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The Unavailability of Nature: Anxieties of Place and Pākehā Identity in the Writings of Pip

Adam, Robin Hyde, and Blanche Baughan

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the idea of nature is never fully available to Pākehā literature, and that is manifested as various kinds of anxiety and uncanny returns. It begins in the twenty first century with Pip Adam's *The New Animals* (2017), which considers the effects of a consumerist society on not only the ecological state of the planet, but also the human psyche. From there it moves back to consider Robyn Hyde's *The Godwits Fly* (1938), which offers a vision of Pākehā society as shaped by outdated sociological rules inherited from an idea of England, trapping both humans and animals in early twentieth century city streets with an existential awareness that native New Zealand, already, can no longer be located. Finally, Blanche Baughan's "A Bush Section" (1908) is approached not simply as a vindication of the settler assault on nature, nor as a justification of bush clearing as a means to an end, but as an antecedent of both *The Godwits Fly* and *The New Animals* in its evocation of a sense of deep anxiety with regards to the preoccupation of imagining Pākehā belonging in relation to nature.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the expression of anxiety, in relation to belonging and place, evident in New Zealand writing. I look at how several writers throughout New Zealand's literary history have positioned their characters in relation to their portrayal of mainstream Pākehā culture and find that the threads of similarity between their works reveal surprising cultural continuities that connect earlier moments of New Zealand writing to the present. Starting with the newest text, Pip Adam's novel *The New Animals* (2017), the thesis then turns to Robin Hyde's semi-autobiographical novel *The Godwits Fly* (1938), and finally Blanche Baughan's poem, "A Bush Section" (1908). This reverse chronology enables the exploration of what it means to encounter a past text in light of more recent writing, not only upsetting the notion that more recent literature is somehow more evolved than that of the past, but also suggesting that those earlier works are surprisingly contemporary in their concerns with nature. I shall argue that the idea of nature is never fully available to Pākehā, and that this recurs in literature as various kinds of anxiety and uncanny returns.

One of the most provocative recent claims about the relationship between Pākehā identity, nature, and literature is Alex Calder's hypothesis of "Pākehā tūrangawaewae," which he outlines in *The Settler's Plot: How Stories Take Place in New Zealand* (2011). This hypothesis is based on "a 'Settlement Studies' perspective," wherein the "basic premise is that the foundational problems, injustices and consequences of European settlement of this country will not disappear – though those problems can and often have been forgotten, underestimated or wished away" (x). Calder states that, for Pākehā New Zealanders, "feeling good about nature equals belonging" (3). However, he also states that "[a]lmost everything seems questionable about this" (3), and therefore describes Pākehā tūrangawaewae as a "syndrome" (4) that occurs when one actually has no place to stand, in contrast to the "more

essential mode of belonging” (5) that Pākehā imagine Māori have. As Philip Steer points out, “[i]t is now relatively commonplace in New Zealand literary studies to say that Pakeha culture has a fraught relationship with its colonial origins” (114), which is why the examination of the thread of anxiety that runs through New Zealand literature, anxiety that mutates and adapts, is of just as much importance now as it ever was and is something the three texts included in this thesis, surprisingly, have in common. This thesis questions whether these three texts can be understood through Alex Calder’s hypothesis of Pākehā tūrangawaewae or if a different approach is needed.

Calder also describes *The Settler’s Plot* as “a Pakeha book rather than a book that actively seeks to document Maori perspectives, though the influence of Maori is registered strongly throughout” (x). This thesis follows the same line to further extent: I do not try to imagine the Māori cultural perspective in relation to tūrangawaewae. However, the examination of the writer’s *representation* of Māori helps to explain not only how these literary places are racialised landscapes, but also how each writer positions the characters in relation to *their* portrayal of mainstream Pākehā culture. For the purposes of this thesis, the acknowledgement of diversity is important when we consider what the term Pākehā means, both historically as the children of settlers and immigrants, and currently as non-Māori New Zealanders. Even the way that contemporary society often struggles with these forms of identity is of importance. Therefore, this thesis does not prescribe to any particular form of ‘national identity’, or singular notions of ‘Pākehā identity’, though these ideas are inevitably discussed. As Steve Mathewman puts it, there are always “changes in identity politics . . . shifting meanings behind being Pākehā. Pākehā and Māori are relational identities. They exist with reference to each other . . . [the terms are] colonial constructs which came about in the early days of contact”. Thus, the changing way we see ‘settler identity’ becomes a key component because, in a country of ‘super-diversity’, Pākehā New Zealanders are no longer

necessarily only descendant from settlers or British immigrants, though they prepared the way for Pākehā today. Now, the notion of being Pākehā includes other ethnicities and cultural considerations that actually add to the ambiguity of the term as a nuanced and changeable concept. Thus, “[c]ontemporary Pākehā, then, are a product of national politics”. Even as the three texts under discussion demonstrate how New Zealand’s colonial past bleeds into the literary present, it is important to not allow the concept of Pākehā guilt to cloud their interpretation, because “white liberal guilt. . . [as an] explanation dismisses history and Māori agency” (Mathewman). I instead analyse each text to trace changes, causes, effects: what each text can tell us about the time and place that gave the impetus for each piece of work. Steer observes that “the role of genre in colonial writing affords insights into the political order of the settlement project and the nation it gave rise to” (59), and this notion can apply to other eras in New Zealand literature: it is important not only for understanding the ability of literature to critique social structures, but also for recognising the role that politics, economic necessity, and social inequity play in shaping the sense of identity, belonging, and place that run through each of the texts in this thesis. The three texts show how identity itself is a very nuanced, multifaceted, and continuously changing concept.

While not seeking to reinscribe stereotypical renderings of “New Zealand identity,” this thesis must nevertheless explore aspects of cultural narratives that make claims for singular, unchanging, forms of identity. For example, the figure of the settler can be seen as symbolising a national icon of successful colonisation, pitted against the land and eventually finding a connection to nature through hardship. While these ideas are of course relevant thematically, there are also economic, ethical, and ecological factors to also consider. The texts I examine are notably concerned with the figure of the settler child as a tool to investigate ideas of innocence, identity shaping, inherited social narratives, and how society is shaped by its language and the stories it associates with place. In the current New Zealand

literary climate, “[l]andscape does not necessarily offer the key to our identities; nor is landscape always the most useful background against which to think about what it means to live here” (Horrocks and Lacey 10). However, for the purposes of this thesis, landscape is unavoidably tied up with the sense of anxiety expressed in New Zealand literature, even when it is presented as a *lack* – or absence – of these things, as we will find in all three texts. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that “[t]he commodifiable beauty of these islands, so readily packaged and exported, has sometimes acted as a screen, obscuring other possible understandings and narratives” (10), because this commodification penetrates the way we read nature – and importantly the way nature is written – in Pākehā New Zealand literature.

I will argue that nature – or native New Zealand – is represented in these works as an elusive place that lays beyond reach of the Pākehā imagination. Instead, contemporary society has a relationship with other forms of nature, compartmentalised simulacra, or sectioned off samples of native bush complete with pathways and toilets, and so the reputedly beautiful pure New Zealand “virgin rain forest” is more often than not out of step with any real experiences of Pākehā New Zealanders (Calder 25). The key to escaping the city and returning to nature, in Adam’s *The New Animals*, is a dangerous pit-bull dog that is trapped in the city: like the pit-bull, certain characters are instinctually pulled towards nature, only to find that the adaptation required to exist there means rejecting consumerist structures of the city and embracing the grotesque. In *The Godwits Fly*, Hyde portrays nature as both an inaccessible ideology and as ecologically damaged by the newly forming city as much as its human inhabitants: “far away in a real wilderness, it might be different; but here the native things looked only grey and sad, all covered in dust. . . the cabbage-palms and tree-ferns people grew in their backyards – like beasts in a zoo – looked cowed and sick” (32). For early twentieth century New Zealanders, “[h]istory began slap bang in England,” because to think of native New Zealand, “[s]omething that had been, something delicate, wild and far away. . .

[became] sickly and unreal” (33). Baughan’s “A Bush Section” is haunted by nature, alluding not only to the decimation of the native bush, but also the indigenous culture that is made explicit by its absence. This is of importance, here, because of exactly what Calder’s hypothesis of Pākehā tūrangawaewae as a “syndrome” (4) picks up on: the social metanarrative that “feeling good about nature equals belonging” (3). The three texts explored in this thesis complicate such a view, exemplifying the anxiety attached to the concept so that it becomes a “syndrome” (4). And thus, landscape – or nature and the native bush – remains an integral concept used to express a deep and complex anxiety attached to any sense of belonging and place.

The three texts at the centre of this thesis have been chosen because of the surprising degree of similarity in their concerns about nature and identity, despite their striking differences in social, geographical, and historical setting. *The New Animals* starts out as an upbeat look into the generational differences between workers in the creative industries living in Auckland city in the twenty-first century. The novel is unexpectedly split into two parts and starts by following a hairdresser and the interactions she has during a day working on a fashion shoot. The second part of the novel is inaugurated with a shocking narrative takeover when another character, Elodie, flees the city by walking into the sea: she adapts to her new marine environment, swims into the Pacific, and transforms into the pioneering coloniser of a floating rubbish island. In a novel that bends gender, genre, and reader expectations, it’s hard to imagine similarities with a pre- and post-World War One novel such as Hyde’s *The Godwits Fly*, yet a similar vein of anxiety runs through the older text. Where *The New Animals* features an instinctual urge to escape the city, *The Godwits Fly* is plagued with the instinctual urge to return “home,” a compulsion fuelled by the imagining of England as home even though the most fervent of imperialist characters, Augusta, has never been there. This is relevant when we consider that Calder uses the term “intuitive” (4) when he discusses the

fallacy of Pākehā “children of settlers recognis[ing] nature as home” (4) as we are dealing with a similar level of imbedded social metanarrative that runs so deep and so far back to the moment of settlement that “A Bush Section” poetically evokes. Further, though not as pronounced as the narrative takeover in *The New Animals*, *The Godwits Fly* also features a narrational shift in relation to its protagonist, Eliza, mirroring her coming of age, artistic development, and psychological frustration at her position in life. Baughan’s “A Bush Section” also exhibits a form of this narrational shift when the seemingly amoral narrator actually speaks to the character, Thor, adding to the ominous tone of the poem. Like Eliza in *The Godwits Fly*, who is representative of the cultural indeterminacy of the settler child, Thor is similarly caught between cultures and their competing ideas of belonging. As the poem’s language is steeped in Scandinavian mythology, the sense of Pākehā being without a history is replaced with the idea of a warped sense of history that is created by the suffusion of the old world into the new. Additionally, Thor is placed directly into the violence of bush clearing in early New Zealand, and ominously tainted with the symbolism of “[t]he Burnt Bush within and without” (236).

Each of the three texts thus engages with real historical moments and real places in New Zealand. “A Bush Section” poetically conjures the moment of bush clearing that we can now Google images of with ease, and was written after Baughan’s stay at a farm in Ormondville (Newton 74). *The Godwits Fly* is semi-autobiographical and features life in Wellington city in the early twentieth century. *The New Animals* deals with issues relating to the gentrification of Auckland city in the twenty-first century and the environmental effects of consumerist life, ending with the colonisation of another real place, Rubbish Island. The three texts can be read as reinforcing Calder’s hypothesis of “Pakeha turangawaewae” as a “syndrome,” however, the texts include cultural, generational, economic, ecological, ethical, and finally, psychological elements in each of their fictional renditions of real times and

places in New Zealand, so, conversely, offer a more nuanced reading of Calder's "syndrome." Each text is concerned, on some level, with New Zealand's colonial past, and how Pākehā still occupy this country, the tension of which bleeds into literature as an underlying and unavoidable sense of anxiety with regards to belonging and place. This idea concurs with Calder and Turner's settler study premise, that "similar impasses are likely to inhabit and deform all the narratives, fictional and non-fictional, of settler societies" (12). At the same time, however, "settler studies [also] implies that Pakeha identity is an unchanging, stable and historically continuous entity" (Steer 114-115), and that Pākehā society "lives without history" (116). Both of the latter theories are challenged by the findings of this thesis.

Chapter one, "Pip Adam's *The New Animals* and the Forms of Pakeha

Turangawaewae," starts with an investigation of Adam's use of metafiction as a subversive tool, before moving onto the Gothic elements as a means to explore economic inequities in urban New Zealand. There is then a consideration of narrative tension and narrational shifts, and the narrational takeover that occurs in the second part of the novel. *The New Animals* engages with conversations surrounding gentrification, neoliberalism, consumerist society, and the overwhelming problem of waste, to question the adaptation required to move forward amidst environmental destruction. Chapter two, "Robin Hyde's *The Godwits Fly*: "A long way was a long way,"" explores the context from which Hyde writes, including the misogyny of the literary nationalism of the 1930s that gives impetus for the novel's more feminist aspects. I move onto Hyde's use of place and the godwit motif, before analysing the characterisation of the Hannay family and the metafictional story telling of the children. There is also a consideration of narration and structure, and an examination of Hyde's use of nature and civilisation as a means to question individual and social identity and belonging that can be related to Calder's hypothesis of "Pakeha turangawaewae" (4). In Chapter three, "Blanche Edith Baughan's "A Bush Section""", the earliest of the three texts, I look into how

Baughan re-creates the moment of colonial appropriation of indigenous land, the ground zero symbolic of the violence of settlement, and relate this uncanny moment to the idea of the attempt to find a utopian possibility in environmental destruction. I then explore Baughan's use of the figure of the settler child, before moving onto her use of language and narration to emphasise the confines of society. The fourth stage investigates the representation of nature versus civilisation to question why Calder's hypothesis of "Pakeha Turangawaewae" can be related to "A Bush Section," and why that can be so unsettling.

Chapter One:
Pip Adam's *The New Animals* and the Forms of "Pakeha Turangawaewae"

“So the story’s ‘Content Advisory Warning’” – everyone looked at Tommy again, so quickly and with such gravity it gave him a start, but he didn’t miss a beat – “and we want this kind of cut up look, but I was thinking, not this distorted.”

The New Animals, 17

Pip Adam’s *The New Animals* (2017) experiments with structure and form to optimise, fully, its unsettling exploration of nature and identity in twenty-first century New Zealand. The first part of the novel seems to take place during a single day and traverses the lives of seven individuals involved in a photo-shoot for a fashion label. The group is divided by gender, generation, and economic status, setting social boundaries that Adam probes in order to interrogate social constructs relating to identity and belonging in this urban sub-culture. In the first section, we follow Carla, a hairdresser and ostensibly the protagonist, and the people she interacts with that day, as well as the stories that she, and other characters, draw from memory as the discourse allows. Tommy is the head of the clothing company that he runs with two other young men of the millennial generation, Cal and Kurt. However, not only do we find that they are financially backed by the wealth of a previous generation –it is implied that Tommy’s wealthy baby boomer father “bought” (8) his son a career – but also their success in the present day is actually based upon the work of three Generation X-ers: Carla; Sharona, the seamstress and pattern maker; and Duey, Carla’s best friend who is also a hair dresser. The seventh character is the elusive make-up artist, Elodie, presumably Generation Z, who initially plays the somewhat flat role of the young sexual interest and people pleaser. Her ally, intriguingly, is an unexpected eighth character, Doug, Carla’s pit-bull bitch. It is Doug and Elodie who start the journey to the second section of the novel, “[t]o the new way.

The new animal they would all need to be” (177). In this highly unexpected and controversial narrative twist, which combines elements of Gothic and science fiction, Elodie ends up colonising the floating Pacific garbage patch, or “Rubbish Island.” In a broader sense, Elodie also colonises the novel itself, becoming an overt and grotesque symbol for necessary and inevitable societal change.

As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, *The New Animals* is highly aware of literary form. It too appears structurally “kind of cut up” in the stark transition from the first part of the narrative to the second section, where the novel takes a turn that challenges reader expectations. But at the same time, it also appears “not . . . distorted”, because the novel reminds us, even as it delves into the bizarre, that it is engaging with real moments in time, real places, and real issues. In the first section, while Adam examines several facets of urban identity in contemporary New Zealand, *The New Animals* exudes a subtle and yet undeniably omnipresent sense of anxiety that builds in momentum. The story and the reader are overwhelmed by the narrative takeover of the second section, where a compulsive return to nature – and to primal instinct – displaces the narrative sequence. *The New Animals* tells us that we must adapt to survive, with a psychological twist that has the potential to shock the reader out of social complacency. This chapter will investigate how Adam creates and then develops this sense of anxiety, this unsettling of metanarratives, regarding Pākehā New Zealand’s societal relationship with identity and place.

I first investigate Adam’s overt use of metafiction as a subversive tool that not only highlights the constructed nature of society, but also examines how personal identity is tied to social, economic, and political moments, both historically and in the present. I then turn to Adam’s use of Gothic elements to explore economics in a social commentary which cements the idea of anxiety as central to understanding the city and nature in the present moment. The third section of this chapter considers Adam’s use of narrative tension to accelerate the sense

of anxiety with a sudden change in trajectory that points to the influence of Janet Frame's early novels, *A State of Siege* (1966) and *Intensive Care* (1970). Finally, I conclude by considering Calder's hypothesis of "Pakeha turangawaewae" in light of this reading of *The New Animals*. I explain why this novel can be read from the Pākehā perspective to deduce that forms of Pākehā tūrangawaewae are far from singular: they are multifaceted, fragile, insubstantial, and difficult to locate. As the text carries its reader away, Adam suggests that a social shift is not only necessary and inevitable, but already happening. The novel engages with, and questions, real social, economic, and political conversations and moments in contemporary New Zealand: gentrification of the city, neoliberalism, housing availability and affordability, consumerist society, and the overwhelming problem of waste. Adam highlights the effect of each of these issues on society and the environment, but also, building up to the second, more mysterious and disturbing section of the novel, stresses the unsettling impact on the individual's psychological health, their sense of self and ontological security, and the adaptation required to move forward amidst environmental destruction.

Part I: Metafictional Places

Her body knew what it was doing – some prehistoric part knew. She didn't have the word for cold anymore. She searched through her mind but it was gone. She just had the body shape of it. The shake and the numbness, no words. What could she trade for words out here? Could she eat words?

The New Animals, 191

At this moment in the narrative there is an uncanny realisation that our participation brings the character to life: if we read these words then Elodie exists. She survives because of the

words we are reading. On first appearance, it would seem that the novel only enters this metafictional mode during the second part. However, the first section also has a strongly metafictional quality, but because it offers a relatively simple story of hairdressing and generational angst, the uncanny, unsettled feelings that underlay the narrative are still present but, for the most part, obscured. Indeed, Adam ensures her reader is always aware of the act of reading. The structure and form of each section offer reminders that writing can generate meaning about places and identity, and that they can also be unsettled through a narrative that fails to deliver on the expectations that it raises. Erin Mercer describes a critical consensus that “metafictional writing exists in opposition to the realist mode, since it is explicitly concerned with exposing the constructed nature of society” (271). In *The New Animals*, the metafictional elements work in unison with not only Adam’s use of realism, but also her inclusion of the Gothic mode that serves to enhance the overall unsettling effect on the reader. Mercer goes on to suggest that “[m]etafictional novels, then, may not oppose mimesis so much as offer a different version of reality than what is found in realist fiction” (271). *The New Animals* self-reflexively plays with these ideas, attempting to absorb the reader into the story, but then, often comically, calling those certainties once more into question.

Section one is suffused with references to stories that subtly imply the facade of a socially accepted reality where communication and memory are unreliable. The characters, especially Tommy, repeat the word, “story,” frequently: “They hadn’t been able to find clothes they liked, so they started their own label. That’s how the story went” (16). Yet the stories frequently change according to purpose, mood, and perception: “They hadn’t found the clothes they wanted to see women in. That was what they said in the first interview. But now they said they hadn’t been able to find clothes they liked” (16). There are the stories of their lives, where the narration continuously weaves into personal monologues and back to the photo-shoot, often through free indirect discourse: “[a]nother night – it was late, all the

clients had left – Carla and Duey shaved their heads . . . They weren't that drunk, but they felt courageous . . . Neither of them said anything like 'Ready, set, go', but it had felt like that" (103). Indeed, the interactions between the characters often point at communication, what people share, how they are affected, and what they hide. Tommy recalls, in one of many soliloquys, how someone his age was publicly accused of rape, someone who had gone to "the same private school and their parents were friends . . . he knew how it made him feel but he didn't want to feel that way so he feigned confusion . . . he felt like people could tell the taint on him, as if the story has left traces on him" (68). When Duey is watching a re-run of *Friends* on television, she finds she is mistaken in her recollection that none of the characters do any work: "But now she was watching it again she saw she was wrong. They were all working. Work was an important part of most of the storylines" (140). Duey goes on to realise "It was just a misremembering. A thing people said and then it came true" (140), emphasising how unreliable and insubstantial the stories people live by really are.

The stories that many of the characters tell are also borrowed from history, however, without the weight of ethics, showing how the teller adapts stories for their own purpose. This adaptation of stories – this apathy – can also be read as a distancing from history: that European history – and culture – are surreal concepts to twenty first century Pākehā in urban New Zealand. To enhance the 'story' of the photo-shoot, Tommy, Kurt, and Cal appropriate catastrophic moments from history. The model's hair style must be "[r]eally short," Kurt said . . . 'Like, you know, Nazis, like they've just been sprayed down with DDT and shaved'" (20). At the same time, "He didn't want them to actually look like victims of genocide. He wanted them to have style" (20). Genocide can even be appropriated as a commodity. Carla reflects on her and Duey's own history and the effect it has on her identity. In the '90s "[t]hey'd used disposable Bic razors to shave skinheads, to reveal Swastika tattoos – to clear the way for more. It sat on her, and that's what Tommy and Kurt and Cal and everyone else

saw. They didn't know it, but that's what they saw" (21). While Carla's personal history weighs on her, her experience, as an older Generation X-er, is also a commodity the millennials can capitalise on. Tommy's comment, when he "turn[s] to her [and says] 'This is why we can't do without you'" (23), carries heavy generational, economical, and political connotations, particularly when we realise Carla's abject living conditions.

This social inequity is emphasised further when Tommy, Cal, and Kurt appropriate the artwork of New Zealand artist, Ava Seymour. Carla shows her understanding of the original pieces, "[she] had been to Ava's 2014 show . . . It was magnificent. With all the force of a long subversive career, held at bay by blocks of colour and the small size, the exhibition battered everyone who saw it" (19). The "force" and commitment of Seymour's "long subversive career" jars against the revelation that Tommy, Cal, and Kurt are "untrained outsiders" (16), who merely "Google image search" (13) to gain ideas. Ironically, the reader can Google image search the exact artwork, which "had babies' heads. Tommy had assumed this was why the title had 'tot' in it, then he found out it meant 'dead' in German" (18), showing how his understanding is not in line with Carla's. This intergenerational misunderstanding supports the notion in the novel that different generations see capitalism manifest in different ways. Because "[t]hey'd looked at straight porn for the shoot but this was better, it had more edge. It was art. 'So yeah, we want to take some of the edge from this, the raunch, and somehow translate it to the men's corporate line'" (18). To the millennials of this novel, the appropriation of art is purposeful, the objectification and adaptation of art to a commodity.

Adam engages with economics and political conversations as she positions Tommy, Cal, and Kurt as the social and cultural result of New Zealand's neoliberal past. Tommy's Grandfather had made the family money, and "[h]is father just kept making more and more money" (46). Tommy's mother is proud of Tommy's creativity, indicating how Tommy is

representative of what Jennifer Lawn explains as the “vehicle for ‘newly unrestrained capitalism, restructuring itself and the world it is embedded into’” (31). Lawn goes on to specify how “creative workers . . . who specialise in arousing and manipulating ideas, affects and stories that [ostensibly] make, not just the consumption of products, but the consumption of life a richer experience” (167). *The New Animals* satirises this idea of manipulating and adapting art, and the commodity of creativity, for the neoliberal project.

Though Tommy, Cal and Kurt “represented the new sincere, the anti-irony” (Adam 20), they arrogantly and paradoxically consider “money was a hindrance, their families. They could have done it from anywhere and that’s what scared people who hated them” (14). But they didn’t. Cal describes their products as “Corporate clothes for the man who’s corporate-resistant” (19), which is ironic seeing as their business is funded by their parents. Kurt adds to the irony by trying to enhance their perceived role of rebels when he says “‘Corporate clothes that say ‘fuck you’,’ . . . *Fuck you*, Carla wrote” (19). Not only is Carla’s note taking metafictionally alluding to the writing of the novel itself, but it also offers a passive aggressive mockery of these millennial postures that underlines the generational and economic tensions in play. Adam builds upon that sense of anxiety about this moment, this place, this meeting, this situation, where the millennial business owners “were rich. It helped with the whole renegade thing. People unrelated to untrained outsiders tended not to invest in them” (16). The comment is taken in context with Tommy’s contrasting opinion of himself, where Tommy “felt like a failure” (94), but also thinks that “[he] and his friends were up to it . . . That was the biggest joke of all, the biggest surprise, the thing that seemed to fuck Carla off more than anything. They were doing it” (97). Adam uses the narrative to emphasise not only how perspective continuously shifts, but also the deep sense of inequity underlaying a neoliberal capitalist society.

By focusing on generational and economic gaps in urban society, *The New Animals* is able to delve into the psychological impacts of existing in such an unstable environment. Throughout the novel, Adam's characters are seen engaging with real social and cultural moments, precisely located in time and place, yet these experiences are often subtly coloured by fantastical elements or existential doubts that convey a sense of anxiety regarding identity, belonging, and place. These encounters centre on the Auckland landscape, and its effect on the characters, who struggle to communicate authentically due to a lack of ontological security: a lack of fixed or concrete identity. In this environment, the characters continuously feel change: "Carla had changed so much she wasn't sure what she actually was" (59). Carla's experience of change encompasses her obscure transitioning role as a middle aged woman, her membership of 'the forgotten generation' of Generation X, and her abject feeling that she is no longer valued by society. Her sense that "things floated that used to be stable" (100) foreshadows Elodie's more overt experience of abjection that fuels the second part of the novel. Indeed, the novel is concerned with fluidity and adaptation, and the broader idea of a society that is transitioning or even evolving into a new form.

The changing cityscape mirrors the transitioning generations and the almost eerie foreshadowing of a cultural shift. The theme of impermanence – that nothing stays the same – is most overtly expressed when Carla walks to work past St Kevin's Arcade on Karangahape Road. This seemingly innocuous detail of setting intervenes in a current, and real, debate about the changing face of Auckland culture and the threats of gentrification. While Adam was writing *The New Animals*, Russell Brown's article in *Metro Magazine*, "K'Rd at the Crossroads" (2016), described St Kevin's Arcade as ground zero for a "perennial anxiety about being gentrified out of existence" (Brown). In contrast to a property developer who states that "K' Rd will . . . be the next Ponsonby," Brown quotes a café owner who likens gentrification to a form of colonisation: "You realise when you're actually here you can't just

plonk yourself down and say to all the ladies of the night and all the homeless people and all the people selling drugs, ‘Okay, we’re here, you can fuck off now’” (Brown). Brown offers a concluding glimpse of St. Kevin’s Arcade that captures some of the economic and cultural tensions in play: “Everyone’s rents are up, but the arcade looks cleaner and brighter than it has in years.” Brown argues that these physical changes are a sign of sociological changes that affect urban culture and identity: a shift where people, and buildings, must adapt to survive or move on.

Carla’s internal monologue, as she walks to work through St Kevin’s Arcade, is thus a journey of generational displacement. Conveyed through free indirect discourse, Carla’s thoughts personify the city in ways that echo Brown’s analysis: “The whole mall seemed to call out for help. It was terrified in its bright new white . . . She’d lived in Auckland for 43 years and it still wasn’t finished. Nothing stayed in place” (7). Carla’s seemingly innocuous decision to visit a café—“Fort Greene was awful but Verona didn’t open until lunchtime” (7)—contrasts her youth with the present day. Verona is an iconic café mentioned often in Brown’s article that has survived since the nineties, and where Carla had in the past “spent hours in the café, sitting at one mismatched table or another.” She now chooses Fort Greene, and opts for “a cup of peppermint tea,” because she can no longer drink coffee: “She missed coffee but the hole she was sure it would burn through her already compromised gut kept any cravings at bay” (16). This sense of personal vulnerability is writ large in the area, where “[a]ll the new owner had done was clean it up –the walls, the tiles. Or maybe they had painted, but the whole mall seemed to call out for help” (7). Indeed, Carla finds “[t]he whole of St Kevin’s was awful now” (7). Whereas once “she’d climbed the stairs drunkenly on Sunday afternoons up from Myers park,” now “it was clean and the café down the end of the arcade served ricotta donuts to men in suits *and she couldn’t*

stand it” (7, my emphasis). Carla’s internal monologue conveys a level of existential dread reflected in the city where everything changes, and she has neither control nor a safe place. Here, generational displacement is symptomatic of the larger sense of anxiety that pervades *The New Animals* as Adam, often metafictionally, engages with real issues of change and adaptation in urban New Zealand.

Part II: Gothic Spaces

Adam’s representation of Auckland city as a place where nothing is fixed—neither identity, nor place, nor memory—is reinforced in the novel’s form, where genre also proves to be fluid. This plays out in a constant slippage between realist and non-realist modes, most notably Gothic, which elevates the sense of anxiety regarding identity and place. Mercer argues that critics have long overlooked Gothic qualities in New Zealand literature, favouring realism as the foundation of the literary nationalism of the twentieth century. By contrast, she claims that “[g]enres are not fixed and unchanging but are in a constant flux, hence contemporary critics point out that genre is historically relative” (13-14). David Craig also claims that “‘gothic modernism’ is a long way from oxymoron,” maintaining that “[t]his is particularly the case in work that’s about *escaping* or getting beyond core orthodoxies and hegemonies of time, public place, scale and aesthetic gender, where less presentable, more grotesque reactions might be hiding” (40, my emphasis). In *The New Animals*, the slippages between realism and Gothic derive from the possibility or need to escape. Duey notices how, for Carla, “things were awful. Tommy. The Dog. The always wanting to go away again but not being able to” (62). Duey even suspects Carla doesn’t remember coming back: “She was pretty sure of that. Pretty sure she didn’t remember those first few weeks” (62-63). The peculiar thing here, is that we never find out exactly where Carla went. Carla recollects “the

first day she noticed how empty everything was and wondered about leaving it all behind”

(125). And we know that:

Carla had come back. That was what she had to live with. She'd got away.

Extricated herself from all of it and then come back. Cold, wet, naked. Quietly, without any attention, and she'd fit back in again, eyes fucked, skin awful, bung feet. She'd come back, washed away the salt, got dressed, and fallen back in line.

(150)

However, the full story of Carla's going away remains hidden from us, and seemingly from the characters themselves. These hints of something abjectly grotesque, monstrous even, are repeated throughout section one, creating the Gothic effect where things remain hidden in “split time-space and structures of displacement [that] leave us with the sense that the given scene is not the whole picture” (Lawn 11). The dramatic narrative changes of the second section heighten this Gothic sense of displacement, further underscoring the power and fluidity of genre. What seems to be the story of the day in the life of an urban hairdresser, rife with Gothic undertones in a realist setting, will be contrasted and echoed by the structure of the novel itself. Indeed, part one sets a seemingly realistic scene where meaning eventually collapses and is displaced by the fantastically grotesque events of part two.

Adam's use of Gothic accelerates the underlying sense of anxiety regarding identity and place, and further enhances the argument that real economic factors contribute to social unrest and issues with mental health. The association of the Gothic uncanny with ‘unhomeliness’ plays out starkly in Carla's living situation. She lives in a flat that she doesn't want to return to, but because of Doug, the dog, she has to. Moreover, because of her financial situation, she cannot afford to move. She is trapped by physical, psychological, and economic restraints. Doug is trapped in the same flat *by Carla*. Realism and the Gothic intersect as the flat simultaneously conveys Carla's state of mind, and is also reflective of

poor housing conditions: “It was an L-shaped room with a kitchen sink and a refrigerator above a small window. . . . Her double bed took up the rest; she had to angle it slightly to get to the door. It had a wardrobe – but not really” (30). This flat, the setting of Carla and Doug’s physical and psychological showdown, is both physically and psychologically difficult to negotiate: not only is it hard to get to the door, the point of exit and entry, but also the indeterminacy of the “wardrobe – but not really” (30) indicates a kind of psychological insubstantiality. Indeed, “[e]very inch of the flat was contested ground. Doug snarled and didn’t sit down. Carla looked away first, back at her phone” (30). An interruption, from outside of the flat, shows the threat that Doug poses toward the unsuspecting: “A child shouted outside and Doug barked and ran to the door . . . [she] jumped and jumped and jumped at the door, like she’d knock it down” (32). Carla, in a strange bid to escape, becomes like Doug: “Carla watched, then banged on the door, too. Shouted at the street and the child. Shouted like she could get the attention of the child and escape with them” (32). The threat that Doug poses to the flat, and to those outside it, overlaps with the strange and intense relationship between the dog and Carla, inextricably linked yet defined by fear and hatred. This representation of a domestic space as a place that is extremely difficult to exist in emphasises how, for Carla, as representative of the working poor, nothing is physically or psychologically homely.

There is a strong psychological dimension to the portrayal of Doug, and her relationship with Carla. In keeping with the elements of the Gothic novel, Doug can be read as Carla’s double, or shadow self: a manifestation of Carla’s psyche. This idea is further enhanced because Gothic abjections that should be expelled are contained, or keep hanging around. This is relevant because Carla and Doug are both trapped and therefore cannot complete the process of abjection. This plays out at a literal level in Carla’s flat as she describes it to Duey: “it’s awful and there’s dog shit everywhere” (65). This seems almost

comical, but the humorous elements are swiftly transformed into the uncanny, as the uncomfortable nature of Carla's domestic existence—physical threat and psychological stress—displays a version of what Craig explains as “the interior of death and confined madness as the other of the public appearance of neatly scaled domesticity . . . the grotesque as abject, homely/unhomely” (40). Carla's private life is centred on a “shitty flat which housed her terrifying dog who was planning on killing her and was now making low, growling noises to the effect” (Adam 72), and this is in deliberately shocking contrast to her public life, where she is so retrospectively fashionable that “curators would contact her to ask if they could just borrow this, or just borrow that” (90).

The Gothic, “unhomely” quality of Carla's flat is not only attributed to her psychological state but also to the broader economic processes that are remaking the city and its inhabitants. Carla is an example of the working poor, where “at least you're not living in a Ghetto” (135), while Tommy exemplifies the offspring of the neoliberal elite, where money begets money: “The building would all have been apartments if Tommy and Cal and Kurt hadn't bought it to run the clothing company from . . . Carla was pretty sure Tommy's father had bought it” (17). *The New Animals* indicates the need for some form of societal change, and that change will come, in the form of adaptation, whether people are aware of it or not. The characters are living within societal bonds where “[a]ll of them thought they had free will, that they were really walking for themselves, stepping out, but Carla knew. Everyone was just responding to stimulus” (99). The first part of the novel is pervaded by Carla's sense that she and her colleagues are merely acting out the roles society gives them. Resisting the fluidity of existence, they “[think] in binaries – together, apart, woman, man, love, hate, mild, strong – [but] it was more complicated than they could understand” (118). Carla remembers “the first day she noticed how empty everything was and wondered about leaving it all behind” (125). Carla comes to see herself in this economy and social world as little different

to Doug: “A dumb animal. Always moving forward unless it was time to go back” (89-90). Indeed, “It was like she didn’t think anymore – she only felt. She wasn’t even checking in with a memory, or a thought; she just kind of sniffed the air” (89). Sharona has a similarly visceral, biological sense of outgrowing this mode of consumerist society: “It was like she was growing into some new species. Everything was out of normal human proportion” (145). As a revolt against the society that traps her, Carla instinctually adapts. Throughout the novel Adam builds upon the idea of adaptation, and primal instinct, revealed as an instinctual urge to escape societal bonds. Later, when we reach the shift in the novel, the purpose of all this ‘building’ is realised – that the characters have been adapting as we read. As the title implies, the novel suggests that primal instincts are part of an evolution, rather than a regression, a necessary return to some natural state: “Carla had changed so much she wasn’t sure what she actually was” (59).

Part III: Structural Shift and Narrational Takeover

“Doug,” she whispered, smiling. “Doug, we’re going for a walk.” . . . Elodie was silent, and then, judging the moment perfectly, she struck, biting deep into Doug’s battle-cropped ear, almost ripping what was left of it clean off.

The New Animals, 156-7.

When Elodie hears Doug barking in the flat and decides to help the dog to escape—yet in doing so also perpetrates an act of shocking violence on the animal—something changes in the nature of the story that is being told. Carla has previously shared with Elodie her own story of going away, telling her “about the water and the way in and the way out and the way back in again” (162). If the first part of the novel focuses on Carla in order to represent the

psychological, physical, and societal confines of living in the consumerist city, in the second section Elodie completely takes over not only Carla's position as protagonist but the entire narration. In an uncanny twist, the novel deliberately frustrates the narrative expectations that have been built up to this point. In an attempt to escape this unsettling state of confusion everything must be reconsidered. Most obviously, the reader's expectations of narrative resolution are thwarted: the photo shoot remains uncompleted, it is not revealed if Carla and Duey resolve their issues, and it is never fully disclosed where Carla went. But even more than that, the reader must question their own interpretative abilities because, in retrospect, there were all those tension building moments that foreshadow the idea that all is never as it seems.

This narrative irresolution is brought into clearer focus by Adam's acknowledgements in *The New Animals*, which attest to the influence of Janet Frame's *A State of Siege* (1966) and *Intensive Care* (1970), particularly during her writing of the second section of the novel. Both of Frame's novels defy reader expectations by changing the story's trajectory, and subverting ideas of truth or reality, by submerging the reader into what can be considered various states of mental illness and alternative realities. The second half of the plot of *Intensive Care* switches to another time completely – a future where government legislation decides who is worthy of living and who is an animal – while *A State of Siege* takes the reader into the terror of a retired woman in her first night living alone, that extends into a questioning of her sanity that is never answered. Both novels examine not only mental health, but also philosophical concepts tied to existential angst and basic ontological security. Mercer states how, “[f]requently, Frame represents material social reality only to destabilise that world by creating another world of subjective fantasy” (199). Adam takes Frame's example of the split narrative structure, which allows for the questioning of what is socially accepted as reality, and pushes it further into an exploration of twenty-first century anxieties with

current issues of waste. These issues are presented at literal and psychological levels, mirroring society's own underlying preoccupations with anxiety regarding identity and place, the roots of which (we will find later) can be traced back, through literature, to the tension between the settler and nature. In *The New Animals* we find that the urge to renounce society that Carla has felt throughout the first part of the novel is now to be realised through a narrative that shifts and shocks in Frame-like fashion, from an urban to a marine setting, foregrounding human-nature interactions – and tensions – stemming from colonial environmental destruction.

This environmental sensibility had been latent in the first part of the novel, though continuously and subtly alluded to. When Carla notices how “[t]hey were all changing, getting bigger, taking up the space where the things they wiped out used to be” (99), she invokes the environmental costs of New Zealand's development since colonisation began. At the same time, the novel is not straightforwardly critical of these changes, for the second part attempts to see a utopian possibility in environmental devastation, however, Elodie's pioneering spirit only serves to enhance the shocking and uncanny narrational twist. The novel suggests a repetition of earlier moments of adaptation and change when Elodie re-enacts the moment of settlement by becoming the futuristic coloniser of the decidedly dystopian Rubbish Island. Now *The New Animals* taps directly into the world wide issue of consumerism and waste, and insists that it is too late, from a uniquely antipodean perspective.

Elodie begins her journey to the more psychological and fantastical section of the novel with a walk down Queen Street, the symbolic centre of Auckland consumerism. Previously, Carla had rejected the redefining of the city, the result of gentrification in Auckland city, that she sees as “frightened in its new bright white” (7). Now Elodie rejects the city for its conspicuous consumption and the resulting waste production of capitalism: “H&M were the worst . . . Most of it wouldn't sell and then where would it go?” (150). The reference to an

iconic global ‘fast fashion’ brand foregrounds the intersection between economic and environmental concerns through an overlapping of local and global scales. When Elodie escapes, despite her science-fiction like adaptation to the water, her destination is neither pure nor natural. Here we gain a sense of the threat of living in a hyper-real, literally plastic world that is irrevocably altering the ostensibly real world of nature. The consumer-based world is manifesting itself in the physical world of nature: “[Elodie] stopped. It was something from home. A plastic bottle. She looked at it bobbing” (217). Something as tangible as a plastic bottle bobbing around in Elodie’s otherworldly journey becomes ironically symbolic of the larger concerns of the novel: how consumerist society impacts the environment to such an overwhelming degree as to push psychological stability over the edge.

Critics have noted the difficulties of representing large-scale environmental challenges. Spiteri argues that,

in the new millennium economic, ecological, and political crises are now inextricably connected, yet obscurely defy expression. Where authors in the previous century were interested in the image of waste, now there is no language to articulate the role of waste in contemporary society. (Spiteri 185)

However, as we have seen, the Gothic provides a means for expressing ideas about waste. In the Gothic, abjections keep hanging around. Indeed, if “[t]he process of postcolonial abjection is. . . one that confronts us every day in the ambiguous form of a series of uncanny returns,” then a Gothic view on waste, and even the people that don’t quite fit into societal confines, becomes able to take on broader allegorical significance (Punter, qtd. in Whisker 147). By drawing on this formal tradition, *The New Animals* is able to articulate the underlying tension of a consumerist society, where waste no longer just gets put in a bin and disappears forever, but instead returns in a manner that is unavoidable, the sheer magnitude

almost too unreal to grasp. For Elodie, the only option is to adapt, re-enact stories from the past, and become a coloniser.

In the surprisingly lengthy account of Elodie’s adaptation to her new environment, the narrative mirrors the dystopian realisation that change is inevitable. Elodie reflects that “[n]othing was stopping the plastic though. Nothing. The plastic would carry on forever” (211). Similarly, the representation of Elodie’s stream of consciousness in the second section of *The New Animals* also keeps going and going and going. Although “[t]he wrong and unusual [is] becoming normal” (186), the shock at Elodie’s adaptation into some sort of grotesque sea creature, skin splitting and eyes bulging, is paralleled by an astounding lack of adherence to a traditional narrative form. Elodie not only becomes “the new animal” (117), in her adaptation to the future, she also becomes “the coloniser of this new land” (212). Elodie becomes a symbol of the adaptation required in the past, when environmental devastation laid the foundations for New Zealand society as it is today, but even more disturbingly, Elodie suggests the level of adaptation required to exist in the future.

Part IV: Pākehā Tūrangawaewae

New Zealanders, or at least Pākehā New Zealanders, are not famous for their eloquence, particularly when trying to speak of their feelings about living here. For Pākehā, this has sometimes lead to a too-easy equation between loving the natural environment and a simplistic sense of belonging.

Ingrid Horrocks and Cherie Lacey, *Extraordinary Anywhere* (2016).

The New Animals is not explicitly about Pākehā culture: in fact there is no mention of culture, in the sense of whether the characters are Pākehā, Māori, or any of the other diverse cultures

that make up the population of New Zealand. Nevertheless, that inattention to cultural identity itself indicates that Adam's dramatis personae is Pākehā. Moreover, many of the tensions underlying the novel—most notably Carla's resistance to the urge to leave, and Elodie's compulsion to leave—are symptomatic of the longstanding anxieties associated with settler descendants' relation to any sense of home, something we will find repeatedly in Hyde's *The Godwits Fly* (1932), and foundational to Baughan's "A Bush Section" (1908). Calder describes his concept of "Pakeha turangawaewae" as "the sort of belonging you have when you don't have turangawaewae" (5), or "a place to stand" (4). Keeping in mind that the concept of tūrangawaewae has become mainstream in New Zealand, it echoes in *The New Animals*, when Elodie finally arrives at Rubbish Island and states: "There was nowhere to stand. It was a mess. This was her new home." (220). In the context of Elodie's new role as coloniser, this wording can even be read as purposefully indicating a futuristic version of Pākehā tūrangawaewae. This idea is underlined when Elodie goes on to say: "But other places had not been what people had expected them to be. Look at Dunedin. Dunedin had been planned in Edinburgh by someone who hadn't even seen it" (220). The reference to planned settlement draws a direct comparison between the environmental crises of the twenty-first century and colonisation in the nineteenth century. In a fairly recently colonised country such as New Zealand, tracing the actual constructions of place and relating those to economic, social and psychological constructions of identity and belonging reveals symptoms of Pākehā anxiety that bleed into the present and even, as *The New Animals* posits, into the future as well.

Considering Calder's hypothesis through *The New Animals* brings several issues to light in terms of inclusiveness, and even exclusiveness, of the Pākehā standpoint that he uses as the platform for *The Settler's Plot*. This reading also manages to elaborate on Calder's hypothesis, agreeing with and enlarging upon several aspects that point at the warped

“syndrome” that describes what it means to have any sense of Pākehā identity and belonging in New Zealand. To recap, Calder states that, for Pākehā, “feeling good about nature equals belonging,” however, he also states that “[a]lmost everything seems questionable about this,” and considers his hypothesis of “Pakeha turangawaewae” as a “syndrome” that occurs when one actually has no place to stand, or the “more essential mode of belonging” that Pākehā imagine is experienced by Māori. Calder acknowledges that his “methods are literary, not empirical,” and that he “cannot write without making assumptions about the feelings of others.” This is an issue of inclusiveness, and exclusiveness, because Calder’s gauge for what it means to be Pākehā seems to be limited to one economic and generational platform.

Realising this is a generalisation, Calder describes childhood in New Zealand in

“Wordsworthian” terms: “Those barefoot days spent in nature, running like a savage through the bush on manuka-needled trails, looking down though pohutukawa to the green bay below, sand in the togs from body surfing. I am mythologizing, of course” (4). While many a Pākehā New Zealander can relate to this line of reminiscing, Calder is excluding a large portion of the population who did not have those experiences, be it due to socio-economic, geographic, and/or cultural differences, for not all Pākehā are directly descended from European settlers, and the inclusiveness of this description of a Pākehā childhood denotes a certain baby boomer generation type of “mythologizing,” particularly with the politically incorrect use of the phrase “running like a savage.” This is relevant when we consider the purposeful separation and emphasis on generation portrayed in *The New Animals*. Tommy’s baby boomer parents represent a certain stereotyping of the ‘me generation’. Carla, Duey, and Sharona all express the kind of Generation X stereotype of the ‘forgotten generation’, to whom the millennials and the baby boomers have come to rely upon for their hard work ethic whilst the baby boomers still hold all the power that they intend on passing over to the millennials. Elodie, however, represents Generation Z, who thus far defy description other than inheriting a planet

in the midst of a climate emergency and facing certain existential angst and ontological insecurity. In this context, Elodie's grotesque adaptation becomes a perfect expression of the Generation Z position, ostensibly the opposite to Calder's reminiscence of a romantic connection to nature, and yet still underlining his hypothesis that Pākehā tūrangawaewae, in this context, can be considered a "syndrome."

Another significant point that can be derived from Calder's hypothesis, in relation to *The New Animals*, can be found when he states that "with a sense of intuitive rightness, the children of settlers recognise nature as home" (4). In *The New Animals* there seems only a disjointed connection to the city where characters, like Carla, feel displaced in a city that she is not only economically imprisoned within, but that also gives her no ontological stability: it won't stop changing (7). The connection to nature, via Doug's imprisonment in Carla's flat, or the escape of Elodie, is portrayed in terms of the fantastical, the Gothic and the grotesque. We can even read, within *The New Animals*, Calder's deep "sense of intuitive rightness" as a psychotic reaction to the same cultural meta-narratives that tell Pākehā that, to belong here, they must have an instinctual affinity with nature.

And it is little wonder that the rendering of that anxiety, and the future, within *The New Animals* is a warped, grotesque, modern Gothic expression that reveals a lack of understanding and lack of articulation when it comes to any place to stand. Horrocks and Lacey explain how, "for Pākehā. . . the too-easy equation between loving the natural environment and a simplistic sense of belonging. . . can end up effectively dodging more challenging understandings of how we can, and still do, occupy this place", and thus, "[f]or many Pākehā, settlers and newer immigrants, the strength of emotion connected to New Zealand, to a sense of home here, doesn't find easy expression" (11). *The New Animals* echoes this sentiment, finding indeed that the expression of identity doesn't come easily, but it is foundational to the anxiety of the novel as a whole: the inequity, the confusion, the

mental angst, and the ontological insecurity that comes with the realisation that nature has become so damaged by consumerism that there is only an inevitably dystopian future.

The New Animals shows that the idea of nature has become warped – even a threat – in multiple ways: human nature, animalistic states of nature, and the natural environment. Elodie’s compulsion to follow Doug’s animal instincts in order to escape the city and return to nature has an allegoric dimension, because “[d]espite the struggle, the dog had been waiting. Elodie could tell. Waiting for someone to take it away” (158). Ominously, Elodie says “[t]here’s nothing but happiness ahead for us. That’s how you’ll remember the way, Doug, follow what makes you happy and we’ll be there” (159). When they are walking, Elodie “couldn’t recognise anything except the pull from Doug to turn right. So she did” (160). Representative of urban dwelling Generation Z, Elodie cannot locate nature without the help of Doug, whose threat, in turn, represents primal instincts. When they do finally locate nature, it is warped, requiring grotesque adaptation.

Another way to read this instinctual urge is that Doug and Elodie, like Carla before them, do not fit into the social roles and confines that the city demands. They are abjections being expelled into the ocean along with other waste. However, Elodie insists on hanging around. As she adapts into a survivor, Elodie’s narrative goes on and on, till “before long, [the rubbish] was stable enough to stand on,” indicating that Elodie’s pioneering instincts have eerily prevailed: “But then she ate, and she didn’t think anymore. She laughed” (220). Considering Calder’s thoughts on the mis-representation of New Zealand as pure and natural, and comparing that to the portrayal of nature in *The New Animals*, we find that nature is firstly difficult to locate, the only access being through that of the dangerous animal, Doug, and secondly warped and grotesque, a Gothic swamp that Elodie and Doug must attempt to navigate to get out to sea. The second section of the novel can thus be read as an overtly satirical social comment on how nature is perceived by urban New Zealand’s Generation Z,

who in turn represent a culmination of the settler and the immigrant: the Pākehā New Zealander in their current twenty first century state.

So, while Calder's hypothesis does connect the concept of Pākehā tūrangawaewae with that of a syndrome, *The New Animals*, surprisingly, exhibits more forms of Pākehā tūrangawaewae by including more factors such as geographic, generational, and economical inequities, rendering a twenty first century urban New Zealand landscape fraught with anxiety regarding identity, belonging, place, and even history. There is a dizzying sense that the characters are imprisoned in a capitalist construct that is outwardly destroying the physical world of nature and inwardly destroying human nature. The psychological impacts from these factors are also found in the other texts that this thesis will consider, through the positioning of the characters in relation to each writer's portrayal of mainstream Pākehā culture. Thus, we will find in Hyde's *The Godwits Fly* and Baughan's "A Bush Section" that, as Calder proposes, the Pākehā relationship with nature is foundational to any notion of belonging and place for early twentieth century non-indigenous New Zealanders, without being framed in Wordsworthian terms. More diverse factors such as generational, economical, and historical and cultural diversity must be considered. The settler's cultural past, like nature – or native New Zealand – haunts these texts as an elusive place that cannot be fully realised, lying just beyond the reach of the Pākehā imagination.

Chapter One: Conclusion

So the story's 'Content Advisory Warning'

The New Animals, 17

Pip Adam's *The New Animals* (2017) experiments with structure and form to not only optimise the general unsettling impact that the novel has upon its reader, but also highlight social inequities that deeply impact the characters' sense of self: their psychological and ontological security. While the first part of the novel investigates a group that is divided by gender, generation, and economic status, these inequities are exposed as outwardly accepted metanarratives in New Zealand urban society that cause inward confusion. By using real moments and places in New Zealand, the novel, even when it slips in and out of the Gothic, the grotesque, and the science fiction genres, exposes a prison-like urban existence that is the by-product of a consumerist society. By the way, when we read Calder's hypothesis of "Pakeha turangawaewae" in light of *The New Animals*, we find that the concept is multifaceted and deeply complex, for Pākehā history itself proves unreliable, and the idea of tūrangawaewae impossible to grasp. Furthermore, as Adam moulds each character to represent her portrayal of mainstream Pākehā culture, the forms of Pākehā tūrangawaewae are connected directly to generational issues. We find that the world of waste that awaits the Generation Z is deeply disturbing on both physical and psychological levels. Nature cannot be located – what is found is a twisted version in the form of Doug, whose animalistic instincts are the key to escaping social constructs, while also being both threatening and sorrowfully disconsolate. Equally abject, Doug and Elodie start the journey to the second section of the novel, "[t]o the new way. The new animal they would all need to be" (177). Only Elodie makes it to Rubbish Island, where she colonises not only this new place, but also

the novel itself, becoming an overt and grotesque symbol for necessary adaptation and inevitable societal change.

This chapter has investigated how Adam creates and then develops this sense of anxiety, this unsettling of metanarratives, regarding Pākehā New Zealand's societal relationship with identity and place. Through this it has concluded that forms of Pākehā tūrangawaewae are far from singular: they are multifaceted, fragile, insubstantial, and difficult to articulate. As the text carries its reader away, Adam suggests that a social shift is not only necessary and inevitable, but already happening. Though the characters are either aware or oblivious, each nevertheless fosters an instinctual urge to leave this place. The second, more mysterious and disturbing section of the novel, shows that awareness and urge to leave to allegoric effect, the result of our colonial past and consumerist present, culminating in the unsettling impact on the individual's psychological health, their sense of self and ontological security, and the adaptation required to move forward amidst the inevitable and dystopian environmental destruction of the future.

Chapter Two:
Robin Hyde's *The Godwits Fly*: "A long way was a long way"

And it is true, too, that the godwits, flying north, never go near England. They fly to Siberia. But to a child in this book, it was all more simple. A long way was a long way. North was mostly England, or a detour to England.

The Godwits Fly, xviii

In Robin Hyde's, *The Godwits Fly* (1938), the idea of what it means to live in New Zealand as a Pākehā is shown to be intrinsically tied to the concept of 'overseas'. This notion is explored through a complex network of stories about people and place to which the individual responds to and is shaped by. The children's stories are often adapted from what they hear and see of the adult world. The protagonist, Eliza, is representative of the settler child, and is symbolic of the transition, and adaptation, of 'over there' to 'here'. Hyde's characters grasp at the idea of a "beloved, unobtainable England" (25), a "Grandmother-Hannay-in-China" (24), and a "Johannesburg gentleman" (82), but to the "child[ren] in this book" (xviii), these places and people are imaginary, however, they are also the stories they live by. As the novel unfolds, these stories are found to subvert social constructs such as history, class and behavioural codes, "challenging conformist morality" (Edmond-Paul, "Robin Hyde"), as the characters navigate and adapt to the often contradictory world around them.

The Godwits Fly is in essence the story of Eliza Hannay, and her journey into adulthood. Alongside Eliza, we are given generational insights into the lives of her parents, Augusta and John, and her siblings: older sister Carly, younger sister Sandra, and baby

brother Kitche. Eliza's closest friends, Simone and Timothy, also have pivotal roles in this story that depicts life in Wellington, New Zealand, in the years immediately before and after World War One. The novel is an exploration of family dynamics that are often an inward, domestic reflection of the outward, social and political climate. The parents, who are constitutionally incapable of compromise, pass their anxieties on to their children, who in turn must psychologically adapt to or resist their socially and morally structured environment. In the early years, the children of the novel show a particular camaraderie which they eventually lose. As they become adults, they develop a sense of displacement, becoming isolated figures, reflecting what Mary Edmond-Paul explains as stemming from the representation of the "alienation of New Zealanders, from themselves and from each other" (20). Augusta reflects upon her own wasted life, while John becomes bitter and resentful of youth. Carly is so fraught with anxiety that she cannot grow up and so Augusta remains the centre of her world. Eliza is a promising and intelligent young poet, before suffering a mental breakdown after a time spent in hospital, and having to contend with a stillborn birth, out of wedlock, and alone in another country. Whether or not they adhere to social conventions, the restrictions of economic, class, and gender inequities mean the Hannays each end up isolated, alone, or lonely. Yet the foreword has nature speak: "Only fools, said the sparse ribbed rock, are ever lonely." (xix).

This chapter will explore *The Godwits Fly* as an examination and subversion of the inherited social codes that physically and psychologically trap Hyde's characters and create a sense of anxiety with regards to identity, belonging, and place. I first investigate the context in which Hyde wrote *The Godwits Fly*, acknowledging the challenges posed to her as a woman writer by the literary nationalism of the 1930s, and how this context gives impetus for certain feminist themes of the novel. In part two, I move onto a closer analysis of *The Godwits Fly*, examining Hyde's use of place as a tool that shapes the identities of the

characters, and, in turn, the individual's sense of identity and belonging – or not belonging. I discuss Hyde's use of the godwit motif in relation to the compulsion and dissatisfaction that is foundational to the sense of anxiety that pervades the novel. There is an examination of the early years of the Hannay family, the normality of their 'homelessness', the parents dissatisfaction: John's freedom of mind is equally as unobtainable as Augusta's idea of England, both parents being important to the consideration of their role in representing the domestic space and the social forces that play out there. I then turn to the metafictional elements that make up the children's world, which is centred in the domestic space and therefore affected by those same social forces. The third section of this chapter considers Hyde's use of narration and structure as reflective of the stages of Eliza's life. I posit that the fluidity of narrational style, and especially its changes in pace, creates a sense of dislocation that mimics the frustrating position of its women characters. Finally, I look at Hyde's representation of nature and civilisation in relation to her characters to consider if *The Godwits Fly* can be read through Calder's hypothesis of "Pakeha tūrangawaewae". Hyde shows how social forces propagate disconnectedness where there should be connectedness: the rules of society isolate rather than unite. Just as we saw in *The New Animals*, the city functions in this novel as a place that physically and ideologically imprisons its inhabitants. The native bush is ostensibly impossible to locate, and its only traces are to be found in stories or in remnants of nature and native elements, haunting Pākehā life in early twentieth century Wellington.

Part I: Context

New Zealand is not a country of flat colours and facts. It is, in everything, subtle and complicated and the knowing of it is a craft as well as an art. It is not easily put on paper. (Hyde, qtd. in Sandbrook, “Not Easily Put on Paper” 118)

The above excerpt exemplifies the challenges faced by the artist – the poet and the storyteller – in response to the difficulty of representing and interpreting the nuanced social and personal meanings of place. Cultural identity is no simple matter, nor is national identity a fixed entity. If the literary nationalism of the early twentieth century sought to create a realist vision of what it means to be a New Zealander, a semi-autobiographical novel should be the perfect vehicle. However, the narrowness of this vision led many writers’ works to be disregarded. In Hyde’s case, this neglect was not only because she was a woman, but also because her writing was not accepted in her time and place. Edmond-Paul observes how “[Hyde’s] influential contemporaries were blind to the scope and variety of Hyde’s work and its mature development: it would have interrupted their version of national literature” (Edmond-Paul 19). New Zealand’s new literary gatekeepers apparently had no time for the “bohemian. . . feminist. . . intellectual. . . creative” (Edmond-Paul “Robin Hyde”), nor for a woman who was willing to write openly about sex before marriage, childbirth out of wedlock, and women’s mental health.

Although Hyde was not the first woman to write of these things, she was nevertheless treated with almost puritanical disdain. One-time friend, James Bertram, described Hyde’s writing as “rather embarrassing record of dangerous living and over stretched ambition” (qtd. in Murray 167). A. R. D. Fairburn nick-named the group of women writers of the time “the menstrual school” (Murray 168). As Newton points out, as a woman, Hyde “embodies” the

opposition to masculinist identity and homosociality (233). Hyde was clearly aware of this confrontational literary climate, stating “much of the really unfair criticism. . . is based on sexual grounds. And they are right to attack, because though they are mostly too dumb to know it clearly, *I’m* attacking – and have, and shall, with luck.” (qtd. in Edmond-Paul “Robin Hyde,” original emphasis). Indeed, Newton notes how “it’s impossible to read Hyde without reference to misogyny or literary nationalism, and without in the process recasting her deviations from its masculine norms as a form of deliberate protest” (226). It is clear that, within *The Godwits Fly*, Hyde writes with an awareness of her position as a female who purposefully goes against social norms in order to assert her right to attempt to live her life authentically in an inauthentic society.

However, misogynistic responses to Hyde’s work did not end in the 1930s. Even in the re-evaluation of Hyde’s work that came about in the 1980s “it took a decade for the cluster of assumptions that informed cultural nationalism to be reconsidered as masculinism” (Edmond-Paul 21). Investigations into Hyde’s brief, turbulent, and productive life can be found in plenty. However, if we read Hyde’s work only through the lens of her real life, we are, in a way, re-enacting the actions of her contemporaries and allowing the prejudices of her time to colour the writing itself. We need to do that, to a degree, if we are to appreciate the social and political aspects of the work, but not so much as we neglect what *The Godwits Fly*, with Hyde’s multiple revisions and careful constructions, is actually saying. As Newton points out, “if we read Hyde less solicitously we may find she counts for even more than we thought” (232). *The Godwits Fly* can be read as an examination and subversion of the social codes that create the sense of anxiety that troubles its characters. The negative reception that Hyde received is evidence of her disruption of the very codes that New Zealand literary society was trying to enforce as some form of national identity. Her work “deviat[es] from masculinist realism established by cultural nationalism” (Mercer 19), because, while *The*

Godwits Fly “does present a specificity that is undeniably local” (Murray 189), Hyde offers alternative futures or ways of being that counter what is ostensibly the reality for women of her time. She wrote to a friend, “Yes, I write about sex – either as the tragedy it is, or the free and clean thing I want it to be” (qtd. in Newton 233). Hyde also associates the longing for an imaginary England with the social rules that govern class and gender discriminations, and highlights the dissatisfaction caused by constraining sexuality within marriage.

Furthermore, Hyde examines and exposes the effects of colonialism on a newly forming nation that seems to be trying to make sense of itself. While *The Godwits Fly* is acutely aware of Māori presence and displacement, they are found, in the imagination of the characters, separated from reality as “promiscuous . . . gods” (179), or in derogatory terms such as “Nigger Jack” (37). These representations of Māori indicate the negative effects of colonialism through the settler child’s eyes. Eliza observes that “you hardly ever saw a Maori, and if you did, it was in town. A dirty old wrinkled brown woman, with a shawl over her head, sat on the steps of an indifferent building and puffed at her short pipe” (32). This is most certainly intended to be subversive, with the idea of “an indifferent building” indicating an aloof and uncaring city. Hyde ominously writes, in her poem “The Book of Nadath” (1937), “Let him learn, he who sleeps in a conquered land beds himself with a corpse: which shall take its time to rot.” (Hyde qtd. in *Young Knowledge* 312). Thus, Hyde is aware of the uncomfortable position wherein the children of settlers, immigrants, and Māori, reside in a state of suspended acculturation, haunted by the effects of colonialism that marks the city and its inhabitants.

The insistence of constantly referring to England shows Hyde’s awareness, too, of the displacement and homogenisation of Pākehā in early twentieth century Wellington. But by having Augusta exemplify the futility and dissatisfaction derived from always looking elsewhere, Hyde also rejects the notion of Pākehā identity as something fixed or only linked

to England. When Eliza states “You were English but not English” (34), Hyde is alluding to the paradox of being called English in New Zealand, despite never having lived in England. By including other nationalities in the Hannay children’s world – they know Scots and Irish, and also referring to people living in China, Australia, and South Africa – Hyde juxtaposes the idea of globally diverse immigration with the homogenised understanding that Pākehā settlers look only to England as a touchstone. In *The Godwits Fly*, looking back to England is looking back to an ideal, a social construct, an *idea* of a history and a place that the characters cannot lay claim to.

Yet, like the paradox of nationalism, *The Godwits Fly* acknowledges the cultural link to England as something undeniable, even as the novel tries to reject it. Stuart Murray observes:

Even as they sought to prove New Zealand’s distinct sense of cultural difference, the writers of the 1930s did so by looking abroad for models and ideas. There is no real sense of contradiction here. The history of New Zealand as a settler colony is full of the unavoidable tension that comes from the colonial legacy of facing two directions at the same time. (13)

However, while acknowledging the tension that comes from looking in two directions, *The Godwits Fly* also acknowledges the futility of this state of being, these inherited social codes and constructs that, within this novel, restrict women, frustrate men, and psychologically damage children. Hyde offers alternatives, asking what would happen if its characters could shed those social constructs. Augusta would have roamed the hills, John could have found real purpose, Carly would not be restricted by puritanical anxiety, and Eliza should have been able to live off a fair wage for her writing. And maybe even bear a baby out of wedlock without shame.

The sense of the past that is recreated in *The Godwits Fly* is very recent, as Hyde writes about the 1910s-1920s from her 1930s perspective, and this also highlights how limited New Zealand Pākehā history is. As Steer points out, “if literature is something of a cultural barometer, then historical fiction provides an indicator of a culture’s attempt to mobilise the past” (116). Hyde’s remarks, from “The Singers of Loneliness”, summarise her viewpoint:

In the false, unreal atmosphere, the writers of my land and generation grew up: loving every inch of the terrain, feeling it grow into the mind and bones, but knowing little of its story or cultural past except what, unconsciously hungry for some background, we were able to invent. (Qtd. in Rawlinson vii)

Stephen Turner’s idea of a people “living in the present, or living without history” can help explain why Augusta grasps at social codes and cultural history that come from a country she has never been to, and why her children live by stories they adapt from adults or make up entirely (qtd. in Steer 114). They must “invent” their own way of existing here in New Zealand. Consequently, the children’s stories are a mix of an imaginary old world and the invention of the new. As we also find in Baughan’s “A Bush Section”, it is in this way that the children’s stories within *The Godwits Fly* can be read as representative of not only the naivety of the settler’s stories, but also the necessity.

Part II: Real Places, Imaginary Spaces, and Stories

“You imbue [places] with meanings and stories, but they imbed themselves in you too . . . you take place with you as you go on” (Cooper 107).

Annabel Cooper’s twenty-first century expression of place sits neatly alongside Hyde’s own expression of place in *The Godwits Fly*, though Cooper writes roughly eighty years later. Hyde has her characters continuously “imbue [places] with meanings and stories,” showing how these stories “imbed themselves” within individual and social identity. *The Godwits Fly* shows how meanings and stories can be inherited, or passed down through generations, because “you take place with you as you go on.” But, as we found in *The New Animals*, the stories that shape identity are always changing, and are not always reliable. The ideas about place are adapted, the meanings are re-worked by each generation, with both social and psychological ramifications.

Place is a main theme of the novel: how places, real and imagined, enhance, and mar all of the characters’ experiences and journeys through life. Hyde makes this theme explicit with her use of the godwits motif in the title and her subsequent explanation in the foreword, “Concerning Godwits”, which seems to start in mid thought: “But many people do not know what a godwit is” (xviii). Hyde goes on to explain how this migratory marsh bird is relevant to this novel:

Later she thought, most of us here are human godwits; our north is mostly England. Our youth, our best, our intelligent, brave and beautiful, must make the long migration, under a compulsion they hardly understand; or else be dissatisfied all their lives long. (xviii)

Hyde's use of the word "compulsion" resonates with Elodie's twenty-first century compulsion to leave New Zealand in *The New Animals*, and Hyde dissects this sentiment within *The Godwits Fly*: both its causes and the resulting dissatisfaction. This sense of settler displacement and the looking back to the idea of England, with its consequential class and gender restrictions, are the most obvious causes of tension within the novel. The issues of place, belonging and not belonging – compulsion and dissatisfaction – can be interpreted as symptomatic of the Pākehā experience, something worth noting here, that will be elaborated upon in part four of this chapter as Calder's "syndrome."

Another way to interpret Hyde's use of the godwit motif is as an expression of how, when people read the world, the literal becomes symbolic, and the symbolic becomes simplified but nonetheless potent, much like the semi-autobiographical text we are about to read, that began its life as a real autobiography (Towl 19). "This imperfect part of truth," as the inscription reads, on the copy of *The Godwits Fly* that Hyde gave to her psychiatrist, not only implies how "there are things about life that have to go unsaid – or that cannot be understood by those who did not live through them," but can also allude to the way that no writing is ever a truthful representation (Hyde qtd. in Sandbrook, "Introduction" ix). Everything we know, it turns out, is a story. Just how adapted and transformed that story has become is what the godwits motif and *The Godwits Fly* implore us to ask. Hyde completes her foreword to *The Godwits Fly*, with both hope and futility, comparing and contrasting ideas of civilisation and England with nature and the settler's isolation;

And, of course, there's something fine, a King of the Castle feeling, about having the place almost to oneself. Fine but lonely. . . .

Only fools, said the sparse ribbed rock, are ever lonely. (xix).

In *The Godwits Fly*, the tensions between civilization and nature, ‘overseas’ and New Zealand, adulthood and childhood, mother and father, are continuously used to compound the overall sense of anxiety: compulsion and dissatisfaction are inevitable. Truth – like the native bush – Hyde implies, is impossible to locate. Stories are all we have.

The first experiences of the world are inherently tied to the interior, domestic spaces that are dominated, in the time of this novel, by the mother. Indeed, in *The Godwits Fly*, it is the idea of England, ‘the motherland’, represented by Augusta that controls the domestic sphere. From the outset of the novel, however, the instability of the Hannay family unit is also brought to the fore. They are, in a sense, homeless, because “[u]ntil the year after the war, life for the Hannay’s meant living in other people’s houses” (1). Moving house is a part of life for the Hannays, and in these early years, “[f]or the Hannay children. . . their migrations were no trouble, but adventure” (1). The fact that they are able to “w[ea]r out a long line of cats, invariably and irrespective of sex named Tam” (1), informs us of the normality, and the longevity, of their living situation. This contradicts the later national myth: that everyone in New Zealand was once able to obtain the quarter acre dream. When Roger Horrocks comments that we look back to “a cartoon version of cultural nationalism” (qtd. in Newton 34), perhaps we also look back to early twentieth century New Zealand as not having the housing crisis that has now arisen, where some families are considered the working poor – or even worse – the notion that a renting family is in effect homeless as they do not own property. Reading back, the realisation *The Godwits Fly* gives us is that this is not a new situation for New Zealand. For the Hannays, this homelessness is the norm that they strive to rise above, and they are in a sense kin to Carla and her unsettled peers in *The New Animals*.

Yet despite their position in life, Augusta is openly an imperialist who still adheres to the rules of class and resists the social implications of the Hannay’s living situation.

Augusta’s characterisation is signalled in the foreword, where Hyde describes the state of

people “being dissatisfied all their lives long” (xviii). The narrative frequently refers to her disappointed expectations: “In their first New Zealand years, many things shocked Augusta, especially the way people, instead of bleaching their linen snow-white in properly secluded drying-grounds, pegged out meaty-coloured combinations and underpants to flap balloon legs and arms right under any body’s nose. But she hid her feelings, except from the family” (2). Born in Australia, Augusta had been making her way to England when she met John and got married in South Africa. The longing for “Augusta’s beloved, unobtainable England” (25), is quite palpable throughout the early part of the novel, and bleeds into the lives of her children: “when they were little, [Augusta’s] children’s frocks were always the prettiest and the best” (178). By contrast, the neighbourhood children are “wilder than ever. Katrine had holes in her bloomers, which oppressed Carly with deep vicarious shame” (26-7), foreshadowing how Carly internalises her mother’s puritanical outlook to the detriment of living as an adult. When Carly gives up on the prospect of marriage and decides to become a maternity nurse, she is faced with the physical reality of childbirth and experiences an epiphany that “[i]t seemed mad to her, horrible, that every person in the world had been born” (224). Indeed, Hyde shows how the “mother is betrayed by a set of conventions which have turned her love for her children into a repressive regime” (Sandbrook, *A Writer at Work* 149). The effect of Augusta’s “compulsion” to look to her idea of England causes her further frustration at her restricted existence, making her “dissatisfied all [her] li[f]e,” manifests in the lives of her children (Hyde xviii).

Augusta is often shown to take out her frustrations on her family, an indication of the tensions in her life that affect her psychologically, and yet Hyde is careful to show another side of Augusta that is beyond the reach of her usual imperialist and puritanical ways. When Augusta threatens Eliza, stating “I ought to take the brush to you young lady,” young Eliza notes that “the voice bore no relation to the wild, somehow tameless and beautiful dark red

hair” (10). These contrasts in Augusta’s characterisation add to the tension between civilisation and nature. The tension between desiring the “unobtainable England,” that is directly connected to Augusta’s rigid outlook and restricted life, is contrasted with something deeper, “wild, somehow tameless,” and can be read as representative of the theme of civilisation versus nature.

Later, these contrasts become imperative in describing a pivotal moment for Augusta where she realises that, perhaps out of necessity, she has wasted her life. Augusta recalls the sacrifices she made for her family, most notably the “gasping agony of giving another individual life” (178). These thoughts are, curiously, contrasted with a yearning of another kind: “[t]hrough the windows of her drawing-room the soft full light burst down the hills, gliding the cleft between the pine trees, and the farther, barren peaks which lifted grey as rosemary above the last of the bush” (178). These images of nature can also represent Augusta’s “wild, somehow tameless,” latent sexual urges, a theme that Hyde does not shy away from (Newton 233). Here, nature is aligned with human nature – something that the “Maori gods” (Hyde 179) retain – that sits in contrast with the idea of England and what it is to be civilised.

For Augusta, this image of nature is contrasted with the image of the city, where the hills are a “burden” (178). Augusta becomes “a beast of burden” (178), in order to make the children respectable clothing, respectable furnishings, and source “[g]ood food for them, though she remembered sitting at table with one egg, and that wasn’t for her, though Sandra was coming” (178). The household, domestic worries that so often “taxed her patience” are also contrasted with her longing for an experience of nature: “[s]till the hills drew back her glance. She thought, ‘I wish I’d gone all round them when I first came here. Now it’s too late” (178). Augusta yearns for the freedom represented by nature, but also intuitively feels at a remove from this place, sensing an indigenous understanding of place that she cannot grasp.

Augusta feels that “[s]he had no part nor lot in the grey hills, whose flanks melted into one another as if Maori gods lay asleep, promiscuous in one another arms” (179). Hyde not only underlines the idea of Augusta’s repressed freedom, sexual or otherwise, but also the ceaseless sense of displacement Augusta feels. The hills represent the affinity with nature and freedom that she attributes to the Māori people: “[b]ut she didn’t hate [the hills] She wished it were not so; she wished she had tramped round their edges years ago. . . It was all she could do now for the hills” (179). Hyde has Augusta sense that there could be another way to live, a freedom beyond the strict adherence to social constructions, however, Augusta only has a glimpse before returning to her more habitual state of regret.

This same kind of dissatisfaction is mirrored through the characterisation of John, who strives not for England – indeed he was born there – but for a freedom of mind that is as equally unobtainable as England is for Augusta. His description of his work as ‘Licking stamps and boots’” denotes the meaninglessness and degradation he associates with his office job (37). John becomes obsessed with reading, and when they move house he “caught rheumatism, bibliomania and politics, none of which he could afford” (18). The tension that his reading obsession causes in the marriage is spelt out plainly: “eagerly, obsessively he wanted to know the insides and contents of things settled for Augusta by providence and the British constitution” (41). Yet there is irony associated to his reading about politics and his anti-capitalist ideals, too, because he buys the books for much more than he sells them back for. John becomes known as a “Red Fed” and the stigma of this political affiliation eventually costs him his promotion at work, which in turn causes his resentment of youth (41). The tension that builds between the married couple exacerbates the sense of anxiety that is manifested in the children’s lives as they grow older, indicating that social anxiety is an inherited state of being. John’s attempt at becoming a ‘free’ thinker and Augusta’s attempt at

raising a respectable family based on British principles, in a recently colonised country, with economics against her, are both losing battles.

The Godwits Fly carefully brings an awareness of the subjectivity of both storytelling and interpretation, not only highlighting the writer-reader relationship but also emphasising the way the world is written for us. Hyde makes this emphasis on story telling clear with metafictional aspects, such as Eliza's observation that "Quietly, leaving hardly a pencil marking behind it, Calver Street had melted away" (77). Mercer observes "what Lawrence Jones calls 'the other tradition' in New Zealand writing, with writers such as. . . Robin Hyde. . . representing a psychological reality that extends and deepens realism's focus on the physical world" (42). Mercer links the "realist tradition. . . [to] another significant and more recent development in New Zealand literature: metafiction" (42). As Hyde intensely focuses on stories as the way the children interpret and then represent – or invent – the world around them there is a continual awareness of the act of writing, "a joint enterprise between the writer and the reader" (Sandbrook, "Introduction" xxix). Just as Hyde's "imperfect part of truth" can reflect how writing can never fully convey any real experience, it can also mean that writing is open to many interpretations: that stories exist anywhere and everywhere.

The Godwits Fly also exhibits how the Hannay children bond through sharing memories that become stories. These stories often take stock of, and emulate ideas from, the adult world. Story telling is vital to the development of the children's sense of identity. "Carly. . . could go back in memory to the Sampson house," recalling that the reason they left that house was because "Mrs Sampson used to stand on the stairs, talking too much and too loud, her hair all down in rats' tails over a red kimono that wasn't done up properly at the front; and she didn't wear a camisole underneath" (1-2). Carly goes on to recall that Augusta said they moved because "of having to carry the children's bath water up all those stairs" (2). But really it was because Augusta worried that John would "feast [his] eyes on Mrs

Sampson” (2). Thus, Hyde is “interested, not so much in subjectivity for its own sake, but in sites where social ideologies and forces were busy playing out their effects” (Edmond-Paul qtd. in Sandbrook xv). In *The Godwits Fly*, the memories are stories about people and places, coloured by the parents’ adult lives that deeply affect the children’s sense of identity.

The stories reflect the gendered world they live in that is also governed by economics, politics, and various social prejudices. There are many mysteries, such as how babies come to be born, which “was one of the things Augusta said you must never talk about” (49). There are the stories of social conventions that, even as small children, are realised as arbitrary: “girls preferred their own way of playing. There wasn’t any set reason why it should be so, it just was, like wearing pinafores and frocks instead of trousers” (30-31). There are other strange and arbitrary differences, like how “boys could collect cigarette cards, but if they saved the coloured cards you got inside Toblerones, they were sissies” (31). Indeed, the stories about the world of the children gives insights not only into gender inequities, but also economic and class issues. When Eliza contemplates the “[f]unny, darkling world of boys,” she notes how “there were four sorts of boys” (31). These range from “the ones Mother said were nice” and are involved with church activities, to “the horse-voiced growing up ones” and the “orphans, who were industrious but wore hideous yellow trousers . . . somehow isolated and queer,” and the lowest on the economic hierarchy, “the Duffel Street boys, who were like the Macartneys only much worse” (31). Not only does this latter group have “nits in their hair,” but also “Eliza wasn’t ever to take the shortcut home through Duffel Street, where the slatternly little houses, squeezing close together, belong to The Micks” (31). Later during their childhood, the Hannay children realise that their own family have slipped down the ranks of social order—lower than residents who were disabled, drunkards, mentally ill, or Māori—to be “the worst people in Calver Street – the poorest,” because of their father’s revolutionary political allegiances. When Eliza realizes this social order, Hyde is able to

show how racism, economics, political beliefs and various social prejudices trickle down and become imbedded in the children's stories and therefore a part of their identity.

Hyde has real places imbued with fantastical stories that become part of how the children see the world. There is the story about the Hutt, "a little river," with "willow leaves and sunlight dropping into it like tarnished coins" (33). The Hutt has its own stories too, such as how "[i]n its pools were electric eels, and if you trod on one it would electric-shock you to death" (33). Here, the Hannay children engage with, and contribute to, the "communal memories in and around nature, of old tunes we still have on our heads" (Calder 5). Yet the fantastical quality of the storytelling reflects how life is different for the children: understanding is different. This is enhanced by the grotesque vision of many children dancing on a dead whale in Lyall bay. Their understanding of life and death is underlined by the next story, which is about something else "slippery": "Once there was an eggplant in Ngaio and Jock Vaughan's backyard. The boys said, 'If you leave an egg-plant grow, a little horse'll come out'" (53). In *The Godwits Fly*, fantastical stories become synonymous stories of place: fantastical versions of reality. But underlaying this part of the novel is the realisation that these are the stories of a newly forming society, so that the children's story-telling that "invents" place is representative of the settlers' necessity.

While the children's stories reflect the adult world by absorbing, mimicking and adapting, the adult's stories – like family history – are also peppered with exaggerations and the fantastical too. Eliza observes how "Adultery was a fantastic and disgraceful disease, like ringworm. It was all very well to cry and be sorry, but if you had it, you must be isolated" (26). When the children go to Australia, they realise all the stories they had depended upon about their Australian relations had been exaggerated by time and distance and are often revealed to be untrue. Carly's "Lords and Ladies were really a terrible have" (59). In Australia, "Eliza sat in the dining room, listening to stories that were absurd and not absurd,

so real that she knew that they had really happened, happened in this short house under the fig tree . . . the biggest fig tree in the whole world” (61). Indeed, we discover, after the trip to Australia, that there are really only two generations of stories here. History is very limited and extremely unreliable, based on living memory, which as Hyde shows easily crosses the borders into exaggeration and pure fiction, just like the children’s stories. *The Godwits Fly* shows how living with this kind of warped sense of history differs immensely to the idea that Pākehā society is “living without history” (Turner qtd. in Steer 116). Even though history, for the Hannay family, is limited and unreliable, it is necessarily foundational to any sense of identity.

Indeed, the naivety of the children’s stories sometimes slips into the uncanny as they often foreshadow later events as they play with ideas from the adult world. Images of “the Home of Mercy. . . [that has] babies there with two heads” foreshadows Carly’s experience at the shock of the act of childbirth and Eliza’s experience of isolation and grief when she has her baby unwed and stillborn (48). Throughout the early years of the novel, for Eliza and her sisters, Augusta instils the ever-present fear of coming across a man. While the reason for the fear is not yet understood, it becomes potent and more than real when the two girls reach adulthood. Augusta foresees a bitter future for her daughters, when she describes women’s life after marriage and childbirth as “Physical and emotional wrecks, little ghosts” (221). Yet, back in the early years of the novel, the awareness of the mysteries of reproduction is wielded as a triumph of knowledge: “Mary Bray knows how babies are born, and so does Isabel Yolund, so there” (49). But these mysteries become more ominous and can be read as purposefully naive so as to contrast with the more adult themes they contain. The children are aware of the mysteries of birth and death but not the reality. The story of the “haunted house,” where “the man who hanged himself jerked and thumped softly against the wind, so that the rope, which had worn a white place for itself, creaked on the bough” is placed next to

the story of “how babies are born” (49). Eliza’s feeling about “the Glory Hole,” the main story from chapter one, is repeated throughout: “[w]here ever you went, you came to the edge of it” (49). This sentiment becomes symbolic of how the knowledge of the adult world, which the children feel as uncanny mysteries, will eventually be revealed as a bitter reality.

Here, *The Godwits Fly* can be read as saying that although there is safety in the naivety of the children’s stories, there are also dangers in the naivety of this young society. The stories can be representative of a settler or colonial society that grasps at the social codes of other places so as to create social constructs and order, paralleling the ostensible safety that Augusta derives from her imagined idea of England. But to stay naïve and to live by fantastical stories and imagined places is to remain dissatisfied like Augusta, or permanently childlike like Carly. *The Godwits Fly* exemplifies how “it can be intensely unsettling when. . . [society’s] foundation stories are called into question,” and that “we have two main choices. One is to hold onto the stories with which we are familiar and comfortable. . . [t]he other is to not default these orthodox narratives, but instead to ‘use our intelligence freely’” (Cain et al. 275). As we will see, when Eliza does come of age, she tries to reject the orthodox. However, her life is fraught with difficulty, and the narrative accordingly changes from entertaining vignettes of children’s stories to recounting her disconnection and mental angst, reflecting how for early twentieth century women, it is impossible to live within the social codes – or without.

Part III: Narrational Shift

[W]e never do anything by wholes, it is all dismembered, like the buttercup. (94)

This epigraph is directly related to Eliza's experience of high school education, yet also reflects the way that the second part of the novel mimics Eliza's mindset as she navigates her coming of age. If the first part of the book can be read as reflecting the naivety of the children of settlers, how they must "invent" stories to live by and find their place here, the second part can be read as rejecting the social codes of the adult world and exposing them as inauthentic and inherited prejudices. What happens when adult characters conform, and what happens when they reject social constructs, produce equal degrees of ontological insecurity, and constitute the main source of anxiety that pervades the second part of the novel. Intriguingly, we have seen this disjointed structure and style used to similar effect, though more pronounced, in works of Janet Frame that were reworked in *The New Animals*. When Eliza hits puberty, and becomes a poet, the narrational style mirrors her mindset by becoming more fluid, with free indirect discourse, sudden changes in dramatic personae, and often slipping into first person conversations with an unspecified 'you'. Here, the artist is representative of the "tameless" (10) aspects of human nature. Coupled with the idea that people and animals are living in the unnatural confines of the city, this can be read as Hyde purposely shifting the style of narration to enhance the overall sense of displacement: a kind of existential angst accompanying dissatisfaction and lack of ontological security in a place fraught with gendered and economic inequities and impossible social codes.

As we have seen, the early years of the novel represent a kind of artistic purity foundational to the characters' development into adults, and are made up of an intricate network of stories that the children use to make sense of the world around them: the adult

world of politics and the city, the natural world of the environment. These stories offer a view of the “symmetrical tensions and patterns of conflict and resolution which reflect and define [Eliza’s] progress” (Sandbrook xxiv). For young Eliza, “[t]he sun writes in big, white letters,” as her day dreams become more and more potent, reflecting her growth into an artist (Hyde 54). As can be found in *The New Animals*, the city is shown as an attempt to contain nature, and in turn nature is shown adapting to the city. Young Eliza frequently hears the lions roaring at the nearby zoo, “far away, lonesome and grim” (46). One day at church she becomes lost in a daydream about one of these caged animals:

Blackmane had got loose, and the only way to escape was by crawling out along the [church] rafters, right to the middle, where it was too high for Blackmane to jump. You could do it by swinging from the cord that held the red plush curtain.

In the body of the church, Blackmane growled and ate the people. (46)

Here, Eliza employs her artistic imagination, a power “which slips through the eyes of all children, sometimes through the brooding eyes of the meadow-beasts as well, but which is only rarely held and formulated” (72). The phrase acknowledges the importance of the children’s stories and the symbolism of the zoo animals in enabling her to grasp the frustration of living within social constructs that imprison society.

Furthermore, Eliza’s vision of “the body of the church” alludes to the church being symbolic of confines and rules or control, while nature is contrastingly seen as a threat to civilisation. After all, “not believing in God and the British Empire were serious offences” (63). However, when Eliza finally has first communion herself, another expectation, or story she has heard, is rendered untrue: “When the Bishop laid his hands on Eliza’s head, nothing happened at all, though other people, with other touches, had made her tremble” (90). Eliza goes on to have a daydream-like conversation with Jesus, where she asks him, “But don’t

You see, the way we live, everything, punishment, reward, system, all dwarf the stature – contraction, not expansion? Isn't man like a clenched fist, cramped, that of its own agonized irritability must hit out, probably at the wrong thing?" (91). Here, Hyde is expressing perhaps the main issue that *The Godwits Fly* has with society: that it is nearly impossible to live within the bounds of its constructs.

This frustration is evidenced further as Eliza comes of age and realises that these social confines are even more harsh for women. Eliza sardonically observes "[h]ow sad it is to be a woman, nothing on this earth is held so cheap" (173). It has been noted that Hyde's "quotation from a ballad of a third-century Chinese poet. . . suggests. . . how finely tuned Hyde was to the poetic meanings and emotional resonance across cultures" and "that Hyde deserves sophisticated readers who can appreciate her abilities" (Edmond-Paul 24). Throughout *The Godwits Fly*, Hyde discusses and comments on the position of women in her time. The observation about the "cheap" status of women makes plain the universality and longevity of this position, and the social and psychological effects. If "most women never grow up" (136), then how do they fully develop any sense of self? While Carly exemplifies a woman who cannot grow up, Augusta represents "[w]omen as machinery for producing and manipulating her children" (178). The plight of Eliza contrasts with her mother in her resistance to convention: "they think I want marriage first: Timothy, Timothy you fool, how can you think I want this?" (162). Hyde does, to an extent, follow through on the fairy-tale ending for Eliza's friend, Simone, however her happiness seems inauthentic because marriage will require her to "have a new face, a stranger face" (234). But Eliza has already realised the futility of that existence, and says "No, it's ourselves we reach for. . . our own undiscovered selves" (137). Thus, *The Godwits Fly* subverts social codes by exposing the inauthenticity of living within their bounds and, by doing so, offers the idea of alternative futures or ways of being, particularly for women.

This concern with the position of women is another important reason why, in the second part of *The Godwits Fly*, the pace and style of narration changes: while becoming a woman can bring a level of self-awareness, with self-awareness also comes frustration. The narration therefore mimics the sense of displacement, or disjointedness, through being, in Eliza's words, "all dismembered, like the buttercup" (94). This is a reflection of Eliza's disjointed sense of identity, that stems from trying to live authentically in an inauthentic world. Simultaneously, the side story of Timothy emulates the idea of women's creation and fall. This notion echoes the central paradox of the novel: that it is impossible to live within social constructs whether you accept or reject them. When Timothy creates a clay woman, after perfecting her and making her strong, he discards her because "God went wrong" (146). Timothy comments that "[b]rains were what ailed them," pointing not only to the masculinist society in which they reside, but also the mental angst that accompanies Eliza's self-awareness in conjunction with her position in society as a female (133). This part of the novel, then, can be read as Timothy expressing the idea that to conform to the moral codes that Augusta attempts to enforce would be simpler if one was a non-thinking being. Timothy's observations anticipate "[t]he central journey that Eliza makes in the novel," which encompasses "the experience of alienation ('loneliness') and loss to disintegration and beyond these to an integrating self-knowledge" (Sandbrook xxviii). This is why the narration becomes more poetic, more experimental, but also disjointed, in order to emulate Eliza's confusing and detrimental journey into self-awareness.

Part IV: Nature Versus Civilisation and the Woman Alone

Bird of my na-tive land, beautiful stranger,

Perched in the kauri tree, free from all danger. (32).

The above excerpt, from a school song, is loaded with subversive connotations with regards to the acculturation of New Zealand, especially from the settler child's perspective that Eliza represents. For one thing, "none of the children had ever seen [a Tui], or a kauri tree either," not only indicating that the native birds are indeed not "free from all danger," but also suggesting that Eliza recognises the hypocrisy of this form of nationalism. Hyde contrasts the native things with "[s]parrows [that] hopped everywhere, living as the Lord provided, on spilled bread crumbs and dust and chaff" (32). This simple sentence places the sparrow, which was introduced to New Zealand in the 1860s and recognised as a pest by the 1890s (Dawson), alongside Christianity as representative of imperialist social codes. When Eliza elaborates on this thought, she aligns it with a broader sense of cultural norms and expectations: "It was a lie to say that bird-of-my-native-land and the thin trees stuck in holes in the playground were sacred and beautiful, half as sacred and beautiful as the thin, clear frame of English trees" (32). Eliza thinks about nature or native New Zealand in contrast to her reality. She contemplates how "far away in a real wilderness, it might be different; but here the native things looked only grey and sad, all covered in dust" (32). Eliza is thus indicating how, for the settler child, native New Zealand is hard to locate and only exists in the imagination, which ironically is how Hyde has also positioned England.

Indeed, *The Godwits Fly* also resembles *The New Animals* to the extent that living things are seen to suffer in the confines of the city. Eliza reiterates the idea that shows the zoo animals as a metaphor for the natural, "tameless" aspects of the otherwise civilised

characters, who are trying to exist in the city: “the cabbage-palms and tree-ferns people grew in their backyards – like beasts in a zoo – looked cowed and sick” (32). Eliza links this metaphor to the Māori people themselves: “you hardly ever saw a Maori, and if you did, it was in town. A dirty old wrinkled brown woman, with a shawl over her head, sat on the steps of an indifferent building and puffed at her short pipe” (32). The “indifferent building” alludes to the idea of an uncaring or aloof society. In Wellington during the dusty 1900s, “[h]istory began slap bang in England,” and to think of native New Zealand, “[s]omething that had been, something delicate, wild and far away. . . [became] sickly and unreal,” (33).

This idea of native New Zealand as “sickly and unreal” borders on the uncanny, and colours how Eliza feels about the city. For her, the city streets “were a dusty mouth that had opened and swallowed everything up” (74). Eliza cannot fathom what real native New Zealand is or was and so the idea of England, enforced by her mother and society, becomes more real while the idea of native New Zealand fades. Even when “the bush calls her” it is actually imported gorse and blackberries (40). Eliza tries to make sense of her position as a settler child:

You were English and not English. It took time to realize that England was far away. And you were brought up on bluebells and primroses and daffodils and robins in the snow. Even the Christmas cards were always robins in the snow. One day, with a little shock of anger, you realized that there were no robins and no snow, and you felt cheated; nothing else was quite as pretty. (34)

Just as Eliza’s “robins in the snow” are a paradoxical symbol for a New Zealand Christmas, so Calder describes the importance of “overseas” to the New Zealand mind-set: “[s]o much from there has always been coming here, but in a manner that is out of step and season, at a remove, virtual – which is never the same as being there” (191). Calder’s sense of being “out

of step and season” helps to explain how Hyde has positioned her characters in relation to mainstream Pākehā culture. Eliza’s dislocation from nature is felt as a removal or distance from cultural *security*, and produces confusion in this moment of acculturation: she can neither locate native New Zealand nor is she actually from England.

Eliza realises that her experience of nature is removed from what was native New Zealand. She describes Paekakariki so realistically that anyone familiar with the place will recognise it: “there was a great azure curve of sea scalloped with foam, far beneath the highest bluff in the world. So high and airy it stood that on it you felt light and unreal, and looking down caught your breath away” (33). However, Hyde subverts such ethereal or romantic notions immediately: “This place was ‘Paekakariki’, a Maori word meaning ‘The perch of the green parrakeets’. But no green wings broke the air there anymore. . .” (33). The ellipsis emphasises the gravity of the moment, offering an early twentieth century response to the ecological effects of colonisation, something we will see, later, as magnified in the earlier context of Baughan’s “A Bush Section”.

This sense of dislocation from native New Zealand also invokes Calder’s hypothesis of “Pakeha turangawaewae,” and the accompanying existential isolation of the settler experience. Calder states that “a sense of isolation and insignificance characterises. . . [New Zealand’s] geo-cultural location as profoundly as ever,” and suggests that the importance of overseas is magnified from a distance, so that “overseas. . . is not so much a destination as the gap distance opens out between here and there” (190, 191). Just as the children’s stories about relations in Australia are proven to be either exaggerations or unfounded in real life, *The Godwits Fly* portrays the reality of England as never being in line with the idea of England. Indeed, within *The Godwits Fly* the trope of isolation is directly linked to gender and economic inequities. Eliza cannot travel as she desires, and when she does manage to travel, to Australia to have her illegitimate child, she finds that “[t]he women were like caged

animals, no worse, like domesticated animals” (207). Due to her position in society as a woman without money or the financial backing of a husband, Eliza is isolated both socially and within her family because of her non-conformist views.

Eliza, at times, embodies the figure of an urban ‘woman alone’ who resembles characters such as Elodie and Carla in *The New Animals*. Indeed, Lawrence Jones’ account of the ‘man alone’ character suggests the possibility of such flexibility, by describing its evolution “from frontier hero, through social victim or rebel to existential agent to a protean figure capable of multiple incarnations” (332). Like we saw with the characterisation of Elodie, in *The New Animals*, Eliza herself displays such qualities. Indeed, during her progress through the novel, not only is Eliza both a “social victim [and a] rebel”, but she also undergoes several physical and symbolic transformations that culminate in the final chapter, when “Eliza quotes Rilke’s “Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes,” in which he describes Euridice as having undergone a metamorphosis in the underworld so that she becomes self-possessed” (Sandbrook, *A Writer at Work* 121). However, it would seem that for Eliza, restricted by both economic and gender inequities, the price of social and artistic self-possession is isolation and danger to her mental health. Physical and psychological isolation – her ‘woman alone’ status – due to Eliza’s social grounding in the idea of England, her non-conformist self-awareness, and her settler identity enlarges the “distance. . . between here and there.” Coupled with Eliza’s lack of mobility due to economic and gender inequities, the tropes of isolation and distance add to the underlying sense of anxiety that pervades *The Godwits Fly*.

Chapter Two: Conclusion

The Godwits Fly suggests how the idea of what it means for Pākehā to live in New Zealand is intrinsically tied to the concept of “overseas.” Hyde’s characters grasp at the idea of the existence of other cultures and places. Although these places and people are often imaginary, they fuel the stories that the children live by as they ‘invent’ the world around them in order to make sense of it, in a kind of settler placemaking that looks back to the old world to invent a new world that turns out to be not new at all. Thus, the settler, the immigrant, the diversity that culminates in the Pākehā, are haunted by the reality of a native New Zealand that they struggle to locate. Here, Hyde’s use of metafictional elements performs similar work to *The New Animals*, simultaneously subverting social constructs such as history, class and behavioural codes, and “challenging conformist morality” (“Robin Hyde”). Thus, through Hyde’s portrayal of the Hannay family, *The Godwits Fly* explores the inner and outer forces that shape the characters’ lives. The Hannays each attempt to adhere, or not, to social conventions that are governed by economic, class, and gender inequities. These restrictions are enforced by an imperialist mother who, in turn, is “dissatisfied all [her life] long” (xviii). This state of dissatisfaction is at the crux of the novel: it is impossible to live within the bounds of this ‘invented’ society, but paradoxically, it is also – as Eliza finds – impossible to reject them without risking psychological, existential, and ontological well-being. As an anti-hero, it is through Eliza’s journey into suffering that Hyde is able to justify the idea of alternative futures and ways of being, promoting a more authentic existence in the face of social codes that are impossible to live up to.

This chapter has explored how *The Godwits Fly* can be read as an examination and subversion of social constructs in early twentieth century Wellington, New Zealand. Observing the context in which Hyde writes the novel acknowledges the tensions between

her real life as a woman writer and the misogyny of literary nationalism of the 1930s, which casts light on its feminist stance toward the newly forming Pākehā culture. Hyde creates and develops this sense of anxiety with regards to identity, belonging, and place that has, at times, unexpected parallels with Pip Adam's *The New Animals* (2017), and even recalls moments of acculturation in Baughan's "A Bush Section" (1908), especially from the perspective of the settler child. Indeed, where *The Godwits Fly* looks back – with frustration – to an idea of England, in *The New Animals* the compulsion is towards the inevitably dystopian future. Like *The New Animals*, Hyde's use of narration and structure is reflective of the stages of the protagonist's journey – a method that adds to that sense of frustration and anxiety that permeates each novel, and the denouement that both novels embrace the trope of isolation and, on various levels, that of the 'woman alone'. Just as we saw in *The New Animals*, the city is a place that imprisons its inhabitants. The native bush is impossible to locate, with only traces to be found in stories, or remnants that haunt the minds of the characters. This haunting, this sense of "intuitive rightness" that Calder associates with the "syndrome" of "Pakeha turangawaewae," can be used to interpret the sense of anxiety that runs through *The Godwits Fly*. Eliza is as haunted by the bush as much as by the imported zoo animals – she is stuck as a witness to the moment of acculturation – but like the godwit, Eliza does not belong to the ever present and 'looming' England either.

**Chapter Three:
Blanche Edith Baughan's "A Bush Section"**

The green Bush departed, green Clearing is not yet come.
 'Tis a silent, skeleton world;
 Dead, and not yet re-born,
 Made, un-made, and scarcely as yet in the making;
 Ruin'd, forlorn, and blank.

"A Bush Section", lines 12-16

In the year 1900, at the age of thirty, Blanche Edith Baughan left her troubled family history behind her and emigrated from England to the crown colony of New Zealand. While staying at a farm in Ormondville, in the Central Hawkes Bay, she witnessed the processes and effects of settler land clearing in the region. Thus her poem, "A Bush Section", published in her collection, *Shingle Short and Other Verses* (1908), is based upon real moments, and places, in New Zealand history. I shall argue that "A Bush Section" is a poetic place that allows Baughan to articulate a pivotal moment for Pākehā culture. The above epigraph makes clear that the poem's setting is almost post-apocalyptic in description and tone, and into this ground zero of the colonial appropriation of the land Baughan places the figure of a settler child. Thor Rayden is, like this place, "[m]ade, un-made, and scarcely as yet in the making" (15), as though he is waiting for the forces of nature – the physical world and human nature – to work upon him in this colonial context: ready to be made by the violent necessities of this place and, in turn, to make this place anew. The "haunting cry of some lonely, far-away morepork, [says]/ 'Kia toa! Be Brave!'" (124), and indeed, the place is uncanny – unnerving even – in the way it reminds its reader that the idea of the familiar pastoral landscape of New Zealand was once another place altogether. The poem suggests that this place perhaps can

never be located in the Pākehā imagination, but perhaps lays just beyond reach and haunts Pākehā renditions of nature in New Zealand literature.

As we have seen, both Pip Adam's *The New Animals* and Robin Hyde's *The Godwits Fly* are predominantly concerned with the subversion of social constructions like the city and social order. Both works portray the effects of civilisation, which in this context is synonymous with colonialism, on nature and people, especially through the seemingly innocent figures of children and animals. Baughan's "A Bush Section" is explicitly concerned with the moment of transition from native bush to pasture, and for that reason has previously been dismissed by twentieth century critics as an example of "colonial poetical handwringings over the departure of the rainforest" (Harris 131). Accompanying this concern is an expression of the anxiety that comes with such a moment of "[un]settlement": the settler appropriation of indigenous land (Steer 114). The poem arguably strengthens colonial resolve by distancing Māori culture from the settler, for the only evidence of previous life is the "haunting. . . morepork" (124) and mention of the extinct "Moa" (195). Due to the thread of anxiety that runs through the poem, however, these images will be explored as subversive and portentous rather than as vindications.

Thus, I investigate "A Bush Section" retrospectively, reading back from a twenty-first century place that has, through *The New Animals*, considered the effects of a consumerist society on not only the ecological state of the planet, but also on the psychological state of its citizens. *The Godwits Fly* evidences how that society was established around outdated sociological rules inherited from an idea of England, accompanied by the dizzying awareness that native New Zealand can no longer be located, that adds to the sense of anxiety shared by characters who are dislocated from the place they find themselves in. Seen in this light, "A Bush Section" can be read not simply as a vindication of settler activity, nor as a justification of bush clearing as a means to an end, but more like *The New Animals* and *The Godwits Fly*

in its evocation of a sense of deep anxiety in the process of imagining Pākehā belonging in relation to nature. This notion culminates in Baughan's evocative idea of "the Burnt Bush within and without thee" (236). Like *The New Animals* and *The Godwits Fly*, "A Bush Section" demonstrates that ideas of place are discursive and fluid, while also highlighting how history, economic factors, and perception shape – and perhaps warp – identity.

Individual and societal adaptation is shown to be inevitable and necessary because nothing is fixed. In addition, "A Bush Section" also shows that these processes of shaping and adaptation are more visible in this earlier moment in colonial history, subverting any ideas of a bucolic, pastoral, or romantic connection to nature in New Zealand's settler history.

Baughan places the figure of the settler child directly into the middle of a moment that reveals violence on cultural, ecological, and ethical levels, and we can recognise the anxiety inducing effect of that situation on Pākehā culture today. But beyond the recognition of Pākehā guilt, there is the examination of the fundamental sense of belonging to nature that begins, for Pākehā, not in some imaginary bucolic setting, but somewhere more like the place Baughan creates in "A Bush Section".

This chapter, laid out in four stages, will investigate how Baughan creates this highly emotive poetic place. The poem is the considerable length of 240 lines of free verse, loosely structured into three parts that will each be considered in turn. I first examine how Baughan sets the scene, creating a poetic place that, like *The New Animals*, is steeped in uncanniness not only because it is based upon real events foundational to tensions within New Zealand culture, but also because of the attempt to find a utopian possibility in environmental destruction. I then explore the figure of the settler child, a motif also used to allegoric effect in *The Godwits Fly*. Through her character, Thor, Baughan explores how perception and interpretation can give a place meaning – and how this can change with the swiftness and fluidity of emotion – emphasising how adaptation is inevitable and necessary for survival.

Thor's identity, based upon "the Burnt Bush within and without," constitutes the beginning of a thread of anxiety that ties "A Bush Section" to newer New Zealand writing like *The New Animals* and *The Godwits Fly* (236). I then turn to the shift in poetic voice that occurs at the centre of the poem, where the style of language changes significantly, as though some ancient force is at play, archaic, terrible and yet reverent. This part of the poem can be read as the exploration of how place, identity, and belonging are all tied to the power and the confines of language: how the past inevitably bleeds into the present and future. Finally, I investigate Baughan's representation of nature versus civilisation and consider whether the "syndrome" of "Pakeha turangawaewae" asserted by Calder can be traced to Baughan's poetic moment in "A Bush Section" – and why that can be so unsettling.

Part I: Setting the Scene

"A Bush Section" begins with the poetic conjuring of a thoroughly disconcerting place. The title, "A Bush Section" indicates the simplicity of the poem's form, or the parameters in which the poet will work to generate meaning, a place that has spatial limitations that also reflect the border obsessions of the colonial quest. Baughan's indefinite "A" implies that this is one of many bush sections, representative of many places undergoing the same colonial transformation. The word "bush" denotes what is native and wild – untamed, and here, unnamed. The word "section" reminds us that this natural and indigenous place has been divided up by someone and commodified. Thus, we are witness to the aftermath of the moment when nature is first commodified for colonial purposes.

Baughan's opening lines use denotative language and parallel syntax to create a sense of immediacy, drawing the reader into what seems to be a realist, modernist, post-apocalyptic

place. The poem begins with a moment of stillness, a time to reflect upon what must have happened here, to locate oneself in the moment of the poem:

Logs, at the door, by the fence; logs, broadcast over the paddock;
 Sprawling in motionless thousands away down the green gully,
 Logs, grey-black. And the opposite rampart of ridges
 Bristles against the black sky, all the tawny, tumultuous landscape
 Is stuck, and prickled, and spiked with the standing black and grey splinters,
 Strewn, all over its hollows and hills, with the long, prone, grey-black logs. (1-6)

The lack of any sentimentality ensures there is a distinctly capitulated and bereft feeling emanating from the words. This is all there is: environmental destruction – the decimation of nature – on a grand scale. And yet there is a “door” and a “fence,” alluding to the human hands that are responsible for the devastation, and suggesting that human lives will be affected by such a dead, eerily empty place. This defamiliarization of New Zealand’s colonial history occurs on several levels: the vision of New Zealand as naturally filled with pasture and farmland comes under scrutiny, as does the idea of borders and the commodification of indigenous land. The dislocation of any true concept of the natural, native world – the native bush – that New Zealand is renowned for permeates *The Godwits Fly* and even, by omission, haunts *The New Animals*. Prior to this, the scene that Baughan creates in “A Bush Section” offers the notion that the settler child can only know the violence of this place, and not what came before.

Baughan elaborates on the idea of the grand scope of this decimation in the name of progress and industry. Indeed, the sheer expanse of the scene, with its “[s]prawling. . . thousands,” “motionless” as though in the aftermath of a battle, elaborates on the simplicity of the first line, as if imploring us to take in the sheer vastness, and yet uncanny stillness, of this place, where the dead trees are humanised by their ability to “sprawl” (2). The matter-of-

fact bluntness exemplifies “how intensely Baughan looks at what’s in front of her” (Newton 75). The first word of line five, “stuck,” creates a break in the rhythm that forces a pause in the reading before continuing on to the sharp sounds of lines five and six, emphasising that this is not a safe place, where a “rampart of ridges / Bristles against the sky” (3-4). Indeed, the landscape is “prickled, and spiked with the standing black and grey splinters” (5). Not only is this a bleak place to be, but also, the logs have been transformed from living nature – their natural state as trees in the bush – first to corpses who suffered a violent death, and then, in a horrifyingly uncanny twist, to weaponry enacting a violent assault upon the land itself. The idea of this place being “stuck,” or worse, of being “stuck” oneself in this warzone, is paralleled by Baughan’s decision to choose, for the character who must contend with this place, a settler child who is equally “stuck” by circumstance.

Conversely, the second stanza reads with the ingenuous tone of children’s literature, “*Along the paddock, and down the gully, / Over the multitudinous ridges, / Through the valley and spur*” (7-9, my emphasis). This subtly foreshadows the introduction of the settler child with lines that are rhythmically paced to enhance the idea of a sort of playful innocence, before being jolted back into realism with the reminder, “Fire has been!” (10). Although, here, the fire is a passive construction, and no agency is attributed to the event, it is still a destructive and dangerous force. This can be read as Baughan’s emphasis of the innocence – or naivety – of the settler, at the same time the cartographic language is also emblematic of the mapping and sectioning, and therefore of appropriation and commodification, of the land that is ironically no longer ‘Bush’. Indeed, this use of language to label and map out the area points to a distinctly colonial viewpoint of a place that is shown to be no longer natural but dangerously tactile, “prickled, spiked . . . and splinter[ed]” (5), “a silent, skeleton world” (13). The absence of sound and colour, for “[t]he green Bush departed, green Clearing is not

yet come,” emphasises this as a pivotal moment when the native place, or the natural world, must give way to something else (12).

At this point we can already read “A Bush Section” as foreshadowing a utopian possibility that can arise from environmental destruction. Harris seems to agree, seeing this moment as an opportunity for Baughan to express “the motif of fresh life arising from the rot of past error [that] is a recurring one in transcendental writing” (114). While I agree with Harris’ points, I suggest that the poem is less “melioris[tic]” (114) than presumed, because we can also read “A Bush Section” as a subversion of the colonial quest. While the poem looks closely at the formation of a new land, it is rife with allusions to everything that could go wrong – as the speaker asks, “How far, how far! wilt thou go?” (240) – and thus provokes a re-examination of the colonial and settler process. This notion is remarkably similar to Elodie’s own twenty first century version of the colonial quest in *The New Animals*, wherein she instinctually takes on the role of coloniser and re-enacts warped melioristic principles in order to survive in the new world of Rubbish Island. Elodie’s attempt to find a utopian possibility is a survival instinct, an adaption that is alluded to as primal, grotesquely re-enacting evolutionary ideas, in a pivotal moment of environmental destruction that is also disturbingly real, lending a Gothic feel to the realisation of the human capacity to adapt for survival. Adaptation is also relevant in Baughan’s poem, where the environmental shaping of the settler child suggests that this place and situation will trigger some kind of primal response in order to survive. And yet the poem’s form also posits that the inherited confines of language and culture are as pivotal as the physical and social confines the child is subjected to by the boundaries of the bush section. Thus, the attempt to find a utopian possibility in environmental destruction becomes a cultural, ecological, and ethical tension within the poem rather than a melioristic solution.

By leading the reader directly to the ground zero of the devastation of native bush, when this place is “dead, and not yet re-born,” “A Bush Section” provokes an examination of how we read colonial texts (14). If the colonial writer requires the absence of Māori or indigenous peoples in order to colonise literary spaces, why is Baughan so explicit about this blankness in “A Bush Section” when she engages with and acknowledges Māori culture in her other writing? Baughan’s absolute clearing of this place, and her *uncharacteristic* silence regarding Māori, stands out as a signpost that points to the *unspoken* violence that arises from the moment of settlement. From our current twenty first century place, the poem reads more like a tragedy than a triumph, where the settler has gone too far, been too violent, where what Calder describes as Baughan’s usual interest in the “blending” of cultures is blatantly omitted (12). In her travel narrative, “A River of Pictures and Peace,” which features “a real ‘Maori lady of the transition period’” (Baughan qtd. in Calder 165), Baughan offers a sense of hope and reverence, with “the spell of the river. . . upon us, and our eyes are opened” (176). In “A Bush Section”, by contrast, all is “Ruined, forlorn, and blank” (16). This blankness rather points to a distinct sense of *absence*, as we saw repeatedly in *The Godwits Fly*, where Eliza observes how “‘Paekakariki’, [is] a Maori word meaning ‘The perch of the green parrakeets’. But no green wings broke the air there anymore. . .” (33). What “A Bush Section” proposes though, is that what happens now is up to this seemingly innocent settler child. By being so explicit about this cleaning of the slate for colonisation, the poem does not simply endorse that moment, but offers a portentous foreshadowing of what will haunt the Pākehā from this moment onwards: the paradoxical attempt to find a utopian possibility in environmental destruction.

It is important to differentiate, for the purposes of this thesis, between settlers and colonisers. Very broadly, colonisers profit from the purposeful appropriation of land at the detriment of the existing indigenous people. Settlers, by contrast, are labourers who are

promised, by the colonisers, a bright future in return for hard work, and it is this latter category that Baughan invokes in “A Bush Section” by her use of the settler child. Arguably, because the settler child is the next generation, this sidesteps questions of agency or responsibility because, as previously noted, the settler child is “stuck” by circumstance. However, because colonisers and settlers prepared the way for modern-day Pākehā, responsibility for the environmental violence described in “A Bush Section” extends all the way to the present. Just as Elodie, in *The New Animals*, re-enacts colonialism, Baughan also implies that the settler child will repeat the violent behaviours of the ‘old world’, by “wield[ing] the axe or the fire” (97):

What change, O Changer! Wilt thou devise and decree?
Hail to the god-ship, O Thor! Good luck to the Arm with the Hammer!
Good luck to that little right arm! (192-194)

This idea of violence as synonymous with progress and industry is in line with the observation that, historically, “the people who have a ‘deep connection’ to nature are often the very people whose work transforms and – arguably – damages nature” (White qtd. in Calder 26-27). This reflects not only the settler’s paradox, but also the anxiety foundational to Pākehā relationship with place.

Indeed, if we recollect the context in which Baughan writes this poem, after her recent stay in Ormondville, in the Tararua district, the association with Scandinavian settlers becomes even more pronounced and adds to the realism of the poem’s projection of settler angst. Ormondville is near the centre of the seventy mile area of New Zealand that was inhabited by settlers from Scandinavia (Flavel 10). As recollected by the descendants of these settlers, “[t]he dream of a future garden of paradise helped to console believers who had to live for decades amid such scenes of destruction, with constant fear of forest fires” (6). Baughan’s moment of environmental destruction, in “A Bush Section”, then, attempts to

evoke a real experience for settlers involved in the bush clearing of the nineteenth century. By reading back, there is an opportunity to contemplate not only how much this period of New Zealand's history still remains in contrast to the "Pure New Zealand" (Calder 22) image propagated for tourism purposes, but also, how literary evidence suggests that settlers often suffered in the undertaking of the colonial quest.

It is interesting to note, then, that "A Bush Section" is written during a period of cultural shift in New Zealand and the birth of the literary "rural myth" (Kuzma 216). Baughan was writing in a time when industry was already flourishing, and where "censuses show that between 1891-1921 employment on the land diminished (due to revolutions in farming), while urban occupations . . . ballooned" (217). New Zealand's firm faith in the rural over the urban lifestyle, and the government's legislative backing of such a myth, demonstrates how "cities were associated with old world problems such as poverty, overcrowding and a wide range of social, political and moral ills The pastoral myth was attractive enough to over-ride the rapidly increasing urban reality" (217). While "A Bush Section" is hardly bucolic, the poem still confirms that this is a time where "writers portray[ed]. . . rural workers – farmers, stockmen, rabbiters and bush men – carving out a living by pitting themselves against the wilderness" (217). The difference is, though, "A Bush Section" concentrates on the moment – or the scene – of destruction and violence, rather than "productive, prosperous farmland with thriving townships" that are more commonly thought of in New Zealand's collective history (217). Reading back, the "rural myth" and the equally mythological image of "Pure New Zealand" can be viewed as evidence of the falsity of cultural memory. Baughan's scene emits an uncanny sensation of displacement that overlays any sense of New Zealand's pastoral history. It has been observed how Baughan layers "A Bush Section" with a "deliberately constructed atmosphere of insidious threat" (Harris 131). The art of the early twentieth century also looks back at this moment in New Zealand's

history almost obsessively, with a penchant for paintings of dead trees and burnt landscapes (Dunn). In the early twentieth century, both art and literature suggest that the “Burnt Bush” (Baughan 236) seems to be ingrained in New Zealand’s cultural memory as a form of trauma rather than rural myth.

This is relevant, here, because “A Bush Section”, with its realism in its evocation of the moment of environmental destruction that accompanies the colonising project, can be read as a subversion of such myths at the very point of their formation. This reading highlights the anxiety that ensues from the settler’s paradox: in order to make this place home, the settler must wreak violence upon that land in attempt to shape the country into a commodity. Thus, “A Bush Section” instead establishes a very explicit contrast between civilisation versus nature. Nature, thus far in the poem, has been subject to terrible violence, has been burnt, mapped out, and has been sectioned off with borders in order to create a commodity for the industrious settler. The scene is so bare that Baughan seems to ask, what now? “A Bush Section” suggests that there is the potential for a utopian possibility to arise from environmental destruction, however, Baughan also implores her reader to wonder, will the benefactors of past injustice repeat the violence that is foundational to the settler’s paradox? This is the reason for the character of Thor, the witness, and interpreter, the seeker of life, the “little Questioner,” and therefore the instigator for moving beyond this first ominously empty scene that Baughan has created, and into the action of the poem (162). Looking forward, the movement from “Green Bush to the Moa, Burnt Bush to the resolute Settler!” proclaims that the future will always be tainted with the past (194).

Part II: The Significance of the Settler Child

Stories are compasses and architecture; we navigate by them, we build our sanctuaries and our prisons out of them, and to be without a story is to be lost in the vastness of a world that spreads out in all directions like arctic tundra or sea ice. . . Which means that place is a story, and stories are geography. . .

(Rebecca Solnit qtd. in *Extraordinary Anywhere* 8)

The idea that place is a story and that people need stories to make sense of their place in the world is something we found repeatedly in *The Godwits Fly*, where Hyde describes writers of the early twentieth century as “knowing little of [this country’s] story or cultural past except what, unconsciously hungry for some background, we were able to invent” (vii). The psychology and spirituality that Baughan assigns to the shaping of her character, Thor, is directly attached to the idea that people instinctually need stories in order to survive. Like Solnit’s “vastness of a world that spreads out in all directions,” Baughan places the settler child into a similarly existentially threatening scene. Now she introduces the human element to show the potential to “build our sanctuaries and our prisons” out of stories. Through the ability to perceive, interpret, and create, people make places just as places shape people. In the colonial context, this seemingly sympathetic notion becomes uncannily linked to the idea of anxiety as attached to identity, belonging, and place, and especially Pākehā belonging, because as Baughan has shown, the moment of settlement is one of violence and destruction. Reading back, when we consider this aspect of “A Bush Section” in light of Hyde’s notion that people must “invent” stories to make sense of place that they otherwise do not understand, then the stories that Pākehā tell about nature become a psychological necessity for forming a sense of identity. Indeed, the second part of the poem is about identity as it introduces Thor, its protagonist. The focus is on the ebb and flow of emotion, while the

grandeur of nature dominates its human inhabitant in a place that is strewn with the sublimity of literature's romantic predecessors. Thor's perception and interpretation of this place become central. Indeed, the word "blank" also implies that settler society is immature – and as we will see "raw" (17). And yet these ideas also imply potential, or that Thor represents a society ripe for shaping, "scarcely as yet in the making. . . blank" (15-16). Perhaps ominously, given the desolate scene, Thor is open for the forces of this place to work upon him. To exist in this place, he is compelled to make sense of it with stories, via the omniscient descriptions of the narration, evidencing myth-making or "[r]e-creat[ing]," which becomes an important theme of "A Bush Section" (183).

Baughan has the seemingly innocent settler child take up that place left absent by the act of bush clearing. Just as Hyde has Eliza represent the creative artist in *The Godwits Fly*, exhibiting a power "which slips through the eyes of all children. . . but which is only rarely held and formulated" (72), Baughan has Thor symbolically "able to represent the transcendentalist emphasis on the naïve, child-like, untutored vision as the direct route to the Divine" (Harris 115). And she does so to uncanny effect. Thor absorbs and reflects his surroundings, embodying "the Burnt Bush within and without thee," implying that his character will grow to be affected by this moment and continue to carry the traces of that tension (236). Thus, Baughan's use of language plays with the idea of Thor's displacement from his Scandinavian ancestry. Like we saw in *The New Animals*, through Elodie's instinctual adaptation required for her own pioneering project, and even *The Godwits Fly*, when Eliza observes how cultural holidays are out of step with the seasons of her geographical reality, a sense of warping of identity and the need for adaptation emphasise the physical and psychological displacement of the settler child. Even Thor's name becomes altered, or mispronounced: "Little 'Thor Rayden', twice-orphan'd son of a drunkard" is actually "Thorold von Reden, the last of a long line of nobles" (21-23). The implication is

that Thor's old world inheritance is as much an encumbrance and a source of pride. The bearer of a name associated with a grand past in a foreign land is now responsible for menial farm chores. The fact that the poem is written in English places one more cultural step between the settler child and their own ancestry and history.

Further, Thor's "raw farm" is hardly bucolic (17), and Baughan imagines the colonial appropriation of this place in anti-pastoral terms. The Wordsworthian engagement with colloquial language, such as "Perch'd" (19), "finish'd" (20), and "wash'd" (21), coupled with the descriptions of the menial work that Thor carries out, enhances the uncanny elements of "A Bush Section" by making the literary familiar simultaneously unfamiliar. The farm is still romanticised in its miniaturisation in comparison to the grand landscape, a "raw little farm on the edge of the desolate hillside, / Perch'd on the brink, overlooking the desolate valley" (17-18). But that "insidious threat" (Harris 131) still lingers: the "larkspur" mentioned in the poem is commonly known as poisonous to both humans and cattle (25). The poetic tone becomes uncanny when what should be an idyllic scene is placed – or displaced – in a location that *seems* to be without history. The domestic and pastoral tasks are contrasted with this "desolate" (17), "disconsolate" (26) place, one that has more post-apocalyptic features than anything else. It is hard to imagine living beings existing here. But perhaps more importantly, what promises to become an idyllic scene, "so gratefully green" (25), is shown to actually have a history prior to the settler, attested by the "haunting cry. . . [of the] morepork" (123) as well as by the extinction of the "Moa" (194). This "raw little farm" (17), symbolically "[p]erch'd on the brink" (18), is exposed as having a recently violent past, as well as being haunted by an indigenous cultural past and also an ancestral past that lingers in the memory of the settler.

As I have suggested, "A Bush Section" does not straightforwardly advocate civilisation – and by extension the colonial project – due to the unnatural portrayal of nature

that follows the violence of the bush fire. This is a place where “billows [are] arrested” and the “currents stay’d” (28). Even the image of mist attempting to entrap the stars conveys a sinister warping of nature, mirroring the position of dislocation – both physical and psychological – inherent in the settler experience. Paula Green concurs, stating that “[t]his is a world slightly off-kilter, hard to read in its multiple movements and fixedness, and in which it is even harder to repair disorientation of self” (46). The idea of this sense of displacement, this being “out of step and season,” is emotively uncanny, and yet this is the place of the settler child, and by extension later generations of Pākehā as well (Calder 191).

The paradoxical tensions within the poem are mirrored by its form. The manner in which the poem accelerates and slows down emphasises the instability of Thor’s situation. At times, it slips back into shorter lines, reinforcing ideas at the same time as repeating them and therefore adding to the sense of monotony, and futility, of this place. After the introduction of Thor, this temporal stasis is contrasted with the actual passage of time: “Day after day, / The hills stand out in the sky, / The splinters stand on the hills” (28-30). Here, the stagnancy of the scene is reiterated, this time, from the perspective of the “low little hut of the settler” (38). The repetition and negatives enhance the sense of barrenness of the place that Baughan has us imagine thus far, both in terms of its physicality and fecundity: “In the paddocks the logs lie prone. / The prone logs never arise, / the erect ones never grow green” (31-33). The implications of infertility associated with the extinction of the native bush heighten the sense of a lack of future development or growth.

Baughan has portrayed the stagnancy of the scene carefully so as to emphasise the contrast of the movement and action, to enhance the sense of immediacy, and to include the reader in the lines that follow:

Yet, see! past the cow-bails,
 Down, deep in the gully,
 What glimmers? What silver
 Streaks the grey dusk?
 'Tis the River, the River! Ah, gladly Thor thinks of the River,
 His playmate, his comrade,
 Down there all day (40-46)

This pivotal moment in the poem, where the barren, monotonous, lifelessness is contrasted with movement, communication, and thought, marks the first notable shift in the tone and feeling evoked by "A Bush Section." Baughan even addresses the reader, "Yet, see!," imploring them to look further into the imaginary, poetic place she has created, positing that perception can change the feeling of a place and incite hope. The omniscient narrator of the poem includes Thor's thoughts through free indirect discourse. The dreariness of "all day" (47) is replaced by a sense of joyous security that the river flows, that something is alive. Given the setting, these living things are more pronounced.

Baughan emphasises the contrasting ebb and flow as the pace of the poem increases and a playful sense of rhyme is introduced. The use of a metaphor of domestic industry adds a distinctly human air to the lines: "Lively glancing, adventurously speeding, / Busy and bright as a needle of knitting" (50-51). A sequence of prepositions associated with the river's movement also echoes an earlier part of the poem, as what was "along . . . down . . . over . . . through (8-9) is now "in . . . out . . . over . . . under" (52). Even the oppressive logs cannot stop the movement of the river as they "helplessly trail in its waters" (54). However, as adaptation and change are inevitable, the logs that were previously mourned for their decimation, and resembled dead soldiers, are now seen as "jamm'd-up jetsam, . . . rooted snags" (55). The past is quickly jettisoned for the promise of progress.

Yet there is something ominous in the optimism, the life-filled joy, of the action and movement of the river. Indeed, the “leaf-boat” (56), named in both Māori and English, is so similar to life-boat that the idea of an escape comes to mind, as does the idea that perhaps it was Thor who made and “[l]aunch’d” the apparatus (57). Thor proves able to take native components and uses them for industrious means, however, he also shows an inclination for “running away and away” (59). Mobility comes into play as a defining factor, as it does for Eliza in *The Godwits Fly*, because the settler child’s world is limited by external factors and inequities, physical and economic borders that shape who they are. In “A Bush Section,” the child must embrace this burnt out place and make a home from environmental destruction because he has no choice. And thus, the river is also a release, and escape, from the isolation of this place:

On, ever onward and on!
 The hills remain, the logs and the gully remain,
 Changeless as ever, and still;
 But the River changes, the River passes. . .
 It stirs, it is quick, ‘tis alive! (62-65, 67)

The idea of escape lingers on the fringes of the poem’s meaning even as Thor enjoys the movement of the river while remaining in place.

Thor seems to crave knowledge and a connection to things “alive”. His subjective interpretation of this place governs whether it becomes what Solnit terms his “sanctuar[y]. . . or [his] prison.” After attention turns away from the river, the possibility of escape from this place is immediately relocated to another, more civilised, context: the train, symbol of industry, progress, and the taming of a recently colonised country. Again, Baughan seems to address her reader as the omniscient narrator addresses Thor: “Listen! Listen! . . .” (70). The pause allows the imagination to take in the next few lines, to imagine the distance and allow

the space to again become vast. What could be “[f]ar away, down the voiceless valley, / league-long spaces of empty air,” and make a “thunder[ous]” sound (71-2, 73)? Along with Thor, the reader is instructed to look, and this time the smoke is not oppressive, and the train is “an airy river of riches” (84). Elements transform simply because of perception and imagination.

Again, the mood and tone changes, as the train passes out of view and hearing, allowing the reader to comprehend the ebb and flow of feeling in this isolated place: “Floating, fleeing, flying . . . / Thor catches his breath . . . Ah, flown!” (90-91). The disappointment, and downward turn of tone, is palpable. The speaker comments, “The Voice and the Vision are gone –” (94). The observation asserts a connection between visual stimulation and creative thought that borders on the realm of the spiritual. The following two lines, “It is gone. And the evening deepens. / Darker the grey air grows.” (109-110), emphasise not only the sense of existential isolation, but also the deepening of the poem and the deepening of thought. As Calder observes, “[d]eeper’ is a very important word for . . . Baughan. It can mean more remote, further back in time, more profound, or all three qualities dovetail with the deepest thing of all: Nature” (14). The darkening and deepening of the poem foreshadow something mystical. The imagination – expressed through language – is shown to be continuously at work, alert to any movement. The humanized “Stars creep silently out,” and remind the settler child that there is much to learn, know, and much they will never know (115). Thor finally speaks aloud to ask of the stars, “‘Oh, where do you hide in the day?’” (116). Otherwise, the thoughts throughout the poem are a blend of the narrational persona, Thor, and even nature: a blending of thoughts that echo the transcendentalist ‘me, you, us’ sentiments of Baughan’s preface.

In the following lines Baughan engages with the senses once again, to remind her reader that this place is indeed alive, with “moist air” (118) and the “spicy breath of the

young break-wind macrocarpa” (119). While this tree is not native and has been planted by the settler as a wind break, it still has “breath” that melds with the “acrid, familiar aroma of the slowly-smouldering logs” (120). The final lines of this section of the poem summarise this sentiment, as the poet imagines the call of the morepork as especially meant for Thor, and translates this native bird’s “wistful, haunting” (123) cry into both Maori and English languages: “*Kia toa!* Be Brave!” (24). We are now approximately at the centre of the poem, its deepest point, where “Night is come. / Now the gully is hidden, the logs and the paddock are all hidden” (125). However, rather than adding to the sense of isolation, the imagination is still at work to enhance and create stories that attempt explain the natural wonders they observe. “Brightly the Stars shine out!...” gives a sense of joy in an otherwise unnerving situation. Furthermore, the earth is mirrored in the sky, and it is Thor who seems to be narrating this sequence, where “The sky is a wide black paddock, without any fences, / The Stars are its shining logs” (128-129). This is an exercise in the capacity for mythmaking, or an example of the need for story to make sense of existence. Interestingly, Baughan seems to pit the earthly against the heavenly, as the stars overcome become “[t]angled” by the “mists of the mountain” (136). As the poem develops, it is Thor’s perception and interpretation that recreates the world in front of him, just as the reader deciphers meaning from the words gathered on the page.

In keeping with the theme of mobility and escape, Thor, once again associates the idea of movement with freedom:

The poor earthly logs, in the wan of the paddocks,
 Never can move, they must stay;
 But over the heavenly pastures, the bright, live logs of the heavens
 Wander at will, looking down on our paddocks and logs, and pass on

(153-156)

Adopting a spiritual perspective, Thor sees the heavens as a place of freedom and earth as a place of restriction. He addresses his “Star-logs” (134) in personal and affectionate tones: “O friendly and beautiful Live-Ones! / Coming to us for a little, / Then travelling and passing, while here with our logs we remain” (157-159). Thor questions the stars in the heavens that mirror the world below. The bush section in which Thor resides penetrates his psychology. The logs dominate his existence and his identity so much so that they become reflected in the heavens. Thor creates a crude religion as a way to make sense of his situation. Just like Thor has “the Burnt Bush within and without thee,” the decimated bush, now logs, are reflected in the heavens.

Thus, Thor’s inquisitive mind leads to questioning and resolving the world around him with story in order to make sense of his existence and create a sense of identity and belonging – or not belonging – in this place. The transcendental interpretation of this human penchant for creativity is certainly influenced by Walt Whitman, with Baughan’s “sense that the frontier has burst the boundaries of the Old World culture, the Sovereign Romantic self is the natural agent for of building anew” (Newton 76). In Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (1855), the self philosophically creates the world around them in poetic fashion: “One world is aware, and by far the largest to me, and that is myself” (60). “A Bush Section” offers a similar possibility to the settler too. However, Baughan highlights the negative of this concept, where Thor will inevitably embody the “Burnt Bush,” by absorbing the absolute physicality of his situation. Stafford and Williams state that “[t]he strangeness of this [star] image reflects the paucity of expression available to the child, and to the colonial poet” (211). The poem thus far has actually taken the reader to the deep centre of personal expression, represented in the night-time version of this place of decimation, where the child must make sense of his existence and find some kind of beauty and hope in order to psychologically survive. Out of necessity, Thor sees this lifeless place reverberate into the heavens, just as the

“Burnt Bush” reverberates within himself: he finds his version of belonging through a warped and decimated version of nature. The irony is in the realisation that Thor is being shaped by such grim surroundings. Thus, I disagree with Stafford and Williams’ view that “the clumsiness and inappropriateness of the image of stars as logs in a burnt-out paddock is overt and challenging” (211). While the poem does express a moment “stuck between acculturation and language” (211), the image of a small child faced with the grandeur of the stars as logs is at once beautiful and terrifying in the way it encapsulates the sheer vastness of the decimation in daylight and translates them into something simultaneously mystifying and overt in its portrayal of sublime uncanniness.

Part III: The Power and the Confines of Language

Contextually, Thor is trying to make sense of his place in this world, this bush section, set in the crown colony of New Zealand. And thus, taking into account Thor’s Scandinavian ancestry, there is considerable irony in Green’s comment about the poem that “it is even harder to repair disorientation of self” (46). The poem now becomes more concerned with the settler’s displacement and their struggle to articulate this new world in old world terms. The language even resembles the middle English translation of *Beowulf*, and other Old Norse poetry. “Conning” (168) is linked to the Norse word for King, and also refers to the steering of a ship. The alliteration and end rhyme “counting” (168) and “clasping” (168) also resembles the poetry of the Vikings. In this moment, “here to-night” (167), in this place “unmade” by man with the bush clearing fire, we are now privy to a world “scarcely as yet in the making” as we witness Thor perceiving, interpreting, and then re-creating the world with words and stories that bring traces of the old world to the new. This not only demonstrates the

power of language, but also its confines, because Thor can only see this new place in light of his connection to elsewhere.

Not unlike the narrational shifts in both *The New Animals* and *The Godwits Fly*, the third section of “A Bush Section” is marked by another significant shift in poetic voice, or persona. The narrator – ambiguous thus far – changes tone from a seemingly amoral commentary to a voice that clearly replies to Thor in a more emotive fashion, reverberating, pulsating, and using anachronistic, biblical, language to build a compelling crescendo of rhythm and mythical meaning. This use of archaic cadence becomes subversive of the power of language itself, and in particular what is inherited – the aforementioned old world language – and how that legacy affects identity and place now. In this light, there is no new start in the freshly burnt landscape of a recently colonised country. Through their use of language, the settler is haunted by the past of a country to which they may never have been. “A Bush Section” reflects the tension between the old and the new, and culminates in the apotheosis-like ending that emphasises the human potential – and even necessity – of wreaking godlike or even revolutionary destruction in order to bring progress.

Furthermore, like Adam’s *The New Animals* and Hyde’s *The Godwits Fly*, “A Bush Section” relies upon this shift in perspective in order to really engage with, and unsettle, the reader’s notions of perception and subjectivity. It is Baughan’s “attempt to defamiliarize the familiar” that engages the reader, unsettling expected forms of narration, so that even the historical use of the language itself comes into consideration as the narrator begins to overtly dominate the poem (Harris 128). So far, Baughan has set the grim scene, then introduced Thor who articulates his place in this sectioned off part of the world that is strewn with mythology and language from the old world. Now Baughan has her narrator reply to Thor, “Ah, little questioner!” (162), and refers to him as “Son of the Burnt Bush” (163), which not only denotes his physical living situation, but also suggests this place has the power to shape

identity. As a child living amongst the colonial land clearing, Thor is shown to be trapped by circumstance, “Straightly pent ‘twixt its logs and ridges” (164). In order to survive he must engage in “monotonous labours” (165). Thus far the poem has been a reflection of Thor’s body and mind, “Strictly tether’d and tied” (166). Yet in Whitmanesque style Baughan’s narrator declares,

One delight have you miss’d, and that one of more import than any:
 More quick than the River, more fraught than the Mail-Train,
 More certain to move than the stars in their courses,
 The most radiant wonder, the rarest excitement of all.

What is it? Oh, what can it be?

-It is you, little Thor! ‘Tis yourself! (171-176, original emphasis)

This excerpt directly refers to subjectivity and individualism. Also, the passage can be read as confirming the idea that, by necessity, the settler child must make sense of this place: Thor must own this place with language or else be trapped, “stuck” in despair.

And thus, “A Bush Section” can be read as an exploration into the power of language to re-enact colonialism by replacing what was already there. Thor certainly cannot comprehend this himself as he is “Little, feeble, ignorant, destitute” (177), even as he is also “Wondering, questioning, conscious, alive!” (178). Baughan makes clear the idea that Thor is ignorant of the history of this bush section, and yet has power:

A Mind that moves ‘mid the motionless matter:
 Mid the logs, a developing Soul:
 From the battle-field bones of a ruin’d epoch,
 Life, the Unruin’d, freshly upspringing.
 Life, Re-creator of life! (179-183)

Indeed, reading from our current place, the “battle-field . . . of a ruin’d epoch” could refer to the present as well as the past. There is the sense of the settler’s displacement, of a

disconnection, from their cultural history and past sense of place. Yet there is also gravity of the moment of colonisation, the decimation of native bush, and potentially also of indigenous culture, as the “wistful, haunting cry of. . .[the] morepork” reminds the reader. Thor, as the “Re-creator of life!,” is also the benefactor of the violence of colonialism. The very next few lines of the following section reinforce Thor’s Adamic position:

“Yea, spark of Life!
 Begotten, begetter of changes;
 Yea, morn of Man,
 Creature design’d to create (184-187)

And yet there is still the very distinct notion that Thor’s ancestral history bleeds into the present, that historical acts of violence could be repeated: “To this, thy disconsolate kingdom – / What change, O Changer! wilt thou devise and decree?” (190-191). Baughan could even be commenting on the megalomania of this situation, where the settler child takes on the significance of a god. In this light, these lines can be read as portentous, rather than vindications of settler activity.

I have argued thus far for the subversiveness of “A Bush Section” and its ability to express an underlying sense of anxiety regarding the colonial roots of Pākehā. The line, “Green Bush to the Mōa, Burnt Bush to the resolute Settler” (194), is not only a powerful example of erasing Māori presence through a displaced reference to natural flora and fauna, but also reiterates the previous allusion to the end of an “epoch” (181), an extinction of an age, and the “dawn[ing]” (189) of a new age. The poem has not denied the brutality that has led up to this moment. Stafford and Williams state that “‘A Bush Section’ comes to a conclusion that is conservative and conventional, with a denial of the land’s past and a privileging of the colonising project” (211), however, the conclusion of “A Bush Section” can also be read as overtly satirical in tone. This notion is not only underlined by the

aforementioned uncanniness of “a world off-kilter,” but also the way Baughan plays with the archaic language (Green 46). The references to notoriously violent Viking exploits and the symbolic use of Scandinavian ancestry place Thor in the position of an old world conqueror of mythical status: “wilt thou wield the axe of fire?” (97). If “the landscape will be remade in the future by the will of the pioneers . . . [then] this future means the artificial creation of a European landscape and the formation of a European culture” (Stafford and Williams 211). However, “A Bush Section” proposes that this European culture will be both hard won and forever displaced, “off kilter,” and wrought from repeated forms of violence. Indeed, “the form of Baughan’s poem is . . . at odds with its message: the poem has sprawl, energy and freedom, all of which both energise and undermine the predictive tenor of the verse” (Stafford and Williams 211). The energy of the poem *purposefully* jars with the archaic forms that Baughan adopts to reflect the displacement of the settler and their language. The old-world myths almost yell out from the page, “What art thou? Where hast thou come from? / How far, how far! wilt thou go?” (239-240).

While “A Bush Section” portrays the “tumult of violence of settlement and . . . play[s] it back as spiritual dynamism,” there is another level of meaning, where storytelling mimics mythmaking and is a necessity for psychological survival as much as the physical exploitation of the land is necessary for economic survival (Newton 79). Baughan has the narrator reply to Thor with an ecstatic forcefulness in the final section. This voice that now dominates the poem can be read as voicing an epiphany: it is as though it is Thor’s own self reflected back at him just as the logs are reflected in the heavens. But, in this uncanny circumstance, the voice can also be read as mocking his situation. Baughan builds this poetic momentum by referring to mythology, archaic language, and biblical symbolism, which jar against the realism established at the beginning of the poem, so that patterns repeat and a warped, uncanny version of the old world is played out. We are again reminded that we are

privity to a moment, “Here in the night, face to face” (235), when we witness Thor facing this place and his own identity. The sight of him, “Standing, small and alone,” reminds us of his innocence and vulnerability (237). Similarly, the assertion of “Bright Promise on Poverty’s threshold” (238) contrasts Thor’s potential and vulnerability, making the final line even more ominous: “How far, how far! wilt thou go?” (240).

Thus, “A Bush Section” can be read as portentous and subversive, rather than a vindication of settler activity and the colonial quest. How Thor perceives his situation is dictated by the old world of Scandinavian mythology and by the English language. Language is shown to be both powerful and confining. “A Bush Section” conveys a place where borders and boundaries physically confine its inhabitants, much like the limits that language and mythology place on Thor. His connection to this place is also foundational to his identity. However, Thor is “stuck” in this place. Baughan makes clear the idea that the “Burnt Bush” is ingrained within the settler child. When Thor is perceiving, interpreting, and then re-creating the world with words and stories, he is also adapting the old ways from the old world into a new place – even re-colonising the space - one that is tainted with a violent history of its own, and that is now ingrained into the newly forming Pākehā culture that Thor is creating.

Part IV: Nature versus Civilisation

“A Bush Section” offers a poetic representation not only of the moment of colonial appropriation of indigenous bush land, but also of the settlers’ psychological and economic necessity that requires imagining belonging in relation to nature. This propensity is also found in various forms in both Adam’s *The New Animals* and Hyde’s *The Godwits Fly*. As

previously ascertained, “A Bush Section” highlights how place is intimately connected with one’s sense of identity and belonging or not belonging. The poem also suggests the settler’s paradox that new life can only spring from the violence of environmental devastation, which seems foundational for the “syndrome” associated with the Pākehā connection to nature.

In *The Settler’s Plot*, Calder explains similar ideas as tensions between “narratives of improvement” and “ruination” (135), the latter intrinsically tied to the “idealisation of nature” (138). Giving the example of Herbert Guthrie-Smith’s *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station* (1921), where the farmer author questions “have I then for sixty years desecrated God’s earth and dubbed it improvement?”, Calder describes his individual agency as “part of a larger pattern that is not of his making, a pattern that shapes him” (142). Applying these ideas to “A Bush Section”, reinforces the argument that the poem offers a subversion of settler activity and is not simply advocating colonialism. Thus, the question it asks, “how far! wilt thou go?”, expresses the position of contradiction that the settler finds. “A Bush Section” aligns with Calder’s comment that “our blind faith in progress ends in environmental degradation – not paradise made, but paradise lost” (135). I posit that Baughan’s keen evocation of the moment of violence and environmental devastation, the precursor to the hard life that awaits the settler, highlights psychological, economic, and ethical tensions that continue to haunt Pākehā literature all the way through to *The New Animals* (2017). Just as Baughan highlights the notion that Thor has the potential to repeat the violence of his ancestors’ mythological past, and of the coloniser’s recent past, so too does Adam’s character, Elodie, show that Pākehā survival potentially hinges on repeating earlier acts of colonisation. We have already seen that, “for Pākehā. . . the too-easy equation between loving the natural environment and a simplistic sense of belonging. . . can end up effectively dodging more challenging understandings of how [Pākehā] can, and still do, occupy this place” (Horrocks and Lacey 11). By reading back to “A Bush Section,” from our

twenty-first century place, the thread of anxiety – the reason for that “dodging” – becomes more visible: that to belong here comes at the cost of cultural, ethical, and ecological violence.

Calder discusses these contradictions that pervade Pākehā culture, even the tension evident in the “hesitant compound of a nation we call ‘Aotearoa New Zealand’ and whose very name suggests two contradictory injunctions about the past” (71). Ideologies such as New Zealand as “100% pure” is full of “brazen ironies” because environmental statistics say the opposite (137). The tendency to ignore as “follies” of the settler things like the environmental truth, along with the violence of New Zealand’s history and the decimation of nature, is exactly what “A Bush Section” does not do (137). It is these contradictions, stemming from the settler’s paradox, which cause the sense of anxiety regarding identity and belonging that Baughan expressed over one hundred years ago, and that Calder identified as contributing to the “syndrome” he calls “Pakeha turangawaewae.”

When we encounter “A Bush Section” in light of the more recent texts the connection between the sense of anxiety in relation to Pākehā identity and belonging becomes even more pronounced in the earlier text. What could appear as a vindication of colonialism becomes a chance to re-examine not only how we read “A Bush Section”, but also how we interpret absence, blankness, isolation, mobility, nature versus civilisation, all themes that are inherent to the texts in this thesis. Steer, in his review of *The Settler’s Plot*, claims that “organizing the book in spatial terms blurs any clear argument about how and why settler literature might have changed over time, and what this might say about changes to settler identity” (207). Indeed, reading “A Bush Section” from our current twenty-first century place and in light of newer New Zealand writing, alters how we see forms of Pākehā belonging and not belonging. Although Pākehā literature perpetually undergoes change, a persistent thread of anxiety does seem to stem from the same colonial dilemmas that “A Bush Section” articulates. The poem

identifies a physical and symbolic place where perception, interpretation, and expression with language shape identity, subversively exemplifying how language controls how we are able to see the world around us, how traces of “The Burnt Bush within and without” remain.

Chapter Three: Conclusion

“A Bush Section,” like *The Godwits Fly* and *The New Animals*, is an expression of place that is based upon real moments, and places, in New Zealand history. Baughan recreates the poetic feeling of the ground zero of the coloniser’s appropriation of indigenous land, a place that symbolises violence on cultural, ecological, and ethical levels, into which she places the figure of the settler child. Thor is not only symbolic of innocence, but also of inevitable hardship and the potential to repeat the violence of the past in the name of progress. The ebb and flow of emotion that follows the structure of the poem echoes the contradictory position of the settler, or the settler’s paradox, wherein cultural, ethical, and environmental issues inevitably come into play. The “haunting cry of some lonely, far-away morepork, [says] / ‘*Kia toa! Be Brave!*’” (124), reminding the reader that this place was not unoccupied, nor was it a virgin land ripe for improvement: this bush section was once another place altogether, a place perhaps that Pākehā can never fully locate in the imagination. Perhaps that is what Calder identifies as a “syndrome.” There are undoubtedly reasons why “A Bush Section” is seen to offer colonial resolve by distancing Māori culture from the settler, however, these ideas can also be read as subversive and portentous, rather than as vindications, not only because of the obvious evocation of violence that feeds the thread of anxiety that runs through the poem, but because of its keen sense of *absence* of Māori.

Ominously, the Pākehā connection to nature can be read as starting directly in the poetic moment Baughan creates. Just as Hyde expressed in *The Godwits Fly*, the connection

that Pākehā feel to nature is warped and compartmentalised because nature itself is in a constant state of acculturation where our parks and reserves are often a simulacra of what once would have been. By reading “A Bush Section” retrospectively, we find that same kind of thread of anxiety also runs through *The New Animals*, where the effects of a consumerist society not only impact the ecological state of the planet, but also the human psyche. Indeed, then, “A Bush Section” takes us back even further to perhaps the beginning of that sense of deep anxiety stemming from the settlers’ psychological and economic necessity that explains the pre-occupation with imagining Pākehā belonging in relation to nature. This notion culminates in Baughan’s evocative idea of “the Burnt Bush within and without thee,” because not only is it by ontological necessity that people shape place with language, but also language and the physicality of places also shape people. The “Burnt Bush” becomes symbolic of the anxiety Pākehā feel in their connection to nature: their place to stand is foundationally uncanny, it is “A Bush Section”, which is why Calder’s hypothesis of “Pakeha turangawaewae” as a “syndrome” can be traced to Baughan’s poetic moment in “A Bush Section” – and why that can be so unsettling.

**Conclusion:
It all starts and ends with ecological disaster**

The attempt to trace the expression of anxiety in relation to belonging and place evident in New Zealand writing has also involved an exploration of what it means to encounter a past text in light of more recent writing. The three texts under discussion seem to go full circle, starting and ending in ecological disaster, which highlights the idea of an underlying theme within New Zealand literature that can be attributed to the ambiguous position of Pākehā and their relationship with nature and belonging. We can view the portrayal of colonial land clearing in “A Bush Section” as representing the starting point of that ecological devastation that, surprisingly, culminates with the psychological, ecological, and existential devastation in the twenty-first century setting of *The New Animals*. By reading the three texts of this thesis together, there is a link between the violence of Baughan’s moment of settlement, the colonial structures explored in Hyde’s account of early twentieth century – a time where “New Zealanders . . . occupy the positions in our societies that were created by the labour of the early settlers” (Wolfe and Avril Bell, qtd. in Mathewman) – and Adam’s reaction to and rejection of consumerist society in twenty-first century writing, expressed by the colonisation of Rubbish Island. All three texts share, in various degrees, an evocation of a sense of deep anxiety with regards to the preoccupation of imagining Pākehā belonging in relation to nature.

To recap, the thread of anxiety that this thesis examines becomes even more pronounced when taking into account Alex Calder’s hypothesis of Pākehā tūrangawaewae. In *The Settler’s Plot*, Calder explains that his theory is based on “a ‘Settlement Studies’ perspective,” wherein the “basic premise is that the foundational problems, injustices and consequences of European settlement of this country will not disappear – though those problems can and often have been forgotten, underestimated or wished away” (x). Calder

states that for Pākehā New Zealanders “feeling good about nature equals belonging” (3). However, he also states that “[a]lmost everything seems questionable about this,” making his hypothesis of Pākehā tūrangawaewae as a “syndrome” that occurs when one actually has no place to stand, or the “more essential mode of belonging” that Pākehā imagine Māori have. However, by including more factors such as geographic, generational, and economical inequities, all three of the texts featured in this thesis elaborate on this “syndrome” by offering more forms of Pākehā tūrangawaewae. In turn, this gives a more nuanced reading of Calder’s hypothesis: a more rounded view behind the psychological necessity, that often comes from social and economic inequity, wherein the Pākehā must ‘invent’ stories, history, and a connection to nature in order to belong here. All three texts are concerned with the psychological and ontological insecurity that comes with the realisation that the real native New Zealand is just beyond the grasp of the Pākehā imagination: the settler’s relationship with nature and belonging starts with colonial violence and ecological devastation. Indeed, within *The New Animals*, Elodie’s shocking transformation can even be read as a psychotic reaction to the same cultural meta-narratives that tell Pākehā that, to belong here, they must have an instinctual affinity with nature. Through reading the three texts of this thesis together, it is clear that the idea of nature is never fully available to Pākehā, and that this is what recurs in literature as various kinds of anxiety and uncanny returns.

In *The New Animals*, Adam uses experimental structure and form to optimise the subversively unsettling impact the novel has upon its reader. It is a book of two halves, wherein Elodie is at first a rather flat, background character and representative of Generation Z. She ends up not only colonising Rubbish Island, but also the novel itself, becoming an overt and grotesque symbol for necessary and inevitable societal change. For Elodie, and by extension her generation, the consumerist society in which the other characters exist becomes uninhabitable. Simultaneously, this rejection of current social structures offers comment on

how unsettled society actually is. Generation X, represented by Carla, Duey, and Sharona, can feel the sense of anxiety with regards to belonging and place. Carla goes even deeper, adapting into an almost animalistic being, though she is trapped in the city and subconsciously traps herself with a deadly pit-bull, Doug. Generation X can remember the past and they know this restlessness has occurred before. But for Generation Z there is only a dystopian future. Elodie's position as Generation Z, and the contrasting positions of the other characters in *The New Animals*, highlight how Calder's gauge for what it means to be Pākehā seems to be limited to one economic and generational platform. Indeed, in light of this reading of *The New Animals*, any form of Pākehā identity must be understood as being far from singular: its forms are multifaceted, fragile, insubstantial and difficult to articulate.

Adam's use of Gothic elements enables an exploration of economic, political, and social inequity that supports the idea that anxiety is central to understanding the city and nature. Gentrification – an adapted form of colonisation – neoliberalism, consumerist society, and the overwhelming problem of waste all necessitate adaptation, and the emergence of 'new animals' able to move forward amidst environmental destruction. Adam's metafictional elements also highlight the adaptation of stories, memories, and even history, for the characters' own purposes. Often without the weight of ethics, this apathy can be read as a distancing from history for urban Pākehā of the twentieth century, and becomes an example of "newly unrestrained capitalism, restructuring itself and the world that it is embedded into" (Lawn 31). *The New Animals* posits that even when the old world is rejected, this restructuring will continue, and this adaptation in order to survive will warp into the grotesque, as exemplified by Elodie and the almost science-fiction restructuring of the novel itself, where meaning eventually collapses and is displaced by the fantastically grotesque events of part two.

Indeed, Adam's use of the Gothic elevates and accelerates the sense of anxiety regarding identity and place. There is also the constant underlying commentary that real economic factors contribute to social unrest and issues with mental health. Carla is trapped by physical, psychological, and economic restraints. Her flat is structurally and psychologically insubstantial, reflecting her sense of ontological insecurity, where realism and Gothic intersect, indicating that broader economic processes are remaking the city and its inhabitants. The characters are living within societal bonds where "[a]ll of them thought they had free will, that they were really walking for themselves, stepping out, but Carla new. Everyone was just responding to stimulus" (99). As a revolt against the society that traps her, Carla instinctually adapts.

In *The New Animals*, the urge to renounce the city that Carla has felt throughout the first part of the novel is then realised through a narrative takeover that shocks its reader, in Janet Frame-like fashion, from an urban to a marine setting, foregrounding human-nature interactions and tensions stemming from colonial environmental destruction. Carla notices how "[t]hey were all changing, getting bigger, taking up space where the things they wiped out used to be" (99). Elodie's rejection of the city, then, can be read as her adaptation to survive, a necessity we find the characters struggling with in *The Godwits Fly*, and something presented as the only option for the inhabitants of "A Bush Section." In this light, it becomes clear how *The New Animals* taps directly into the world-wide issue of waste, and insists that it is too late to go back, from a uniquely colonial perspective. Elodie does find a place to stand: "This place. This place. . . she was the coloniser of this new land" (212). With the current state of the planet, this subversion of the foundational tensions in New Zealand society are shown to stem from our colonial past and can be traced all the way into the consumerist present. *The New Animals* insists that societal change is not only inevitable but is also already happening.

Whereas *The New Animals* features an instinctual urge to escape the city, *The Godwits Fly* is plagued with the instinctual urge to return home, a compulsion fuelled by the imagining of England as home even though the most fervent of imperialist characters, Augusta, has never been there. The idea of what it means to live in New Zealand is thus intrinsically tied to the idea of overseas, anticipating Elodie's instinctual compulsion in *The New Animals* to leave urban society for a marine setting. *The Godwits Fly* similarly explores the rejection of social constructs: by adhering, and not adhering, to social conventions, in addition to the restrictions imposed by economic, class, and gender inequities, the Hannays each end up isolated, alone, or lonely. Like we saw in *The New Animals*, the early twentieth century city in *The Godwits Fly* is a place that physically and ideologically imprisons its inhabitants. The native bush is ostensibly impossible to locate, and its only traces are found to be in stories, or remnants of nature and native elements that haunt the novel.

Hyde's rejection of nationalistic misogyny and of moral conformity offer alternative futures or ways of being that counter social structures of her time. By having the character of Augusta exemplify the absolute futility and accompanying dissatisfaction derived from always looking elsewhere, Hyde also rejects the nationalistic singular notion of Pākehā identity as something fixed or only being linked to England. The novel instead offers the children's stories as representative of the necessity for the settler to 'invent' ways of being here, stories that are inevitably tied to old world puritanical notions and haunted by the uncanny traces of native and indigenous New Zealand. As we found in *The New Animals*, the stories that shape identity are always changing and are not always reliable. Truth – like the native bush – Hyde suggests, is impossible to locate. But *The Godwits Fly* also asks who made up these stories we live by. The answers are found in how Hyde positions her characters in relation to mainstream Pākehā culture as living inauthentically within the bounds of society: Augusta, the dissatisfied imperialist; John, who is equally dissatisfied

despite his rejection of society; Carly, who is kept in childlike suspension thanks to her mother's puritanical outlook; Timothy, who is incapable of authentic love because he clings to an ideal of a woman who cannot exist; Simone, who accepts marriage and a godwit status even though she knows it's a false reality; and Eliza, who realises the futility of that existence and says "No, it's ourselves we reach for. . . our own undiscovered selves" (137). However, Eliza's more enlightened or authentic outlook leads to suffering and her position as the 'woman alone.' Thus, it proves impossible to live within the bounds of the 'invented' society, but paradoxically, it is also impossible to reject them without risking psychological, existential, and ontological well-being. When Eliza has a daydream-like conversation with Jesus, she asks him, "But don't You see, the way we live, everything, punishment, reward, system, all dwarf the stature – contraction, not expansion? Isn't man like a clenched fist, cramped, that of its own agonized irritability must hit out, probably at the wrong thing?" (91). Eliza's frustration is evident – she cannot make sense of the world let alone her place in it.

Hyde also positions mainstream Pākehā culture as dislocated, at a removal or distance from cultural security that links to ontological security, and that causes confusion for Eliza. In this regard, *The Godwits Fly* can be read as an early twentieth century response to the ecological effects of colonisation. The novel is highly aware of the environmental damage the colonial quest has caused, and how that is reflected in the lives of settler inhabitants, something magnified in "A Bush Section". This ecological stance is important for the subversion of any imaginary bucolic or pastoral sense of Pākehā history, which begins somewhere more like the place that Baughan creates in "A Bush Section".

Like *The New Animals* and *The Godwits Fly*, the poem exhibits a form of narrational shift where the seemingly amoral narrator actually speaks to the character, Thor, adding to the ominous tone of the poem, where archaic language begins to dominate the space, alluding to the confines of language. Baughan places Thor directly into the moment of violence that is

the bush clearing of early New Zealand. From here, Thor is caught between the old world and the new, ominously tainted with the symbolism of “[t]he Burnt Bush within and without”. He too offers impetus for the settler’s economic and psychological necessity to ‘invent’ a place to belong. However, the poem makes it clear that this belonging comes at great ecological and ethical cost: that the settler – no matter how innocent - is tainted by his circumstance. Thus, it is both beautiful and terrifying when Thor, a settler child standing alone in a burnt out bush section, sees the stars as cosmic logs reflected expansively in the heavens: Thor ‘inventing’ a crude religion to make sense of his place of a world in which he is the centre, a “Mind that moves ‘mid the motionless matter”. Yet he is also the “son of the Burnt Bush” and the one who has the potential to “wield the axe of fire”.

Thus, Baughan makes it clear that the moment of environmental destruction is synonymous with the moment of settlement. This means that Thor has the potential to keep repeating forms of colonial violence in order to continue to occupy this place, something that *The Godwits Fly* picks up on, and eerily, Elodie from *The New Animals*, overtly plays out. Elodie becomes a symbol of the adaptation required in the past, when environmental devastation laid the foundations for New Zealand society as it is today, but even more disturbingly, Elodie suggests the adaptation required to exist in the future. Read together, the three texts of this thesis become the perfect platform for exploring how the idea of nature is never fully available to Pākehā, and how this sense of belonging can only manifest itself as a “syndrome” that is difficult to articulate, and therefore repeatedly recurs in New Zealand literature as various kinds of anxiety and uncanny returns.

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