusion caused by counting Whitty's lease of land on the former Myhree Station twice; giving evidence in court in October 1878, Whitty claimed to 'lease 11000 or 12000 acres bank lands,' not have two separate leases ('Beechworth Court of Assize,' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, October 12, 1878, 4).

The confusion appears to arise because the Union Bank attempted to sell what was advertised, and cited by Jones, as 12 000 acres ('Important Sale of Freeholds,' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, December 22, 1877, 5) in December 1877. However, Whitty only bought 232 acres in the auction of this land in February. The 'greater portion of the lots were withdrawn from sale' when they did not meet the reserve price, and Whitty presumably then leased them from the bank ('Sale of the Union Bank Lands,' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, February 16, 1878, 5).

135. Carey, *True History*, 194; I. Jones, *Ned Kelly*, 96.

136. See Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 356–359.

137. Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia, 1788 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), 138; For a discussion, see Reece, 'Ned Kelly's Father,' 239–243.

as effectively indigenous victims of British colonisation, victims of a biased legal system denied political power. But to a domestic audience, the appeal in the same indigenization lies in the defusal of settler anxieties; by Irish suffering, the land is possessed, offering a domestic appeal not available in, say, *Long Live Sandawarra*, in part a novelisation of the life of Jandamarra by Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson) which deals in similar themes of bush resistance to police.[138] Carey's Kelly says this quite definitely: 'everlasting title to the rich soil of Avenel' is gained by Red Kelly's suffering and death, while 'through abuse & tyranny the police had forfeited the right to the land.' Kelly's supporters are even presented as autochthonic, rising 'from the earth like winter oats.'[139]

This is not a neutral position in a settler context, but one which is 'embarrassingly exclusive'.[140] Presenting an empty landscape from which the Irish have been excluded establishes them as, in the terminology used by Terry Goldie and discussed in the previous chapter, indigenized through suffering and labour; but this in turn excludes earlier possessors, the Mogullumbidj people. There is limited but persuasive evidence for what happened to them; as Jacqui Durrant explains it,

> When visiting the region in February 1841, a little over two years after the first permanent arrival of Europeans, George Augustus Robinson wrote of pastoralist George Faithfull at Oxley on the King River that 'Faithfull has the credit for having shot a number of blacks in his time and for having encouraged his men who were convicts' [...] his stockman James Howard would reminiscence in the *Argus* towards the end of his life about Faithfull's men having shot more than 200 Aboriginal people in one day, leaving the bodies strewn along the river.[141]

There was clearly a substantial Aboriginal presence before this shooting, since a greater expanse of land which would eventually lend its name to Whitty's Myrrhee station had been abandoned by the original squatter, Faithfull's neighbour George Edward MacKay, when

> In May 1840, 21 of them, all armed with guns, besides their native weapons, attacked my station in my absence. They murdered one of my servants and burned my huts and stores, and all my wheat [..] Four horses, each worth £100, were killed, and only seven head of cattle, out of nearly 3,000, were left alive on the

138. Mudrooroo Narogin, *Long live Sandawara* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1992).
139. Carey, *True History*, 38, 334, 323.
140. Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures*, 189.
141. Jacqui Durrant, 'Mogullumbidj: First People of Mount Buffalo,' *Victorian Historical Journal* 91, no. 1 (2020): 31.

run.[142]

Similarly, James Quinn's Glenmore run had previously been abandoned sometime between 1845 and 1851 'on account of blacks and dingoes.'[143] Evidently, up until approximately 1845 an Aboriginal population was present and forcibly resisting colonisation, but had been dispossessed or killed by Kelly's time, before his family claimed their land.

Realisation of this background of dispossession complicates the moral claim of the selectors to land, but Carey's narrative ignores this, instead presenting the Irish as lower than Aboriginals:

> Yes damn them said Jem we was raised to think the blacks the lowest of the low but they had boots not us and we damned and double damned them as we run.[144]

This attitude is reiterated when Carey gives an account of an (entirely fictional) attack on Kelly's father by 'a mob together made of the remnants of different tribes' by 'a vicious Sydney black by the name of Warragul' as he travels to Henry Buckley's station at Gnawarra.[145] Warragul's origins in Sydney suggest that he has no more claim to the land he is on than Kelly does, and his attack is presented as unprovoked. Even his name is probably a reference to 'warrigal,' a slang term for wild sometimes used as a derogatory term for Aborigines, as it is later in the novel: 'a skinny young warrigal v. natty in tweed britches and blue shirt.'[146]

By replacing this history of dispossession and frontier violence directed towards Aborigines with a history of dispossession and frontier violence suffered by settlers, the novel can over-write older claims to land and Australian identity to the approbation of white Australians.[147] At the same time, however, this attitude can also appeal internationally by presenting Australian settlers as effectively colonised, leaving them simultaneously familiar and

142. Thomas Francis McBride, ed., *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: A Series of Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines, etc., Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq., Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of Victoria* (Melbourne: Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria, 1898), 152–153. For the ownership history of Myrrhee see Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, 230

143. Billis and Kenyon, 190.

144. Carey, *True History*, 13.

145. Carey, 15.

146. Carey, 268.

147. In a related but distinct argument, Susan K. Martin finds Kelly's 'Irishness a kind of 'white' blackness' which lets him be Other to Australian identity and therefore 'innocent of Australian transgressions against the land and the property of Aborigines' but still recuperable into a new and similarly innocent Australian 'white establishment' (S. K. Martin, 'Dead White Male Heroes: *True History of the Kelly Gang*, and Ned Kelly in Australian Fictions,' 312). See also, for a discussion of the 'ambiguous and sentimental undercurrents' in public considerations of Irishness in postcolonial Australian thought, Ann McGrath, 'Australia's Occluded Voices: Ned Kelly's History Wars,' in *Narratives of the Occluded Irish Diaspora: Subversive Voices*, ed. Mícheál Ó hAodha and John O'Callaghan, Reimagining Ireland (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012), 12.

exotic, but also reinforcing cultural cringe by differentiating them from their metropolitan origins — allowing the use of what Carey has called 'a lot that's attractive to people in post-colonialism'.[148] Tellingly, Annette Kern-Stähler suggests approvingly that the novel remains postcolonial, since the absence of Aboriginality is compensated for by the 'perspective on the colonial oppression of the Irish.'[149] Similarly, to Dolores Herrero, 'in a novel in which the Aborigines are practically absent, the Irish minority seems to stand for the fight of the dispossessed against the overwhelming forces of History.'[150]

Such conclusions are particularly troubling when 'the Irish minority' were not fighting against dispossession but were active and willing participants in it. At the same time, however, they appear inevitable because of Carey's successful appeal to the desires of two audiences at once in order to achieve domestic and international success. *True History of the Kelly Gang*'s commercial success then begins to appear predicated upon an evasion of a settler context in general, and of indigenous dispossession in particular.

## 2.4 Gerald Murnane

This section moves from the success of Peter Carey, understood as reliant on the management of contradictory desires in international and national audiences related to cultural cringe, to examine the work of Gerald Murnane as an example of a comparable writer whose international success has instead been limited. Although his form of postmodernism escapes the trap of cultural cringe, I argue that this has been at the cost of losing the apparent quiddity upon which Carey's success relied.

### 2.4.1 Introduction

Murnane, born in 1939, worked first as a primary school teacher and then a teacher of creative writing in Melbourne. After his wife's death, in 2009, he left Melbourne and moved to Goroke, a small country town where, in 2018, a *New York Times* interviewer found him

148. Moss, 'Car-Talk: Interview with Peter Carey,' 91.
149. Annette Kern-Stähler, '"The True and Secret Part of the History is Left to Me": Colonial Oppression and Selective Historiography in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*,' in *Xenophobic Memories: Otherness in Postcolonial Constructions of the Past*, ed. Monika Gomille and Klaus Stierstorfer (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 244.
150. Dolores M. Herrero, 'Peter Carey's True History of the Kelly Gang: Ethical Dimensions in the Re-evaluation of Australia's Mythic Hero,' *Commonwealth : Essays and Studies* 27, no. 2 (2005): 80.

perhaps performatively working behind the bar of a golf course.[151] Before this move, three months training for the priesthood in Sydney in 1957 were his longest period away from Melbourne.[152] 'He has never left Australia, and has never visited Queensland, the Northern Territory or Western Australia', writes Nicholas Birns, but has instead spent his life producing, at irregular intervals, a body of work including both fiction and non-fiction in which each form of production has tended to resemble the other and explore similar themes.[153]

A publisher's note to his 'A History of Books' runs as follows, suggesting that his work can be seen as the combination of a remarkably parochial experience with an equally broad reading:

> The authors of the books referred to in 'A History of Books' are believed to include Miguel Ángel Asturias, Giorgio di Chirico, Charles Dickens, Margaret McKenzie, Mikhail Petrovich Artzybashev, James Joyce, Frank Wedekind, R.C. Sherriff and Vernon Bartlett, George Borrow, John Clare, Christopher Brennan, Thomas Hardy, Herman Hesse, Gerald Murnane, Roger Longrigg, Joseph Conrad, Elias Canetti, Brian Aldiss, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James T. Farrell, François Mauriac, William Styron, Frederick Exley, George Gissing, Henry Handel Richardson, Frank Dalby Davison, D.M. Body, Roy Campbell, Robert Musil, Gyula Illyés, Emily Brontë, André Maurois, Jack Kerouac, Sándor Márai and Halldór Laxness.[154]

If we exclude Murnane himself, it becomes noticeable that, in this tumble of the canonical and obscure, four Australian names sit alongside the familiar and the exotic: Christopher Brennan, Henry Handel Richardson, Frank Dalby Davison, and the (very obscure) Margaret McKenzie. This treatment of them as neither marked out by nation nor unequal to the writers from abroad recalls the argument, in Kipling's 'One Lady at Wairekei', against the splitting the world into classes like 'Colonial Literature' in favour of reading work, whatever its origin, as 'the lives of men and women written by men and women.'[155] In other words, Murnane here takes neither a culturally nationalist approach, pushing against cringe by focussing on Australian-ness, nor a cringing approach which assumes Australians cannot be equal to for-

151. Binelli, 'Is the Next Nobel Laureate in Literature Tending Bar in a Dusty Australian Town?'
152. Imre Salusinszky, *Gerald Murnane*, Oxford Australian Writers (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993); Gerald Murnane, *Something for the Pain: A Memoir of the Turf* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2015), 50, 221.
153. Birns, *Contemporary Australian Literature*, 169.
154. Gerald Murnane, *A History of Books* (Artarmon: Giramondo, 2012), 206. 'D.M. Body' is a misprint for 'D.M. Booy' (Peter Murnane, email message to author, 3 December 2021)
155. Rudyard Kipling, 'One Lady at Waireki,' in *The Cause of Humanity and Other Stories: Uncollected Prose Fictions*, ed. Thomas Pinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 351.

eign writers. Instead, quietly, he treats them as 'men and women,' all equally capable of talent and deserving of attention.

This escape from cultural cringe can be seen in his own fiction, which — determinedly individual rather than placing himself in an exclusively international or Australian literary community — tends to revolve around certain themes and obsessions,[156] as well as having recurring features such as semi-autobiographical yet ambiguous narration. This approach has produced some devoted admirers but little public awareness; to Paul Genoni:

> Certainly it is the case that Murnane has never had a large readership in Australia. Sometimes glowing reviews and positive critical attention have not transformed into large sales, and publishers have had difficulty in keeping his books in print. Although Murnane's influence has arguably transcended his low reader numbers, he has never entered the public consciousness in the same way as other writers—such as David Malouf, Peter Carey, Tim Winton or Kate Grenville—who are associated with the literary end of Australian fiction.[157]

His overseas sales have also been minimal, although works of his have been published in Britain, Sweden and the United States. A recent revival — spearheaded by a handful of admirers such as Ben Lerner, Teju Cole and J.M. Coetzee — has led to the international republication of some of his work, especially by And Other Stories in the UK, while at the same time other work — domestically long out of print — has been republished in Australia by Giramondo and by Text Publishing, so that — as of 2020 — 'his works, which had all but gone out of print at one point in his career, are now more widely available than they have ever been.'[158]

The reading which follows will suggest this lack of readership — unlike Carey's — is directly linked to this emphasis on the individual consciousness rather than the nation, since such individuality (in escaping myth) presumably alienates some readers. Paradoxically, however — and here my approach differs from my reconstruction of Murnane's own intent — this individuality allows for readings which interpret aspects of this individuality in terms incorporating settlement, since the individual consciousness presented by Murnane has been influenced by the settler experience.

156. To one reviewer, Peter Craven, Murnane 'writes endlessly' about a 'handful of themes.' (Peter Craven, '*Barley Patch*,' *The Age*, October 3, 2009, A2)

157. Paul Genoni, 'The Global Reception of Post-National Literary Fiction: The Case of Gerald Murnane,' *JASAL*, no. 9 (2009): n.p. https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/JASAL/article/download/10155/10053.

158. Anthony Uhlmann, ed., 'Introduction,' in *Gerald Murnane: Another World in This One* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2020), 1.

### 2.4.2 Murnane and the individual vision

A useful introduction to Murnane's work, especially since there has been relatively little comment by critics rather than practitioners, comes from J.M. Coetzee, originally writing in the *New York Review of Books*. Coetzee's subtle reading of Murnane is as the product of an Irish-Australian and Catholic heritage not maintained as faith. This leads to a continued belief in and expression of knowledge of a 'quite other world that is nonetheless in a not easily explained way part of our own,' together with 'ingrained feelings of personal sinfulness' which culminates in a form of idealism.[159] In Coetzee's interpretation of Murnane,

> The activity of writing, then, is not to be distinguished from the activity of self-exploration. It consists in contemplating the sea of internal images, discerning connections between them, and setting these connections out in grammatical sentences.[160]

Although Coetzee does not mention it, this closely corresponds to Murnane's description in a foreword to a reprint of his first novel, *Tamarisk Row*, as intended to bring 'to life the fictional personage responsible for it: the narrator through whose mind the text is reflected.' Similarly, in a letter to Paul Genoni, he associated himself with the small group of writers who 'report truly the contents of their minds or they arrange patterns of imagery,' rather than producing 'essentially film-scripts, some more subtle than others.'[161] Film-scripts can here be understood as a depiction of external reality — such as the Australian landscape — novel to readers. These sentiments are expressed in greater length, but perhaps with less clarity, in his concept of 'true fiction' (explored in *A Million Windows*),[162] but are perhaps more simply put in his declaration that 'whenever I've written a work of fiction, I've considered it a detailed report of certain of the contents of my mind at the time of my writing.'[163]

As a result (to expand on Coetzee's approach) Murnane's fiction and his non-fiction blur together into explorations of a narratorial voice or implied author which resembles Murnane. This narrator deals with a simplified mytho-poetic world derived from Murnane the person's

159. J.M. Coetzee, 'Reading Gerald Murnane,' in *Late Essays: 2006-2017* (New York: Viking, 2017), 260–261. (An alternative argument for the influence of Spinoza rather than idealism upon Murnane has been made by Patrick West (Patrick West, 'Spinoza / Space / Speed / Sublime: Problems of Philosophy and Politics in the Post-Colonial Fiction of Gerald Murnane,' *Journal of Postcolonial Cultures and Societies* 4, no. 4 [2013]: 1–15).
160. Coetzee, 'Reading Gerald Murnane,' 262–263.
161. Genoni, 'The Global Reception of Post-National Literary Fiction: The Case of Gerald Murnane,' n.p.
162. Gerald Murnane, *A Million Windows* (Artarmon: Giramondo, 2014).
163. Gerald Murnane, 'The Still-Breathing Author,' in Uhlmann, *Gerald Murnane*, 166.

experience of Murnane the writer's recurring thoughts (or 'image clusters in his mind'), which in their turn are in some manner related to, but not derived from, Murnane the person's life experiences.[164] The conjectured reader's experience then creates the conjectured author she reads after Murnane-the-implied-author imagines her, so that — to Coetzee's interpretation of Murnane — 'the 'real' (mundane) world and the real (ideal) world maintain themselves in a tension of erotic reciprocity, each holding the other in existence.'[165] Similarly, Imre Salunsinszky identifies in Murnane a desire to explore 'a deeper truth of things, that is not accessible through science or rational vision.'[166] He argues that Murnane's fiction enacts

> an orderly, progressive unfolding of a set of central concerns that have to do with the relation of the individual mind to the reality confronting it. Murnane's books are about the adventure of consciousness.[167]

This is some distance from Ned Kelly's experience of Irish-Australianness, but, in practice — I would argue — comes from the same broader experience of the isolation of the settler or the southerner, of growing up near Melbourne at the surly edge of the world.[168] (Nicholas Birns points out that both Murnane's narrator in *A Million Windows* and Ned Kelly respond to reading *Lorna Doone* as 'books that speak back to a metropolitan consensus.'[169]) Once the idea of a real or false world is abandoned, it becomes clear that imagination, reading, and experience of actual landscape are all contacts, in Gerald Murnane's philosophy, with an outer world distinct from personal experience. But to live in Australia, and read Hungarian fiction, as Murnane-the-person does, means collecting a set of image clusters about unknown countries, like the America and Hungary of *Inland*, which are both part of Murnane-the-writer and unexperienced by Murnane-the-person, even if they might be known to his eventual reader.

164. Shannon Burns, however, argues that 'my work on a literary biography of Murnane has so far revealed that the fiction is far from superficially autobiographical; indeed, the boundary between Murnane's fiction and his life is extraordinarily fluid.' (Shannon Burns, 'Truth, Fiction and True Fiction,' in Uhlmann, *Gerald Murnane*, 30) This claim is difficult to evaluate without access to more details of Murnane's biography; in the near future his biography should be published and become available to analysis.

165. Coetzee, 'Reading Gerald Murnane,' 267.

166. Salusinszky, *Gerald Murnane*, 1.

167. Salusinszky, 2.

168. Perhaps, however, it is worth noting that Murnane, at least in his early work, appears to have believed that this inability to escape one's own role as an observer and find an objective truth was in some sense the price paid for Catholicism; in *Tamarisk Row*, a Protestant teacher can 'know the secrets of the Australian bush instead of the mysteries of the Catholic religion,' and can therefore, in the free indirect discourse of the narrator, enjoy 'the true meaning of a[n Australian] poem' (Gerald Murnane, *Tamarisk Row* [Melbourne: Heinemann, 1974], 47).

169. Birns, *Contemporary Australian Literature*, 176.

Murnane makes this clear by tending to at least gesture towards his sources, so that — for example — the ostensibly Hungarian narrator of *Inland* gives a list of plants unfamiliar to both him and an Australian like Murnane, at which point an ambiguous voice intercedes in brackets to give the reader their source in a 1967 book, *The Life of Prairies and Plains*.[170]

One can recall here the much-discussed settler angst about a consciousness formed on a European literary heritage being forced to confront an alien landscape, a point to which this chapter will return. But Murnane's intent here (as opposed to ways in which he can, and will later, be read) is more likely to suggest that the experienced landscape has the same relationship to the ideal real as the landscape that is read about or the landscape that is imagined. None of these are real in the sense of approaching the ideal; instead, they exist in Coetzee's erotic reciprocity with that ideal.

In an interview, Murnane has conceded that 'in many parts of my work there are passages that come from my feeling that landscapes are connected with emotional states or sexual matters.'[171] It is not that language is inadequate to landscape that is real, and therefore needs to be made new to correspond to it. Instead, the landscape that is encountered by a consciousness made up of image-clusters will be created in interpretation with those clusters; a thoroughly postmodern position (even if Murnane would not describe it as such), but one which reflects a fundamental settler alienation in which sensibilities formed by one culture encounter a landscape that did not contribute to the cultural formation and interpret it accordingly.

This experience is dramatized in Murnane's short story 'Cotters Come No More' in which a fifteen-year-old walks on a farm with his bachelor uncle while discussing poetry and fantasising about encounters with the (imagined) girl he would meet if he were alone. This story can be read as symptomatic of Murnane's interpretation of cultural cringe and its effects on literary production. The narrator argues for, in essence, a nationalist view of literary production which Carey would be unlikely to disagree with. Here, literature comes from landscape and the role of the Australian writer is to use that landscape to fight against cultural cringe by rejecting 'ponderous and arrogant Europeans':

> I began to talk about the welter of impressions bombarding our senses and crying out to be preserved in the form of poetry [...] All this, I argued, should be the sub-

170. Gerald Murnane, *Inland* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1988), 5.
171. Susanne Braun-Bau, 'A Conversation with Gerald Murnane,' *Antipodes* 10, no. 1 (June 1996): 48.

> ject of poetry. He ought to read, and I intended one day to write, a poetry set free from the strict rules that ponderous and arrogant Europeans wanted to impose on the world. Where were we at that moment? I asked him rhetorically. We were at the very southern edge of an enormous land whose fund of poetic inspiration had barely been tapped. Neither he nor I knew of any poem celebrating the peculiar qualities of our little zone of bare hills lying between the emptiness of the Southern Ocean and the hazy plains inland. It was our responsibility to preserve in poetry what no one else had written about. And it was our right to be free to search for the most apt words unhindered by history or tradition. No one before us two had stood quite where we stood among those grassy hills or had seen and felt what we saw and felt. No one from before our time should cow us with their laws or customs. As poets and admirers of poetry we should be free.[172]

His uncle responds elliptically by telling him 'that his father, my late grandfather, had said about some men that instead of talking they opened their mouths and let the wind blow their tongues around.'[173] Instead of explaining further he recites a long poem the author cannot quite remember and 'that owed nothing to his surroundings,' from which he reconstructs:

> Remember now beside the wain...
> The days of old are o'er;
> This is our harvest of the plain,
> And we return no more.[174]

The narrator begins to think of lost countries, a term which includes for him his bachelor uncle's girlfriends and — in another sense — his own lack of sexual experience, but which must also be intended to recall the experience of the authors of what he imagines to be 'a very old ballad' in England.[175]

As they walk on, they encounter the ruins of a house which the uncle explains once belonged to the narrator's great-great-uncles, the Cotters. The poem the narrator remembers begins to have its fourth line replaced by 'And Cotters come no more.'[176] Finally, the two encounter what must be a young couple having sex in a car, but is not described as such. The story ends with:

172. Gerald Murnane, *Velvet Waters* (South Yarra: McPhee Gribble, 1990), 108–109.
173. Murnane, 109–110.
174. Murnane, 112.
175. In fact, the poem the narrator cannot recover is almost certainly intended to be William Morris' 'The Burghers' Battle', with its lines 'And we return no more', 'And sowed this harvest of the plain,' 'The days of old are o'er', and 'Remember how beside the wain.' (William Morris, 'The Burghers' Battle,' in *Poems by the Way* [London: Reeves & Turner, 1891], 13–15) But this is essentially irrelevant to the story, except insofar as Morris is himself imagining a lost country and mediæval life rather than authentically describing personal experience.
176. Murnane, *Velvet Waters*, 117.

> And surely in the next moment I knew I was going to hear, during the many long pauses while my uncle and I travelled afterwards further away from the coast, the Cotters my forebears calmly reciting.[177]

This experience implies a rebuke to the narrator's initial assumption that landscape leads to new language, as if experience would 'blow their tongues around'. Although it might be true that no-one before 'had seen and felt what we saw and felt,' the implication is twofold: others have felt the same, as in Morris' case, and others have seen the same landscape. What is impossible, however, is to both feel *and* see the same landscape, since the landscape is approached through a series of memories and associations not only personal but also the products of literary experience. As a result the narrator's landscape is studded with imagined female presences, but (he assumes) his uncle's is not: 'It seemed a little unfair that I could find in any of the paddocks around me the young woman I was sure to meet one day while he, almost forty years old, could see only an empty landscape.'[178] Conversely, the uncle can see features in the landscape unknown to the narrator. These have been derived from his knowledge of, for example, the poem or the history of the Cotters. Meanwhile, the couple in the car — in the same landscape — respond quite differently based on the sexual knowledge available neither to the narrator or his uncle.

This interpretation is supported by another reference in Murnane's work; in *Inland* we find the narrator standing in the wind that has come down through a particular landscape from Mount Macedon. He has been trying to 'become the only man who had names for what mattered most in his native soil,' or at least to 'learn the peculiar qualities that distinguished my own particular things from other things of other districts' only to realise, after various failures, that

> my native soil had no things peculiar to it. I learned that the things in soil are only patterns of other things. My native soil was a little different from other soils, but only because the hundreds of things in it were arranged in patterns a little different from the patterns of the same hundreds of things in the soils of other districts.

As a result, when 'I opened my mouth and waited for the wind to blow my tongue around' he finds no words or names.[179]

177. Murnane, *Velvet Waters*, 118.
178. Murnane, 108.
179. Murnane, *Inland*, 70.

This sense of imagined distance recurs in what must be one of the finest short stories to deal with Australian identity, his 'The Battle of Acosta Nu', part of a sequence of meta-narratively linked short stories where each narrator claims to be the author of the next story. In this story — easily readable as a dramatization of cultural cringe, but one in which *Australia* is the dreamt-of superior culture, inverting the approach of Carey's *Theft* — a narrator presents himself as a New Australian living in Paraguay, descendant of Australians who set out to build a socialist utopia there. It becomes apparent that the narrator actually, much to his regret, believes that he belongs in Paraguay despite his repeated claims to Australian-ness. However, the narrative, beginning with its opening line ('I stood on a hill northeast of Melbourne and looked across the folds of suburbs towards the Kinglake Ranges and almost believed I was in Australia after all'[180]) regularly shows that the narrator is in Australia but believes himself to be in Paraguay, condemning the Australians he encounters as representative of Paraguayan culture; in actuality, then, he is an Australian who believes himself to be a Paraguayan who believes himself to be an Australian, in what he calls 'one of the outrageous paradoxes that always occurred to me when I came close to defining the Australian character.'[181] His imagined Australia, meant to be its own unique place, cannot correspond to the Australia he lives in. The story closes with his realisation (on 'a busy road that led into the centre of Melbourne') that he and his son are really Paraguayans in their 'native land', but are surrounded by 'Australians', 'the people who still dreamed of a vague land they believed themselves shut out of.'[182]

'Australia' and 'Paraguay' here become empty postmodern referents, meaningful only in the experience of an individual consciousness. The narrator can interpret whatever he sees of Australia as Paraguayan, because the terms 'Australia' or 'Paraguay' only have meaning as the result of a cluster of images and referents in his own mind, that which has been read about or imagined (he thinks of his newfound land of Paraguay as 'the country he had thought for years was only a place he had read about'), rather than what he believes to be 'the true source of [Australian] culture, the land of Australia itself.'[183] As such, it is meaningless to talk of an Australian experience or landscape; to do so quickly devolves into 'outrageous paradox:'

> We had all of us probably spent part of our youth hoping to meet fellow-exiles and to share all we knew of Australia. But the few of us who had actually attempted this

180. Murnane, *Landscape with Landscape*, 71.
181. Murnane, 74.
182. Murnane, 121–122.
183. Murnane, 80.

> had found it strangely difficult. Some of us might have decided it was by definition impossible.[184]

If, however, the reading of cultural cringe and Carey's success given earlier in this chapter holds, such an approach to identity — whatever its inherent worth — will not be able to achieve Carey's commercial success so long as it remains more difficult to read and interpret as what the next chapter will discuss as 'exportable' literature corresponding to pre-existing knowledge or desires for exoticism in international readers. An insistence that Australia can only exist in the individual mind prevents Murnane from dramatizing Australia as an exotic spectacle (because it lacks quiddity). A typical comment from international reviews is 'I'm intrigued by his ideas, but too often bored by his writing'.[185] (In contrast, as has already been discussed, Carey's alterations to Australian history have the opposite effect.) But international stereotypes of Australian identity and assumptions of cultural superiority do not (or did not, until very recently) prompt international readers to consider Australian writers in the terms which would allow Murnane's project to be understood.

This may seem a bold claim but is supported by the only international review of Murnane (excepting a negative capsule review in 1989) I have been able to find before his revival, which vividly demonstrates why Carey may have desired the deliberate creation of exciting narratives compatible with metropolitan knowledge. Howard Jacobson — himself a later Booker winner — there dealt with Murnane's *Landscape with Landscape* (the collection including 'The Battle of Acosta Nu') in a very negative review of Australian production as a whole for the *Times Literary Supplement*.[186] The collection is

> free of the problem of deciding on a language in which to have his characters converse or think, because no one, apart from the brooding central presence we are warned not to confuse with the author, is permitted to do either. The title of the collection renders fairly the inescapably monomaniacal nature of the enterprise: six fetid and obsessive parts woven into one fetid and obsessive whole [...] that the author can keep us interested in what might thus appear to be a rather parochial problem [never having crossed the borders of the state of Victoria] is a tribute to his fidelity to the obsession. This might not be a book which offers to tackle

184. Murnane, *Landscape with Landscape*, 76.

185. Claire Lowdon, 'As good as Joyce?: Gerald Murnane, the eccentric Australian unknown called the next Nobel literature laureate by *The New York Times*,' *Sunday Times* (London), January 20, 2019, 32.

186. In an interview, Murnane has described how 'A reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* hadn't the faintest idea what the book was about.' (Braun-Bau, 'A Conversation with Gerald Murnane,' 47)

> the wide spectacle of Australian life, but in a curious kind of way simply not being able to is precisely its subject, and so in an even more curious kind of way it comes around, negatively so to speak, to tackling the issue of the spectacle after all. If nothing else, he acknowledges it — everything in Australia that isn't Melbourne and its environs — as a continuing reproach.[187]

The review as a whole seems to desire Australians — with one specific exception, the author of *Illywhacker* — to write with more gusto about the 'spectacle' of Australia, wishes that they not use Australian English ('a language for tawdry dreams') and occasionally makes judgements which in retrospect seem incorrect: Helen Garner as 'Mills and Boons for Bohemians', for example. Its broader problem is no more or less than an inability to consider Australian writers not as purveyors of 'the wide spectacle of Australian life', but as *writers* using their own language in a state of cultural equality: 'men and women', to once again recall Kipling, not 'Colonial Literature.'

### 2.4.3 Murnane's The Plains and settlement

If Murnane's project is understood entirely as the exploration of individual consciousness, it would seem to reject not only cultural cringing but also the possibility of reading for settler commonalities at all. This sub-section will respond to such an argument by reading Murnane's novella *The Plains* to identify — beneath an ongoing emphasis on the individual vision — some key settler commonalities linked to landscape, as well as ways in which some of the text's oddities can be interpreted as attempts to avoid a distasteful association with stereotypes of Australian masculinity, rather than a claim that no commonalities exist. By doing so, I will argue that Murnane's approach, unlike Carey's, retains the possibility of transnational settler comparison.

*The Plains* is the story of a film-maker — someone Murnane later called 'a man who tries to see properly'[188] who travels from 'Melbourne — the city I preferred to forget'[189] into the plains — or, as he sometimes significantly calls it, and as he intends to title his film, the Interior. This is a vast and ill-defined region where great houses of landowners act as eccentric patrons to a subduedly artistic community, much concerned with the nature of the plains and

187. Howard Jacobson, 'Measuring up to the age and place,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 4417 1987, 1308.
188. Salusinszky, *Gerald Murnane*, 43.
189. Murnane, *The Plains*, 17.

the best ways to observe and represent them. The plains are a region somewhere in the interior of what one character calls the 'legal fiction' of Australia with their own customs of dress and behaviour, together with a complex notional history of suppressed conflict and aesthetic movements.[190] (The two are, in Murnane's vision, intertwined, since the latter causes the former.) They are, in other words, an inversion of a highly urbanised and coastal Australia presumed, by international observers and those suffering from cultural cringe, to have little cultural history or record of aesthetic achievement into a rural and inland plain with little else but these things. This almost exactly inverts both *True History*'s presentation of rural and isolated Irish exiles with a nascent culture derived from landscape and a similar depiction in a work to be discussed in the next chapter, Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*.

Much of Murnane's profoundly ekphrastic text is concerned with recounting disputes among proponents of aesthetic visions of the plains and descriptions of particular works of art, but in such plot as there is, the protagonist (no characters are named) is hired into one household on the basis of his proposal to make a film of the plains, despite his patron's critique of the proposal, then spends an uncertain number of years engaged in preliminary research for it. He has dilatory encounters with his patron's wife and daughter; he imagines writing a body of essays for the wife to read, or more likely not read, and sets up a dummy of himself in a window in which the daughter sees him in order to see what she saw, in accordance with his primary and unachievable goal:

> I want to bring to light the plain that only she remembers—that shimmering land under a sky that she has never quite lost sight of.
>
> And I mean to see still other lands that cry out for their explorer—those plains that she recognises when she gazes out from her verandah and sees anything but a familiar land.
>
> Last of all I want to venture into the plain that even she is not sure of—the places she dreams of in the landscape after her own heart.[191]

He gives presentations which end with him having curtains drawn for his audience to see the plains by daylight; and, finally, the novella ends, in a description of the recurring pattern of the 'scenes', picnic-expeditions into the plains he goes on with his patron and other guests, with a request to his patron

190. Murnane, *The Plains*, 37.
191. Murnane, 71.

> to record the moment when I lifted my own camera to my face and stood with my eye pressed against the lens and my finger poised as if to expose to the film in its dark chamber the darkness that was the only visible sign of whatever I saw beyond myself.[192]

This last line can be contrasted with the first:

> Twenty years ago, when I first arrived on the plains, I kept my eyes open. I looked for anything in the landscape that seemed to hint at some elaborate meaning behind appearances.[193]

*The Plains*, therefore, is most concerned not with plot but the circling of ideas between these two positions. To Ben Lerner, the key interest of *The Plains* is an exploration of how much of 'what part of consciousness—of sensation, of emotion—might be shareable [or, one might say, prizeworthy] and what part is irreducibly individual.'[194] He observes, despite claims to individual vision, 'an obsession with constructing and contesting collective fictions' in the plainsmen, so that:

> "Australia" is the name of Murnane's supreme fiction, the idea that his private landscapes might somehow correspond with those of his countrymen and women, or at least be glimpsed by them, without having to be translated into mere "taste or fashion," where commonality is purchased at the price of standardization.[195]

In the many descriptions of failed works of art, and the failure of the protagonist's own work, a bleaker conclusion might be found in which, to Murnane, all artistic responses to the landscape of the plains are doomed to at least partially fail because they attempt to capture an individual consciousness' vision of a shared actual which can only be depicted in correspondence to an individual real; as the second paragraph of *The Plains* has it, the plains are a place 'that only I could interpret.'[196] There is no such commonality as Australia, because

> the boundaries of true nations were fixed in the souls of men. And according to the projections of real, that is spiritual, geography, the plains clearly did not coincide with any pretended land of Australia.[197]

192. Murnane, *The Plains*, 126.
193. Murnane, 9.
194. Ben Lerner, 'A Strange Australian Masterpiece,' *The New Yorker*, March 29, 2017, n.p. https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-strange-australian-masterpiece.
195. Lerner, n.p.
196. Murnane, *The Plains*, 9.
197. Murnane, 37.

As Julian Murphy puts it, *The Plains* gives 'a dematerialised view of landscape in which it is purely the product of the human mind.'[198] The realist depiction of landscape treats the plains as what the narrator's patron scornfully calls 'mere surfaces reflecting sunlight,' when — in the patron's interpretation of the project — the narrator 'was trying to discover my own kind of landscape.'[199] But such a realist depiction will seem to offer marketable details about an unknown continent more likely to succeed commercially. This is made clear in a form of parable, about a painter who tried to paint

> what he called, for convenience, the landscapes of dreams. He claimed to have access to a country derived from his unique perceptions. It was superior to any country that others called real. (The only merit of so-called real lands, he said, was that people of dulled sensibility could find their way about in them by agreeing to perceive no more than did others of their kind.)[200]

This painter's successive approaches can be interpreted as allegories of attempts to avoid association with Australia and its stereotypes, echoing (perhaps) Murnane's own attempts to escape both cultural nationalism and the reductive stereotypes of the metropole, even if doing so prevents mass market appeal and prize victories which would necessarily rely upon the common understanding of the 'real' Australia.

In his first stage of work, commentators found in his 'unmistakeable landmarks of his private country' abstract reductions and representations of the plains they knew. He next added symbols shared between the plains and his own land, and commentators found in his work the representation of a common cultural heritage, when his intent was to make his own private landscape accessible. Finally, he turned away from any observation of the plains and — by the time he meets the narrator — produces instead landscapes which do not reflect his own inaccessible vision but instead the kind of landscape that might be imagined from within that vision; to the narrator, however, observing these doubly-imagined landscapes, 'his purple hills and silvery stream could have passed for a view of Outer Australia,' the Australia Murnane's readers are assumed to experience. The final effect of his work is indistinguishable from the agreed perceptions he derides, so that it looks like 'a crude imitation of one of the gilt-framed, glass-covered landscapes I had seen in the furniture department of the town's largest store.'[201]

198. Julian Murphy, 'Reading Landscape in Gerald Murnane's *The Plains*,' *Exegesis*, no. 2 (2013): 49.
199. Murnane, *The Plains*, 61, 62.
200. Murnane, 66.
201. Murnane, 66–68.

This allegory, read in light of work such as 'The Battle of Acosta Nu', is suggestive; some critics have argued that *The Plains* should even be read as an exploration of phenomenology.[202] The major point for the specific argument of this chapter, however, is that the readers allegorised in the painter's audience would rather encounter a work reflecting these common stereotypes.

This emphasis on the individual vision might seem to suggest — even as it urges a rethinking of Carey's approach to landscape by identifying all landscapes as imagined — some doubt about the possibility of reading for settler commonalities at all. As one key passage puts it:

> Perhaps because they still felt themselves encircled by Australia, the plainsmen preferred to think of their reading as a private exercise that sustained them in their public dealings but could not excuse them from their obligation of cultivating an agreed tradition.
>
> And yet what was this tradition? Listening to the plainsmen, I had a bewildering sense that they wanted no common belief to fall back on: that each of them became uncomfortable if another seemed to take as understood something he himself claimed for the plains as a whole. It was as though each plainsman chose to appear as a solitary inhabitant of a region that only he could explain. And even when a man spoke of his particular plain, he seemed to choose his words as though the simplest of them came from no common stock but took its meaning from the speaker's peculiar usage of it.[203]

But the next paragraph complicates this vision, already weakened by the acknowledgement of an agreed tradition:

> On that first afternoon I saw that what had sometimes been described as the arrogance of the plainsmen was no more than their reluctance to recognise any common ground between themselves and others. This was the very opposite (as the plainsmen themselves well knew) of the common urge among Australians of those days to emphasise whatever they seemed to share with other cultures. A plainsman would not only claim to be ignorant of the ways of other regions but willingly appear to be misinformed about them. Most irritating of all to outsiders, he would affect to be without any distinguishing culture rather than allow his land and his ways to be judged part of some larger community of contagious tastes or fashions.[204]

This casts a great deal of *The Plains* into a disguised comment upon cultural cringe, but one where Murnane — unlike Carey — deals with its existence by ignoring it, and in doing so

202. Salusinszky, *Gerald Murnane*, 45–47.
203. Murnane, *The Plains*, 12–13.
204. Murnane, 13.

resists its power, just as his imagined Interior simply ignores the interface between the cities of the coast and the outside world.[205] It can be read as an assertion of cultural worth separate from either the representation of the postcolonial exotic for an ill-informed metropolitan audience or the cringing rebuke of English influences, justified by a desire to avoid external judgement of a distinguishing culture which both exists and is hidden.

The desire to avoid being read as part of a stereotyped culture is very understandable in a context in which understanding of Australian tastes and fashions was often limited to certain performances of cliché, as has been discussed in Jacobson's review. But it is in this cultural context that the claims of *The Plains* need to be understood; a point which becomes especially clear when considering how the novella, as Salusinszky argues, inverts stereotypes of Australian masculinity to favour intellectualism, abstraction and perfectionism.[206]

Instead, *The Plains* does present, even in its imagined world, two key settler commonalities: concern about land, and a sense of disconnect between culture and land. Where *True History of the Kelly Gang* works as an assertion of the links between Australian-ness and landscape, *The Plains* has all its characters display a common disconnection between their interior worlds and the landscapes they find themselves in but can neither understand nor own, while the novel itself dramatizes a retreat from Outer Australia to an imagined and more desirable landscape: what one narrator in *Landscape with Landscape* thinks of as the desire 'to live continually in a landscape of literature.'[207]

Harriet L. McInerney observes that *The Plains* 'seems to be done without reference to Indigenous land ownership,' but notes nonetheless the odd applicability of Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs' thesis of settler unsettlement, an argument that land becomes *unheimlich* because of the dual and irreconcilable claims to it by both Indigenous and settler owners.[208] Certainly, an obvious argument of *The Plains* is that its settlers can never truly understand or possess the plains.

205. See also Nicholas Birns' argument that Murnane's work can 'resist a simple postcolonial reading that sees Australia as merely reacting to the British legacy' by setting out alternative locations like Paraguay or Hungary as 'the "other" of Australia' (Birns, *Contemporary Australian Literature*, 175). Doing so implicitly suggests that Britain is not the natural comparison. Birns' argument can then be extended to understand Murnane as rejecting the notion that Australian culture should be primarily evaluated against British culture before being inevitably found wanting, instead enabling a choice of alternative affiliations and comparisons.
206. Salusinszky, *Gerald Murnane*, 60.
207. Murnane, *Landscape with Landscape*, 137.
208. Harriet L. McInerney, 'Apprehending Landscapes: The Uncanny and Gerald Murnane's *The Plains*,' *Antipodes* 31, no. 1 (2017): 142–143.

To John Wylie, this point is clear:

> No matter how long you might dwell within a given landscape, Murnane suggests, no matter how far back your ancestry in a place might be traced, or how environmentally perceptive or skilled you might be, you cannot write the earth. It remains inaccessible and far beyond the reach of any writing, inscription, or art. To express this thought another way, there are no original inhabitants.[209]

But the 'you' of this thought must be derived from the novel's characters; and there is no reason (given their explicitly white skin and references to first arrival on the plains) to think that these characters include indigenous Australians.

Murnane's history of the plains has its own historians, who claim that the 'flat and featureless' plains slowly revealed more and more.

> Trying to appreciate and describe their discoveries, the plainsmen had become unusually observant, discriminating, and receptive to gradual revelations of meaning. Later generations responded to life and art as their forebears had confronted the miles of grassland receding into haze. They saw the world itself as one more in an endless series of plains.[210]

To Sue Gillett, '*The Plains* can be read as a parody of the conventional narrative of exploration' in which the process of exploration, a making familiar, is inverted: 'the explorer enters the already inhabited, the familiar world of country Australia, and makes that world seem unfamiliar.'[211] I am not entirely convinced by this argument, especially given just how few traces of 'the familiar world of country Australia' remain.[212] Murnane's historians instead appear to be describing a gradual familiarisation with an initially alien landscape; a developing approach to landscape and belonging which becomes congruent with indigeneity. J.M. Coetzee has described a similar desire on the part of white South African writers, who seek to 'conceive not a social order capable of domesticating the landscape, but any kind of relation at all that consciousness can have with it':

> In the words he throws out to the landscape, in the echoes he listens for, he is seeking a dialogue with Africa, a reciprocity with Africa, that will allow him an identity better than that of visitor, stranger, transient.[213]

209. John Wylie, 'Landscape as Not-Belonging: *The Plains*, Earth Writing, and the Impossibilities of Inhabitation,' *Philological Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 177.
210. Murnane, *The Plains*, 15.
211. Sue Gillett, 'Gerald Murnane's *The Plains*: A Convenient Source of Metaphors,' *ARIEL* 26, no. 2 (1995): 25.
212. One obvious omission is any description of agricultural activity.
213. J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the culture of letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 7–8.

If this South African parallel is applied to Murnane, *The Plains* can be seen not only as the adventure of an individual consciousness but also as a commentary on attempts by individuals, alienated by settlement, to reconcile an inherited culture with an alien landscape. This then establishes commonalities with texts from other locations of settlement: both Coetzee's South African writers, but also Mulgan and Hulme, as well as Canadian writers soon to be discussed.

### 2.4.4 Murnane's 'Land Deal'

Such a reading can be expanded by considering a short story by Murnane, 'Land Deal.' This unusual story is collectively narrated, apparently by a group of Aboriginals selling the land which would become Melbourne and its environs to John Batman. At first, the narrators interpret the trade goods offered as objects they have dreamed, interpreting — for example — metal as the sort of product those who fell trees with stone would inevitably imagine. They therefore conclude they must be in a dream. As the story goes on, however, they are forced to conclude that it is not a dream of their own. The absurdity and 'wildest folly' of a land sale then provides evidence that they are in fact being dreamed by the buyers, who want to imagine a world where land could be sold, and cities built upon it, even while they fail to see the actual land on which they stand. The true significance of the story appears to lie in its metafictionality, as the imagination of a white Australian in the 'unheard-of city' of Melbourne dreamt by the buyers. The settler desire identified by Coetzee is solved by distinguishing the dreamt landscape from that available to an Aboriginal observer.[214] Murnane appears to propose two different dreams of the Australian landscape which are mutually contradictory. However, he acknowledges that his interpretation of Aboriginality can only come from within his own culture's dream of the Australian landscape, one which views the landscape through culture rather than being the product of the landscape; the contradictory dream must, therefore, be the product of its supposed antagonist, and the truth of Aboriginal experience, coming from an entirely different set of cultural referents, is unknowable to Murnane. This vision of set-

214. Coetzee's argument, in fact, develops from disjunction between the 'rival dream topography' already described and another 'dream topography that the South African pastoral projects': 'a network of boundaries criss-crossing the surface of the land, marking off thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch with, beneath him, a pyramid of contented and industrious children, grandchildren and serfs.' (Coetzee, *White Writing*, 6–7) The parallels with the estates of *The Plains* and the 'parcelled out' land of 'Land Deal' are obvious.

tlement appears to suggest that there will be elements of experience in Australia which will remain unknown, even if new discoveries will allow a form of belonging. This means that alternative, Aboriginal, forms of knowledge will remain as a standing challenge to exclusive occupation and representation of Australia.

This reading of a minor work by Murnane allows a simple form of the distinction this chapter has explored: between two possible forms of response to cultural cringe, only one of which has been internationally successful. The first, exemplified by Murnane, emphasises individual interpretation as the source of reality. This approach escapes cultural cringe but does not appear to meet the demands of metropolitan readers and prize culture for apparent veracity. The second, exemplified by Carey, does not claim veracity, and so rewrites its sources (especially to combat cultural cringe), but does claim an underlying quiddity based on an Australian uniqueness and makes changes to be compatible with expected paradigms. This second form has been much more commercially successful; at the same time, it does not encourage readings on the basis of a shared settler identity. The next chapter will further explore the desire of international readers for claims to truth about a given place — this time, Canada — but will expand on the market success of internally and externally generated images of the country as reified in literature.

# Chapter 3

# Canada

## 3.1 Introduction

Building on the previous chapter's discussion of cultural cringe, settler representation, and the calculus of international success for Carey as against Murnane, this final chapter begins with an observation by Carey. In contrast to Australia, Carey suggested in a 2002 interview, Canadian literature received international attention — its authors were 'studied everywhere' even while Australian authors were not. 'There must be some reason for that,' he thought, 'someone's spending some money, someone's putting some effort in, and we are not.'[1] This observation suggests an alternative means of achieving international success: state funding.

In this final chapter, I intend to draw a distinction between the reading methods appropriate for two groups of Anglophone Canadian literary production defined and created by patterns of state funding. The focus will be on Canadian novels published since 1957, the year the Canada Council was established; chronologically, the last novel examined is Margaret Atwood's 2000 Booker-winning *The Blind Assassin*. This timeframe covers the rise of cultural funding in Canada but ends before a curtailment of international cultural funding in 2012.

The chapter delineates a distinction between two groups of Anglophone Canadian literary texts in this timeframe.[2] A local canon is enabled and supported by state funding at a subnational level, and appeals to small groups of knowledgeable readers who — I will argue

1. Nathanael O'Reilly, 'The Voice of the Teller: A Conversation with Peter Carey,' *Antipodes* 16, no. 2 (December 2002): 165.

2. It is important to note the obvious fact that a different Francophone canon exists which displays its own patterns of national assertion and international circulation, primarily to France. Analysis of Canadian literature in French is beyond the scope of this thesis, although some literature in English from Quebec is discussed.

— find particular value in texts which assume readerly knowledge and move beyond mimesis. The second canon is for an international audience. This audience is here primarily represented by the United Kingdom, as the market most likely to be influenced by the Booker Prize. This international canon is also supported by state funding but has the different task of broadly appealing to readers who do not necessarily have any particular knowledge of Canada. It therefore attracts funding meant to correct this, encouraging mimetic readings.

To examine this in practice, I look at three specific authors who shared the same publisher: Margaret Atwood, Sheila Watson and Leonard Cohen. Within Canada, these three authors could be seen as sharing canonical status. Watson's *The Double Hook* is 'often identified as the emblematic Canadian modernist novel,' or the beginning of contemporary Canadian literature.[3] Cohen's canonicity as a novelist and a poet is supplemented by his international fame as a singer-songwriter, while *Beautiful Losers* is the postmodern counterpart to *The Double Hook*. (Mentions of both stud Atwood's recollections of Canadian literature in the 1960s.)[4] Atwood, meanwhile, is 'far and away Canada's best-known living writer'.[5]

For readers abroad, the situation is very different. Atwood – Booker Prize winner and celebrity author – is read everywhere, increasingly so in part due to television and film adaptations of her *The Handmaid's Tale*. The other two are essentially unknown. *The Double Hook* has never been published in English outside Canada; many of Atwood's readers will have encountered Watson's work only as an epigraph for Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. *Beautiful Losers* has been slightly more successful, perhaps because it has been buoyed by Cohen's fame (although its comparative success remains modest). And yet only some of Atwood's texts have successfully translated themselves into an international context, and, oddly, the texts which have *not* succeeded internationally are the most likely candidates to be taught within Canada. This chapter explores why this discrepancy might have developed, and what its repercussions are for the case I am making about the success of settler writing within prize cultures, especially in the UK.

Looking first to Atwood's *Life Before Man*, I argue that this earlier novel attracted Cana-

3. Cynthia Sugars, 'Canada,' in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: The Novel in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the South Pacific Since 1950*, ed. Coral Ann Howells, Paul Sharrad, and Gerry Turcotte, vol. 12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 98.

4. Margaret Atwood, *The Burgess Shale: The Canadian Writing Landscape of the 1960s*, CLC Kreisel Lecture Series (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2017).

5. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, 209.

dian audiences primarily because of its intense focus on the particularity of Canadian experience. I then show that this particularity is likely to have made the novel less appealing to an international audience, as reflected in comparatively meagre sales figures. In contrast, Atwood's later Booker-winning novels — represented here by a discussion of *The Blind Assassin* — do not assume particular knowledge and so could much more easily find international success.

Cohen and Watson are stronger examples of this pattern. Both Watson's *The Double Hook* and Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* are notoriously obscure texts which – I show – derive meaning in part from knowledge the reader is assumed to already share with the author as members of a common regional community. As such, their capacity to exemplify that community in academic discourse and to be read within the community itself has bought them continuing attention, as their publisher, McClelland and Stewart, intended. This built up cultural capital for the publisher, and contributed to its survival when dependent on state bailouts, even if sales alone could not have justified keeping these particular novels in print. These grounds for local success have nevertheless foreclosed on the possibility of significant popular audiences internationally, which in turn means – since they are therefore not taught – they attract little academic attention.

I conclude by arguing that such locally popular or ex-centric texts can be productively read in terms of a settler literature. They assume readers with cultures and experiences shaped by settler colonialism, and therefore have significant commonalities with the cultural productions of other instances of the same global phenomenon, whether in Canada itself or abroad. In contrast, it is harder to read texts intended to show Canada to an international audience in the same manner, since these texts derive their value to readers and the state from their ability to present Canada as unique and unitary.

The chapter ends with close readings of both *The Double Hook* and *Beautiful Losers*. These readings have a dual purpose: both to explore and delineate this phenomenon in particular texts, but also to more broadly demonstrate the capacity for such productive readings and their general viability.

## 3.2 Distinctive Canons

This section briefly delineates the concepts of international and domestic canons and collates some evidence to establish reasons for belief in their divergence. To enable quantitative analysis, I define the domestic canon as those Canadian texts which are widely studied and written about within Anglophone Canadian universities — Margaret Laurence is one example — while the international canon is comprised both of those texts regularly studied and published upon worldwide (but especially in the United Kingdom) and those texts which have won major international prizes such as the Booker Prize winners Ondaatje, Atwood and Martel. These definitions, of course, lead to a great deal of overlap in authors, if less so than in texts. I am therefore particularly interested in the cases where texts or authors canonical in one site are not canonical in the other, and in relative positioning within the canon.

Many such discrepancies are in the table below. This shows the number of times a given author appeared on the syllabus of 2007-8 Canadian literature courses (where they were taught on more than four courses).[6] Compilations, criticism, and coursepacks have been omitted. Authors in bold are those who have been shortlisted for or won a major international prize; these have been included even if they were taught on fewer than four courses.[7]

| Author | Courses |
|---|---|
| **Ondaatje, Michael** | 59 |
| **Atwood, Margaret** | 39 |
| King, Thomas | 39 |
| Laurence, Margaret | 29 |
| Robinson, Eden | 22 |
| Ross, Sinclair | 22 |
| Findley, Timothy | 21 |
| Highway, Tomson | 21 |
| **Munro, Alice** | 20 |
| Brand, Dionne | 17 |
| **Richler, Mordecai** | 16 |
| Davies, Robertson | 12 |

6. This data comes from Paul Martin, *Sanctioned Ignorance: the politics of knowledge production and the teaching of the literatures of Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013), 267–282.

7. The list of these authors was taken from Roberts, *Prizing Literature*, 4

| | |
|---|---|
| Montgomery, L.M. | 12 |
| Wilson, Ethel | 12 |
| Duncan, Sara Jeannette | 10 |
| Leacock, Stephen | 10 |
| Moodie, Susanna | 10 |
| **Michaels, Anne** | 9 |
| Pollock, Sharon | 9 |
| Urquhart, Jane | 9 |
| Clarke, George Elliott | 8 |
| Kogawa, Joy | 8 |
| Kroetsch, Robert | 8 |
| Lee, Sky | 8 |
| Richardson, John | 8 |
| Wah, Fred | 8 |
| Buckler, Ernest | 7 |
| Campbell, Maria | 7 |
| Carr, Emily | 7 |
| Choy, Wayson | 7 |
| Watson, Sheila | 7 |
| Johnston, Wayne | 6 |
| MacLennan, Hugh | 6 |
| Maracle, Lee | 6 |
| Taylor, Drew Hayden | 6 |
| Taylor, Timothy | 6 |
| Wiebe, Rudy | 6 |
| Alexis, André | 5 |
| Callaghan, Morley | 5 |
| McKay, Don | 5 |
| Poulin, Jacques | 5 |
| Toews, Miriam | 5 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Boyden, Joseph | 4 |
| Carson, Anne | 4 |
| Cohen, Leonard | 4 |
| De Mille, James | 4 |
| Goto, Hiromi | 4 |
| Grove, Frederick Philip | 4 |
| Lam, Vincent | 4 |
| **MacDonald, Ann-Marie** | 4 |
| Moore, Lisa | 4 |
| Moses, Daniel David | 4 |
| Ross, Ian | 4 |
| Roy, Gabrielle | 4 |
| Scofield, Gregory | 4 |
| Van Camp, Richard | 4 |
| Vanderhaeghe, Guy | 4 |
| Wagamese, Richard | 4 |
| **Clarke, Austin** | 3 |
| **MacLeod, Alistair** | 3 |
| **Martel, Yann** | 3 |
| **Mistry, Rohinton** | 3 |
| **Shields, Carol** | 3 |
| **Hill, Lawrence** | 2 |
| **Hage, Rawi** | 0 |
| **Ignatieff, Michael** | 0 |

There is a clear pattern. A handful of authors – Ondaatje, Atwood, Munro – are seen as canonical both inside and outside Canada. A very large number take on a critical importance within Canada not apparent outside; and a final cluster of authors attract international attention out of proportion to their domestic significance. However, it is also important to note a subtler distinction than the table reveals; dually canonical authors do not necessarily have the same texts enter the domestic and international canon, and their relative canonicity

may differ. For example, Margaret Atwood is inescapably canonical both domestically and internationally. But her relative canonicity is still divergent; she was three times more likely than Ondaatje, her nearest rival, to appear on UK university syllabuses[8] but any work of hers is taught in only a quarter of Canadian university courses, meaning that there is an 'increasing disappearance of Atwood from Canadian literature courses at the same time as her world reputation is reaching even greater heights.'[9] Those texts which do appear on Canadian syllabuses are disproportionately her poetry and works from before *The Handmaid's Tale*, while it is reasonable to believe that her international readership is particularly interested in later (sometimes Booker Prize-winning) works.

Such data as is available confirms a differing international canon. A survey of British Association for Canadian Studies members who taught Canadian literature is one piece of evidence. The survey's results were coupled with a different poll, of Canadian academics, which aimed to discover the fifty most important fictional Canadian texts. 'How many of the [top ten] listed are available in Britain?', it asked.[10] By my count, only two of them were in print with British publishers at the time (*Anne of Green Gables* and Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*).[11]

This difficulty of access directly influenced canon formation; 'availability' (together with 'appropriateness to the course') was the most important reason for selecting a particular text to teach given in the survey, well ahead of 'personal choice.'[12] As a result, some of the most important names in Canadian literature ('Kroetsch, Laurence, Urquhart, Findley and Munro') were all cited as texts respondents would like to use but could not.[13] Commenting on the survey, Danielle Fuller and Susan Billingham conclude that 'this approach severely restricts the nature and shape of the British version of the Canadian canon. And it's a self-perpetuating cycle: without a reliable supply of texts, there is little hope of increasing the demand.'[14] As late as 2019, Gillian Roberts argued that she was constrained by availability in her work teach-

8. Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson, *The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14.
9. P. Martin, *Sanctioned Ignorance*, 182.
10. 'Canadian Literature Survey,' *CanText: The Newsletter of the BACS Literature Group* 2, no. 2 (March 2000): 3.
11. Two novels by Margaret Laurence have since been brought back into print, alongside Timothy Findley's *The Wars* and a new illustrated edition of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*.
12. 'Canadian Literature Survey,' 1.
13. 'Canadian Literature Survey,' 2.
14. Danielle Fuller and Susan Billingham, 'CanLit(e): Fit for Export?,' *English Quarterly Canada* 39, no. 1 (2007): 17.

ing Canadian literature in the UK, 'a country where so few of the writers I want to teach are published' — a challenge when attempting to 'avoid centring texts and figures who are already occupying the centre' like Margaret Atwood.[15]

Atwood and Ondaatje's status as winners of the Booker Prize meant and means that their books were easily accessible and so could be taught when Canadian texts were required. Texts like these became canonical as a direct result; then, by being taught, they became the subject for students to teach in the future, for articles to be written, and so on. In contrast, the domestic canon clearly includes authors not particularly well-known internationally, who were not published internationally, or — if published internationally — did not sell sufficiently well to keep their books in print. As well as the examples of Cohen and Watson, we might consider figures like Hugh MacLennan (whose thoughts on international and domestic marketability will soon be discussed, and who has already been compared to John Mulgan); in Canada, he is so well-known a part of the literary firmament that there is a pop song using lines from him (The Tragically Hip's 'Courage (For Hugh MacLennan)'), but his fiction has not been taken up by a UK or American publisher.[16]

## 3.3 The Canadian Literary Marketplace

This seems to reify the question of canonical formation into one that must take account of book history; specifically, the market conditions that allow Canadian texts to remain in print domestically when their production in the UK is commercially unsustainable. If Margaret Laurence had been in print in the UK when the BACS survey was conducted, she would have been (as respondents made clear) taught and theorised. The explanation for her absence from the UK form of the international canon is not to be found in the inherent properties of her work, but in the material conditions of its production and dissemination. An obvious distinction between UK and Canadian publishing is the importance of state funding; the next two subsections will explore its impact.

15. Gillian Roberts, 'CanLit and Canadian Literature: A Long-Distance View,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 239 (60th Anniversary Special Issue 2019): 25.

16. Alan Galey, 'Looking for a Place to Happen: Collective Memory, Digital Music Archiving, and the Tragically Hip,' *Archivaria*, no. 86 (2018): 20.

### 3.3.1 Domestic funding

Canadian publishers and authors not focussed upon international sales are almost universally dependent upon government subsidy. The median profitability of Canadian publishers from 2000-2005, for example, was 2.3% to 4.8%, while the federal Book Publishing Industry Development Program alone provided 5.8% of total revenues.[17] This was only a single part of the subsidies upon which publishers rely. In 2010, the federal framework consisted of the Canada Book Fund, which provided $39.5M of funding a year to publishers. The Canada Council for the Arts provided $19M of funding for specific works. Other programmes supported translation, and a public lending right system delivered around $10M to authors.[18] These figures do not include substantial provincial support; for example, Ontario — where most English Canadian publishing occurs — funds its own Arts Council and Book Fund, and since 1997 it has also offered a 30% tax credit for expenditures on the production and printing of new books.[19] Authors also receive direct subsidies and grants amounting to some 15% of writers' total income.[20] Less direct means of support include state support for literary prizes, and a deliberate emphasis on examining, reproducing and celebrating Canadian literature by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Of the combined revenue of all Canadian English-language publishers, 7% of revenue is from federal assistance and 5% from provincial assistance.[21] In Ontario specifically, where more granular figures are available, national support programmes account for 8% of revenue, provincial support 4%, tax credits for publishing 3%, and institutional sales – e.g. to libraries

17. Roy MacSkimming, *The Perilous Trade: Book Publishing in Canada, 1946-2006* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2012), 4.

18. Canadian Heritage, *Investing in the future of Canadian books: review of the revised foreign investment policy in book publishing and distribution* ([Ottawa], 2010), 4–5, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/pch/CH44-158-2010-eng.pdf. These figures are now likely to be lower; the Canada Book Fund declined in real value by almost 40% from 2001-2019 (Association of Canadian Publishers and l'Association nationale des éditeurs de livres, *Beyond 2020: Investing in Canadian publishing's next decade: Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget* [2019], 3, https://publishers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2020-ANEL-ACP-PreBudgetConsultation-Final.pdf). This is not especially important in discussing an earlier period of circulation

19. See Linda Whittaker, 'Culture for one, or Culture for all? How Canadian Federalism Influences Federal and Provincial Policy toward the Book Publishing Industry' (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2009), 42–46.

20. The Writers Union of Canada, *Devaluing Creators, Endangering Creativity. Doing More and Making Less: Writers' Incomes Today* (2015), 5, https://www.writersunion.ca/sites/all/files/DevaluingCreatorsEndangeringCreativity_0.pdf.

21. Nordicity, *The Canadian English-Language Book Publishing Industry Profile: Final Report* (Association of Canadian Publishers, 2018), 21, https://publishers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Book-Publishing-Industry-Profile-FINAL.pdf.

and schools, which themselves rely on state funding – 17%.[22] In total, then, 32% of Ontario publishers' revenue can be ascribed to direct and indirect state support.

It is important to include institutional sales in this number because of the outsized significance of library sales for Canadian publishing; in the heyday of funding in the 1960s and 1970s, 'the sale of any title to the library market could easily make a book profitable. The challenge for editors and publishers was to determine which kinds of books libraries would buy.'[23] This market has since diminished, but 'what provincial education boards wanted students to read' remains a substantial market.[24] This market has particular interests in supporting local and specific texts.[25]

Even so, these figures perhaps understate the extent to which fiction specifically relies upon state funding; because Canadian fiction would lead to the highest average losses for publishers if it were unfunded, fiction is given even higher levels of support by the Canada Council, while many other categories of books, such as textbooks for the classroom, are excluded.[26] They also exclude invisible forms of funding, such as taxpayer-funded local prizes which are themselves monetarily insignificant but drive further sales.

These levels of support — already high by the standards of most countries — have been maintained at comparable or higher levels since the establishment of the Canada Council in 1957, and government support 'is generally considered one of the key sources of the extraordinary increase in literary activity in the years between 1960 and 1985'.[27] In the mid-1980s,

22. Nordicity and Castledale Inc., *An Economic Impact Study of the Ontario Book Publishing Industry: Final Report* (2013), 30, http://www.ontariocreates.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=1404.

23. Robert Lecker, *Keepers of the Code: English-Canadian Literary Anthologies and the Representation of the Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 220.

24. Robert Lecker, *Making It Real: The Canonization of English-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1995), 162.

25. School courses tend to emphasise regionalism in general, together with a particular encouragement of work from their own region. For example, the Ontario high school curriculum prescribes that students will, in a course on Canadian literature, 'study the themes, forms, and stylistic elements of a variety of literary texts representative of various time periods *and of the diverse cultures and regions of Canada*.' (Ministry of Education [Ontario], *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 11 and 12: English* [[Toronto], 2007], 145, my emphasis, http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/english1112currb.pdf) In Alberta, demand for local content was at one point high enough that for a set of anthologies 'letters and memoirs [had to be] drawn from newspapers and community histories' as well as extracts from already-published authors from Western Canada (Amy von Heyking, 'Fostering a Provincial Identity: Two Eras in Alberta Schooling,' *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, no. 4 [2006]: 1144). Similarly, Cassie Brown's novel *Death on the Ice* appears to have attracted no academic attention whatsoever, and little readership beyond Atlantic Canada. But because it was 'required reading in Newfoundland high schools,' it has remained in print and circulating within a provincial community (Nick Mount, *Arrival: the story of CanLit* [Toronto: House of Anansi, 2017], 255).

26. Robert Lecker, 'The Canada Council's Block Grant Program and the Construction of Canadian Literature,' *ESC* 25, nos. 3-4 (1999): 455.

27. Sarah Corse, *Nationalism and Literature: The politics of culture in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59.

Canadian state expenditure on cultural support was triple that of the United States if tax deductions were included, and more than ten times as much if only direct government support was considered.[28]

This suggests that there must be something distinctive about the Canadian state; successive governments would not spend so much without *some* purpose. A common answer is that these levels of cultural spending are based on Canada's situation as an agglomeration of many culturally-distinct nations, ethnic groups and provinces.[29] Spending on literature counteracts strong feelings of difference and allows the imaginative unification of Canada, while reinforcing the 'cultural Maginot Line' that keeps Canada distinct from the United States.[30] (This argument has been a constant in Canadian cultural discourse since the Massey report referred to in the appendix.) One thinks of Morag Gunn in *The Diviners*, singing 'The Maple Leaf Forever' with the rest of her class, while Jules Tonnerre remains silent.[31] If enough money is spent, a better song than 'The Maple Leaf Forever' might be written, adding the lily to the thistle, rose and shamrock entwined, and Jules might be ready to join in. ('The Maple Leaf Forever' has, in fact, been regularly rewritten to include a fleur-de-lis.)

Robert Lecker argues that, far from being value-free, Council funding has been federalist and nationalist, using cultural funding to promote national unity. He echoes John Metcalf, who identifies the obvious fact of a state interest in nation-building as readily translatable from the language of bureaucrats, who, despite their euphemisms are 'still talking about using literature to promote national identity and unity.'[32]

From a settler colonial theoretical perspective, this argument would be unsurprising. The

28. Corse, *Nationalism and Literature*, 61.

29. A recent survey of Canadians on personal identity found that 'four in ten consider themselves Canadian only (15%) or as a Canadian first, but also someone from their province or region (25%). By comparison, close to three in ten identify exclusively with their province/territory (7%) or their province/territory first, but also as a Canadian (20%). Most of the remainder (30%) say they identify equally with the country and their province-/territory.' (Environics Institute for Survey Research, *Canada: Pulling Together Or Drifting Apart?* [Toronto, April 2019], 7, https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/confederation-of-tomorrow-2019-survey---report-1/confederation-of-tomorrow-survey-2019---report-1-pulling-together-or-drifting-apart---final-report.pdf) In total, 77% believed that their region or province was very or somewhat important to their identity, and there is overwhelming agreement that 'a federal system of government is the best one for Canada because we are a country made up of many different peoples and nations.' (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 30)

30. Richard Cavell, 'World famous across Canada, or transnational localities,' in *Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature*, ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 86.

31. Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 57. See also Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988), 80

32. John Metcalf, *What is a Canadian Literature?* (Guelph: Red Kite Press, 1988), 28.

logic of elimination means that the state will attempt to eradicate difference. However, I am reluctant to accept this whole-heartedly. My interpretation of mainstream Anglophone Canadian political culture is that, in response to the supplantation of the conservative tradition of British North America identified by George Grant,[33] Canadian liberalism, especially in the person of Pierre Trudeau, found itself faced with a definitional problem: it was beginning to adopt a liberalism developed from American models (rather than relying on a British or French identity) but needed, then, to retain some point of distinction from the United States in order to remain an independent state.[34] Furthermore, this distinction needed to be accepted across geographical, linguistic and social diversity. The solution was a reinterpretation of the state as a guarantor of both negative and positive liberties for individuals, as defined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and as a conglomeration of collectives within the nation banding together in mutual support, as produced by official policies of bilingualism, federalism and multiculturalism highlighted in the appendix.[35] In this way, national unity is expressed in respect for diversity; what holds Canada together is its *lack* of a central identity and preference instead for valuing multiple possible ways to be Canadian.[36] Although Lecker would probably agree with my argument to this point, I would even go further, moving now to demonstrate that the nature of state funding in Canada has been such as to *reinforce* notions of regional and ethnic difference.

To make this point, it is necessary to introduce a distinction between the recognition of difference and the support of separatism. In simple terms, if a government is faced with – say – a movement for independence from within a province that speaks a different language and feels itself to be of a different culture, the best approach is not to deny difference but to manage it. It is in this sense that Smaro Kamboureli identifies a 'sedative politics' in Canadian identity construction:

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33. See George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (1965; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005)

34. One marker of this anxiety can be seen in Atwood's *Survival*; as Laurence Steven notes, four of its nineteen epigraphs are from Grant (Laurence Steven, 'Margaret Atwood's "Polarities" and George Grant's Polemics,' *American Review of Canadian Studies* 18, no. 4 [1988]: 443)

35. In contrast to this argument, Daniel Coleman suggests that an emphasis on 'liberal dealings with internal as well as external differences' was or was seen as a continuation rather than replacement of ideals of Britishness (Coleman, *White Civility*, 20–21).

36. As Trudeau put it, 'Uniformity is neither desirable nor possible in a country the size of Canada [...] There is no such thing as a model or ideal Canadian. What could be more absurd than the concept of an "all-Canadian" boy or girl?' (Pierre Trudeau, 'Speech to Ukrainian-Canadian Congress, Winnipeg, 9 October, 1971,' in *Conversations with Canadians* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972], 32–33)

> a politics that attempts to recognise ethnic differences, but only in a contained fashion, in order to manage them. It pays tribute to diversity and suggests ways of celebrating it, thus responding to the clarion call of ethnic communities for recognition. Yet, it does so without disturbing the conventional articulation of the dominant society.[37]

While consciousness of difference exists, state authority is threatened and even the continued existence of the state as currently constituted is uncertain. Beyond indigenous resistance, the histories of the settler states display — as the appendix shows — multiple instances of nations attempting to break away from the settler state or to resist incorporation. Even without the threat of violence or separatism, democratic states will respond to national voting blocs while they can be determined. The Canadian state has clearly learnt how to manage difference well enough that such overt dissent is in the past, but a sense of difference remains.

This is the root of settler colonial theory's rejection of reconciliation. By recognising difference in ways which do not challenge the state, the state can maintain its authority. When faced with Québécois separatism, the Canadian state did not attempt to pretend that Quebec was the same as any Anglophone province, but instead conceded points which did not challenge state authority: government services would be available in French as well as English, but it would be the government who provided them. This immediately cast into doubt claims that the federal government was attempting to destroy a unique Francophone culture, while not interfering with the government's ultimate claims to authority. To forestall Québécois separatism, Quebec needed to be recognised as already separate.

If this is generally the case, the most effective state intervention to maintain unity will be to, paradoxically, support recognitions of difference. If differences genuinely exist, to suppress them will be to create opposition to that suppression. In contrast, their recognition at worst continues an already existing state of affairs. Meanwhile, the granting of cultural independence weakens the demand for political independence.

An examination of Canadian cultural funding shows that this argument has been recognised in funding decisions. Nick Mount notes that 'Half the Canada Council's first arts fellowships went to Quebeckers, and until 1967 the Council directed most of its limited support for trade publishing to French-Canadian firms.'[38] In the present day, Quebec, with 23% of

37. Smaro Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2000), 82.
38. Mount, *Arrival*, 231.

the Canadian population and Nunavut with 0.001% receive 31.10% and 0.68% of the Canada Council's grants.[39] It is unlikely to be coincidental that these are, respectively, a Francophone and majority-indigenous polity which have the most coherent claims to a separate identity. (The case of Quebec is particularly interesting; the provincial government there funds cultural production aggressively in its own right.) The state's literary prizes, the Governor-General's awards, are similarly divided into French and English awards despite the numeric dominance of Anglophones; and since the 1970s there has been cultural funding targeted at visible minority communities.[40]

This implicit purpose of Canadian literary support — managing difference to build the state — occasionally becomes overt, as when Ondaatje's *Collected Works of Billy the Kid* won the Governor-General's Award for Poetry in 1970. The former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker called a press conference in which he complained that it was inappropriate to give 'a Canadian prize [...] to a writer who dealt with an American subject.'[41] At this point, Diefenbaker had no role in the awards, but they had been brought under the aegis of the Canada Council and therefore the state during his government.[42] It is therefore worth bearing in mind what he, as a former decision-maker, seems to have understood the purpose of the awards to be.

It is important to clarify that he was not in any sense complaining about the identity of the writer, but instead his choice of subject. Prizes were for building a common national identity by examining Canada from disparate origins, not for celebrating possibly aesthetically valuable literature about Canada's culturally-dominant neighbour. In that sense, Ondaatje's Sri Lankan origins were not an issue; Sarah Corse points out that fully two-thirds of protagonists in novels which won the Governor-General's awards are non-Canadian or have some other affiliation beyond Canada.[43] Similarly, juries for the Governor-General's Awards are deliberately chosen to come not only from the three main regions of the country but also for diversity of age, sex and ethnicity, in order to incorporate diversity into a unifying structure.[44] (It was,

39. 'Overview of Canadian Culture Statistics,' Canada Council for the Arts, https://canadacouncil.ca/-/media/Files/CCA/Research/stats-and-stories/data-tables/2020-21/en/2020-21-SS-Canadian-Culture-Stats-EN-FINAL-WEB-CSA-2018.pdf.

40. 1300 publications were supported under the aegis of multiculturalism from 1973-1992 (Judy Young, 'No Longer "Apart"?: Multiculturalism Policy and Canadian Literature,' *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 33, no. 2 [2001]: 88).

41. Ed Jewinski, *Michael Ondaatje: Express Yourself Beautifully* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1994), 83; Mount, *Arrival*, 137.

42. Mount, *Arrival*, 51.

43. Corse, *Nationalism and Literature*, 110.

44. Roberts, *Prizing Literature*, 23.

in fact, during Diefenbaker's tenure that the awards were expanded to include the parallel system for literature in French.)

Leonard Cohen's recognition of this nation-building role for the awards had led him to reject a Governor-General's Award for 1968 (as did Hubert Aquin) partly because 'he felt that receiving an award from the federal government at a time when the separatists were crying for recognition was, for someone from Quebec, not quite timely.'[45] That is, the award would have co-opted his particular identity into the overarching framework of Canadian identity, in a particular instance of the general phenomenon identified by Kamboureli and Roberts in which 'challenges presented by literary works to the nation might be subdued, or 'sedated,' by the process of celebration.'[46]

A more directly comparable case to Ondaatje in this instance is instead Mavis Gallant. W.J. Keith notes that — after '[h]er first submission to the New Yorker was rejected because of its Canadian setting' — she did not receive 'a Governor General's Award until the publication of her significantly titled *Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories*'; although her literary merit was undoubted, her role as an expatriate who wrote stories set mainly abroad diluted the political value of her work.[47] State funding of literary production in this manner becomes a way to recognise and manage difference within a national framework. As successive groups have gained *political* power, they have also begun to receive *cultural* funding.

This management of difference, together with the generally high levels of funding available, has had interesting effects on the production of Canadian literature. I will argue that publishers dependent on federal money have found it more economically sensible to publish writers from across the country, even if their potential market is very small, than to publish the writers with the largest possible market. This is because the rewards of maintaining good relations with the state are more important to the survival of publishers than maximising profits at any given moment.

For example, McClelland and Stewart approached bankruptcy in 1963, 1971 and 1984. On the first occasion, it was saved by a successful emphasis on Canadian content, especially its New Canadian Library series; on the second and third, the state provided rescue funding.

45. Ira B. Nadel, *Various Positions: A Life of Leonard Cohen* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 1996), 173–174.
46. Roberts, *Prizing Literature*, 227.
47. W.J. Keith, 'Shooting Niagara? Some pessimistic thoughts about the future of English-Canadian literary studies,' *Essays on Canadian Writing*, nos. 51-52 (1993): n1.

Making publishing decisions, Jack McClelland, its head, balanced short-term profits against the sort of cultural capital which could ensure ongoing subsidy and, when required, government bail-outs. Publishing authors at least congruent with state desires became a strategy for establishing long-term viability, if at the cost of short-term profits. When Sheila Watson wrote to McClelland worrying that her novel was a financial liability, he waved the point aside:

> it is my impression that THE DOUBLE HOOK made money for McClelland and Stewart.[48] If it didn't, we would still consider it one of the best books that it has ever been our privilege to publish. It gave us great satisfaction. It has added prestige to our imprint.[49]

'Prestige to our imprint' is a revealing phrase. This prestige could have an eventual monetary value in encouraging state support; a strategy made more likely by certain other features of Canadian publishing. The traditional understanding of publishing balances short-term success with ongoing sales as part of a backlist. McClelland and Stewart were unusual in that their backlist was, to a remarkable degree, their frontlist; in 1970 it made up 60% of total sales.[50] The most important part of the backlist was the New Canadian Library (NCL) series. This series kept paperback editions of Canadian 'classics' (loosely defined) in print. (McClelland's letter moves on to discuss placing Watson's novel in the NCL). When financial results were disappointing, the pace of addition to this series was increased; in 1974, 19 novels had to be added. The strategy was simple; books which would otherwise be out of print would be sold to a school and university market.[51] Costs would be minimised by printing short texts in paperback and keeping royalty rates extremely low (only 3% for authors, at first, increased in 1973 to 6%[52]). This, together with an aggressive publishing schedule, would counteract limited sales; a profit of only $100 each was expected for the first four books in the series.[53] The hope was that by providing cheap editions, a new market in universities would develop. This occurred, and the 'NCL simultaneously encouraged and benefited from a steady increase in post-secondary courses in Canadian literature.' These became its primary market.[54] Building

48. Initially, it appears to have in fact lost them $160 (Mount, *Arrival*, 172).
49. Jack McClelland to Sheila Watson, August 24, 1964, CA ON00389 2006 01 586, University of St. Michael's College, John M. Kelly Library, Special Collections
50. Janet B. Friskney, *New Canadian Library: The Ross-McClelland Years, 1952-1978* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 71.
51. Friskney, *New Canadian Library*, 61; Lecker, *Making It Real*, 160.
52. Friskney, *New Canadian Library*, 34, 79.
53. Friskney, 37.
54. Friskney, 44, 61.

up the prestige of Canadian literature, if at a short-term cost, would in the long-term create a stable new market.

Sales of *The Double Hook* were indeed slow but steady; in its first four years in the NCL it sold 1264, 1101, 1497, and 1579 copies, before sales accelerated. Other books sold only 3000-4000 copies up to 1979; Edward Meade's *Remember Me*, for example, sold 3090 copies in 14 years.[55] These were not speculative books, but reprints of titles already published with known sales figures. Low sales such as these must have been possible to predict at least to some degree, but in some way such books were still economically viable.

One reason such a backlist-heavy approach remained sustainable for both McClelland & Stewart and other publishers lies in a provincial initiative with a significance generally overlooked by book historians. In 1971, McClelland & Stewart again risked bankruptcy. An emergency recommendation by an Ontarian Royal Commission on Book Publishing then sitting meant that the Ontario Development Corporation gave a substantial loan — eventually forgiven — against unsold inventory.[56] The Commission argued that

> McClelland and Stewart represents an accumulated creative momentum in original Canadian publishing which could not quickly be replaced by other Canadian publishing enterprises should its program terminate or be sharply curtailed. We recognize that the fact of the firm's present difficulties must be explained by the very scope of the program it has mounted, but that program is itself a national asset worthy of all reasonable public encouragement and support.[57]

This emergency loan was expanded into a programme for all publishers. Guaranteed loans and/or rebates on interest were to be made available to Ontarian publishers. These were made in accordance with the value of unsold copies and accounts receivable. Generally, this has been read as no more than a particular form of subsidy. But it also allowed new publishing strategies.

Previously, if a publisher printed, say, 3000 copies of a Canadian classic and sold only 100 per year, large costs would have been sunk into an asset that might take thirty years to be recovered. (In practice, the costs of storage meant that unsold copies would have been destroyed and the assets written off long before.) The new policy, promptly introduced by On-

55. Friskney, *New Canadian Library*, 198–199.

56. Rowland Lorimer, *Ultra Libris: Policy, Technology, and the Creative Economy of Book Publishing in Canada* (Toronto: ECW Press / Canadian Centre for Studies In Publishing (CCSP) Press, 2012), 87.

57. Royal Commission on Book Publishing, *Canadian Publishers & Canadian Publishing* ([Toronto]: The Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1972), 287.

tario, meant that up to 75% of the value of the books concerned could immediately be realised as an interest-free loan, and the books themselves could be sold in small numbers over a long period. The recovered money could be invested into other books, and the cycle of investment-profit-reinvestment would be greatly accelerated.[58] As such, it was possible to publish a print run large enough to be economical in anticipation of attenuated sales to a small but constant market. This market could take various forms, but university or school courses were the most likely.[59]

*The Double Hook* is a classic example of this strategy. As it made its way onto university courses, a small but persistent market was created. This market has been served ever since, in a way which is evidently not viable abroad. The novel could be expected to sell enough copies to justify itself over time, even if its sales in any given year would be commercially inadequate. Meanwhile, it provided the sort of prestige which guaranteed both continuing state support and emergency rescue, if required. And, in a more conventional form of success, by 1999, it had sold a respectable 23 000 copies, making it one of the NCL's success stories.[60] This works out to be around seven hundred copies sold a year. In 2007-2008, it featured on seven university courses, and ten years earlier in twelve.[61] Assuming each course sold tens of copies, these must have accounted for a very large proportion of its sales.

Meanwhile, publishers seeking to fulfil their role as arbiters of national culture tend to seek out regional works, perhaps to justify their receipt of national subsidies; the New Canadian Library's editor Malcolm Ross, for example, deliberately set out to shape the series by seeking not literary merit but 'cultural history' within a 'multi-dimensional' cultural structure comprised of a mosaic rather than a melting pot.[62] As a result,

> In terms of regional coverage, the series of the Ross-McClelland period included at least one title set, in whole or in part, in every province and territory, with the exception of the Yukon. [Ross sought] a sampling of titles that would reveal the diversity of ethnic and religious heritage to which Canadians from specific localities and regions were heir.[63]

58. Such a strategy must have become less profitable, if still viable, in 1993. Minimum sales-to-inventory ratios were then introduced to maintain eligibility for industrial support (Lorimer, *Ultra Libris*, 116).
59. For example, half the sales of Leonard Cohen's first book were at a single university (Mount, *Arrival*, 203).
60. P. Martin, *Sanctioned Ignorance*, 84.
61. P. Martin, 124.
62. Laura Groening, 'Malcolm Ross and the New Canadian Library: Making it Real or Making a Difference?,' *SLC/ELC* 25, no. 1 (2000): 95.
63. Friskney, *New Canadian Library*.

Interviewed many years later, Ross was clear that this was achieved deliberately; he wanted to provide 'a sense of what the literary development was like in each major segment of the country - Pacific coast, prairies, urban centre, Maritimes - their differences and similarities, to get a sense of the Canadian literary map, as it grew.'[64]

Because relatively few copies needed to be sold and a favourable home market was likely to exist, this diversity was an achievable goal. Even if a novel was unlikely to appeal to schools, English studies in Canada has since the mid-1970s aggressively attempted to find regional balance and to explore 'a mosaic of regional experiences,' as has Canadian prize culture.[65] A novel written for a regional community could therefore plausibly attract local and federal subsidy, travel into national universities, and not need to find a popular audience at all, instead relying upon the attempts of Canadian university and school instructors to find a post-national balance.

One professor interviewed by Paul Martin is typical; he explains

> I try to think in terms of regions and makes [sic] sure that I cover the Atlantic provinces ...Then Quebec just gets left out of this, of course. Then Ontario, the Prairies, and BC. I try to represent each of those regions and at least introduce the students to some of those regional differences.[66]

This same process is true of ethnic communities; in fact, it is even more likely to have occurred, because the Canadian state's official policy of multiculturalism meant that funding was specifically targeted at both encouraging minority writing and its distribution. For example, Rohinton Mistry was first published because McClelland and Stewart received a grant from the government's Multiculturalism Program.[67]

The system of state subsidy then permits and encourages the canonical inclusion of texts from within relatively small communities. This explains the diversity (of region and of ethnicity) apparent in the list of the most commonly taught Canadian writers already given.

64. Anna Maria Del Col, 'Serial Culture: the Inception, Shifting Ideologies, and Inception of the New Canadian Library' (master's thesis, University of Guelph, 2002), 46.
65. Brydon, 'Australian Literature and the Canadian Comparison,' 160; Roberts, *Prizing Literature*, 23.
66. P. Martin, *Sanctioned Ignorance*, 156.
67. J. Young, 'No Longer "Apart"?: Multiculturalism Policy and Canadian Literature,' 88.

### 3.3.2 International funding

But it is not sufficient to analyse literary funding within Canada as solely a domestic concern. State domestic funding exists alongside a countervailing impetus: within the nation difference needs to be managed, but beyond the nation's borders unity is required to protect domestic distinctions. In this, Canadian political thought long predates the similar ideology of the European Union. The approach here is reminiscent of Kertzer: 'it is precisely because Canada has so many conflicting constituencies that we need a national space in which to meet, dispute, and negotiate.'[68] As Smaro Kamboureli explains it, more negatively

> Canadian cultural policy has exerted its regulatory power in two sites simultaneously: within Canada it has focused on 'the production of cultural citizens,' and showed a concern 'with the maintenance and development of cultural lineage via education, custom, language [...] and the acknowledgment of difference in and by the mainstream;' at the same time, it exports this regulation of cultural economy and its production of 'compliant citizen[s], who learn self-governance in the interest of the cultural-capital polity'.[69]

In concrete terms, this second site of cultural policy was managed by the Canadian state's foreign-policy apparatus until 2012.[70] Canadian foreign policy has three key pillars: trade, defence, and cultural diplomacy.[71] The interpretation of the last value has traditionally included an emphasis on exporting Canadian cultural production to the world as well as encouragement of academic study of Canada. Until 2008, DFAIT maintained a literature and publishing programme which financially assisted promotional projects abroad by authors as well as participation in book fairs.[72] Canadian Studies internationally, including literary studies, was also funded directly by the Canadian foreign ministry from the 1970s to 2012, with the intent of increasing knowledge of Canadian culture indirectly by using academic institutions.[73] This

68. Kertzer, *Worrying the Nation*, 188.
69. Smaro Kamboureli, 'Beyond Understanding Canada: Belatedness and Canadian Literary Studies,' in *Beyond 'Understanding Canada': Transnational Perspectives on Canadian Literature*, ed. Melissa Tanti et al. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2017), 14.
70. However, a further state contribution was the Association for the Export of Canadian Books, now renamed Livres Canada Books. This non-profit association was initiated by and remains funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage (Lorimer, *Ultra Libris*, 178–179). Its purpose was to strengthen Canadian publishing firms in their local programmes by assisting with marketing books for export and foreign rights sales, rather than cultural diplomacy.
71. Serge Jaumain, *The Canadianists: the ICCS, 25 years in the service of Canadian studies* ([Ottawa]: International Council for Canadian Studies, 2006), 17.
72. Lorimer, *Ultra Libris*, 184.
73. Jaumain, *The Canadianists*, 48.

funding of international cultural relations was, per capita, second only to France.[74]

An important aim of this funding was to drive interest in Canada. Universities in the Commonwealth and the United States were to be encouraged to realise that Canada was substantively different from their own country, and globally it was to be presented as an exciting area of study. In 1975, the Symons Report argued that

> our image abroad is vague, when it is not a complete distortion. Canada is still rarely viewed abroad as a distinct country and society whose history, politics and literature merit serious intellectual examination. A few of the old 'ice and snow' myths linger and the epithet of 'the unknown country' may have acquired a new meaning.[75]

To correct this, diplomatic efforts focussed on showing a distinctive Canadian culture. This goal, however, had an ambiguous relationship with the domestic goal of managing difference (a 2008-2012 funding of literary projects under the heading 'managing diversity' notwithstanding). For example, at the same time as it began to spend heavily on promoting Québécois culture within Canada, the federal government quadrupled its support for Francophone cultural relations abroad from 1963-5, attempting to prevent Quebec being seen as its own nation, rather than a province.[76] As a 1970 paper on foreign policy put it, coming after a quadrupling of budgets for Canadian cultural exchanges with *la Francophonie*:[77]

> The particular needs of French-speaking Canadians, principally in Quebec, have prompted provincial governments to seek contacts in the *francophone* world, especially in France, but the Federal Government has become much more extensively involved in international cultural programmes in order to provide a *national framework* for the cultural aspirations and interests of *all Canadians*. [my emphasis; 'francophone' is italicised in the original][78]

By 1995, a significant report on Canadian foreign policy argued (in a position paper by John Ralston Saul) that cultural promotion was important because:

74. Barbora Polachová and Magdalena Fiřtová, 'Canadian Identity: Issues of Cultural Diplomacy (1993-2012),' *TransCanadiana*, no. 7 (2014–15): 82.

75. T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa, 1975), 248, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED124032.pdf.

76. Stephen Brooks, 'Uncertain Embrace: The Rise and Fall of Canadian Studies Abroad as a Tool of Foreign Policy,' in *Promoting Canadian Studies Abroad*, 10.

77. Mary Halloran, *Cultural Diplomacy in the Trudeau Era, 1968-1984* (Ottawa: DFAIT, 1996), 3.

78. Department of External Affairs, *Europe: Foreign Policy for Canadians* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada, 1970), 28.

> in the medium-and long-term, a country that does not project a clearly defined image of what it is and what it represents, is doomed to anonymity on the international scene. Only Canadian culture can express the uniqueness of our country, which is bilingual, multicultural, and deeply influenced by its Aboriginal roots, the North, the oceans, and its own vastness.[79]

Here, emphases on the different nations recognised domestically (bilingualism and multiculturalism) are paradoxically turned into a single 'clearly defined' and unique image. What the 1970 report calls the 'basic objectives of national unity and national identity' come into conflict with the domestic need to manage diversity to preserve differing identities. The implication is that the promotion of one will become a separate activity from the other: within Canada, state funding will go to works and their interpretations which recognise and manage difference, but beyond the Canadian border funding will be used to present a view of a united Canada.

An example of such a conflict was the Canadian government's programme of book gifts. Initiated in 1971, 150 titles a year (including fiction) were sent to recipient national and university libraries abroad by the Department of External Affairs. Reviewing this programme, T.H.B. Symons argued that its origins as domestic support for Canadian publishers (by providing a guaranteed government market) meant that the programme had distributed books not entirely useful to 'assisting students and scholars in other countries who are interested in learning or teaching about Canada.'[80] In other words, publishers operating within the subsidised domestic market produced books that complicated views of a unitary Canada and were therefore not necessarily compatible with the purposes of the other site of state subsidy.[81]

Similar tensions can be seen in the difficult relationship between the domestic Association for Canadian Studies (ACS) and the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS) (funded by what was then called the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, DFAIT).[82] Their funding for (respectively) domestic and international concerns led to varying approaches. The editor of the *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, a project of the ICCS, argued that international Canadianist should avoid 'merely duplicating 'domestic ap-

79. Special Joint Committee on Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, *Canada's Foreign Policy: Principles and Priorities for the Future - the Position Papers*, vol. 2 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1994), 85.
80. Symons, *To Know Ourselves*, 250.
81. This particular conflict between two state desires had to be resolved by selecting the titles for distribution more carefully so that they could also fulfil diplomatic goals.
82. Brooks, 'Uncertain Embrace: The Rise and Fall of Canadian Studies Abroad as a Tool of Foreign Policy,' 27.

proaches" and instead treat 'Canadian arts and literature in an international context' and as 'distinctly Canadian.'[83] At the same time as he wrote, domestic critics were beginning to argue that there was no such thing as a 'Canadian' identity. To Danielle Fuller, DFAIT's funding led to 'complicity with, and indeed our emotional investment in, some institutional structures (educational and governmental) that we found ideologically and intellectually problematic,' necessitating caution to avoid the risk of reproducing 'normative or pronationalist ideas about Canada and its literatures.'[84] Cynthia Sugars in turn examines how Canadian literature in the UK is read in 'a swirl of popular and academic literary acclaim.'[85] She shows that the 'critical discourse about Canada in Britain frequently invokes an idealized construction of Canada, which is bolstered by a ready demonization of the United States.'[86] This involves readings in which Canada is contrasted with the homogenising American other as a heterogenous unity, a 'figure of paradox: unified by its integral disruption.'[87] As such, it provides a role model for contemporary Britain.

To produce such readings, academic and popular critics take a

> mimetic leap from literary text to Canadian sociopolitical reality, to the extent that the literary work, as a work of fiction, gets left rather far behind. While this represents a somewhat naive approach to literary analysis, my point is that it is less naivete that is at work here than a preoccupation with other – perhaps more urgently felt – matters.[88]

Sugars does not examine the role of the Canadian state in supporting such readings, but it is suspicious that such readings of unity-in-distinctiveness and distinction from America were precisely the aim of DFAIT funding, suggesting the importance of a question raised by Kamboureli:

> To what extent have European or Asian literary critics become, unwittingly perhaps, the instruments of this national episteme that has traditionally promoted a homogeneous and mainstream view of Canada?[89]

83. Qtd. in Dirk Hoerder, *To Know Our Many Selves: From the Study of Canada to Canadian Studies* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 298.
84. Danielle Fuller, "Beyond CanLit(e)': Reading. Interdisciplinarity. Transatlantically,' in *Shifting the Ground of Canadian Literary Studies*, ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Robert Zacharias (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 67–68.
85. Sugars, 'Noble Canadians, Ugly Americans,' 93.
86. Sugars, 95.
87. Sugars, 102.
88. Sugars, 100.
89. Kamboureli, 'Beyond Understanding Canada: Belatedness and Canadian Literary Studies,' 15.

One answer comes from Fuller and Susanne Billingham, who responded to Sugars by conceding that her 'mimetic leap does occur, not only because of any neocolonial desires for identification on the part of the British audience, but also because of DFAIT's own tendency to market CanLit as the key to understanding Canadian identity.'[90] They argue both that 'encouragement to read Canadian literature mimetically has been a dominant and continuous trope within the DFAIT rhetoric about culture as the 'Third Pillar' of its diplomatic mission' and that the individual academics who have promoted Canadian literature outside the academy in the UK have all 'benefited in some way and at several points in their careers from the provision of Canadian government funding via DFAIT.'[91] Although they argue that Sugars makes a reductive case and point to other examples of readings, their article as a whole supports Fuller's later realisation.

This strongly suggests that we should expect a bifurcated publishing system for Canadian literature: a domestic response to a state emphasis on recognising difference over unity and recognises links to source cultures; and an attempt to market work abroad as an exemplar of unity-in-difference which emphasises the distinctiveness of Canadian cultural production as a unified field.

## 3.4 Two Literary Systems

The existence of two publishing systems, as described, in turn implies the necessity of marketing work to specific audiences; a small set of local readers and a broad international market. Local readers can be expected to have more specific knowledge of the cultural context of a work, and to respond to reflections of this specific knowledge, while international readers are more likely to desire explanation of any cultural context.

This distinction, under the names nativist and cosmopolitan, has long been observed in Canadian literary criticism,[92] but it has become an especially contentious field of dispute since

90. Fuller and Billingham, 'CanLit(e): Fit for Export?,' 119.

91. Fuller and Billingham, 116–117.

92. The original formulation is by A.J.M Smith; the idea is perhaps most familiar as Northrop Frye's distinction between identity and unity, where 'identity is local and regional, rooted in the imagination and in works of culture; unity is national in reference, international in perspective, and rooted in political feeling.'(Northrop Frye, 'Preface to *The Bush Garden*,' in *Northrop Frye on Canada*, 12:413) More recently, Linda Hutcheon has influentially argued for 'ex-centricity' based on regional feeling as the dominant feature of Canadian cultural production (Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*). These positions resemble the division between nationalist and eternalist already seen in Australia, and in the work of J.P. Matthews. Related arguments in the aftermath of cultural nationalism and the globalisation of New Zealand literature have also become

Canadian literature's rise to global prominence expanded its readership – or, as Frank Davey puts it, led to 'the development of desocialized transnational texts that are largely unconnected to local, regional, or national politics and practices or that attempt to subordinate social questions to aesthetics.'[93] Stephen Henighan has called this phenomenon 'Free Trade Literature': literature which 'evolved from an artistic work engaged with language and history into an *objet d'art*' which 'should advertise its literariness through 'beautiful' imagery, exotic settings, exquisite production and other features calculated to flatter its purchaser with evidence of his own aesthetic refinement.' The cost of such a procedure is the 'drastic disappearance of Canadian reality in our fiction,' a victim of what Henighan calls 'the quest for global competitiveness.'[94]

As a result, Davey draws a deliberately exaggerated scenario: in Canadian literature of the mid-nineties,

> The country's national institutions – the Writer's Union, the League of Canadian Poets, the Canada Council juries – are now largely operated by coalitions of special interests. There is no national literature audience; there is an international audience that responds to prizes and celebrity, and there are special constituency audiences that respond to various constructions of marginalized identity.[95]

The domestic canon then becomes a selection of works for representation across ethnicity, region, and period, while these works remain unknown elsewhere:

> Thus, in contemporary fiction, one selects from among titles by George Bowering, Jack Hodgins, Audrey Thomas and Robert Harlow a B.C. novel;[96] from titles by Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch a prairie novel; from titles by Atwood, Davies and Richler a Central Canadian novel; and work by David Adams Richards is by default the Atlantic novel. Elsewhere, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* has become the Asian novel and Timothy Findley's *The Wars* the gay novel.[97]

prominent more recently after an influential provocation (Evans, 'Spectacular babies'). For a recent survey, see Paloma Fresno-Calleja and Janet M. Wilson, 'New Zealand literature and the global marketplace,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 56, no. 2 (2020): 147–156. However, these divisions were also identified in both Australia and New Zealand long before (Elizabeth McMahon, 'Archipelagic space and the uncertain future of national literatures,' *JASAL* 13, no. 2 [2013]: 1–2).

93. Frank Davey, '(Con)figuring a "Canada": Some trends in Anglophone-Canadian Literature, Criticism, and the Arts,' in *Beyond Quebec: Taking Stock of Canada*, ed. Kenneth McRoberts (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 122.

94. Stephen Henighan, 'Free Trade Fiction: The Victory of Metaphor Over History,' in *When Words Deny the World: The Reshaping of Canadian Writing* (Erin: Porcupine's Quill, 2002), 134.

95. Davey, '(Con)figuring a "Canada,"' 127.

96. Such a 'B.C. novel' by Bowering might well include *Shoot!*, discussed in the Australian chapter as an example of a lack of commercial success.

97. Davey, '(Con)figuring a "Canada,"' 126–127.

These critics here represent a common strain of argument of undoubted value which perhaps nonetheless inadequately distinguishes between reception and inherent content. Just because *The Wars* is predominantly read because of its status as 'the gay novel' – if we accept this somewhat doubtful claim – does not mean that it cannot be read in other ways. Henighan may still remember that he never quite managed to speak at the Oxford postcolonial seminar in the 1990s, trapped between 'postcolonialism and globalism' as he was, but that in itself does not prevent reading Canadian literature in a postcolonial – or indeed settler – context; it only means that either he or the seminar missed a way to do so.[98]

Robert Lecker approaches the same issue in a perhaps more sophisticated way, drawing a distinction between intermingled and conflicting discourses (rather than content groupings) of what he calls privacy and publicity in Canadian literature. 'Privacy meant the text, not culture; language, not logos; writing, not theme; reader not community.'[99] As a reading method, it paid attention to textual hermeneutics at the cost of relating to a broad national public, becoming no longer 'concerned with Canadian values, or Canadian issues, or even Canadian literature' in favour of the explication of privatised groups.

> The privatization of Canadian literature [means that] we know – we are taught – that there is no monolithic group of texts that embody national experience and that there is no unproblematized vision of Canadian life. This means, of course, that most of the myths associated with the idea of national experience must also die: the myth that there was ever a coherent canon of Canadian literature; that Canadian literature transparently depicts some kind of social reality; that the study of literature might unite diverse people in their desire to understand more about their country; that Canadian literature is 'the bond of national unity.'[100]

Such an approach is obviously incompatible with attempts to show Canadian unity to the world; but not to follow it is to contradict the domestically necessary recognition of difference.

My interpretation of this argument expands upon it to suggest that this realisation alone opens up new interpretative possibilities. A work written for the inclusion of a particular community or communities within the Canadian state relies on the existence of those communities, or at the least intimate knowledge of them, for its readership.[101] As such, it can assume

98. Stephen Henighan, 'The Canadian Writer: Between Postcolonialism and Globalisation,' in *When Words Deny the World*, 105.
99. Lecker, *Making It Real*, 90.
100. Lecker, 107.
101. I became painfully aware of these communities of reading when I raised, in a seminar at the University of

a much higher level of hermeneutic competence among its readers; they can be trusted to be alert to textual features beyond the mimetic which instead rely upon shared knowledge and structures of feeling; even, at the highest level, ambiences.[102]

To take a highly contrived example, a description of wool in fiction from Quebec is likely to remind its readers always of *pure laine*, the term for those of exclusively French-Canadian ancestry, regardless of its functional or mimetic role in the text. When in Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* a character (F.) shows his social success by buying a garment factory where he once worked along with a Jewish underclass, it can therefore be read as more than usually significant that 'the respectable animal smell of wool still clung to the air' as he explains that the 'world is made of races [...] People are different!'[103] Such examples can be multiplied almost endlessly, since any community will define itself by shared knowledges, experiences and vocabulary.

As Tom Paulin puts it, discussing a similar phenomenon in Ireland,

> A writer who employs a word like 'geg' or 'gulder' or Kavanagh's lovely 'gobshite', will create a form of closed, secret communication with readers who come from the same region. This will express something very near to a familial relationship because every family has its hoard of relished words which express its member's sense of kinship. These words act as a kind of secret sign and serve to exclude the outside world.[104]

I would expand this argument beyond vocabulary alone, but into shared or folk memory of both personal and collective experience. Atwood gives a similar example, of a man in Ontario identifying the barn where 'we hid the women and children, that time the Fenians invaded.' To Atwood, fiction is constructed out of 'such individual particulars' even when 'remembering as a personal experience and event' things not directly experienced.[105] Further Canadian examples are easy to find. Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* derives a great deal of its power from its

Toronto in early 2016, the obviously symbolic figure of Tom Thomson in a poem to make a particular point, only to discover that (whatever his symbolic value) he was real and a figure familiar to every educated Ontarian.

102. Atwood herself, discussing Carol Shields, best known for her *The Stone Diaries*, gives one example while exploring her *Swann: A Mystery*: 'Canadian readers would understand the allusion, but British ones who might consider this plot far-fetched will be interested to know that there was a Canadian woman poet murdered in this way: Pat Lowther, whose best-known collection is *The Stone Diary*.' (Margaret Atwood, 'To the Light House,' in *The Worlds of Carol Shields*, ed. David Staines, Reappraisals: Canadian Writers [Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014], 6)

103. Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 40.

104. Tom Paulin, 'A New Look at the Language Question,' in *Ireland and the English Crisis* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1984), 191.

105. Margaret Atwood, 'In Search of Alias Grace: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction,' *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (December 1998): 1505.

ability to make the familiar places of Toronto – the Bloor Street viaduct, the R.C. Harris Water Treatment Plant, an *urban* shared experience – rich and strange by reincorporating stories of migrancy and unionism within them and the already-familiar stories of the time (such as the disappearance of Ambrose Small). André Alexis has similarly responded to claims that his work is 'very much defined by references to a specific locale' by arguing that this is 'my way of going back to the emotional reality that's hidden behind the names or the buildings.'[106]

There is nonetheless a cost associated with such an approach. This exclusive knowledge encourages a positive reception within the community of origin, but does so by necessarily excluding the outsider who reads unaware of them. *In the Skin of a Lion* won the City of Toronto Book Award, given by a jury of citizens, for its depiction of that city; but to write about it faced resistance from publishers; according to Ondaatje, 'I also remember being told when I began to write that it was commercial suicide to set a thriller in Toronto or any Canadian city as opposed to New York or Miami or Kiev.'[107]

In Ondaatje's later Booker Prize winner, *The English Patient*, globally recognisable narratives of the Second World War may have been less exclusionary to an international readership than the familiarity expected by *In the Skin of a Lion*; Henighan, for example, notes the characters' disavowal of Canadian specificity: 'I'm from Upper America', says Hana, and Ondaatje talks of 'North American troops.'[108] This is an especially persuasive argument when recalling that every Australian Booker Prize winner other than Peter Carey has won that prize, as Ondaatje did, with a novel about the globally-shared experience of the war, and that Ondaatje's subsequent success has involved writing about locations other than Canada.[109]

Faced with this problem of gaining one audience by excluding another, some authors have deliberately chosen one or the other and adapted their work appropriately. Hugh MacLennan — mentioned in the first chapter in comparison with Mulgan — is one example. He appears to have wanted an international audience he could not have while also maintaining a Canadian one. It has been convincingly argued that his 'Canadian' works were a deliberate attempt to

106. Branko Gorjup, 'From Despair to Childhood - Branko Gorjup speaks with Andre Alexis,' *Books in Canada* 27, no. 3 (1998): 11–13, http://www.booksincanada.com/article_view.asp?id=40.

107. Qtd. in William Leon Smith, 'Torontos: representations of Toronto in contemporary Canadian literature' (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2012), 13.

108. Henighan, 'Free Trade Fiction: The Victory of Metaphor Over History,' 143–144.

109. The list of internationally successful Canadian novels dealing with either world war is very long. Prominent examples are Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997); Joseph Boyden, *Three day road* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005). Also common is the broader pattern of a novel with specifically Canadian content being followed with more internationally comprehensible content and then global acclaim.

capitalize on the presence of Canadian audiences for whom the texts were carefully attuned. To his biographer Elspeth Cameron, MacLennan 'in conforming to the nationalist agenda of his time,' lost authenticity. She argues that the 'authentic writer behind the nationalist guise' is probably to be found in his early and unpublished novels, written before the massive success of *Barometer Rising*.[110] But if this is the case, MacLennan's decision was absolutely correct in commercial terms. One of these novels remains unpublished. The other, *Man Should Rejoice*, dealing with the Austrian uprising of 1934 and narrated by an American, was only published in a critical edition edited by Colin Hill in 2019.

Writing in 1980 about its final rejection, MacLennan treated his disappointment as matter for what Hill, while hinting that the recollection may have been shaped for effect, calls an 'epiphany.' His logic ran:

> First: our sensibilities are formed in childhood and therefore are produced to some extent by the societies in which we are born. Secondly: drama depends, as Aristotle had pointed out, on recognitions – that is, the audience must know the general features of the background of the story if he is to be interested in it. Thirdly: Canada is unknown in everything social and human that matters. Conclusion: if I were to become an authentic novelist, I would have to make the background of my story recognizable to readers.[111]

In other words, the outside world would take little interest in writing about the unknown country of Canada, but MacLennan's sensibilities were formed by a Canadian context and so he had failed to write successfully of other places. The obvious solution was to write primarily for a Canadian audience who would 'know the general features of the background of the story,' and to please them by including almost encyclopaedic levels of specific detail.[112]

As discussed, international interest is possible if a sufficiently common framework for reception already exists. MacLennan was right to doubt that there would be much interest in Canadian novels which took their regional origins for granted, but international readers already know how to read in certain ways, as the previous chapter discussed: they know about

110. Elspeth Cameron, 'Will the Real Hugh MacLennan Please Stand Up: A Reassessment,' in *Hugh MacLennan*, ed. Frank M. Tierney, Reappraisals: Canadian Writers Series (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 29.

111. Qtd. in Hugh MacLennan, *Man Should Rejoice: A Critical Edition*, ed. Colin Hill (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2019), xxxviii–xxxix.

112. Another approach to the same problem of being unknown can be seen in Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*; the main narrative of the novel is accompanied by an ironic history of Newfoundland written by a character, allowing 'the general features of the background of the story' to be presented (Wayne Johnston, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* [Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1998]).

shared history, such as the Second World War, and how to read within a shared context, as in texts that respond to canonical metropolitan texts. Finally, the great transnational issues that have been the focus of sustained critical attention can be applied to a new location as travelling theory: for example, reading in feminist or conventionally postcolonial terms, as has been discussed in the case of *True History of the Kelly Gang*. In other words, aspects of the national which are not unique to the nation can attract international attention, together with suitably mimetic representations of the nation as an exotic and different place. I will now move to discuss this dynamic in the works of Margaret Atwood.

## 3.5 Early and Later Margaret Atwood

This discussion of Margaret Atwood looks at her *Life Before Man* and then her Booker-winning *The Blind Assassin*, alongside her Clarendon lectures, in order to show, specifically, how the same factors which led to her domestic canonisation limited international recognition; close engagement with the culture and history of Toronto in the earlier novel led to enthusiastic domestic recognition and international incomprehension, while the later novel – by becoming less tied to Canadian society – was more easily interpretable elsewhere. In this way can be examined the distinction between literature which can be tied to a particular context developed through settler colonialism, and literature which escapes that context in order to succeed in international markets and prize culture, but at the cost of becoming less reflective of a common settler context.

### Life Before Man

*Life Before Man* represents a departure from Atwood's earlier work, in that it deliberately represents Toronto in remarkable but somewhat obscured depth: 'the details of Toronto's streets, its restaurants, museums and landmark buildings are described exactly.'[113] In contrast, her first novel was set in Toronto but disguised this with fake names, to the surprise of McClelland and Stewart's assessors.[114] She later explained that this was because she 'was so embar-

113. Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 11.

114. Margaret Atwood, 'Literary Papers' (Atwood (Margaret) Papers, MS Coll 200 Box 95, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto). This was not unusual for earlier Canadian writing, recalling ' when Sinclair Ross suppressed Canadian references from *As For Me and My House* in order to find a publisher in the United States and Morley Callaghan's short stories drained Toronto of its street names and history to satisfy U.S. magazine ed-

rassed by the location that I never actually named the city and disguised the street names as best I could. Everyone knew that real novels were not set in Toronto.'[115] *Life Before Man* is also surprisingly unfamiliar in an international context. Theodore Sheckels calls it 'Atwood's neglected novel;' Fiona Tolan observes 'the surprising incidence of comparative essays which ignore its existence and choose to confer on *Bodily Harm* the honorary distinction of being the fourth novel.'[116] The *Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood* argues that it 'has not had the sustained critical attention of her other work.'[117] It is one of only two of her novels not to be published in Spain.[118]

There is reason to believe that this, again, is simply because it sold poorly internationally. A 'Nan' (almost certainly Nan Talese, Atwood's editor) is likely to have rejected her next novel, *Bodily Harm*.[119] The most likely reason is the low sales of *Life Before Man*, which Talese's (surviving) presentation to her sales force before the publication of *The Handmaid's Tale* says sold only 8500 copies.[120] In contrast, *The Handmaid's Tale*, a book which is highly localised to Cambridge, an *American* setting, sold 75 000 copies in its first year.[121] Talese must in this case be referring to American sales figures, since *Life Before Man* and *Bodily Harm* both sold

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itors with a faceless Anytown.' (Stephen Henighan, 'Nations Without Publishers,' in *A Report on the Afterlife of Culture* [Windsor: Biblioasis, 2008], 267)

115. Margaret Atwood, 'The City Rediscovered,' *New York Times*, August 8, 1982, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/08/travel/the-city-rediscovered.html. For a detailed analysis of the use of Toronto and Canada more generally in Atwood's earlier novels, see Leila G. Mitchell, 'The External World in the Novels of Margaret Atwood,' *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'Études Canadiennes* 15, no. 1 (1980): 45–55.

116. Theodore F. Scheckels, *The political in Margaret Atwood's fiction: The Writing on the Walls of the Tent* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 59; Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction*, Costerus New Series (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 89.

117. Macpherson, *The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood*, 42.

118. Pilar Somacarrera, 'A Prince of Asturias Award for the Queen of Canadian Letters: Reading Margaret Atwood's Texts in Spain,' in *Made in Canada, Read in Spain: Essays on the Translation and Circulation of English-Canadian Literature*, ed. Pilar Somacarrera (London: Versita, 2013), 112.

119. The letter in which she does so is missing from Atwood's papers at the Fisher library, and so there is some uncertainty in an interpretation necessarily based upon a brief catalogue entry; the most likely option is that it was rejected (since a manuscript was returned) but it is also possible that somehow the novel was obliged to remain with Simon and Schuster, the publishers for whom Talese had worked before taking up her new role at Houghton Mifflin, and who would eventually publish it some time later. Against this interpretation, Atwood successfully moved publishers with Talese when Talese later moved from Houghton Mifflin to Doubleday, and Simon and Schuster did not publish their edition of the novel simultaneously with its Canadian publication, as was usual, but in 1982. The catalogue entry, for MS Coll 200 Box 96, runs: 'Letter from "Nan" of Houghton Mifflin, dated May 26, 1981, enclosing annotated pages of typescript of novel, and expressing regret that it will not be published by Houghton Mifflin.'

120. She refers ambiguously to 'her book previous to' *The Handmaid's Tale*, which most naturally refers to *Bodily Harm*, but Talese would not have had access to sales figures for this novel – which, after all, she did not publish – and I read her as instead referring to 'her previous novel *with me*.' In any case, these arguments still apply to *Bodily Harm*.

121. This was presumably fuelled by the recognition and approbation of most American reviewers, who apparently emphasised its setting (Reingard M. Nischik, *Comparative North American Studies: Transnational Approaches to American and Canadian Literature and Culture* [Palgrave MacMillan, 2016], 158).

more than this according to McClelland and Stewart's sales figures; *Life Before Man* was in fact a Canadian bestseller. My argument is that these two distinguishing features – poor sales, and therefore the eventual lack of critical discussion; and its response to place – are in fact linked. The novel was welcomed by Toronto audiences precisely because it represented their city in great detail, but such representation confused and alienated readers from elsewhere. Atwood almost gleefully, for instance, refers to Eaton's, Eaton's College Street, the Eaton Centre, and Timothy Eaton almost interchangeably, while providing very little for readers who want to work out what 'Eaton' refers to in a particular context.[122]

In general, she writes in a sort of code not at all incomprehensible without local knowledge, but which relies upon it for its effects. A lawyer who instead makes children's toys is – we are meant to realise – likely to be successful if he returns to it. But to know this, we have to extract knowledge from the fact that he used to run in Queen's Park in law school; this means he was at the University of Toronto, whose law faculty is next to the park, and therefore was at one of the most selective Canadian law schools. Atwood does not say so explicitly, instead assuming a knowledgeable audience.

The frequent mentions of real bars, shops and restaurants seem calibrated to signal meaning, and to provide the thrill of recognition; the audience are meant to know, for example, that food from Ziggy's – a deli chain, although this is not mentioned – is more expensive than a supermarket, and so when characters are twice mentioned as bringing it to another, meaning is being signalled; or that when a character invites another to lunch at Varsity Restaurant, its cheapness signals the opposite. The cumulative effect is highly localised:

> Lesje is out for lunch with Marianne. They've just had a sandwich at Murray's, which is near and cheap; now they're walking over to Yorkville and Cumberland to look in the store windows. It's no longer the place to shop, says Marianne, whom Lesje regards as an authority on such things; too overpriced. Queen Street West is the place now. But Queen Street West is too far away.[123]

It is easy to show that this confused international readers. At one point, characters

> are all playing a game that substitutes the word "moose" for any other word in the title of a Canadian novel. It has to be Canadian. This apparently is part of the

122. Eaton's operated department stores. The original Eaton's was a department store; Eaton's College Street was an expansion operated a few blocks north of the original location until the new Eaton Centre replaced it in 1977; what Atwood calls 'Timothy Eaton' was the church named after the original founder.

123. Margaret Atwood, *Life Before Man* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), 90.

> joke. "As for Me and My Moose," Elizabeth says, and everyone else in the room chuckles. "A Jest of Moose," says the wife of the man from Greek and Roman who works at the CBC. "A Moose of God," replies the man, whose name is Philip.[124]

To one American reviewer,

> Played down here, that would yield Gone with the Moose, Of Moose and Men, or The Naked and the Moose. In Toronto, it produces a string of titles no American has ever heard of.[125]

This only points towards incomprehension rather than alienation, but other reviews show the same fundamental lack of understanding. Carol Beran has shown that the novel was carefully planned to incorporate multiple ethnicities within the Canadian mosaic, and Atwood's papers strongly support the argument that this was a major goal.[126] But the coding was too subtle to translate well; a major review in the *New York Times* could claim that 'all of the characters are deracinated.'[127]

A more significant problem for international success was that such close detail inevitably engages with Canadian realities in a way which neither exoticizes nor explains it to an international audience. Throughout the novel, Atwood refers obliquely to secession in Quebec and the RCMP's illegal break-ins to investigate the Parti Québécois. (See appendix). A character thinks about the pointlessness of a petition regarding this — never explained directly — since no-one will admit the 'paint is chipped on the bright red musical Mountie of their dreams.'[128] He could be referring not only to a Canadian but an international audience.

The distinction between this and Atwood's later work, more congruent with state purposes, can perhaps be represented by an irony of history. Part of *Life Before Man* was written in Edinburgh, where her partner Graeme Gibson was briefly writer-in-residence at the University of Edinburgh. There they met a Canadian PhD student, Peter Boehm, who was returning to Toronto. He agreed to check local details for Atwood; a set of questions for him includes the text of the Queen's Park War Memorial, and descriptions of the Timothy Eaton

124. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 152.
125. Timothy Foote, 'Human Rex: Atwood on the Extinction of Man,' *Esquire*, February 1, 1980, 87–88.
126. Carol Beran, 'The Canadian Mosaic: Functional Ethnicity in Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man*,' *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 41 (Summer 1990): 59–73.
127. Marilyn French, 'Spouses And Lovers,' *New York Times*, February 3, 1980, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/00/09/03/specials/atwood-life.html.
128. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 305.

Memorial Church and the Medical Arts Building (now home, incidentally, to the Toronto English Department).[129] Boehm, then obscure, would go on to have a distinguished career as first a diplomat (where he maintained a particular interest in cultural diplomacy) and then as a politician. This career would intersect and re-intersect with Atwood's; at his first posting, for example, in Cuba, he invited Atwood and Gibson for a programme of cultural exchange funded both by the Cuban state and the Canadian Embassy. Even in his last diplomatic role, as Ambassador to Germany, he was present for a literary award given to Atwood [130].

By exploring the Canadian state's use of Atwood in Cuba it is possible to further examine its use of literature for the purpose of cultural diplomacy. Cuba provides a particularly clear case, since books are normally sold in pesos at a low value, limiting potential for profit from literary export. As such, Canadian publication in Cuba relies almost entirely upon state support and is therefore perhaps less ambiguously the product of state desires than other locations where a publisher's profit motive complicates interpretation.

Atwood herself has been a regular visitor to the Havana International Book Fair, and has been involved in three publishing projects in Cuba. One, the anthology *Desde el Invierno: Veintitrés Cuentos Canadienses*, compiled Canadian short stories (and excerpts from novels) collected by Atwood and her partner Graeme Gibson and was funded by the Canadian state. I have not been able to obtain a copy, but Atwood and Gibson's introduction and the list of stories selected is publicly available.[131] This introduction is a useful example of certain themes; although it begins with the repudiation of a singular Canadian identity, it moves on to shared features which distinguish Canada from the United States: weather, politeness, migrancy and so on, which (implicitly) do establish a common Canadian-ness. It concludes by arguing that the presence of the United States impedes a relationship between Latin Americans looking north and Canadians looking south, and as a result they know too little about one another. Disseminating Canadian fiction will help to fix this.

These themes are of obvious use to Canadian diplomatic efforts, establishing a common ground of maintaining distinction against American influence and encouraging, therefore, Cuban trade with Canada as less of a threat than that presented by a state more difficult to dis-

129. Margaret Atwood, 'Research notes, correspondence. 1978-1979' (Atwood (Margaret) Papers, MS Coll 200 Box 32, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
130. Peter Boehm, email message to author, 6 July 2021
131. https://web.archive.org/web/20070401140044/https://web.net/owtoad/desde.html

tinguish from the United States. A cynical approach to the funding of Atwood and Gibson's collection would note that it very closely followed the establishment of a Canadian-Cuban nickel mining joint venture, recalling the funding of the Pegasus Prize already discussed in the New Zealand case.[132] There are obvious reasons for Cuban policy-makers to act in accordance with a suspicion of international capitalism; establishing Canadian distinction from American capitalism could be understood as increasing the likelihood of such ventures succeeding and multiplying.[133] However, it necessarily follows that work which establishes distinction and the familiar will be more useful to the state than 'tarnished Mounties'.

Atwood did not receive funding for a foreign tour promoting *Life Before Man*, and although its research was the initiating factor behind her Cuban associations, it has not, perhaps because of its relatively negative attitude towards the Canadian state, been subsidised for publication there. This is a notable contrast to other works — as late as 2020, soon after winning the Booker for a second time, Atwood received funding from the Canadian state for a tour of Australia and New Zealand promoting *The Testaments*, a novel in which Canada is positively contrasted with the dystopian Gilead.[134]

### **Atwood's** The Blind Assassin

The relative obscurity of *Life Before Man* and *Bodily Harm* can be contrasted with the international attention given to *The Handmaid's Tale*. In contrast to the confusion with which international reviewers approached her Toronto, they seem to have eagerly identified parallels to Cambridge, Massachusetts in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Meanwhile, Canadian reviewers were notably more suspicious: 'Of the 127 US reviews of this novel I could uncover, 80 are positive, 9 are negative, and 38 are largely nonevaluative or mixed (80:9:38)—quite a difference to the

132. Archibald R.M. Ritter, 'Canada's economic relations with Cuba, 1990 to 2010 and beyond,' *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 16, no. 1 (2010): 124.

133. As well as another: Canadian banks are dominant across the Caribbean (Diana Thorburn, 'Nationalism, Identity and the Banking Sector: The English-Speaking Caribbean in the Era of Financial Globalization,' in *Ethnicity, Class and Nationalism: Caribbean and Extra-Caribbean Dimensions*, ed. Anton L. Allahar, Caribbean Studies [Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005], 77), and were (unlike other foreign banks) not nationalised by the Cuban revolutionary government (Duncan McDowall, *Quick to the Frontier: Canada's Royal Bank* [Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993], 364–365). Although they eventually exited the market in any case, given the geopolitical situation, their return to a liberalised Cuba would open up a major new market from which American competitors would almost certainly be excluded — but such a return would rely upon Cuban cultural perceptions of them as somehow distinct from other banks because of their Canadianness.

134. J. Goulet, *Margaret Atwood's Australian tour cost taxpayers almost $10,000*, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, May 26, 2021, https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/margaret-atwood%E2%80%99s-australian-tour-cost-taxpayers-almost-10,000.

respective proportions in Canada (18:6:20).'[135]

I am particularly interested here in exploring how Atwood manages to balance the demands of domestic and international audiences in *The Blind Assassin*, which unlike these precursors has appealed to both constituencies: a recognition made manifest in its Booker Prize win. There is little direct evidence for the Booker judges' opinion of *The Blind Assassin*. According to notes made by Goff, some early thoughts were:

> C.G Outstanding
> MF hates it
> RT improved on reading 2[136]

The judges, chaired by Simon Jenkins, were Roy Foster, Mariella Frostrup, Caroline Gascoigne and Rose Tremain. This is not particularly revealing but can be expanded upon by looking at other occasions Atwood was shortlisted for the prize. The fragments of evidence for each novel shortlisted shows grudging acceptance at best of a shortlistable novel, but not a winner. Anthony Thwaite, for example, listed *The Handmaid's Tale* as the 17th best novel in 1986;[137] David Lodge recalls it cursorily as an acceptably shortlistable novel ('commended with some qualifications') for the 1989 prize, but with no sense among him or the other judges that it might win.[138] A.N. Wilson did not rate *Alias Grace* in his 1996 list at all. That year 'Margaret Attwood,' as tallied by Goff, had only two votes to appear on the shortlist (though appear she did).[139]

Carmen Callil's speech as chair of the judges in 1996 presented – at the same time as she claimed over half the best novels were by English novelists – English novelists as 'writing on the far edges of the great centres of English literature which reside in Ireland, America, Canada and India, and the Pacific countries.' To her, 'English writers cannot stand up and say I'm English and I'm writing about life in my vibrant/interesting/doom laden country with the confidence of a Scot or Irish person.'[140] In the eyes of Booker judges, then, it seems Atwood's role as a Canadian writer was to write about life in Canada and show the interest, vibrancy or doom of her country, not her novel or herself. Callil concluded her speech by announcing that the 1996

135. Nischik, *Comparative North American Studies*, 158.
136. 'Papers of Martyn Goff' (BP/1/32/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library, 2000).
137. 'Papers of Book Trust' (BP/1/18/1/2, Oxford Brookes University Library, 1986).
138. David Lodge, *Writer's Luck: A Memoir: 1976-1991* (London: Harvill Secker, 2018), 333.
139. 'Papers of Martyn Goff' (BP/1/28/1/3, Oxford Brookes University Library, 1996).
140. Carmen Callil, *Speech*, BP/1/28/1/3, Oxford Brookes University Library, 1996.

Booker Prize winner was Graham Swift, with *Last Orders*. This novel is set against the very grey backdrop of southern England from Bermondsey to Margate, emphasising — instead of setting — the characters whose internal monologues comprise the novel. This would seem to present a problem grappled with not only by Atwood but also by other authors discussed in this project. If the unexplained detail of *Life Before Man* was indeed alienating, then maximal commercial appeal internationally would rely upon a move away from Canadian content. But if literary worth, for Callil and for others, relied upon the depiction of vibrant Canadian life as something unique, then explicitly Canadian details would still be commercially valuable, not least because they could contribute to a prize win.

International reviews of *The Blind Assassin* were both enthusiastic and emphasised its attention to Canadian detail. Even a capsule review in *The Guardian*, after the novel was shortlisted, devoted a significant portion of a very brief review to assuring readers that 'Atwood's exploration of themes of authorship, secrecy and female fulfilment also accommodates much historical material concerning industrialism and labour relations leading up to the second world war [sic],' as if without this material, its value was uncertain.[141] Similar statements recur in international reviews, emphasising how 'Atwood's research is meticulous'; 'she is scrupulous about not making mistakes in her fictional world'; she grounds the novel's melodramatic events 'in carefully observed social and emotional detail.'[142] A very negative review argues, in a form of grudging praise, that 'Atwood sometimes operates with the indiscriminate retrieval of an internet search engine set to "display all".'[143]

This implies that Atwood successfully managed to both provide detail and (one reviewer excepted) not alienate her readers by doing so.[144] The novel also gives a notably stronger impression of historical truth than is likely to be found in Atwood's other novels. Canadian or partially Canadian novels like *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace* are much more clearly the creation of unreliable and confused narrators. Perhaps their corresponding lack of success in prize culture

141. John Ezard, 'Obscure authors make Booker history,' *The Guardian* (London), October 6, 2000, 9, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/oct/06/books.bookerprize2000.

142. Paul Levy, 'The Booker: Good Choice, Bad Television,' *Wall Street Journal* (New York), November 8, 2000, A24; Mel Gussow, 'An Inner Eye That Sheds Light on Life's Mysteries: Margaret Atwood on Vision, Sacrifice and Lyrical Complexity,' *New York Times*, October 10, 2000, E2; Michiko Kakutani, 'Three Stories Woven Into A Suspenseful Design,' *New York Times* (New York), September 8, 2000, E43.

143. Thomas Mallon, 'Wheels within Wheels: Margaret Atwood has written a novel-within-a-novel that involves watery death and a science fiction best seller,' *New York Times*, September 3, 2000, BR7.

144. However, these statements do de-emphasise the playful manipulation of history by Atwood – the novel is studded with fictional extracts from newspapers, for example – in favour of establishing the novel's value as a description of Canadian reality.

can be attributed to their inability to be read as mimetic representations of historical truth: that is, as descriptions of Canada rather than reflections of individual psychology.

If this is the case, it must mean that Atwood found a way to make her Canadian detail appealing to a metropolitan audience. She is, in fact, quite open about attempting to do so, as might be expected from a writer always willing to acknowledge a keen awareness of how to gain and maintain an audience.[145] For example, in her Clarendon lectures (later published as *Strange Things*), she presents herself as deliberately emphasising 'the more *outré* menu items to be found in Canadian literature.' Since 'Canadian literature as a whole tends to be, to the English literary mind, what Canadian geography itself used to be: an unexplored and uninteresting wasteland, punctuated by a few rocks, bogs, and stumps,' she makes it interesting – after abandoning the prospect of turning up in native dress, reminiscent of Hulme's Booker win or Katherine Mansfield before her – by deliberately emphasising cannibalism and the frozen North 'even though most Canadians now live in cities.'[146] In a rueful echo of the failure of *Life Before Man*, she explains to a young Canadian at Oxford who felt she was giving a falsely exoticizing impression of Canada and ought to write about urban life instead that:

> I thought that the English had quite a lot of urban life themselves, and that they didn't need to hear about it from me. I failed to say that the right idea could often be right from a sociological point of view, but was not necessarily right from a literary one. Given the choice between a morning spent in the donut shop and a little cannibalism, which would you take – to read about, that is?[147]

Bearing this question in mind, I would like to suggest that one way in which *The Blind Assassin* could succeed was its compatibility with some of Atwood's dramatizing and perhaps more easily-understandable critical models. These were set out in *Survival*, originally written for a domestic audience with little familiarity with Canadian literature but now primarily read internationally as an introduction to an unknown body of work.[148] Many critics – so many as to strongly suggest the truth of the statement – claim that *Survival* is responsible for international interest in Canadian literature; that it 'catapulted CanLit, and, as it turned out,

145. The careful work by many individuals required to do this is fascinatingly discussed in Lorraine York, *Margaret Atwood and the labour of literary celebrity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).
146. Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 2–3.
147. Atwood, 5.
148. Its academic reception within Canada was and is generally negative; a decade after its publication, Atwood claimed that 'most self-respecting professors of CanLit begin their courses, I'm told, with a short ritual sneer at it.' (Margaret Atwood, *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose* [Toronto: Anansi, 1982], 105).

herself onto the literary map.'[149] European critics apparently still rely heavily upon Atwood's interpretations, even if they have never been as domestically influential.[150] As a result, Atwood is in the unusually fortunate position of being able to provide to international critics both interpretative strategies and texts upon which they can be applied.[151]

Specifically, Atwood devotes a chapter of *Survival* and considerable attention in *Strange Things* towards the figure of the isolated old woman as a pattern in Canadian fiction (although it might well be argued that — as in *Alias Grace* — her fiction expands upon this concept to include the isolated *young* woman, and — adding further complexity — that female oppression is useful for her purposes in part as a way to explore other forms of oppression). There is a clear link between her discussions of Canadian fiction in *Strange Things* which presents women as cannibals and cannibalised, and Iris and Laura's view of abortions – of female independence – as a form of cannibalism. More importantly, in *Survival* she identifies at some length a pattern of Canadian fiction which depicts Canadian women as

> all over fifty, and a tough, sterile, suppressed and granite-jawed lot they are. They live their lives with intensity, but through gritted teeth, and they are often seen as malevolent, sinister or life-defying.[152]

*The Blind Assassin*'s Iris can be read in conformance with this model. Atwood moves from this into a long discussion of 'the Rapunzel Syndrome,' which has

> four elements: Rapunzel, the main character; the wicked witch who has imprisoned her, usually her mother or her husband, sometimes her father or grandfather; the tower she's imprisoned in – the attitudes of society, symbolized usually by her house and children which society says she must not abandon; and the Rescuer, a handsome prince of little substantiality who provides momentary escape. In the original Rapunzel story the Rescuer is a solution and the wicked witch is vanquished; in the Rapunzel Syndrome the Rescuer is not much help. [...] The Rescuer's facelessness and lack of substance as a character is usually a clue to his status as a fantasy-escape figure; Rapunzel is in fact stuck in the tower, and the best thing she can do is learn how to cope with it.[153]

149. Reingard M. Nischik, *Engendering Genre: The Works of Margaret Atwood* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), 169.
150. Michelle Gadpaille, 'Thematics and its Aftermath: A Meditation on Atwood's Survival,' *Primerjalna književnost* 37, no. 3 (2014).
151. Another internationally-prominent figure in the same position might be J.M. Coetzee.
152. Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (House of Anansi, 1972; Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 2004), 237.
153. Atwood, 249–250.

The varied subplots of *The Blind Assassin* can be closely mapped to these elements. Laura, Reenie, and Iris are trapped in a tower with the girls' father; Reenie cannot abandon them because of her link to the girls, her surrogate children. Laura and Iris are trapped with Richard, Iris' husband, before Laura is literally imprisoned in a sanitorium. The potential rescuer, Alex Thomas, is, of course, faceless – a major plot point is the photograph in which he holds up a hand to obscure half his face – and a subject of fantasy for both girls and in the novel-within-a-novel. (Perhaps signalling his fantastic character even more, he is also an author of pulp fantasies.) These women end up trapped in houses or institutions unable to escape and internalising their prisons, culminating in a chapter called 'The Tower', where a suppressed fantasy of a rescuer is unable to be spoken aloud and will never come to fruition.

The way to recognise such imprisonments, Atwood tells us, is to recognise women who 'visualise their imprisonment by thinking of themselves as trapped in bodies which they do not recognize as theirs.'[154] Iris repeatedly looks into mirrors to find her own face beyond old age. Earlier, the night before her marriage, she 'seemed to myself erased, featureless, like an oval of used soap, or the moon on the wane.' On her honeymoon, 'I myself however was taking shape—the shape intended for me, by him. Each time I looked in the mirror a little more of me had been coloured in.'[155] Atwood can therefore be understood as providing both a creative text and an accessible method of interpretation, allowing her to present local detail in a recognisable master plot. The following sections will examine some comparable texts which failed to succeed internationally, but which perhaps can be more successfully read in a settler context than the nation-based *The Blind Assassin*.

## 3.6 **Leonard Cohen's** Beautiful Losers

In contrast to Atwood's later work, Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* has not easily circulated beyond a Canadian context.[156] There are two potential reasons for this. The first is obvious to any reader: the novel is apparently chaotic and self-indulgent, and is almost impenetrable. Its publication appears to have come about in part because Jack McClelland hoped to

154. Atwood, *Survival*, 250.
155. Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2000), 235, 303.
156. For full details on difficulties in its circulation and translation, see Francis Mus, *The Demons of Leonard Cohen*, with a foreword by Brian Trehearne (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2020), 131–147.

provoke a publicity-raising obscenity trial.[157] In practice, it was supported by the state and para-state apparatuses already discussed: Cohen, a recipient of one of the inaugural junior arts fellowships of the Canada Council, wrote it while living in Greece on state subsidy, then sold the manuscripts to the University of Toronto for $6000, easily twice as much as he earned in royalties.[158] Meanwhile, much of his public profile had been won through a state-funded biographical film, as well as CBC appearances.[159] Contextually, possible reasons for this are obvious enough. Quebec was newly restive, Cohen was a prominent literary figure who was moderately separatist but could well be resigned to federalism — unlike, say, Hubert Aquin — and the novel itself dealt heavily with how it felt to be in Quebec and why Quebec might reject Anglophone domination. For example, one of its protagonists, F., a separatist M.P., blows up a statue of Queen Victoria on Sherbrooke Street, losing a thumb. As any Canadian reader at the time would know, even if an international one would not, a statue of Queen Victoria on Sherbrooke Street had been blown up in July 1963.[160] The resultant lack of need for popular appeal allows the novel to indulge in complicated schemas which can be interestingly read in a settler context.

One of the earliest critical discussions of *Beautiful Losers*, Michael Ondaatje's short monograph *Leonard Cohen*, recalls that on a first reading, 'nothing linked [*Beautiful Losers*] together except some rather precocious epigrams and some dull, narcissistic introspection.' But on a second reading, this 'all subsided to the right level and linked up'.[161] Douglas Barbour has similarly argued that, for a novel which preaches connecting nothing, '*Beautiful Losers* is constructed with great care, its connections only too obvious: not to make them, it seems to me, is to abdicate one's responsibility as a reader'.[162]

Cohen's notes or plans say that for the narrator, 'from a certain perspective (one he tries to

157. Jack McClelland to Leonard Cohen, 15 June 1965, in *Imagining Canadian Literature: The Selected Letters of Jack McClelland*, ed. Sam Solecki (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1998), 101–102. No trial eventuated: Nick Mount wonders if 'the first and so far only Canadian novel to feature vaginal, anal, and armpit penetration by a self-propelled flying vibrator somehow escaped obscenity charges' only 'because few people read it.' (Mount, *Arrival*, 52)
158. Mount, 42, 71.
159. Nadel, *Various Positions: A Life of Leonard Cohen*, 115; Anthony Reynolds, *Leonard Cohen: A Remarkable Life* (London: Omnibus, 2010), 50–51.
160. Anthony Kellet et al., *Terrorism in Canada 1960-1989*, 1990-16 ([Ottawa]: National Security Coordination Centre, Police / Security Branch, 1990), 235.
161. Michael Ondaatje, *Leonard Cohen*, Canadian Writers: A Subseries in the New Canadian Library 5 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), 45.
162. Douglas Barbour, 'Down with History: Some Notes Towards an Understanding of *Beautiful Losers*,' in *Leonard Cohen: The Artist and His Critics*, ed. Michael Gnarowski (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1976), 136.

achieve but cannot – for it is too dangerous) all action is reduced to the pure outline of service or command.'[163] The novel appears to celebrate victimhood — being a beautiful loser, sometimes called in the novel a saint — as a form of redemption.[164] At the moment of one character's greatest degradation, she undergoes a literal apotheosis.[165] This binary is indicated by a persistent pattern of red and white, where white is associated with command and red with submission, so that — to take some of many examples — sexual dominance is signalled by 'red grease' and a 'white shirt' or 'the King of France [...] touched the map with his white finger' and as a result 'out of Quebec, into the scarlet forests' the French marched to burn down Mohawk villages.[166] In a novel with a very obvious 'lack of a coherent, linear plot'[167] we have to look to such features of language, obeying F.'s command: 'Watch the words, watch *how it happens*,' rather than relying upon plot summaries.[168]

However, it is much easier to observe this pattern when an audience can recognise changes Cohen makes because of shared experience.[169] For example, one of the protagonists of the novel is F., a separatist politician. He recalls how he 'loved the red chairs of Parliament'.[170] As in all the Westminster parliaments, the chairs of the lower house are green.[171] Similarly, he describes an obviously anachronistic feast where Catherine Tekakwitha spills a glass of red wine on the white tablecloth and the stain spreads until 'a total chromatic metamorphosis took place in a matter of minutes' and everything and everyone had 'absorbed the imperial hue';[172]

163. Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers: Running Notes*, Ms. Coll. 122 Box 9 Folder 13, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, 1996, n.p. Desmond Pacey also recognises 'voluntary loss of self for some higher cause' as the main theme (Desmond Pacey, 'The Phenomenon of Leonard Cohen,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 34 [1967]: 18). Atwood sees it as an example of her already-identified 'Victor/Victim chain' in Canadian letters (Atwood, *Survival*, 122).

164. Stephen Scobie, *Leonard Cohen*, Studies in Canadian Literature (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1978), 10.

165. Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 183.

166. Cohen, 45, 78, 79. This argument is anticipated by Linda Hutcheon, who suggests that the novel's original conflict is 'between Red Man and White Man' and notes the recurrence of red and white overtaking one another (Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*, 44). Winfried Siemerling also notes the conflict between red and white, but ascribes it to white symbolising distancing thought and red the abolishment of thought and its 'self-defining boundary with the other' (Winfried Siemerling, *Discoveries of the Other: Alterity in the Work of Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michael Ondaatje, and Nicole Brossard* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994], 46). It is almost certainly derived as a pattern from an obvious source: 'White America' had 'destroyed the Red Man and stolen his pleasures' (Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 89)

167. Robert David Stacey, 'Pornographic Sublime: *Beautiful Losers* and Narrative Excess,' in *Intricate Preparations: Writing Leonard Cohen*, ed. Stephen Scobie (Toronto: ECW Press, 2000), 218.

168. Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 186.

169. In a related argument, Francis Mus suggests that while 'specific references to Quebec and Canada are fairly common throughout the literary work, they disappear in the later music.' (Mus, *The Demons of Leonard Cohen*, 94) This perhaps explains the relative international success of fiction and music.

170. Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 163.

171. Mark Bourrie, *Canada's Parliament Buildings* (Toronto: Hounslow Press, 1996), 65.

172. Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 97–98. My reading of this scene is as intended to recall, first, the then-new maple leaf flag, and, second, imply that the French characters will be turned purple or red — i.e. victims — by future

but the reader needs to appreciate that the feast, supposedly in late April 1676, is given by three French characters who had left Canada long before.[173] (However, Cohen does signal quite clearly that we are intended to recognise this fiction: 'I find no mention of this feast in any of the standard biographers.')

If these changes are apparent to a particular audience, they can act as a signal to look for broader changes. The powerful Charles Axis, generally acknowledged as a 'parody of the familiar Charles Atlas comic book advertisement',[174] appears in white bathing trunks rather than — as Atlas apparently wore — leopardskin.[175] He is the strongest man on the beach; the weakest wears a 'red bathing suit'.[176] Similarly, Cohen copies and slightly adjusts advertisements from comic books and magazines before inserting them into the novel at thematically appropriate moments, again to emphasise power and submission.[177] The novel slips into a reverie on contemporary film stars as saints, playing with the same red/white motif:

> Even after the lights came up, the Cinerama screen continued to bleed. I quiet the crowd with a raised scarlet finger. On the white screen your erotic auto accident continues to bleed![178]

Such international references in turn work to de-emphasise the service/command binary as specific to Canada. Instead, it becomes a repeated pattern across cultures and relationships: the relationship between F. and I. as teacher and student (or, in Stephen Scobie's specialised terminology, 'saint and disciple'[179]); between French-Canadians and English-Canadians; Canadians and Americans; Jew and Gentile; coloniser and colonised; missionary and convert; women and the beauty industry; beachgoers and bullies; even Hitler and history. This reduces the significance of the specific relationship between settler and indigene: all groups are both power-

British imperialism.

173. André Vachon, 'Talon, Jean,' in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, ed. George Williams Brown, Marcel Trudel, and André Vachon, vol. 1 (1979; University of Toronto Press / Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2003–), accessed May 15, 2017, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/talon_jean_1E.html; W. J. Eccles, 'Rémy De Courcelle (Courcelles), Daniel De,' in Brown, Trudel, and Vachon, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1; Henri Béchard, 'Togouiroui, Joseph, Great Mohawk,' in Brown, Trudel, and Vachon, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1.

174. Peter Wilkins, '"Nightmares of Identity": Nationalism and Loss in *Beautiful Losers*,' in Scobie, *Intricate Preparations: Writing Leonard Cohen*, 37. The identification is also made in Medrie Purdham, '"Who is the Lord of the world?": Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and the Total Vision,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 212 (2012): 87; Ian Rae, *From Cohen to Carson: The Poet's Novel in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 82.

175. Richard Landon, 'A half-naked muscleman in trunks: Charles Atlas, superheroes, and comic book masculinity,' *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18, no. 2 (2007): 203.

176. Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 69.

177. Compare, for example, 'Thin Legs,' *TV Radio Mirror* (New York) 59, no. 3 (February 1963): 87, https://ia802701.us.archive.org/8/items/radiotv00ma/radiotv00ma.pdf and Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 107.

178. Cohen, 205.

179. Scobie, *Leonard Cohen*, 7.

less (and thus made powerful) or powerful and thus made powerless:

> Suffer the change from red to white, you who weave insignia, which is all of us in our night. But we are merely once upon a time.[180]

The vision here is not of particular and distinct victimhoods (Anglo-Canadian, French Canadian, Native) united by common partaking in the collective victimhood of Canada (as Atwood once suggested), but a shared victimhood that extends across groups. Carey's use of Irishness in *True History* points towards a possible reason for this emphasis in a settler context.

When the novel ends, those who have accepted orders and obeyed are the ones who end up 'making it.' At the climax of the novel, 'Hey! cried a New Jew, laboring on the lever of the broken Strength Test. Hey. Somebody's making it!'[181] Strength no longer has significance; what matters is acceptance. This can be understood as the defining pattern of *Beautiful Losers*. Over and over, action is presented as a matter of differences in power or a matter of compulsion. Rather than forming a unified message, beyond the virtue of acceptance, these act instead as a repeated pattern, tangling into one another so that different forms of domination echo earlier ones. Hitler can become a sex toy, and a sex toy (significantly called the D.V.) can become an expression of the will of God, and both of them can make a saint.[182] A purely mimetic reading fails to account for the issue of why Cohen would write such a novel, instead taking scattered elements of the novel's focus on victimhood to prove its conformance to a Canadian pattern.

But to be a settler is to have a vested interest in the acceptance of victimhood. While I. begins to accept Science, F. confronts the revelations of History, invoked by F. in quasi-religious terms: 'its will be done.' 'I was tired,' says F., 'I was sick of the inevitable. I tried to slip out of History. Never mind, never mind. Just say I was tired. I said no'.[183] The novel's dreams of victimhood resolve themselves into the larger settler dream of escaping the past; History can finally have no claim on those, like settlers, who have no hope of pardon and live on stolen land. If everyone simply accepts, 'confirms tradition through amnesia', 'dissolves history and ritual by accepting unconditionally the complete heritage' of common suffering, then the particular suffering inflicted by settlers on indigenous figures like Edith and Catherine no longer needs to haunt them.[184] Cohen, in his strange way, is too moral a writer to accept this argu-

180. Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 211.
181. Cohen, 242.
182. Cohen, 179–182. For the will of God, see Pacey, 'The Phenomenon of Leonard Cohen,' 92.
183. Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*, 163.
184. Cohen, 161.

ment entirely; but his gestures towards it go unrecognised by a reading method which does not anticipate settler concerns, even if they are most easily recognised by a particular local knowledge.

## 3.7 **Sheila Watson's** The Double Hook

This chapter will conclude by examining Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* as an example of how texts within a local canon can be productively read as exploring the impact of settlement upon culture, even if no longer presenting specific Canadian detail, even though this aspect — while drawing readers at a national level — seems to limit international success. Watson's novel has never been published in English outside Canada. The novel follows the aftermath of the killing of a Mrs. Potter by her son James, exploring the ramifications of the killings within an isolated rural community. The community is haunted by both her ongoing presence, seen fishing, and the ambiguous figure of Coyote. Mrs. Potter's daughter Greta burns both their house and herself, while James flees into town, then returns to his community in a form of redemption. The novel is stripped of most referents to the real and instead exists in a kind of Old Testament dream landscape, influenced by the Cariboo — where Watson taught — but without any evidence that it is intended to be about the place rather than the reader's recognition of changes to the presumably known Cariboo. (Neither Canada nor Cariboo – nor *any* real place – is ever mentioned in the novel.)

I argue here for a reading (influenced by Frank Kermode) of the novel which identifies meaning beyond the immediately apparent. Three linked propositions are put: first, the novel can be read as an exploration of an abstracted experience of settler colonialism; second, this abstraction alienates international readers (just as, it has been argued, it did in Carey's *Tristram Smith* and Murnane's *The Plains*) but was enabled by the conditions of Canadian literary funding; and, third, it can be successfully read nonetheless as part of a transnational phenomenon rather than within an exclusively national context. That it has not been read as such, perhaps because it has never circulated internationally in the Anglophone world, demonstrates the underlying argument of this thesis.[185]

185. Italian and Swedish translations were produced, but have long been out of print (Sheila Watson, *Il doppio amo*, trans. Franscesca Romana Paci [Pungitopo: Marina di Patti, 1993]; Sheila Watson, *Dubbelkroken*, trans. Berit Skogsberg [Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1963]).

### 3.7.1 Abstraction and interpretation

Watson occasionally discussed her intention in writing the novel. The idea came to her on the same Bloor Street that features so prominently in *Life Before Man*:

> it was in answer to a challenge that you could not write about particular places in Canada: that what you would end up with was a regional novel of some kind. It was at the time, I suppose, when people were thinking that if you wrote a novel it had to be, in some mysterious way, international... And so I thought, I don't see why: how are you international if you're not international? if you're very provincial, very local, and very much part of your milieu. I wanted, to do something too about the West, which wasn't a Western, and about Indians which wasn't about ...Indians. No, not 'about Indians,' because I don't even want to put it that way, I'm putting it badly now.[186]

Attempting to understand what is meant by this distinction relies upon a look at some of the intellectual sources drawn upon by Watson. I do so here in order to tease out the distinction between international and local Watson establishes here, and to understand its relationship to an anti-mimeticism embedded in a milieu.

The first source is Bonaventure: in a letter to a friend and eventual biographer:

> 'There is a natural literalism as there is a verbal literalism,' she wrote to me [...] in the wake of my first reading of *The Double Hook*. 'It is St. Bonaventure I think who makes a comment about the phrase 'Verbum Dei' – word *of* God, word *about* God.' She continued: 'In some ways the D.H. is a comment on this type of literalism...'[187]

The second is Yeats. 'In a journal entry dated 22 September 1958,' Watson recorded Yeats' phrase 'the grass blade carries the universe upon its point,' commenting 'The *D.H.*, I suppose, is an attempt to make the grass blade bear this weight.'[188] The argument by Bonaventure referenced is, essentially, that divine revelation relies upon an understanding subject who can receive a partial revelation of the fundamentally unknowable, rather than facts, so that 'revelation is always something greater than what is merely written down.'[189] My understanding of Watson's project, then, is that by making the small details of the everyday bear the weight of

186. Sheila Watson, 'What I'm Going to Do,' in *Sheila Watson and* The Double Hook, ed. George Bowering, Critical Views on Canadian Writers (Ottawa: The Golden Dog Press, 1985), 14.
187. F.T. Flahiff, *Always Someone to Kill the Doves: A Life of Sheila Watson* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2005), 191.
188. Flahiff, 238.
189. Josef Ratzinger, *Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Fransciscan Herald Press, 1971), 108.

the universe around them, something can be produced which is 'of' its context but not 'about' its context, implying the whole to a reader through a fragment, like a blade of grass.[190] Watson therefore — as critics have argued — 'hides meaning in words, evokes a picture of a landscape without describing it, allows events and actions to be apprehended as much by what is not on the page as by what is.'[191]

To Glenn Wilmott, the novel is a 'stripping away from realist description of the temporal backgrounds, spatial contexts, and causal relations that would ordinarily interpret the represented phenomenal succession of the present.'[192] Margaret Morriss argues that an analysis of the manuscripts shows a deliberate removal of personal details, place and history.[193] In Watson's own words, 'I wanted to get rid of the reportage.'[194]

This process can be understood as creating, in Frank Kermode's terms,

> a conflict between narrative sequence (or whatever it is that creates the "illusion of narrative sequence") and what I shall loosely, but with pregnant intention, call "secrets".[195]

Watson has pushed 'reportage' away from the main narrative, but incidental details remain as secrets recoverable in interpretation, since narrative, in Kermode's model of thought, is a combination of the presentation of a fable and the process of its interpretation, which — shades of Bonaventure — alters it. Interpretation produces secrets; that is, lacunæ and oddities which do not correspond to the proprieties[196] of the story – the obvious plot and characters – and so which the process of interpretation for meaning alone suppresses.

In context, as will soon be argued, these secrets relate to the effects of settler colonialism on the Native and settler characters of the novel. However, because they are abstracted away

190. In practice, this can even look like a blade of grass: for example, early in the novel a character 'could hear the cow mumbling dry grass by the bushes.' (Sheila Watson, *The Double Hook* [[Toronto]: New Canadian Library, 2008], 5). Dry grass comes up more easily, without the tearing sound cattle make ripping green grass with their tongues, because it parts more easily from its roots. This may not be a coincidence, given the repeated emphasis on the rootlessness of the novel's characters.

191. Margaret Turner, 'Fiction, Break, Silence: Language. Sheila Watson's "The Double Hook,"' *ARIEL* 18, no. 2 (1985): 67.

192. Glenn Wilmott, 'Postmodern Tragedy: Family in Native Literature,' *University of Toronto Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (2002): 901.

193. Margaret Morris, ''No Short Cuts': The Evolution of *The Double Hook*,' in *Sheila Watson: Essays on her Works*, ed. Nick Moschovakis, vol. 40, Essential Writers Series (Toronto: Guernica, 2015), 78.

194. Sheila Watson, 'Interview,' *Capilano Review* 1, nos. 8/9 (1975–76): 354.

195. Frank Kermode, 'Secrets and Narrative Sequence,' *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 85.

196. He uses this ambiguous word since Conrad — on whom he is writing — does: 'In the conduct of an invented story there are, no doubt, certain proprieties to be observed for the sake of clearness and effect.'

from a particular place, they can become relevant to settler colonialism transnationally, not simply to British Columbia.

### 3.7.2 Narrative secrets and readerships

First, however, it needs to be shown that the context of the Canadian local canon enabled readers to identify these secrets, but did not do so for an international readership.

Early rejections of the novel by non-Canadian publishers emphasised its obscurity; Rupert Hart-Davis complained it was 'insufficiently explored, too much motion and dust.'[197] Cecil Day-Lewis 'found it difficult to get clear in my mind the characters and their responses to one another and to their situation. Commercially, I am afraid, the book would stand no chance in the British market.'[198] Americans 'doubted that enough readers would understand it.'[199] Looking for co-publishers, McClelland & Stewart had it rejected by 'Knopf, Harcourt, Atlantic-Little Brown, Doubleday, New Directions and Grove.' Fred Flahiff notes that a reviewer for a general audience, in the *Globe and Mail*, called it 'obscure', 'eccentric' and 'difficult.' He did not recognise that the novel begins with a matricide, and thought that the killer James had an 'embittered wife' who was actually his sister.[200]

The novel — as already discussed — instead relied upon a small cohort of readers and could be commercially viable only through state support of various kinds, because Watson simply did not wish to engage a broad audience she saw as 'crying out for clarity.'[201] These readers appear to have been the sort one longs for. George Bowering supposedly typed the whole novel out[202]; Marshall McLuhan (incredibly) found the same response to Yeats which Watson had privately noted:

> Yeats noticed without surprise that 'the grass blade carries the universe upon its point.' Such is the procedure of *The Double Hook*. Instead of huge visual gestures or the social abstractions of [the regionalist novel], the whole Canadian fabric is included in each moment of experience in this novel.[203]

197. Flahiff, *Always Someone to Kill the Doves*, 81.
198. Flahiff, 196.
199. Flahiff, 83.
200. Flahiff, 199.
201. Flahiff, 80.
202. Or so a postcard he sent her in 1990 claimed (George Bowering, George Bowering to Sheila Watson, November 12, 1990, CA ON00389 2006 01 148, University of St. Michael's College, John M. Kelly Library, Special Collections)
203. Qtd. in Flahiff, *Always Someone to Kill the Doves*, 238.

Canadian critics have then been very willing to recognise a subtext to the novel dealing with settler colonialism in Canada.[204] It can be seen as an exploration of two dispossessions: a Native culture damaged by settler colonialism, and a loss of roots and grounding caused by the migration of settlers into a new context. Watson identified, buried within the novel:

> the problem of an indigenous population which had lost or was losing its own mythic structure, which had had its images destroyed, its myths interpreted for it by various missionary societies and later by anthropologists – a group intermarried or intermingled with people of other beliefs – French Catholics who had come into the West with the Hudson Bay Company, Biblical puritanical elements – all now virtually isolated from their source. All these voices echo.[205]

### 3.7.3 Transnationality of abstracted settler colonialism

In practice, the relevance of settler colonialism — as presented through Watson's method — has been suppressed enough that its presence takes a generic form which could be equally relevant to Australia or New Zealand. Reading for these presents a novel 'of' settler colonialism in the abstract, not in a particular place. This can be shown using two examples: eyes and fencelines. These recur over and over again without relevance to the obvious plot of the novel, but form a parallel interpretative possibility. To explain this possibility unfortunately requires going into somewhat repetitive detail, since it exists *around* the main flow of plot and text rather than as a summarisable part of a larger whole.

We are never told why James Potter kills his mother; equally, we are given no explanation of why the other characters do not force consequences upon him, so that his 'good fortune flies in the face of any ordinary sense of justice and of moral and legal codes.'[206] (It will be recalled that precisely the same question was asked of Joe in *The Bone People*.) The closest explanation

204. Marlene Goldman, *Dispossession: Haunting in Canadian Fiction* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 46, 62; Glenn Willmott, 'Sheila Watson, Aboriginal Discourse and Cosmopolitan Modernism,' in *The Canadian Modernists Meet*, ed. Dean Irvine (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2005), 111; Marlene Goldman, 'Coyote's Children and the Canadian Gothic: Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* and Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning*,' in *Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic*, ed. Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), 51–73; Arnold E. Davidson, '"The Double Hook's' Double Hooks,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 116 (1988): 36; Oliver Lovesey, 'The Place of the Journey in Randolph Stow's "To The Islands" and Sheila Watson's "The Double Hook",' *ARIEL* 27, no. 3 (1996): 51–56. Atwood, notably, instead interprets it as about two female characters — Greta and her mother — trapped in a fear of life (Atwood, *Survival*, 240–243).

205. Sheila Watson, 'It's What You Say,' in *In Their Words: Interviews with Fourteen Canadian Writers* (Toronto: Anansi, 1984), 159.

206. Angela Bowering, *Figures Cut in Sacred Ground: Illumination in* The Double Hook, Western Canadian Literary Documents (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1988), 90.

comes in an ambiguous passage:

> He asked himself now for the first time what he'd really intended to do when he'd defied his mother at the head of the stairs.
>
> To gather briars and thorns,
> said Coyote.
> To go down into the holes of the rock
> and into the caves of the earth.
> In my fear is peace.
>
> Yet as James stood looking at the river, his heart cried out against the thought: This bed is too short for a man to stretch himself in. The covering's too narrow for a man to wrap himself in.[207]

He feels, in other words, uncomfortable in the landscape. This discomfort is expressed as a strange pun on 'bed', referring to the river bed.[208] His discomfort with his mother is shifted from the domestic sphere into the landscape as a whole; he feels that he cannot properly belong where he lives, that something displaces him from possession of the land. This truth requires a distortion of the real; the land has to be a bed.

Earlier came a passage it seems natural to read as, at least in part, a discussion of James' motivations. This passage also emphasises how the 'distemper' he feels applies not just to life at home but to the whole world and to the ground; the metaphors in which it is described continue the pattern of positioning the dispute in the landscape and the natural world:

> And when they'd raised their eyes their mother was watching as a deer watches.
> Now Greta'd sat in the old lady's chair. Eyes everywhere. In the cottonwoods the eyes of foolhens. Rats' eyes on the barn rafters. Steers herded together. Eyes multiplied. Eyes. Eyes and padded feet. Coyote moving in rank-smelling. Nothing had changed. The old lady was there in every fold of the country. Seen by Kip. Seen by Ara.[209]

Why, when James thinks of his mother, does he think of eyes? George Bowering has pointed out that 'Watson's novel is more about eyes than anything else', while to Nancy F. Corbett 'the theme of sight and insight is woven into every page of the novel [...] It is not ordinary perception which is the issue here, but a kind of seeing through or beyond ordinary events in order

207. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 89.
208. Note, however, a probable allusion to Isaiah 28:20.
209. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 29.

to discover their hidden meanings.'[210] 346 words in *The Double Hook* are forms of see, look, watch or eye.[211] In comparison, words to do with fishing – supposedly the recurring event of the novel, what it is 'about' – only appear 67 times.[212] Going over these examples at length shows both how pervasive this becomes as a motif and how coherent a reading it gives.

Mrs. Potter, it is clear, has a special ability to see. 'You're seeing things all the time,' Ara tells William, 'but you never look at anything here. Sometimes when your mother was going up and down the creek I wanted to call out: What are you looking at? She was the one who noticed.'[213] Her seeing induces guilt not just in her children, but in all the characters. There are numerous examples, but perhaps the most interesting case is the Widow.

> Looking out the window at the land fenced off [...] Flesh calls for flesh, she thought. She had paid enough. Had come with Wagner. Her lips closed. Her eyes shut. Had come into the wilderness. She had done wrong. She had seen the wrong. It was God who would judge. She covered her eyes with her hand. She had cried out against God. She had set wrong on wrong. She had been judged. Eyes looking from the creek bottom. From the body of another old woman. Knowledge. Silence. Shame.[214]

Here looking – the act of looking – induces guilt, and this guilt is associated with nothing more than that the widow 'had come into the wilderness' and whatever it was she saw then and does not want to see now.

Consider the ambiguous statement of Watson in an interview: 'the seeing becomes the dread of all the others because they are terrified of being seen or seeing what they don't want to see.'[215] Watson did not explain what it is that characters are afraid to see, but the fear permeates the novel. The Widow keeps 'her eyelids folded over her eyes' so that her son thinks of her that 'A person can't keep her eyes glazed over like a dead bird's forever'.[216] The Widow keeps trying. In a strong echo of *The Waste Land*: 'You can tell me nothing, the Widow said. Go. Go. I hear nothing. I see nothing.'[217] Theophil later echoes her when he tries to drive Kip away:

210. George Bowering, *Left Hook: a Sideways Look at Canadian Writing* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2005), 167; Nancy F. Corbett, 'Closed Circle,' in G. Bowering, *Sheila Watson and* The Double Hook, 116.
211. 'see', 'seen', 'saw', 'eye', 'eyes', 'eyed', 'look', 'looked', 'looking', 'looks', 'watching', 'watches', 'watched', and 'watch'
212. 'fishing', 'fish', 'fished', 'fishes' and 'hook'
213. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 63.
214. S. Watson, 69.
215. Sheila Watson, 'Sheila Watson in Her Own Words,' in Moschovakis, *Sheila Watson*, 40:166.
216. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 11.
217. S. Watson, 14.

'Lively, he said. We don't want to hear nothing. We don't want to see nothing.'[218] In town, Pockett echoes them both: 'there's jokers here who see nothing'.[219] Kip reflects on this willed lack of knowledge:

> All the time, he thought, people go shutting their doors. Tying things up. Fencing them in. Shutting out what they never rightly know. He thought: Angel can see but Theophil's let fear grow like fur on his eyes.[220]

And when Kip is blinded, James' violence is associated with Kip's seeing.

> Then they heard James's voice rising in the barn. They heard a cry. They heard Kip's voice: You bastard, James. They heard James's voice. They heard his words: If you were God Almighty, if you'd as many eyes as a spider I'd get them all.[221]

So both Kip and Mrs Potter have violence done to them by James because they see something other characters deliberately choose not to see. The most obvious link between them can be found with a look at the early drafts of the novel: as Margaret Morriss puts it, 'Old Man Potter was an Englishman, while no one knows where the Old Lady came from; Kip and Angel are 'pure-blooded' Indians, but William and James (and presumably Greta) are 'a mixed lot."[222] The manuscripts in fact go into slightly further detail: 'William's father, the Widow had told her, was an Englishman. His mother's strain no-one knew. Her gods were not her husband's gods. William was a mixed lot.'[223] The implication seems to be that his mother is an unknown type of Native, rather than simply of unknown origins.

At one point the novel gives us a list of those, like Kip, 'Knowing too much. Like the old lady. Like Greta. Like Angel sitting now in the kitchen. Waiting to catch you in the pits and snares of silence.'[224] It is hard not to notice that these characters are all the Native characters, and not to recognise that there are truths which the settler characters do not wish to recognise: 'You don't know what I know,' says Greta.[225] It is said of Mrs. Potter that 'No person's

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218. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 43.
219. S. Watson, 88.
220. S. Watson, 45.
221. 54 S. Watson, The manuscript version is even stronger in its associations: 'You're not God Almighty. If you were I'd still grab the lid of your great eye and swing there till I kicked it shut. You peeping jack. If you had as many eyes as a spider I'd get them all.'
222. Margaret Morris, "No Short Cuts'," 83–84.
223. Sheila Watson, 'Manuscripts of The Double Hook' (University of St. Michael's College, John M. Kelly Library, Special Collections CA ON00389 2-2-1-2006 01 42), n.p.
224. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 28.
225. S. Watson, 23.

got a right to keep looking'.[226] These two characters are looking for a knowledge which the other characters do not want to know; the others live in what Margaret Morriss has called 'a voluntary ignorance embraced in order to protect the negative, self-defensive peace which suffocates rather than activates the wasteland.'[227]

Therefore, the characters of the novel are not just afraid of being seen, but – more particularly – afraid of being seen by the native eyes they have dispossessed. Kip is 'forced out'; but he wanders the landscape of the novel causing discomfort in people by looking at them on their land. James turns into a murderer because he feels discomfort in his experience of the landscape. (One wonders here about the significance of killing his mother in terms of both creating alienation from his origin and from others and his response to mother/land.) He has to mentally transform it but still cannot feel he belongs.[228] The Native characters look at those whom they know do not belong on the land, and their gaze on the usurpers recalls the knowledge the settlers are trying to forget but cannot. Ara, for example, recognises this in Mrs. Potter. She wants to push her out of sight and leave things as they are, but cannot do so.

> There are things, she said, that can't be straightened out. They have to be pulled and wrenched and torn. And maybe just stay muddled up. Or pushed out of sight and left where they are. You can't tidy up people the way you can tidy up a room, she said. [...] You're seeing things all the time, but you never look at anything here. Sometimes when your mother was going up and down the creek I wanted to call out: What are you looking at? She was the one who noticed.[229]

This resistance to being pushed out of sight is perhaps some form of justification or ex-

226. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 16.
227. Margaret Morris, 'The Elements Transcended,' in G. Bowering, *Sheila Watson and* The Double Hook, 83.
228. The best rejoinder to the obvious objection that James is of mixed descent is that, while partly of the coloniser and partly of the colonised, he chooses to take the coloniser's part. One piece of evidence for this is that James also joins in the willed blindness of the settler characters; when he sees the ghostly figure of his mother,

> He pulled the horse up. Then closing his eyes gave it its head. He felt it draw to the centre of the bridge. And heard its feet echoing on the boards until solid earth dulled their beat. (S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 88)

Another is his role as the harbinger of a new and redeemed society; of a Canada, which the novel perhaps suggests, can only be united by forgetting the sins of the past. The novel gives an odd significance to his new plaid shirt, a symbol of the Canadian frontier. Overall, however, the objection is perhaps misguided. The role of the colonised in *The Double Hook* is not part of the main narrative but one of the novel's secrets. As such, it is not necessary to expect more than partial compliance with the literal and narrative aspects of the novel; rather these serve as carriers from which, in Beckett's phrase, whatever is behind the words can leak out. (Incidentally, this scene strongly recalls, while also subverting, William George Richardson Hind's 'Civilization and Barbarism'; another instance of local echoes. Hind was one of very few artists to have depicted the Cariboo. See Coleman, *White Civility*, 14 for a discussion of the painting.)
229. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 63.

planation for her killing and for Kip's blinding. (In response to Ara's statement, William tells her 'Don't squeeze at your eyes like that, he said. I've known men blinded by less. Over a period of time, he said.'[230]) When Kip offers the excuse for his blinding already discussed, Angel silences him: 'Night's for sleep when you have a place to lay your head.'[231] The implication is that there are those who have not a place to lay their head, because they have been dispossessed, and that Kip can sometimes be numbered among them. The characters of the novel want them gone.

The associative habit of the novel reinforces the connection. In the quotations already given, it becomes apparent that seeing is associated with boundaries: the land fenced off, people fencing away the land. With startling regularity, the people who see Mrs. Potter's ghost think of fences.

> When at last he went down to the creek the old lady had gone. And he thought: Someday I'll put a catcher on the fence and catch her for once and all.[232]

It is not entirely clear what Felix, the character thinking here, means by 'a catcher'; the very idea seems to be opposed to the nature of a fence. Perhaps he is thinking in terms of her fishing; any more relevant sense is unknown to both the *OED* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. The idea of 'catching' Mrs. Potter seems more suitable to, as James does, wanting her gone rather than wanting her excluded. Again the language used seems to deform itself in the direction of another interpretation, rather than serving the interests of the narrative: a presence on the land needs to be caught and destroyed.

The Widow's reaction is again to think of a fence and the violation of boundaries across the land:

> Dear God, she said, what does she want? So old, so wicked, fishing the fish of others. Slipping her line under our fence before my boy can get the fish on his hook.[233]

The significance of this is made particularly clear by the way it leads the narrative into inconsistency. Symbolic truth has to overwhelm literal truth; there needs to be a fence now; later in the novel, however, the widow's son, reacting to the same incident, plans to build a

230. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 64.
231. S. Watson, 111.
232. S. Watson, 8.
233. S. Watson, 10.

fence in the same place where, clearly, no fence exists. He has an oddly charged interaction with Kip over the rolls of wire he will use.

> I'm going down to put a fence right across the creek, he said, so James Potter's mother can't go up and down here any more.[234]

We can interpret in this a fear of native eyes disregarding fencelines and observing settlers on the land. In other words, the guilt Mrs. Potter induces is the guilt of the settler, and her murder is an enactment of colonial murders. Such a reading may seem far-fetched, but consider the odd terms in which Greta's death is described:

> The words of the lord came, saying: Say now to the rebellious house, Know you not what these things mean? Greta had inherited destruction like a section surveyed and fenced.[235]

Again the destruction of a Native character is associated with surveying and fencing; the Biblical allusion supports this argument. The full verse (Ezekiel 17:12) is, in the King James Version,

> Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these *things mean*? tell *them*, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon

The captivity of the Israelites in Babylon is an unmistakeable echo of captivity in colonial states; the identification is strong enough that in the parallel society of New Zealand, for example, numerous syncretic religions emphasising the parallels between dispossessed Israelites and dispossessed tangata whenua emerged.[236] The death of Greta is, parallel to its connection with the overall narrative, linked to the surveying and fencing of land for settlement. The idea is reinforced by the vague comment of the Widow's son when he discusses her death: 'You don't have to spy your way along an actual built fence to know the probable lay of the land.'[237] After he speaks comes the call of a coyote:

> Happy are the dead
> For their eyes see no more.[238]

234. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 11.
235. S. Watson, 103.
236. For a full discussion see Bronwyn Elsmore, *Like Them That Dream: The Maori and the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Auckland: Libro, 2011). One, Ringatū, still survives among Tūhoe.
237. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 104.
238. S. Watson, 105.

When James rides into town, there is a clear distinction between the 'pole fence of the Indian reservation', a permeable barrier from which he is driven away by 'bone-thin dogs' 'running to drive him off territory they'd been afraid to defend'[239] and what he finds when 'he came to fenced-off land. Signs of habitation. A flume. A gate. Some horses pastured in a field.'[240] Fenced-off land is the boundary between the indigenous and the settled.

This argument is also supported by the observation of Oliver Lovesey about the special significance of Coyote:

> The Coyote of the Shuswap people is a trickster, but also a defining figure in myths of place, specifically in designating ancestral boundaries. The setting of *The Double Hook* is Native land, and this land is Coyote's 'pastime' (13). Coyote stalks the beginning and end of the novel, as if marking territorial borders[241]

I have had to go at some length here with relatively critical yield just to show how pervasive these references to eyes and fencelines are, and how consistently they form a narrative of their own. But it is worth re-emphasising that they have no relevance to the obvious plot of the novel; nor do they fit into any specific landscape or place. They need to be pieced together in a way not natural to us as readers; we are left in the position of William:

> Ever since I was in Greta's kitchen during the storm, she said, I've been trying to fit the pieces into a pattern. Some of the pieces aren't so far to look for as you think, he said. Do you know, Ara, he said, for a man who sees so much I've not seen what was growing up in my own yard. It's like a man who stands on a rock looking over a valley. He doesn't notice the rock, he said. He just stands on it.[242]

The novel stands on the rock of the colonial project, and in its main concerns it does not notice (or perhaps sidelines) it. Within its words, however, colonial anxiety can be found not 'so far to look for as you think,' in a fear of eyes watching from the fenceline and the secret knowledge which they possess.

As such, its secrets echo across the other novels discussed in this thesis. We can recall the significance to Ned Kelly, adopting an indigenous role in Carey's novel, of

239. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 82.
240. S. Watson, 82.
241. Lovesey, 'The Place of the Journey in Randolph Stow's "To The Islands" and Sheila Watson's "The Double Hook",' 53–54.
242. S. Watson, *The Double Hook*, 65.

> more than once sitting on my horse to watch McBean eat tea & when his dogs was going wild he could do no more than stare out into the wild colonial dark. He did not own that country he never could.[243]

Similarly, 'home' to Kerewin Holmes is where the fences are not:

> "Fences down, I take it?"
>
> "Fences mainly non-existent. It's poor hard land to farm." [...] "This is it. This is home."[244]

The notable lack of international success for this (one of the most important Canadian novels) strongly suggests, however, that requirements for such reading methods (and the identification of such similarities) are not desired by international audiences. Instead, such approaches appear best suited to texts created for the subsidised and local Canadian market. International audiences prefer instead texts which can circulate without subsidy, and which are more easily interpretable without specific knowledge, especially if they seem to offer facts about Canada as a unique location (an approach aided by Canadian cultural diplomacy). It seems likely that a novel like Watson's, which relies on disputing and manipulating such facts, will never achieve the same success. But by moving into the abstract lineaments of experience, it comes closer than almost any other novel to depicting a generalised settler experience rather than its particular manifestations in a particular place. In contrast, a Booker winning text like *The Blind Assassin* (rather than *Life Before Man*) has to emphasise — to win such a prize, and to attract state support — a unique Canadianness which makes settler commonalities harder to observe.

243. Carey, *True History*, 194.
244. Hulme, *The Bone People*, 162–163.

## Chapter 4

# Conclusion

At the beginning of 1936, T.S. Eliot gave a lecture on 'Tradition and the Practice of Poetry.'[1] He began with a claim that his title was misleading; what he really meant by tradition was not so much an allegiance to earlier models as a sense of common response to the influences of a changing world, of earlier literary periods, and of contact with foreign literatures. Aware of his audience — he spoke at University College, Dublin — he moved to discuss a larger issue: 'Must we regard London as the centre, in the same way that Athens and Rome especially were centres; Rome drawing to it the gifted writers from all parts of the Empire?'[2] This, he argued, was not the case for Ireland or for America, while the case of Scotland was ambiguous, since poetry — to Eliot – by a Scotsman written in Scots could preserve its own differences from English, while that written in English could not. However, one situation was not at all ambiguous: that of the 'British Dominions.' 'I do not know,' declared Eliot, 'of a single poet of the slightest merit in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, though I assure you a good deal of verse is written in those countries.'[3]

'In' the dominions is not here the same as 'from': in Eliot's model, great writers might appear — he gives, although he mistakes her for a Tasmanian, the example of Katherine Mansfield — but without a sustaining tradition, 'when a writer of exceptional merit and originality appears in any dominion, he tries to get to London.' (An enactment of such a move — and its ultimate rejection — was seen in the discussion of *St Urbain's Horseman* in the second chapter.)

1. T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Practice of Poetry,' in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934-1939*, ed. Iman Javadi, Ronald Schuchard, and Jayme Stayer (1936; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 300–310.
2. Eliot, 304.
3. Eliot, 305.

Their work then remains embedded in an English tradition to which they bring only 'their individual gifts, together with the imagery and feeling of their childhood in remote lands – that is, a certain exoticism.'[4]

The continuing influence of arguments similar to Eliot's remains.[5] These can be ambiguously supportive, as in Casanova's argument that 'the great heroes of literature [even those from the periphery] invariably emerge only in association with the specific power of an autonomous and international literary capital.'[6] Or they can — as in Huggan's critique of the 'postcolonial exotic' — decry this bringing to London but recognise its continuation in new forms. The emergence of the Commonwealth literary tradition from the 1960s onwards could be seen as an attempt to assert that what we would now call postcolonial literatures form a fourth literary tradition developed out of colonial experience, with its own languages, affiliations and responses — and therefore best interpreted as something other than merely individual gifts and exoticism bought to London. This project of incorporating all postcolonial Anglophone literatures into a common tradition was, as the introduction discussed, a difficult one to sustain entirely without minimising the rather significant difference that settlers benefited from and generally supported the colonial project.

This thesis, however, has explored how an alternative common settler tradition, related to but distinct from a tricontinental postcolonial tradition, might exist in interaction with institutions of publishing and prize-giving. This existence does not require the direct influence of transnational equivalents in that tradition — as if MacLennan or Mulgan had to read one another — but can instead be based upon parallel developments from common origins in a transnational British settler colonialism, so that — to continue the example — MacLennan and Mulgan both respond to similar cultural developments from a shared base even though they worked in isolation. For example, a reader from New Zealand, thinking of Eliot's claims that no verse of any merit existed in 1936, would almost inevitably think of the *Phoenix* group of poets as a counterpoint, with names which would later recur in literary history: Mason, Brasch, Curnow, Glover, and Fairburn.[7] But one from Canada would as naturally think of

4. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Practice of Poetry,' 305.

5. In 2021, for example, it was possible for Joe Cleary to respond to Eliot (and related arguments by Ezra Pound and Hugh Kenner) by arguing that a model based on three literary traditions — British, Irish and American — can now be extended by adding a fourth tradition of Caribbean writing which has come to assert itself clearly (Joe Cleary, *Modernism, Empire, World Literature* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021], 244–245).

6. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 109.

7. A recent examination of *Phoenix* in an explicitly transnational reading as part of a broader modernism is

what is variously called the Montreal group or McGill movement: Klein, Smith, and Pratt. Both were small groups of young men in one city publishing little magazines after forming a loose circle as undergraduates; both were deeply influenced by an imported modernism; both were suspicious of regionalism and literary exoticism and both had an uneasy relationship with precursors elsewhere in the country who seemed to be less modern and more closely affiliated to producing exoticism within metropolitan models: 'Maple Leaf' or 'Kowhai Gold' poets working in an English tradition.[8] Both would, as literary developments continued, then be condemned in their turn for holding a seemingly exclusively male, white and educated conception of the literary tradition which strove rather too hard to identify a nascent national identity.

The main investigation of the thesis has not been devoted to an exploration of this possible tradition, but rather to an examination of the national and international production and circulation of fiction from the three settler states, which includes consideration of why cross-national comparison might have become less common after apparently burgeoning as a critical subject in the 1980s and 90s. The answer is a tendency to success in prize culture — and therefore in the literary marketplace and critical discourse — for those works re-incorporated into the English tradition by the Booker Prize in a metaphoric, if not literal, move by their authors to London. There, they can be read — as would be expected if Eliot is representative — with a 'certain exoticism' as the work of an individual genius within a London-centric tradition. The first chapter gave a clear example of such a reading in Norman St John Stevas' Booker speech dealing with Carey and Hulme.[9] But the same exoticism differentiates them from one another in readings looking for such distinctions and makes reading for comparison less likely.

This contention underpinning the thesis could be further supported and reinforced, in conclusion, should the same transformations seem to occur in another work from a different location: that is, if another text from within a different Anglophone settler context is simul-

Andrew Dean, 'Nationalism, Modernism, and New Zealand,' *JNZL* 38, no. 1 (2020): 17–21.

8. See Lawrence Jones, '"Bliss Was It in That Dawn ..." from *Phoenix* to *New Poems* 1932-34,' *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, no. 17 (1999): 26–46; J.A. Weingarten, 'Modernist Poetry in Canada, 1920-1960,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 314–337. Although John Mulgan was closely associated with the *Phoenix* poets, perhaps it should be noted that he did not contribute work there. He did contribute to an associated magazine, *Kiwi*, edited by two members of the Phoenix committee (Vincent O'Sullivan, *Long Journey to the Border: a Life of John Mulgan*, 2nd ed. [Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2011], 72).

9. Stevas, *The Lasting Crown*.

taneously incorporated and exoticised in similar patterns to those identified throughout this thesis. As this thesis entered its final stages of preparation, the white South African writer Damon Galgut won the 2021 Booker Prize for his novel *The Promise*. The award provided a useful and timely test-case to do exactly this: read a new work in dialogue with the arguments already developed to assert their validity.[10] In closing, I therefore offer a short reading of Galgut's novel in order to bring together and underscore my central arguments concerning the Anglophone settler novel in the global and (especially) metropolitan marketplace: that prize culture encourages readings for unique exoticism that treat each location of settlement as very distinct and as representative, thereby obscuring similarities.

Galgut's novel is divided into four episodes over thirty-one years;[11] each episode deals with the death and funeral of one of a South African family against a background of broader changes in South Africa. Until the very end, the titular promise — to give a house to Salome, a black servant — is not kept. The novel's most unusual feature is a narrative voice which, although itself distinctive and present, also dips in and out of the consciousness of the main characters and ancillary ones around them.[12] This allows — amidst a series of tragedies — a grim humour that is primarily satirical but at moments is farcical and even cruel, developed from the reader's access to the ignoble thoughts of successive characters. This is very different, in setting and style, from the other Booker winners analysed in this thesis. However, as will soon be discussed, familiar patterns nonetheless recur.

## 4.1 Summary

Before turning to Galgut, the core arguments of the thesis can be briefly recapped to allow comparison. At the highest level, the first chapter argued that international readers found it easy to interpret Hulme's *The Bone People* as exotic and indigenous (and therefore uniquely

10. Although the introduction discussed reasons not to include South African settler writing from before 1994 in the main body of the thesis, the end of apartheid has perhaps normalised South Africa in the metropolitan imagination enough that it can be justifiably (if briefly) reconsidered here.

11. There is some ambiguity about these dates. Although most reviewers and the Booker judges have claimed it takes place over forty years, the novel explicitly begins in 1986 (Damon Galgut, *The Promise* [2021; London: Vintage, 2022], 35), and characters re-encountered at the end of the novel put the gap at either thirty or thirty-one years (237, 285). However, Jacob Zuma's February 2018 resignation also occurs at the end of the novel (270), slightly extending the timeframe. This is one of a number of seemingly deliberate implausibilities which will soon be discussed.

12. One obvious exception is that the range of viewpoints observed or enacted are primarily those of white characters; we do not, for example, at any point gain access to Salome's thoughts.

Māori rather than comparable to Pākehā parallels, or parallels from outside New Zealand). They tended to treat Hulme as representative of an often under-examined Māori identity rather than as creating individual fiction. Such readings obscured alternative interpretations of the novel as a work influenced by settlement and therefore directly comparable to other exemplars of settler literature, despite very strong reasons for such comparisons. (These included both a strong similarity to the New Zealand counterpart text, John Mulgan's *Man Alone*, and a critical problem best solved by an awareness of issues around state care in a settler colonial context.) The second chapter argued that a simultaneous overt rejection and implicit acceptance of cultural cringe in Australia, sustained through a particular form of what I termed settler postmodernism, brought commercial success to Peter Carey's later work not available to his earlier work or to that of the more subjective Gerald Murnane. The third chapter, focused on Canada, argued that state funding allowed, within Canada, an implied readership with more information than was available to an international readership dependent on commercial appeal and often influenced by cultural diplomacy. As a result, some works, such as *Beautiful Losers* and *The Double Hook*, circulated successfully among small local audiences without enjoying international success. Others, such as Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* offered a simpler version of Canada as unitary and unique which obscured similarities but found a wider, transnational, readership.

In more detail, the first chapter compared Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* and John Mulgan's *Man Alone*. It established the exoticisation as indigenous rather than settler, and representative rather than creative, that allowed Hulme's novel to circulate transnationally while Mulgan's very similar work did not. It then used close readings of *The Bone People* to present ways in which analysis focussed upon the legacies of settlement could explain certain problems in the novel — such as attitudes to child abuse and state care — already identified but not necessarily satisfactorily explained by other readers. It concluded by applying critical approaches developed for settler literatures more broadly to give a new reading of the novel which incorporated settler ambivalence and desire for indigenization.

The second chapter explored the relative success of works — primarily Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* — which used a form of postmodernism which still claimed to describe Australia with particularity or quiddity (therefore allowing mimetic readings) and those works by Carey and by Gerald Murnane which took a more conventionally postmodernist approach.

It argued that Carey's postmodernism allowed him to appeal to readers in multiple groups and at multiple levels, shaping his narrative to reward reading in multiple different ways so that it could — for example — simultaneously be read as embracing metropolitan cultural judgement or angrily rejecting it depending upon the reader. Its prize win and simultaneous local success relied upon an ability to be read in these multiple ways. In contrast, Gerald Murnane's works were more conventionally postmodernist and so did not appear to give direct information about Australia. This correlated with a lack of popular readership. Because Carey's changes to history emphasised the uniqueness of the Australian situation, it became more difficult to recognise similarities with the Canadian or New Zealand experience — including, especially, worries about indigeneity. This was not the case in Murnane's more personal works, which could successfully be read to recognise the influence of culture (including a shared settler culture) upon perceptions of reality.

The third chapter used a book historical approach to explore local and international Canadian canons which differed substantially and were explained by patterns of state support. The local canon assumed knowledgeable readers (emphasising divergence within the state) but could not succeed commercially in international markets without state support. This state support marketed a unified and culturally-distinct Canada. Texts that displayed Canada's difference from other settler states and emphasised mimeticism, especially in a simplified form which did not assume readerly knowledge, then circulated internationally. Meanwhile, texts that explored the concerns of specific groups within the nation could be more productively read within a settler context but did not circulate in ways that encouraged such readings. Atwood's *Life Before Man* was an example of the second category. In contrast, her *The Blind Assassin* carefully explained details and closely followed models for reading Canadian fiction already set out in Atwood's own critical work. This meant it was read as a mimetic representation of a unique Canadian experience. The chapter concluded by looking at two locally-canonical works, Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* in order to identify ways to read the local in a settler context. Texts like these which encouraged hermeneutic readings derived from an implied knowledgeable readership paradoxically became more rather than less similar to texts from outside Canada influenced by a common history of settlement.

These findings are significant because — although preliminary, and restricted to a small number of texts — they support the idea that the relative lack of critical interest in specifically settler models of literary analysis (rather than national or more broadly postcolonial) may not be because no such similarities are to be found, but because the terms on which texts circulate transnationally — especially as Booker Prize winners — work to minimise similarities and instead to emphasise divergence. The thesis can then be understood as making the broader claim that the particular texts easily available and familiar to international critics because of their success as Booker prize winners are not necessarily representative of the context from which they emerged. Moreover, theoretical formulations which do not take into account the means — especially the Booker Prize — by which texts have reached audiences and local as well as internationally-prominent critical approaches will remain partial. This then implies that a return to the critical approaches to settler literature developed in the eighties and nineties may be a useful addition to literary analysis of texts written in and for settler cultures. This study contributes some initial readings following these critical approaches — especially in close readings of Murnane and Watson — but is also useful as an explanation, developed from three different national perspectives, of why such readings have become less common. In this way, it prepares the ground for future work on a broader variety of texts.

## 4.2 **Damon Galgut's** *The Promise*

If Galgut's Booker-winning novel can be read in similar, symptomatic, terms, it would reinforce the presumption that such commonalities are unintentionally obscured by the presentation necessary to succeed within metropolitan prize culture. I offer this final reading as a way to both consolidate and diversify the case already developed. To make this argument, it is necessary first to briefly explore the novel's reception.

Beyond the Booker prize, the novel's international reception was highly positive, as will be discussed. The international reception of the novel emphasised many of the same features we have seen emphasised in parallel Booker-winning texts from Australia, Canada and New Zealand, even while internal textual evidence strongly suggests an alternative reading. This alternative reading is, put briefly, for the novel to be understood as a highly allegorical drama exploiting the characteristics of theatre to present South African circumstances in a refined

and symbolic form, rather than as an accurate rendition of those circumstances compatible with historical rather than symbolic truth. This allegory is more easily made compatible with the pre-existing perceptions of Anglophone settler literature discussed throughout the thesis than a realist text would have been, but is itself read as realist internationally.

To take an immediately obvious example, to an international audience the Swarts are precisely typical: 'there is nothing unusual or remarkable about the Swart family, oh no, they resemble the family from the next farm and the one beyond that, just an ordinary bunch of white South Africans.'[13] To a domestic audience, theirs is more an allegorical than realistic depiction: an accumulation of unlikely details in their particular situation which can however still be read as representative of the broader situation. Most obviously, they have at least three households of black farm workers on their farm. But their farm can only require fewer workers, if any:

> it is in no meaningful way a real farm, one horse and a few cows and some chickens and sheep [...] out there among the low hills and valleys, halfway to the Hartbeespoort Dam.[14]

In action here appears to be the assumption — derived perhaps from the international canon of South African literature and generic memories of the farm novel or plaasroman — that it is unquestionably typical for a white South African family to be farmers and exist within a social context including farm labourers employed and exploited by them, when this would in fact be highly unusual.[15]

Such unlikely events and details accumulate and accumulate still further throughout the text. To take a further sampling, it is exceedingly improbable that a blind dominie of the Dutch Reformed Church could (only once, for unexplained reasons) have slept with his sister, then left his church to establish an evangelical congregation emphasising (eventually fatally) the use of snakes in a remote setting. Similarly, a Catholic priest breaking the seal of the confessional because he 'needs the bathroom and this might hurry things along' is at least un-

13. Galgut, *The Promise*, 221.
14. Galgut, 10.
15. In 2017, there were 36 977 white farm owners or managers in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, *Census of Commercial Agriculture 2017: Financial and production statistics*, 11-02-01 (2017) [Pretoria, 2020], 32, https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-11-02-01/Report-11-02-012017.pdf). The most recent published census found that 8.9% of the South African population was white; that is, around 4 607 580 people (Statistics South Africa, *Statistical release (revised): Census 2011*, P0301.4 [Pretoria, 2012], 17, http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03014/P030142011.pdf). In other words, only around 0.8% of white South Africans are farmers or farm managers.

usual, since this has been a matter of martyrdom in recent history, as Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* indeed touches upon.[16] His celebrating a 'funeral mass' by 'raining Latin upon them' in the twenty-first century is, in comparison, merely unlikely, but it is deeply implausible that he could believe that saying Jesus was fully human was blasphemous, rather than the reverse.[17]

By the end of the novel, the text itself points to its own impossibilities:

> And this is when Amor lays the piece of paper, which she can't yet possibly have in her possession, on the table. Smooths it flat with her hands. Points at it, or maybe through it, at the floor beneath.[18]

So what is the purpose of these improbabilities, and in what way do readers accept them? They might be a dramatization of broader truths rather than a particular detail: the unthinking exploitation of black labour, the violence of the apartheid state, the corruption and hypocrisy of religion under apartheid, the political transition which laid the powerful low.

Perhaps Galgut's intent can be further refined by a related pattern of oddities: an extraordinarily blatant and almost clumsy symbolism, in which, for example, Anton can meet a 'Private Payne' while he repents of a murder (soon to be discussed), then meet him again many years later and run away before committing suicide, running away from his private pain.[19] In that first meeting, he even asks 'Are you an allegory? Are you real?'[20] Similarly, a dove can crash into a window and die at the same moment hope of reconciliation does.[21] This strange use of symbolism can be linked to an epigraph from Fellini to the novel: they recall his extravagant moves beyond realism.

Galgut could therefore be seen as presenting not the realism of the novel, but the exaggerated gestures and limited characters of film or theatre, a suspicion supported by a seemingly deliberate flatness of character. (In fact, the narrative voice seems to obviously play the role of a theatrical chorus, a word which Galgut has used to describe it.[22]) In interviews, he empha-

16. Galgut, *The Promise*, 199.
17. Galgut, 222.
18. Galgut, 284.
19. Almost the only negative review of the novel identifies a pattern of 'crude symbolism' (Adam Mars-Jones, 'Orifical Events,' *London Review of Books* 43, no. 21 [November 4, 2021], https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n21/adam-mars-jones/orificial-events).
20. Galgut, *The Promise*, 38.
21. Galgut, 129.
22. Ellen Peirson-Hagger, 'Booker Prize-winner Damon Galgut: "South Africa is not a country that speaks with one voice,"' *The New Statesman*, November 5, 2021, https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/2021/11/booker-prize-winner-damon-galgut-south-africa-is-not-a-country-that-speaks-with-one-voice.

sises the influence of writing a film script on the novel, describes it as the 'four acts of a play',[23] and regularly refers to how

> theatre and cinema in some ways are ahead of novels because they play with narrative in ways that maybe the novel is not bold enough to do a lot of the time, although there's no reason why it shouldn't.[24]

This desire to emphasise the individual drama over perfect fidelity to the facts is, of course, a perfectly justifiable and frankly interesting artistic decision, which — again, to an informed reader — is unmistakeable rather than covert. Galgut has been clear that he is not so much interested in the historical drama of South Africa as the exploration of ways to represent its experience:

> I was, I am, much more interested in the family and their internal dynamics. Soap opera over politics any day! Aesthetics over ideology![25]

If, however, he has not been read in this way internationally — as will soon be discussed – the novel remains open to readings reminiscent of those already discussed for other Booker winners; the same emphasis on representation and exoticism discussed in *The Bone People*; the same cultural cringe and historical looseness apparent in readings of Carey; and the same unifying and flattening for an implied reader without specific cultural knowledge seen in Canadian export fiction. These readings cumulatively work to place the novel as an exotic representation of white South African experience within the metropolitan tradition, rather than aligning it with a distinct settler tradition which could otherwise be identified.

### 4.2.1 Parallels with New Zealand examples

It will be recalled that a great deal of the international attention directed towards Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* developed from the rather naïve interpretations of her as representative of Māori or of New Zealand's unique landscape; how, in the words of Martyn Goff, 'the power

23. Eloise Barry, 'Damon Galgut on Confronting South Africa's Racist History With Booker-Winning *The Promise*,' *Time*, November 5, 2021, https://time.com/6114441/damon-galgut-booker-prize-the-promise/.
24. Mark Gevisser, '"Most of the stories have been told by now, it's just the ways of telling that are new" — Damon Galgut talks with Mark Gevisser about his new novel, *The Promise*,' *The Johannesburg Review of Books*, July 18, 2021, https://johannesburgreviewofbooks.com/2021/06/18/most-of-the-stories-have-been-told-by-now-its-just-the-ways-of-telling-that-are-new-damon-galgut-talks-with-mark-gevisser-about-his-new-novel-the-promise/.
25. 'Lightbulb moments: Damon Galgut on writing *The Promise*,' Penguin Books, November 2, 2021, https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2021/august/damon-galgut-the-promise-interview-novel-inspiration.html.

and feeling for nature and the more mystical sides of a dwindling people, the Maoris, will make it a gem providing a whole new range of experience.'[26] These interpretations took very little account of the world as it was, favouring instead a loose accumulation of unchallenged metropolitan perceptions, such as that the Māori population was dwindling, or that cannibalism was rife. A tendency to view Galgut as representative of white South Africans recalls this tendency to view Hulme as unthinkingly representative of Māori.

The novel, to the *New Yorker*, responds to 'the demands of history,' 'is drenched in South African history.'[27] To the Booker judges, it was 'a strong, unambiguous commentary on the history of South Africa.' Similarly, on awarding the prize, Maya Jasanoff — the chair of the judges — called it 'really dense with historical and metaphysical significance' and praised its use of 'the history of the last 40 years of South Africa'.[28] As such, an explicit anti-realism — again, the novel is clear at moments that its events cannot be happening — is read instead as (in the words of the *New York Times*) 'realist fiction, plus some extras' rather than as an allegorical and dramatized vision of a symbolic, not realistic, set of circumstances.[29]

This perceived realism is, however, limited by metropolitan preconceptions. Internationally, South African fiction seems to be rewarded for revisiting the factual exploration of apartheid and the traumas of South African history, that which metropolitan audiences already know. As Galgut puts it,

> I think publishers in the UK and elsewhere either regard South African literature in the sense that South Africans wrote about apartheid, and that's over, so we don't want to hear anymore from you guys. Or else, the only subject they recognize is apartheid, and it's 'Why aren't you writing about that?'[30]

It then becomes easier for details to seem realistic when they are perceived to be true in the context of sometimes-vague understandings of apartheid, even if this was not at all a matter of authorial intent: the title of the same *New York Times* review cited above, for example,

26. Goff, 'Recent Fiction.'
27. James Wood, 'A Family at Odds Reveals a Nation in the Throes,' *The New Yorker*, April 12, 2021, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/04/19/a-family-at-odds-reveals-a-nation-in-the-throes.
28. Alison Flood, 'Damon Galgut wins Booker prize with 'spectacular' novel The Promise,' *The Guardian* (London), November 3, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/nov/03/damon-galgut-wins-booker-prize-the-promise.
29. Rand Richards Cooper, 'A Family, and a Nation Under Apartheid, Tears at the Seams,' *New York Times*, April 15, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/15/books/review/damon-galgut-promise.html.
30. Ella Fox-Martens, '"Outlines and Shadows" — Damon Galgut,' *Soft Punk*, June 14, 2021, https://www.softpunkmag.com/essay/outlines-and-shadows-damon-galgut.

emphasises the novel as about 'a Nation Under Apartheid' even though most of the novel — although exploring post-apartheid claims to justice — occurs after apartheid's end.[31]

### 4.2.2 Parallels with Australian examples

In practice, an approach emphasising apartheid can shade into a form of cultural cringe. By emphasising apartheid as a form of exoticism, the characters of the novel can be understood as less moral than the implied reader, just as many of Carey's Australian characters were. If my reading of Galgut's intent holds, this is not necessarily because of his own cultural cringe — the poor moral behaviour of the characters heightens the drama and tips them into allegorical depictions, rather than being intended to be an accurate depiction[32] — but international readers can still find themselves to be superior if they do not recognise the looseness with historical fact (as in Carey's case) through which such an effect is achieved.[33]

Whatever one's belief about South African racism, it is simply impossible for, for example, the remaining sibling Astrid, 'one of three white children Salome raised as her own,' and who has seen Salome almost every day of her life, to temporarily forget her name.[34] A point is being made here about the place of black servants in white consciousness, not about history. Similarly, Anton — if the novel needs to succeed on the level of allegory — must be at least affected by historical guilt. Historically, such a man would not necessarily have been directly implicated in apartheid, except through state compulsion. Galgut's own life shows this. As a conscript in the South African Defence Force — like all his generation of white males — he was once 'National Serviceman of the Month.'[35] This does not make him a murderer. But as a conscript, Anton shoots a woman in a township near Pretoria with complete impunity and

31. Similarly, *The Guardian* described it as a 'bravura novel about the undoing of a bigoted South African family during apartheid.' (Anthony Cummins, 'The Promise by Damon Galgut review — a curse down the decades,' *The Guardian* [London], June 8, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jun/08/the-promise-by-damon-galgut-review-a-curse-down-the-decades)

32. Galgut points towards this when he identifies Amor and Anton, two siblings in the family, as 'the two sides of my own nature and maybe the two sides of a kind of white South African nature' rather than necessarily realistic (Gevisser, 'Most of the stories').

33. Carey's most recent novel repeats this pattern; he gives the text of a purported certificate of exemptions for an Aboriginal man (Carey, *A Long Way from Home*, 199) which is not — as its language clearly suggests to an informed reader — genuine but is instead very lightly adapted from a false certificate which has circulated broadly and with great popularity on social media (AFP Australia, 'This "certificate" about the former status of Australia's Aboriginal people is not genuine, experts say,' July 2, 2020, https://factcheck.afp.com/certificate-about-former-status-australias-aboriginal-people-not-genuine-experts-say).

34. Galgut, *The Promise*, 190, 24.

35. Daniel Conway, *Masculinities, Militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign: War resistance in apartheid South Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 76.

without motive, allowing a thread of guilt to run throughout his life.[36] This is not particularly plausible, but it makes narrative sense.[37] A local reading can recognise this; but international readers will instead take it as historically plausible. The much more complex exploration of conscription in Galgut's early novel *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* — not an international success — is therefore lost.[38]

A similar process can be clearly seen in a minor character, Anton's father-in-law. He was the Minister of Justice in 1986, 'a physically as well as morally repugnant person with the blood of innocents on his hands' 'who everybody used to respect and fear.' He had 'to go in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and admit to doing those horrible, necessary things;' later he suffers dementia.[39] But the Minister of Justice at the time was Kobie Coetsee, who did not have to go before the TRC, but became the president of the Senate post-1994 before dying young and lucid, much honoured for his role in negotiating with Mandela and his defence of the rule of law both under apartheid and after.[40] In a novel about justice, such a change makes a great deal of sense and would be immediately recognisable to local readers; in a novel read instead as about history, it reinforces the presumed moral inferiority of white South Africans.

36. Galgut, *The Promise*, 35.

37. Briefly, the defence force in the interior, at least among normal rather than covert units, emphasised a 'hearts and a minds strategy' and attempted a 'non-shooting war,' in contrast to the police (D. Conway, *Masculinities, Militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign*, 41).

> Highly conscious of the good name that they had cultivated over the years, the army tried to ensure that soldiers conducted themselves accordingly and were more disciplined than they were aggressive. The heads of the army realised that a single indiscretion on the part of a single soldier in the townships during these tense times could do immense damage to the army's image and have a catalysing effect on anti-government violence.
>
> [...]
>
> And so, not surprisingly, during 1985 most of the complaints against security personnel were aimed at the police (J.A. Stemmet, 'Troops, Townships And Tribulations: Deployment of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the Township Unrest of the 1980s,' *Journal for Contemporary History* 31, no. 2 [2006]: 188, 191).

38. Damon Galgut, *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* (London: Abacus, 1992).

39. Galgut, *The Promise*, 55, 193.

40. 'Kobie Coetsee,' *The Guardian* (London), August 5, 2000, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2000/aug/05/guardianobituaries.nelsonmandela; Robert Harvey, *The Fall of Apartheid: The Inside Story from Smuts to Mbeki* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 105–116.

### 4.2.3 Parallels with Canadian examples

Finally, we might set *The Promise* in relation to the discrepancy identified in the Canadian chapter between exportable literature emphasising mimesis but lacking difficult-to-understand details of Canadian experience — even if apparently providing the exotic — and literature for local audiences which did the opposite, emphasising hermeneutical readings and assuming a knowledgeable audience. *The Promise* is similarly exportable, but quite possibly because it attempts to universalise in allegory rather than focus on particular details;[41] indeed, it is mocking of the particular:

> The telephone has rung eighteen times, the doorbell twice [...] Twenty-two cups of tea, six mugs of coffee, three glasses of cool drink and six brandy-and-Cokes have been consumed. The three toilets downstairs, unused to such traffic, have between them flushed twenty-seven times, carrying away nine point eight litres of urine, five point two litres of shit, one stomachful of regurgitated food and five millilitres of sperm.[42]

The effect, however, is similar to an attempt to make accessible for an international readership. 'Cool drink' for 'soft drink' is easily translatable by the reader even if it appears exotic; meanwhile, glaringly, in a novel about an Afrikaner family, there is not a single word in Afrikaans (except those incorporated into South African English) in the novel apart from their family name. However, we know that they do speak Afrikaans, since Anton thinks of English as 'My father's tongue, forever foreign to me.'[43] It must therefore be invisibly translated throughout the novel, making the text more accessible but with an invisible loss of particularity.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in patterns of allusion; in the novel, allusions to Yeats, Conrad (twice), Joyce, Tintin, Beckett and *Hamlet*, among others, are easily observed. It is much harder to identify traces of South African literature or (non-apartheid) history, presumably unknown to a metropolitan audience. But there are ghosts: of Totius' 'O die pyn-

41. Galgut has argued, also, that for South African literature,

> it's not only the audience overseas that's lacking, it's actually support from the government here. The arts and culture department has always been the kind of joke ministry of the South African government, and with a little more help and support, I think local artists could be making far more of an impact (Fox-Martens, '"Outlines and Shadows" — Damon Galgut').

42. Galgut, *The Promise*, 22.
43. Galgut, 37.

gedagte' and of the Zulu king Dingane.[44] These, however, are very difficult to spot and are almost hidden compared to the very overt allusions to European literature and the metropolitan tradition: 'slouching towards Bethlehem in the Free State', thinks Anton, at one point; at another 'Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears.' Joycean rain falls 'like some cheap redemptive symbol in a story' on 'both the living and the dead.'[45] Such a pattern of reference rewards international readers at the cost of divorcing the novel from its own national tradition (unless at a subliminal level).

## 4.3 Limitations and further work

A reading of *The Promise* suggests that similar patterns of reception can apply to Booker Prize winning texts from throughout the formerly British settler colonies. These patterns emphasise distinction and exoticism over possible similarities such as cultural cringe or indigenization. However, the attempt in this thesis to primarily explain critical patterns and international reception rather than apply them or provide a close interpretation of commonalities has led to some limitations which point to some directions for future research.

There has been little direct of comparison of texts from one state with those from another, because of the primary need to compare prize-winners with close equivalents from within a national context. This approach is supported by the consistent recognition of national differences as well as similarities, but weakens the overall argument. In future work it would be very interesting, for example, to read Watson's *The Double Hook* and Murnane's *The Plains* in direct dialogue with one another as allusive texts about an abstracted experience of settlement and alienation, rather than presenting only an implicit comparison across chapters in which the primary comparator is instead a Booker Prize-winning text.

Similarly, the texts used to demonstrate the validity of approaches based in settlement are not themselves necessarily representative of local canons, and are chronologically broadly spread. This is an especial concern in the discussion of Australian works, which focuses upon postmodernism rather than other genres. It is possible, too, that divergences identified between, say, Mulgan and Hulme, or between Watson and Atwood are not just because of differences between the demands of the national and the transnational but also because of changes

44. Galgut, *The Promise*, 27, 278.
45. Galgut, 37, 144, 290.

over time. (I am particularly concerned here because of the sheer scope of social change in the former settler states within the Commonwealth in the past seventy years.) To correct this limitation would have required considering many more works, a project beyond the scope of this thesis.[46]

Finally, these questions of scope also limited this study to only three states, with South Africa partially included in this conclusion. Although — as discussed in the introduction — there are good reasons to identify these three as forming a particular grouping, a broader exploration might well lead to new discoveries. Scotland, especially, comes to mind, if Eliot's judgment upon it is recalled at the same time as remembering that the only Scottish novels to win the Booker have used a distinct dialect and emphasised Glasgewian poverty and cultural distinctiveness. Or, to take another example, Atwood has regularly discussed how when studying early American literature she perceived it as going through the same stages of cultural differentiation and angst as Canadian literature did in her time. Is it possible to identify similar divergences in this American literature between that which was locally celebrated and that which circulated in Britain?[47] If so, what would this mean for the claim that there was something especially slow about the cultural differentiation of these particular dominions?

In this context of scope, I am particularly troubled by the Booker success of J.M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* in 1983. In the Australian chapter, it was argued that the implicit exploration of Australian identity through allegory was less likely to achieve international success in the works of Murnane or in Carey's *Tristran Smith*, since audiences appear to reward mimetic detail. The reading given above of *The Promise* strongly supports this point, reducing an allegory to a piece of realist fiction. But in *Michael K* we find an implicit exploration of an imagined future South Africa which perhaps attempts to avoid mimesis. This may support the argument made in the introduction that readers were likely to have viewed South Africa in terms of an ideological battleground between racism and anti-racism rather than as a particular place to be explained and explored. However, Coetzee at least attempts to leave Michael K's racial identity ambiguous (even though critical consensus tends to view him as

46. The particular texts chosen justified a chronological gap — Mulgan's clear influence on Hulme, Watson's important canonical position in Canada and Atwood's use of her as an epigraph to *The Blind Assassin*, and Cohen's international fame as a singer which still did not translate into international success as a novelist.

47. Casanova has in fact suggested that such an approach should be applied to Gertrude Stein, arguing that critical tradition has concealed 'the structural pattern of literary domination' by neglecting to consider her place as an American, and therefore from 'literarily a dominated country,' attempting to accumulate literary authority in Paris (Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 42).

coded non-white).

The introduction to this thesis began with a question: why had I not encountered certain Canadian texts except within Canada, when they seemed to induce a response in me similar to New Zealand texts which also did not circulate there, and — furthermore — to display similarities and suggest comparison as a means to answer critical questions? The discovery that a critical tradition examining such similarities did exist but seemed to have become less important over time only made the question seem more important.

This developed into two related arguments, developed through close comparative reading in each context. First, in order to fully interrogate the international canon of Anglophone settler writing within the Commonwealth, it is necessary to acknowledge and question a divergence between local and transnational canons. Second, this difference is shaped by several factors: prize culture, cultural cringe, the metropolitan desire for exoticism, and cultural diplomacy. Indeed, canons are shaped by these as much as by the merits of a given text. As a result, texts circulate locally and transnationally (here, within the global English canon) in different ways responding to different pressures. Most importantly, as has been shown in a succession of case studies, one of the major drivers of transnational circulation is prize culture, especially the Booker Prize. The prize rewards features other than those which encourage local circulation. Specifically, it has tended to incorporate texts within a metropolitan tradition similar to that identified by Eliot, bringing them to London. Distinction from metropolitan texts with greater cultural capital then relies upon establishing explanatory value and exoticism as representatives of a unique culture, place or history. This occurs even if their uniqueness is created or made apparent within the text rather than necessarily being supported by external evidence. Such an emphasis on uniqueness minimises similarities to other writing from a settler context. Texts then circulate through institutions developed from and supported by cultural colonisation (or a desire — as is seen, for example, in the history of Canadian cultural diplomacy — to evade these institutions). Locally, the mimeticism and distinct and exotic identity required for such incorporation are less important, allowing for a greater range of possible readings and approaches. These include readings which identify common patterns based upon a shared history of settlement.

The influence of prize culture and ongoing cultural colonisation (especially in the form

of the Booker Prize) can then be understood as constructing a distinct transnational Anglophone canon of writing from such countries as New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, but also including — in a qualified way — South Africa. Compared to local canons, this construction emphasizes uniqueness and is both less amenable to reading for commonalities based on a common history of settlement and less likely to be read for such commonalities.

# Appendix A

# Chronology of selected events

**1725-1779** Peace and Friendship treaties in maritime Canada begin a pattern of treaty-making with Indigenous groups in Canada and New Zealand not replicated in Australia (or in much of British Columbia).

**1763** Royal Proclamation defines jurisdictional limits of British colonies in North America.

**1788** First Fleet arrives in Botany Bay.

**1804** Castle Hill convict rebellion in New South Wales

**1815-1850** Substantial migration to Canada from British Isles reduces American cultural influence on Anglophone Canada and establishes French Canadians as a minority.

**1835** John Batman negotiates a treaty, soon nullified, for the lands around what is now Melbourne. This is arguably the subject of Murnane's 'Land Deal'.

**1837** Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements) establishes violence of settlement and encourages assimilation.

**1837-38** Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada; several rebels exiled to Australia; George Arthur, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, had recently left Van Diemen's Land.

**1839** Durham Report encourages responsible government and the union of Upper and Lower Canada in response to rebellions.

**1840** Treaty of Waitangi.

**1851** Gold rush begins in Australia, massively increasing population.

**1854** Eureka rebellion by gold miners in Ballarat, Victoria.

**1860-1869** Victoria Land Acts begin the process of breaking up land into small freeholds; Crown Lands Acts 1861 (NSW) similarly allows selection, as does the US Homestead Act of 1862.

**1866** First Fenian raids into Canada.

**1867** Canadian Confederation.

**1867-1969** Native schools system in New Zealand.

**1868** Fenian demonstrations in West Coast of New Zealand; attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh in Sydney followed by mass anti-Irish sentiment; Thomas D'Arcy McGee (anti-Fenian Canadian politician) assassinated.

**1870** Red River Rebellion

**1871** Canada Dominions Land Act encourages closer settlement on prairies by granting freehold ownership of 160 acres of land to settlers who live on it and cultivate a portion.

**1876** Abolition of NZ provinces.

**1877-1921** Numbered Treaties in Canada.

**1878-80** Ned Kelly on the run.

**1879** McLean Gang active in British Columbia.

**1885** North-West Rebellion

**1891-1894** Liberal land reforms in New Zealand attempt to break up large estates (especially of the South Island), concurrent with the acquisition and redistribution of Māori land and the 1894 Advances to Settlers Act; the cumulative effect is to follow the Australian and Canadian examples in encouraging relatively small freehold farming.

**1894-1947** Mandatory residential schools in Canada for First Nations children.

**1899-1902** Second Anglo-Boer War; Australian, Canadian and New Zealand contingents participate.

**1901** Australian Federation; NZ rejects membership.

**1905-1967** Stolen Generations in Australia; children are removed from their families in order to encourage indigenous assimilation.

**1907** Colonial Conference establishes dominion status for Australia and Canada; New Zealand and Newfoundland proclaimed dominions in aftermath.

**1909** Sheila Watson born.

**1910** Dominion status for new Union of South Africa.

**1911** John Mulgan born.

**1913** Natives Land Act (South Africa)

**1915** Gallipoli contributes to a sense of a distinct Australian and New Zealand identity, at least in succeeding myth. (It is often forgotten, however, that the Newfoundland Regiment were also present.)

**1916** Very high South African casualties at Delville Wood seen as Anglophone South African sacrifice for Empire.

**1917** Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele contribute to a sense of distinct Canadian identity and sacrifice, as well as reiterating the Gallipoli experience for Australia and New Zealand.

**1922** Chanak crisis; Canada — unlike Newfoundland and New Zealand — makes clear that it is for the Parliament of Canada to declare war, not Westminster.

**1926** Balfour Declaration establishes dominions as 'autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, and in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs'; this leads to a seperate and divisible Crown; King-Byng affair in Canada.

**1931** Statute of Westminster effectively removes UK Parliament's legislative authority over dominions and — in the aftermath of King-Byng — redefines role of governors-general; applies to Canada immediately, Australia 1942, NZ 1947. Isaac Isaacs becomes first Australian-born Governor-General; Perth Treasury Building Riot.

**1932** Queen Street riot (Auckland, New Zealand); later incorporated into *Man Alone*.

**1934** Leonard Cohen born.

**1935** Regina Riot (Canada).

**1937** Governor-General's Literary Awards (Canada) established, initially by Canadian Authors Association and John Buchan.

**1939** Commonwealth Literary Fund (Australia) undergoes a major expansion and move away from the model of the Royal Literary Fund; Gerald Murnane and Margaret Atwood born; publication of *Man Alone*. Jan Smuts, signatory of the Treaties of Vereeniging and Versailles, returns as prime minister of South Africa, leading the country into the Second World War as the head of a pro-Allied faction.

**1943** Peter Carey born.

**1945** Bernard Freyberg first New Zealand-born Governor-General.

**1947** State Literary Fund (New Zealand); Keri Hulme born.

**1948** Commonwealth citizenship after 1946 introduction of distinct Canadian citizenship; National Party victory in South African election is followed by implementation of apartheid.

**1949** Canada ends appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

**1949-1951** Massey Report argues cultural distinction is a necessary part of Canadian independence. Recommends university funding, state support for the arts in the form of a 'Canada Council', National Library.

**1950** Vincent Massey first Canadian-born Governor-General; A.A. Phillips publishes 'The Cultural Cringe'.

**1951** ANZUS Treaty

**1953** John Matthews arrives at Toronto.

**1957** Canada Council established for public funding of the arts.

**1959** Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan for the first time enables widespread movement of students between Australian, Canadian and New Zealand universities as well as the UK; Governor-General's Literary Awards in Canada expanded to include French-language categories; publication of *The Double Hook*.

**1960** First Nations suffrage without losing Indian status in Canada; Hunn report in New Zealand identifies Māori marginalisation in the context of increasing urbanisation, but makes various recommendations to achieve socio-economic parity with Pākehā based on the assumption of 'final blending' as the appropriate goal; Union Nationale lose power in Quebec, beginning Quiet Revolution.

**1961** South Africa becomes a republic and leaves Commonwealth.

**1962** Federal voting rights for Aboriginals, Australia; Commonwealth Immigrants Act removes automatic right to settle in UK.

**1963** *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ) begin bombing campaign.

**1964** Establishment of ACLALS during first conference on Commonwealth Literature, at Leeds.

**1966** Effective end of White Australia policy; publication of *Beautiful Losers*.

**1966-67** Hawthorn report identifies First Nations marginalisation in Canada; recommends closure of residential schools and new model of 'citizens plus' giving indigenous Canadians 'the same rights and responsibilities as other Canadians, in addition to those rights guaranteed through treaties and initial occupation of North America'.

**1967** UK is replaced as Australia's single largest export partner

**1968** British government announces withdrawal from east of Suez; Australian and New Zealand military forces remain in Malaysia and Singapore respectively after early 1974 end of ANZUK as part of Five Power Defence Arrangements; similar concerns about forward defence (and American pressure) leave these two states committed to Vietnam War, which Canada and the UK decline to participate in.

**1969** Booker Prize begins

**1970** October Crisis in Canada; FLQ kidnappings lead to invocation of War Measures Act, temporary suspension of *habeas corpus* and deployment of Canadian Armed Forces.

**1971** Pierre Trudeau announces government policy of bilingualism and multiculturalism; Mordecai Richler is first author from a settler state to be shortlisted for Booker.

**1972** Establishment of Aboriginal Tent Embassy; William McMahon (briefly Australian PM) announces end to policy of Aboriginal assimilation, adopted by opposition under Whitlam.

**1973** Canadian recognition of indigenous land claims after *Calder* (judicial recognition of aboriginal title) leads to comprehensive and specific claims processes; Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement; UK joins EEC and introduces further immigration restrictions on Commonwealth.

**1975** Dismissal of Whitlam government in Australia; Māori can choose electoral roll in New Zealand; Waitangi Tribunal established in New Zealand; Māori Land March hīkoi protests land and cultural loss. James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement negotiated between Cree, and Inuit nations and Quebec and federal government (slightly modified in 1978 when the Naskapi nation join the agreement) — first of the 'new' Canadian treaties.

**1976** Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory); Montreal Olympics boycott because of New Zealand sporting links with South Africa; establishment of Canada-Australia Literary Prize; Canada Immigration Act (imitated by New Zealand 1987); large number of illegal break-ins by Royal Canadian Mounted Police revealed; sovereigntist Parti Québécois take power in Quebec, setting the stage for 1980 referendum.

**1976-1995** New Zealand Book Awards state-funded; later joined with privately-funded competitor.

**1977** Gleneagles Agreement intended to discourage sporting links between South Africa and Commonwealth; Keable inquiry and Royal Commission into RCMP illegal activities begin.

**1977-78** Occupation of Bastion Point, Auckland, New Zealand.

**1979** Publication of *Life Before Man*.

**1980** UK no longer New Zealand's largest export market; Constitution Express in Canada echoes hīkoi in New Zealand while protesting proposed patriation of Canadian constitution; George Manuel, the organiser, had strong connections to Māori rights movements and had travelled there.

**1981** Springbok tour of New Zealand leads to widespread unrest.

**1982** Canada Act patriates Canadian constitution; Constitution Act 1982 (Canada) includes Charter of Rights and Freedoms; s. 35, outside the Charter and therefore without s. 1 Charter limitations, recognises and affirms in response to Indigenous concerns the 'existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada'; *The Plains* published.

**1983** Closer Economic Relations (Australia and New Zealand)

**1984-1987** *Te Maori* exhibition tours United States and New Zealand, increasing awareness of Māori culture internationally.

**1985** Waitangi Tribunal can investigate past breaches of the Treaty; *The Bone People* wins Booker; Paul Reeves first Māori Governor-General.

**1986** Constitution Act (for New Zealand) and Australia Act imitate Canadian constitutional patriation; Puao-te-Ata-tu report on Department of Social Welfare in New Zealand criticises institutional racism and failing of Māori children.

**1990** New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, consciously modelled upon Canadian jurisprudence ('it will be seen that many provisions of the draft bill are closely based on the Canadian text. This will be of major practical importance for New Zealand lawyers and courts will be able to draw on the rich and developing jurisprudence of Canada'); Oka crisis in Quebec; release of Nelson Mandela after meetings with Kobie Coetsee begun in 1987.

**1992** *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)*; promptly followed by the (federal) Native Title Act 1993 and recognition and protection of native title; effective end to fiction of *terra nullius*; referendum on Charlottetown Accord (Canada) fails.

**1993** Nunavut Land Claim Agreement; Nunavut becomes a separate territory April 1, 1999.

**1994** South Africa readmitted to Commonwealth after first multiracial elections.

**1995** Quebec referendum narrowly fails.

**1996** Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Canada) issues final report; most of its sweeping recommendations are not implemented but wide public debate is sparked.

**1997** *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* establishes mistreatment of Stolen Generations.

**1998** First National Sorry Day in Australia.

**1999** Australian republican referendum fails.

**2000** Sydney Olympics draw global attention and acclaim to Australia; Ned Kelly features at the opening ceremony among other symbols of nationalism and cultural independence; *The Blind Assassin* wins Booker.

**2001** *True History of the Kelly Gang* wins Booker.

**2003** Prime Minister's Literary Awards (New Zealand) established.

**2007** Prime Minister's Literary Awards (Australia) established; Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States are the only states to vote against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**2008** Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada established to investigate residential schools system.

**2014** Booker Prize expands beyond Commonwealth.

**2020** NZ Royal Commission interim report into state care finds widespread abuse and disproportionate rates of Māori children being taken into care.

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# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Elleke Boehmer FRSL FRHistS FEA for her patience, kindness, sage advice and continued guidance through the long gestation of this thesis.

This thesis was was funded generously and therefore made possible by the Oxford-Aidan Jenkins Graduate Scholarship.

In an influence less obvious but still important, I've been lucky to spend years in collegiate environments, in every sense of the word, where literature is valued and discussed as part of a community of learning; best summarised — since to name everyone and everything would be impossible — by saying that this thesis has been shaped not only by the community of Merton College and the Oxford Postcolonial Seminar but by friends and teachers at the Universities of Toronto and Victoria also, as well as in other institutions and around the world.

And it would not have been possible at all without Rosie Sykes.