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Inherited Body

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
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Abstract

Narrative ethics is a useful tool for approaching New Zealand historical fiction about family history because it looks to the risks and losses of appropriating family for the author, their subjects, and readers. In the following critical analysis I discuss three recent New Zealand novels based on family historical narratives, each of which depict characters attempting to write their own stories within power structures that threaten to silence them: Alison Wong's *As The Earth Turns Silver* (2009), Paula Morris's *Rangatira* (2011), and Kelly Ana Morey's *Bloom* (2003).

For a writer a narrative ethics analysis ensures they acknowledge the ethical implications of their work, not just for their own family, but for collective understanding. My novel *Inherited Body* fictionalises an incident from my family's history about mental health and sits alongside a contemporary narrative that seeks to understand the possible causes of a psychotic break.

A narrative ethics analysis has highlighted my dual role as reader/critic and writer. Wayne C. Booth's discussion of narrative ethics emphasises the connection between writer, character and their readers. Adam Zachary Newton expands on this transactive connection and shows the ethical consequences of narrating story and fictionalising people, and the reciprocal claims connecting teller, listener, witness and reader in that process. As a reader, I took on an ethical responsibility to understand the texts, and as a writer, I attempted to understand the effect of my characters and readers of the book's content. Connecting my critical and creative components with a narrative ethics framework ensures that I see both sides of narrative ethics.

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**Critical Component: Silence, Appropriation and
(Mis)Remembering: A Narrative Ethics Analysis of
Alison Wong's *As The Earth Turns Silver* (2009),
Paula Morris's *Rangatira* (2011) and Kelly Ana
Morey's *Bloom* (2003)**

Introduction

The research for my critical component grew from my need, as a writer, to understand the ethical consequences of writing a family history, and the authorial decisions I make to communicate that history, especially in relation to mental health. Patrick, the son of Irish and German immigrants to Dunedin, New Zealand, was my great, great uncle. In 1926 Patrick suffered from a psychotic delusional episode and killed his best friend in the Railways Hotel in Dunedin. Patrick handed himself into police after the act, and after a trial where he was declared criminally insane, spent the rest of his life in Seacliff Asylum, north of Dunedin. Patrick's life was a family secret, only discovered when my mother started to investigate our family tree. Learning about Patrick sparked my curiosity as to the factors that lead to mental decline in men in the early twentieth century, what the mental health system looked like in that era, what treatments--if any--would have been available to Patrick, and, generally, what day-to-day life in the asylum would have been like for Patrick.

In my initial conception of Patrick's story I wanted to write from his perspective to understand his mental decline, and give him a chance to speak after so much familial silence. While the historical record gave me information about what Patrick did, the limitation of history is that it does not reveal an individual's train of thought. I can surmise a certain amount but I can never know what he was thinking. This is where imagination bridges the gap between what is known and unknowable. But bridging this gap carries with it ethical risks, and introduces the following question: how can I write about the experience of severe mental illness with accuracy and empathy, and in a manner that does not turn Patrick into a caricature?

Wayne C. Booth poses the question "What are the author's responsibilities to those whose lives are used as 'material'" (130). Booth cites Philip Roth, whose

Zuckerman novels (1979-87) answer the question by saying that “art justifies all” (130). While Booth thinks that Roth’s answer is lacklustre, he does not answer it himself. Instead he says that while the question is pertinent for a writer, it may not arise for a reader who may have no way of knowing the “truth” of the people used for “material.” Booth discusses the voices and roles the listener unconsciously adopts when reading and insists that these voices and roles cannot be ignored in ethical criticism (125-26). While ethical critics often discuss whether a particular text will harm someone else, or whether the author has provided ethical support for the reader, Booth’s discussion highlights the connection between writer, character, and reader and their ethical responsibilities to each other. These relationships cannot be ignored in ethical criticism because “each of these authors and readers, tellers and listeners, has a different character from all the others and each will *respond* to, and thus be *responsible* to, a richer set of characters than is suggested in most ethical criticism” (126). In order to respond to these ethical questions, I will outline a brief summary of the ‘ethical turn’ in literary criticism before looking closely at Adam Zachary Newton’s theory of narrative ethics and its application to three historical novels written by New Zealand women that focus on family narratives.

The ‘ethical turn’ in narrative analysis

Although the ethical return to narrative theory occurred in the 1980s, philosophical interest in how literature influences its audience, either positively or in a negative light, dates as far back as Plato and Aristotle. Both philosophers recognised “ethics as a substantial part of [literature’s] appeal to audiences” (Phelan). Hawthorn and Lothe explain that “ethical issues were, prior to the emergence of structuralist narratology in the 1960s, generally an integral part of storytelling” as writers made

ethical decisions “in deciding whether to write, what to write about, and how to treat their chosen subjects” (1). In making such decisions, the role of narrative, as Larson explains, “is at once philosophical and political” (8). While Russian formalism, New Criticism and French narratology put ethics in the background of literary theory in the first sixty years of the twentieth century, the Chicago neo-Aristotelianists made ethics an implicit element of their approach, most notably in Wayne C. Booth’s *The Company We Keep* (1988) (Phelan). Booth views literature as a form of rhetoric and believes that the “telling and receiving of narratives” are forms of human activity that arise and are understood in the context of our lives (Hawthorn & Lothe 4).

There were two aspects that paved the way for the return to ethical concerns. First, post structuralism argued against an understanding of the world which was based on solid foundational principles such as God, or binary oppositions. Poststructuralists believed these foundations were an illusion or dependent on an imbalance of power –men over woman, white over black, mind over body – meaning that a post structuralist critique supported politically focused approaches such as feminist criticism and postcolonial criticism, amongst others (Phelan *Narrative*). The second aspect that paved the way for an ethical return was the rise and fall of Anglo-American deconstruction. Scholars engaged with Derrida’s view that rhetoric was the study of tropes, and semiology the study of what language means inside the text (Schwarz 193). This perspective extended New Criticism, yet Lawrence Buell argues that during the late 1980s there were two facets of an ethical undercurrent in the deconstruction movement. The first was a “defense of ‘rigorous unreliability’ in critical reading as itself an ethics”, and the second was a dialogue between Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. Yule argues that their dialogue resulted in Levinas becoming the “most central theorist for the postpoststructuralist dispensation of turn-of-the-century literary-ethical inquiry” (9). Initially, deconstruction was focused on

aesthetics rather than ethics but J Hillis Miller did apply an ethical framework to deconstruction in arguing that an “ethical reader will recognize that the nature of language inevitably undermines the search for a determinate ethics of the told” (*Phelan Narrative*). However, this argument was overshadowed by Miller’s deconstructionist colleague de Man who had written anti-Semitic articles during the Second World War for a newspaper that collaborated with Nazis were posthumously published. Because of the horrific outcomes of Nazi anti-Semitism, academics questioned “whether deconstruction was morally evasive or iniquitous” and questioned whether not looking outside of the text was ethically short-sighted (Buell 8-9). After these revelations literary studies became open to the connection between ethics and literature.

The so-called ‘ethical turn’ since the late 1980s has taken two directions: poststructuralist ethics and humanist ethics. Poststructuralists are concerned with the ethics of alterity and they pay special attention to the representations of the other (ethics of the told) and the ethics of reading, whereas humanist ethics, which I focus on, “acknowledges otherness as important for ethical engagements with narrative, but it emphasizes the benefits of connection across difference” (*Phelan Narrative*). Two foundational texts for humanist ethics are Booth’s *The Company We Keep* (1988) and Martha Nussbaum’s *Love’s Knowledge* (1990) which paved the way for Newton’s *Narrative Ethics* (1995) which asserts that ethics and narrative are inseparable (Hawthorn & Lothe 4-5). Contemporary ethical critics, such as James Phelan, Charlies Altieri and Suzanne Keen, extend Booth and Nussbaum’s work. Phelan seeks to refine Booth’s connection between rhetoric and ethics by “highlighting the significance and centrality of ethical judgements in the experience of reading narrative” (Phelan), whereas Altieri discusses the rationality of their work,

and Keen investigates the relationship between affect and ethics. What unites ethical critics is the “strong connection between life and art” (Schwarz *Humanistic* 5).

Wayne C Booth built on the work of philosopher Martha Nussbaum to articulate a rhetoric of fiction that looked at all literature and its ethical concerns, namely the inter-connectedness between the author, text and reader. While Nussbaum’s moral philosophy was focused on Victorian novels, particularly those by Henry James, Booth explains that “ethical criticism is relevant to all literature” (*Ethical Criticism* 20). Booth first articulated that there is an unavoidable ethical component in any dialogue between implied author and reader in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), and expanded on this argument in later work where he explained that an implied author is the writer’s responsibility to their work, their responsibility to create the “most generously committed ethos imaginable” (*Company* 128). Ethos, or character, is the way which we, and more broadly society, choose to be through our “habits of choice in every domain of life” (*Company* 8). For Booth, ethical criticism, “describe[s] the encounters of a story-teller’s ethos with that of the reader or listener” (*Company* 8). Booth uses the metaphor of friendship to explain the relationship between a reader and a narrative, saying, “All of these fictions are like the would-be friends we meet” (*Company* 179). And each ‘friend’ relates an outlook on life “founded on a set of explicit or implicit values” that the reader interacts with and decides whether to accept or reject those values, that friendship (Stefanescu 276). The ethical responsibility of reading is twofold: the first, is that the reader will “behave responsibly towards the text and its author”, and secondly, the reader will take responsibility “for the ethical quality of his or her ‘reading’” (Booth *Company* 10). Booth’s criticism places responsibilities on writers and readers to give an ethical response to the company they keep.

Narrative as ethics

I first came across Adam Zachary Newton's theory of narrative ethics while reading Clive Baldwin's essay "Narrative, ethics and people with severe mental illness" (2005) that brought together the ethical concerns of constructing an individual's narrative whilst they are experiencing severe mental illness with a narrative fiction analysis. Baldwin argues that the experience of severe mental illness compromises the individual's ability to construct a narrative about themselves or their relationships with others in a meaningful and coherent way. His paper investigates "what ethics might look like with regard to people with severe mental illness" whose narratives construct their reality at a time when their reality cannot be understood by others (1022). Although the patient's story may not be understood, medical practitioners co-author the patient's story and Baldwin's paper highlights what practitioners need to take into account when they assume that role (1024). Baldwin's essay ties together narratives used in health-care with Newton's narrative fiction analysis, in particular highlighting that narrative is "both the story being told and the telling of that story – the Said and the Saying" (1024). Baldwin's argument spoke to my creative project where I was attempting to write a narrative about Patrick's experience of mental illness, and the ethical ramifications of doing so which lead to further investigations into Newton's theory of Narrative Ethics and how it could apply to the novel I am writing, and the novels I analyse.

Whereas Booth's analysis prises apart narrative from ethics, Newton connects them. Booth constructs a relationship of friendship between the text and reader, and creates subs-sets of ethical endeavour—ethics of reading, ethics of fiction, and ethics of criticism—while Newton proposes that "narrative ethics implies simply narrative *as* ethics: the ethical consequences of narrating story and fictionalising person, and

the reciprocal claims binding teller, listener, witness and reader in that process” (10-11). Newton’s analysis foregrounds the relationships between characters within the text and the ethical ramifications of an author’s choice of narrative strategy. In order to explore the transactions between life and art, and between reader and text, Newton builds upon Gerard Genette’s narrative modes to offer a three part system of narrative ethics. The first, *narrational* ethics, or “saying”—a term Newton borrows from the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas—refers to the “formal design of the story telling act, the distribution of relations among teller, tale, and person(s) told” (25). To investigate narrational ethics is to analyse the system of exchanges between tellers, listeners and witnesses, and the “intersubjective responsibilities and claims which follow from acts of storytelling” (18). Newton’s narrational ethics looks at the connections between the characters in the story, the author and their focalised narrator, and readers.

One of the key terms of narrational ethics, the Levinasian concept of “face-to-face”, Newton uses to explain that intercultural recognition is only achieved by acknowledging our physical ethnic markers. Newton defines this acknowledgement as a productive difference. Newton analyses texts using Levinas’ concept of ethical transcendence which, in Newton’s interpretation, involves a “scene of recognition which forms around the acknowledgement or repudiation of a face” (183). Levinas’s ethics is based on person-to-person contact, in how we relate to one another and find meaning from those interpersonal encounters (Beavers 1). For Newton, these interactions, the face-to-face can signify “a material focus within a textual field of representation” and can represent the face of social (in)justice (183). Acknowledging or repudiating a face within a novel has political implications for others of the same ethnic grouping in society because, according to Levinas, when we see the other’s we have a desire to respond to their needs (183). Newton explains

that the novels he analyses show how the social structures of policing and repression have projected the image of a monster onto the African American face (183). While one outcome for intercultural recognition is to see the self beneath the face, Newton believes this is utopian, and instead believes that productive difference can only be achieved when we acknowledge our different physical markers - when we see each other face-to-face (184). Productive difference emphasises incommensurability, and its suggestion of trauma and violence adheres to Levinasian ethics (184).

The second system of ethics Newton discusses is *representational* ethics, an approach that concentrates on the unfolding of character, “the sea change wrought when selves become either narrating or narrated” (25). Representational ethics asks what the gains, losses and/or risks are when “selves represent or are represented by others” (18). Newton borrows from Levinas in his belief that fiction is an essential doubling of reality which ties “acts of representation to responsibilities” (19). For Levinas, proximity to another demands responsibility, or the ability to respond (Beavers 6). The power of fiction to represent others, and act as a way of “knowing” (or, in other words, being in proximity to them) means that fiction is subject to ethical responsibility (19). Newton believes there is a “slippage between mimetic, synthetic, and thematic aspects of character can actually *de-realise* a person in text” (129). Rather than a character representing a ‘real’ person, the character can be reduced to a copy, type or analogy for the text. This “stripping back” of person, as Newton calls it, reduces the person in the representational space so they become an aesthetic form that effaces their personhood (132). In between the covers of a book, a person can be reduced to an aesthetic object by the author.

Yet, within book covers, characters can also withhold secrets, and speak for themselves to oppose voices of authority. Newton’s analysis concentrates on self and voice, and suggests how secrecy within a text invites interpretation. Newton

expands on the secrecy and the recognition of those secrets using Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* where Newton suggests that "the *telling* or the *hoarding* of secrets serves as the glue which binds person to person, and only consequently, person to plot" (247). Throughout the novel the characters explain how they are connected. The characters do this, in Newton's view, using discourse which parallels Mikhail Bakhtin's twin discourses: "the *authoritative* and *inner-persuasive*: the first is the voice of dogma and social control [...] and the second is predicated on self-assertion – 'retelling in one's own words'" (253). Newton explains that the narrators in *Bleak House* use inner-persuasive narration to negotiate voices of authority (253). As readers, we know the secrets of the text, and see them dispensed within the story by the narrators who control their flow.

Newton's third ethical system, *hermeneutic* ethics, is a "narrative inquiry into the extent and limits of intersubjective knowledge in persons' reading of each other, and the ethical price exacted from readers by texts" (25). Newton argues that prose fiction is subject to an ethics because one of the discursive worlds it inhabits is an ethical one, which "resembles features of everyday communicative experience" (25). Newton proposes, through hermeneutic ethics, that a reader is responsible for "getting" the text, but Newton notes that in "getting" the story, the reader can also lose the "person as 'real'" (19). He warns that the way a person is appropriated or allegorised "endangers both intimacy and ethical duty" (19). What Newton means here is that the person becomes a type rather than an individual, and this transformation, in turn, distances the reader from the very person they are trying to exercise an ethical duty towards. One of the reader's ethical responsibilities is to respond to this paradox. Therefore, reading carries responsibilities to understand the story, whilst also understanding that in "getting" the story the reader may lose the characters as real. It is this paradox, Newton argues, readers are responsible for

responding to (19). His humanist response highlights the transactive connection between life and art, between reader and text.

Feminist and Postcolonial theories and Narrative Ethics

Philosopher Sandra Harding's articulation of Standpoint Theory argues that all knowledge is 'situated knowledge', and she "rejects the possibility of anyone being able to speak from no particular social or historical location at all" (83). The connection between 'situated knowledge' and narrative ethics is articulated by Hawthorn and Lothe when they explain that stories need to be seen in "the context of the lives and consciousness of the human beings who produced and responded to them" (4). Narratives are 'situated knowledge' and gender is one way in which stories can be understood. Katherine Saunders Nash argues that feminist critics have much to gain by "leavening their investment in narrative politics with a more thorough consideration of narrative ethics" (9). While traditionally feminist critics and theorists concentrated on the dynamics among real writers, Nash suggests that they consider implied authors and their audiences to advance feminist politics (9-10). Incorporating concerns about gender into a narrative ethics analysis would articulate the connection between art and women's (and men's) lives. A feminist narrative ethics analysis would give voice to the situated knowledge of the gendered experience.

However, a feminist application of narrative ethics is problematic because when an ethical discourse is enacted, politics becomes a secondary concern. Women's and Gender Studies theorist Lynne Huffer explains that the 'ethical turn' has short-circuited "political questions about power" and as such many feminist and queer theorists believe "that ethical thinking leads to inherently conservative political

positions” (4). Lawrence Buell also argues that the literary-ethical inquiry needs to address “its emphasis on interhumanity [to be] better synthesized with a social and/or political ethics” (16). The perceived secondary nature of the political to the ethical is a divide to be bridged for narrative ethics to be more politically engaged in the lives of women. Katherine Saunders Nash, in *Feminist Narrative Ethics* (2014), observes that feminist theorists and critics focus on politics rather than ethics by correlating “literary analysis with real-world power and authority in texts and institutions” (9). Yet, Nash argues “feminist politics is an ethical enterprise” and she suggests that feminist critics could gain much by “leavening their investment in narrative politics with a more thorough consideration of narrative ethics” by giving consideration to implied authors and their audience (9). Although some academics argue that ethics renders politics as a secondary concern, Nash believes that feminist politics is ethical.

Nash proposes a new theory of feminist narrative ethics by focusing on the ethics of telling, and utilising the concept of the implied author in her analysis of modernist historical fiction. Narrative’s telling involves its “transmission through narrative voice, or discourse” (1) and this matters most to Nash because the ethics of the telling “arises from specific singular acts of socially progressive intervention and reimagining” (5). It is through the telling that an alternative world and power dynamic is communicated. She believes that the implied author concept, borrowed from Wayne C. Booth, allows her to “attribute rhetorical purposiveness to a person, someone proximate but not equivalent to the novelist, a figure located outside of the text, who attempts to guide the reader’s imaginative ethical judgements” (10). Nash believes an assessment of the implied author gives a “nuanced reading and interpretation of the feminist ethics of the telling” (5-6).

While Nash believes that a narrative ethics framework is political, her solution of ensuring it is a foundation of feminist narrative politics does not directly address issues of representation. Although Nash explains how an implied author guides a reader to an ethical judgement, with certain clues and without coercion, the ramifications of the implied author's observations does not venture explicitly into representation or the multiple subject positions a woman may occupy. As Newton articulates, we do not know the gains, losses or risk when "selves represent or are represented by others" (18). Neither does Nash, as Jean Mills explains, contextualise how her theory fits into the debates of feminist narratology, "where discussion of politics of sex, gender, and sexuality as it relates to real-life authors, critics and readers, as well as to narrators and characters" (176). Although Nash offers a theoretical base for a feminist narrative ethics, her theory does not address Newton's use of the term 'face-to-face' to account for intersubjective acknowledgement of gender difference, or that difference in conjunction with other subject positions. By adapting Booth's framework of 'implied author' Nash concentrates on only one aspect of narrative ethics rather than encompassing a dynamic relationship between narrative ethics and feminist narratology, or to borrow and adapt Newton's phrasing, to look at the "ethical consequences of narrating story and fictionalizing [...] [women], and the reciprocal claims binding teller, listener, witness and reader in that process" (11). A dynamic relationship between narrative ethics and feminist analysis will address the gap in Newton's narrative ethics.

Recent New Zealand historical fiction also challenges Newton's account of the Other. Newton uses Levinas's concept of ethical transcendence to argue that the acknowledgement or repudiation of face in a narrative can be a metonym for the "[b]ody politic within a field of social representation" meaning that the face of the Other in a narrative can express the concerns of the Other in society (183). However,

this conception of the Other does not account for the differences within an ethnic grouping, or language, which have narrative consequences. Finally, the use of different narrative modes – for example, a culture’s specific worldview – has a significant impact on the kinds of ethical transactions we have with the past. I will expand on the cultural specificity of historical perspective in my discussion of Morey’s novel.

Newton’s argument that the essence of ethical behaviour is to acknowledge and respect the difference of the Other is closely related to the political concerns of postcolonial critiques. Yet, Maureen Moynagh argues that an ethical foundation for postcolonial theory is hindered by its affiliations with other post-foundations theories (i.e. postmodernism) that appeal to an ethical humanist universal. But a universal – which is often consonant with universalizing -- framework is problematic for the postcolonial context because it does not account for minority identifications (109). The other problem with a universal framework for postcolonial studies is that European practices of colonialization gained their authority from the assumed truth in the concept in the creation of nation-states (Moynagh 110). Yet, in an environment of globalisation and transnationalism where the nation-state’s boundaries are blurry, or as Moynagh terms it, “when the hinge between universality and universalizing appears to be coming undone through the diminished powers of the nation-state” there is a call to the ethical universal (111).

Several scholars have engaged with the ethical component of postcolonial narratives. Jeremy Hawthorn and Jakob Lothe explain that Nadine Gordimer explores “ethical issues linked to, and resulting from, the systematic suppression by the minority white population of the black majority one” (*Narrative Ethics* 9). James Meffan and Kim L. Worthington write that in much criticism of South African literature the terms ‘ethical’ and ‘political’ are used interchangeably, although ethics

is secondary to political concerns (131). Ethical writing in South Africa “is that which engages with, and is responsible to, Otherness – where the self-Other binary is always understood in terms of the most visible markers of difference, those of skin colour” (131). In the South African postcolonial context, ethical writing is framed as political counter-discourse that “speaks to, of and for the Other silenced by marginalization or exclusion in the violent appropriations and overwritings of colonial narration or the narratives of colonialism” (132). This ethical response to a specific political legacy is framed in “liberal humanist terms that understands all selves” are to be treated equally (131). Yet this approach poses the danger of “reenacting and reinscribing colonial representational violence” (Meffan and Worthington 133) by interpreting the Other through the colonial gaze. The ethical humanist universal is problematic in postcolonial contexts because while it seeks to speak for the Other, doing so runs the risk of reinscribing the colonial gaze.

Narrative ethics and selected New Zealand historical novels

How have contemporary female writers in New Zealand negotiated this ethical transactive connection for themselves? In the following analysis I look at three recent New Zealand novels based on family historical narratives, each of which depict characters attempting to write their own stories within power structures that threaten to silence them: Alison Wong’s *As The Earth Turns Silver* (2009), Paula Morris’s *Rangatira* (2011), and Kelly Ana Morey’s *Bloom* (2003). All three novels stage central concerns of narrative ethics, yet also complicate its assumptions because of their concerns with gender, ethnicity, and generational continuity. The novels engage with the past however, the writers utilise historical narratives differently as

they incorporate family stories into the history of New Zealand society. Alison Wong's novel, set at the turn of the twentieth century, highlights the complications of the cross-cultural relationship between Pakeha resident Katherine McKechnie and Chinese immigrant Chung-yung Wong in an era of anti-Chinese sentiment. Morris's novel *Rangatira* recreates the life of her ancestor Paratene Te Manu (Ngati Wai), shuttling between recollections of his journey to England in 1863, and the novel's present (1886) when he is in Auckland preparing for the Land Court battle to decide which iwi owns Hauturu (Little Barrier Island). Morey's novel *Bloom* (2003) has a contemporary setting. While Constance, the novel's narrator, is living in Auckland she is visited by Nanny, a member of the Hauhau group who fought land contestation against the colonial government. This leads Constance to investigate the history of Taranaki, and how that history has affected the personal histories of the Women Spry.

A narrative ethics analysis provided a framework to engage with texts by writers who identify and write from a Māori perspective to ensure I can read the narrative in the terms the writer proposes. Bridget Orr, in her essay, "The Maori House of Fiction" (1996) demonstrates that Pakeha critics are either silent in response to novels written by Māori, or when they do voice an opinion within a monocultural perspective the commentary falls into "an appropriative interpretive 'assimilation'" (74). Orr has observed reviews from Pakeha critics that involve aesthetic judgements from a culturally inadequate European framework, and reviews that anthropologise Māori writing (74). Orr critiques Mark Williams's discussion of Keri Hulme's *the bone people* and Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* suggesting that Williams engages with the texts in terms of its cultural effects rather than a close reading that takes into account structure, language or themes from the writer's presentation of their standpoint (80-

81). Orr believes this approach creates a double standard where Pakeha novels are considered “novelistic excellence” while Māori novels are seen as “the aesthetically unsuccessful epiphenomenon of cultural conflict” (81). This lack of engagement on an aesthetic level limits an investigation as to what the status of ‘the novel’ is in Māori terms, and more broadly how the European form has been transformed by its use in non-European contexts. While some of these contexts may be reasonably familiar to critics and readers, Orr suggests that any reader needs an understanding of the ideology that produces a literary text.

This need for understanding, in a narrative ethics framework, places a reciprocal claim on me as the reader to understand and respond to the text. Newton explains that “textual interpretation comprises both private responsibilities” in the act of reading as well as “public responsibilities that follow from discussing and teaching works of fiction” (19). This responsibility has two aspects: the first is ‘getting’ the story, and the second, is ‘getting’ the story without losing the characters as real people. Losing the characters risks appropriation or allegorising that endangers ethical duty. Responding to his paradox, of understanding the story yet not losing the characters as real people, is what Newton believes readers’ are charged with responding to (19). In choosing to analyse two texts written by authors who identify as Maori I wish to respond to Orr’s critique of Pakeha discourse on Māori literature, and extend that to an ethical consideration of texts written by writers who occupy multiple subject positions.

Wong and Morris engage with family history in different ways in their novels and I wanted to look at the ethical ramifications of their approaches. New Zealand playwright Lynda Chanwai-Earle states that Wong’s novel is the “first major historical New Zealand Chinese novel” (qtd. in Calleja 138). As such, it seemed deserving of more critical attention than it has received. The seed of the novel

germinated from Wong's paternal great-grandfather's life as the proprietor of a fruit and vegetable shop in Newtown, Wellington (Lancashire *As the career* 42). While Wong "didn't try to write his story" I was interested in how she used a family story as material to write the novel, and what ethical concerns this raised (Lancashire *As the career* 42). While Wong in her author's note distances herself from aligning the novel's content with her family, Paula Morris draws on the story of an ancestor, Paratene Te Manu, and she recreates a period of his life for the novel (*Rangatira* 287). This account ends on a non-fiction postscript which explains Paratene's fight for his land and seems to signal the ethical limits of a fictional reimagining in connecting life and art. Paratene is also the subject of a short story by Morris where she leaves much to the reader to intuit whereas the novel spells out the appropriation of land. A critical analysis of Wong and Morris's novels would provide me with alternative approaches to writing a novel based on family stories.

Kelly Ana Morey's novel *Bloom* provided a different narrative about family history, and accordingly employs a different narrative form to narrate that history. While Wong and Morris's novels engage with their known biologically connected ancestors, Morey's fictionally imagined family are attempting to reclaim cultural identity and are rebuilding whakapapa after years of physical and violent dispossession from their tūrangawaewae. While Morey's fictionally imagined family have some biological connections, the family is not bound by them. Instead, the family is formed and expanded on the "basis of voluntary interpersonal relationships of mutual affection and understanding" (Cheal 10). Morey's novel illustrates that family is not a fixed term, rather it is defined "according to an individual's perceptions of what that concept means or represents" (Rankins-Robertson 61). Regardless of how the unit of family is constructed, basing a narrative on an element of family history reflects a social, cultural and historically specific site and illustrates

how the individual is placed within a larger, connected unit (Rankins-Robertson 62). The family in Wong, Morris and Morey's novels are a site to explore the past and its ramifications for the present.

I begin my analysis with Wong's *As the Earth Turns Silver*, where I argue that Wong's use of limited third-person focalisation, and occasional use of first person, engenders silence and secrets as an unintended consequence of its narrative technique, which does not ultimately transcend language barriers, racist, or gendered stratification that exist in both the Pakeha and Chinese community. Although Wong enables characters to speak to the reader using first person and third person limited narration, I argue that this choice of narrative voice enacts an ethical responsibility from the reader, while at the same time perpetuating racist, gender and language structures in the novel. Building on these observations, I will then turn to discuss how Wong's thematising of cross-cultural and cross-gender encounters highlights the need to complicate Newton's conception of productive difference in terms of class, gender and ethnicity. The productive difference of gender in combination with ethnicity is not acknowledged in Newton's analysis, but the powerful effects of this combined stratification are on display in the portrayal of Katherine and Yung's relationship. Katherine and Yung attempt to see each other face-to-face in terms of ethnic difference, but their communication through the language of the body remains undercut by their different cultural experiences of gender inequality. Finally, I turn from the novel's central protagonists to its most maligned figure, the xenophonic Lionel Terry, in order to explore the limits Wong establishes on the ethical burdens of her own narrative. Wong does not give the reader access to Terry's consciousness, which does not allow the reader to encounter Terry face-to-face, therefore the reader has no insight into Terry's sanity at the time of the murder. In comparison, Wong's depiction of Robbie's consciousness demonstrates the author's

ethical duty towards mental health, and directs the readers' ethical responsibility to characters whose mental illness is the result of psychic trauma.

I next turn to Morris's *Rangatira*, which foregrounds a related series of questions about narrative ethics. *Rangatira* illustrates the tension between Paratene's sense of injustice, arising from the appropriation of his land, stories and customs, and this enthusiasm for sharing his knowledge and culture through the principle of reciprocity to create a bicultural vision for New Zealand. Morris posits Paratene in the role of artist/writer to mediate the tension and highlight the differences between forms of insider and outsider appropriation. As an outsider, William Jenkins's lack of intersubjective knowledge is shown through the choice of Rangatira to take to England. This lack of knowledge is also illustrated in his appropriation of the Rangatira party's cultural practices and images for commodification while on the British tour. While the novel portrays the Rangatira tour as an opportunity for productive difference, I will expand on Newton's analysis to explain how differences within an ethnic group problematises productive difference. Language also complicates Newton's productive difference; in *Rangatira*, Paratene tells his stories to English audiences through a translation of Te Reo Māori that dismisses Paratene's knowledge and cultural significance of the stories. Morris also conveys how commodity exchange and art - I will give particular attention to the appropriation of Paratene's image in Lindauer's studio - can inhibit productive difference and reveal power hierarchies. Yet, the tour also creates a co-dependent relationship between Jenkins and the Rangatira. This ethical relationship is further complicated by Jenkins's elevation of status in England as a result of his connection with the Rangatira. The theme of cultural appropriation in Morris's work asks readers whether sharing stories enacts productive difference, or whether stories should remain in their own cultural setting. Morris also unintentionally questions the

transformative potential of fiction by using a postscript to explain the contestation of Hauturu. The change of form ‘tells’ readers that land appropriation is fact, and that it is not up for fictional reimagining. Her short story “Rangatira,” out of which the novel grew, also relates the contestation of Hauturu. I discuss the different endings of the short story and novel to illustrate how the writing principles ‘show not tell’ carry an ethical and aesthetic value.

Finally, I will illustrate how Morey’s use of Māori cosmology and the concept of whakamā (shame) create a different ethical relationship to the past than is seen in Wong or Morris’s works by actively linking the past violence to present cultural dispossession at the same time as foregrounding the ongoing ruptures in identity brought about by past crimes. The narrative highlights Rose and Connie’s attempts at reclaiming their culture and whakapapa through photography and family history, which exceeds the physicality implied in Newton’s use of the term face-to-face. The novel also stresses how much knowledge can be recovered from the past. Further distinguishing and complicating the ethical project of *Bloom*, however, is Morey’s adoption of an ironic, playful mode to portray her female protagonists and its often jarring juxtaposition with their experiences of loss. Informed by Morey’s accounts of her writing journey and desire to write from her cultural standpoint, I will suggest that *Bloom*’s playful irony creates a conflicted ethical relationship to the past and the present. Because that irony is given licence by the pathos of history, the novel’s ethical core resides in a claim to historical truth that it does always sustain. And because that irony functions as a form of resistance to received narratives and oppressive cultural norms, it tends toward the retrieval of individual cultural identity at the expense of being able to invoke a collective cultural and political responsibility for the characters and readers.

The New Zealand novels based on family historical narratives that are at the centre of this thesis highlight several crucial ways in which Newton's theory of narrative ethics must be extended and complicated to take account of forms of difference. First, while Newton acknowledges the face and its markers of ethnic difference, he does not discuss gender difference. This omission does not take into account how "gender roles are constructed [and] that such roles place systematic, inequitable constraints on women and men" (Nash 143). In the texts that Newton analyses (by Crane, Melville and Wright) he explains how the social structures of policing and repression have projected the image of a monster onto the African American face (183). Although the focus of Newton's analyses is on the face and instances when that face is acknowledged or repudiated in the texts, the focus on the face ignores the sexed body. Newton discusses the "ethical obligation to see . . . face to face" in terms of intercultural recognition but he does not acknowledge the sex of the face, or how gender in combination with ethnicity marks the body. I will expand the concept of face-to-face in my discussion of Wong's novel to illustrate its dual stratification of gender and ethnicity, and how this determines whether you can speak in society.

The narrative ethics framework allows me to see the consequences of who is permitted to speak, to whom, and whether this choice enables or hinders intersubjective knowledge between characters. It also highlights the negative consequences of creating character types that belie the psychic realities of individuals, and therefore sway the reader's empathetic capabilities. As a writer, I can see which narrative techniques are the most successful in highlighting the connection between life and art for the collective, rather than just the individual or family portrayed in fiction. As a critic, the positioning of politics before ethics in

feminist and postcolonial theory suggests a need to look at both elements to ensure that a narrative ethics analysis is seen as a politic act. Multiplying theoretical positions enables, as Alan Lawson mentions in his essay on Second World Literature, a view that is “*doubled* not halved” (68). A narrative ethics perspective that takes into account the multiple subject positions – gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality – would enhance the political imperative of a narrative ethics analysis.

Chapter 1: Responsibility in the Context of Narrative Silence: Alison Wong's *As The Earth Turns Silver* (2009)

Introduction

Alison Wong's novel *As The Earth Turns Silver* (2009) narrates the cross-cultural relationship between Katherine McKechnie and Chung-yung Wong in early 1900s New Zealand. At the time of the novel's publication, there were few books published by Chinese New Zealanders about the Chinese immigrant experience at the turn of the century. New Zealand playwright Lynda Chanwai-Earle states that Wong's novel is the "first major historical New Zealand Chinese novel" (qtd. in Calleja 138). In *As The Earth Turns Silver*, Chung-yung has immigrated to New Zealand to work with his brother Chung-shun in his fruit and vegetable shop in Newtown, Wellington at the turn of the twentieth century. Katherine McKechnie is a Pakeha resident who lives in Newtown with her husband, Donald, and their two children, Robbie and Edie. Katherine feels unfulfilled in her role as wife to newspaper man Donald, who reports on Lionel Terry, a historical figure in the novel who was convicted of murdering Joe Kum-yung in an effort to bring attention to the dangers of Chinese immigration to New Zealand. Donald becomes enamoured with Terry and comes to adopt his anti-Chinese sentiments. He then passes these racist sentiments to his son Robbie. Not long after Terry's conviction Donald dies, and, in turn, Katherine is left to bring up their children in greatly reduced financial circumstances. She eventually finds employment as an assistant for Mrs Margaret Newman, the wife of a Member of the House of Representatives, and Katherine and Chung-yung's stories in *As the Earth Turns Silver* interweave. Katherine buys

produce from the brothers' shop, and begins talking to Yung, who gives her good fruit amongst the seconds she selects. Yung is interested in interacting with Katherine and learning English. Through language, the pair develop a mutual affection and fall in love. While both are aware of the dangers of their relationship in an environment of anti-Chinese sentiment, to not see each other would amount to emotional death. The couple think their relationship remains a secret, but Robbie follows his mother one evening when she meets Yung and discovers it. Years later, before Robbie departs for service in the First World War, he stabs Yung in his shop.

While the reception to the novel was positive, some reviewers raised concerns about the nature of its characterisation. Siobhan Harvey, writing for *The Listener*, found the novel “[i]mbued with lyricism and sublime imagery” and a “tightly structured, scrupulously interconnected narrative that is clearly well researched and simultaneously literary and readable” (Harvey *Ghost* 41). Louise O’Brien noted that Wong, “persistently and realistically describes the relationship in terms of its contexts – family, history, politics, culture – which are overwhelmingly determining. It’s an unusual framework for a love story, and a refreshingly complex one” (O’Brien *The good*). O’Brien also noted that the “heroes of this novel are endowed, and sometimes burdened, with noticeably modern sensibilities, jarringly at odds with the representation of their historical and cultural milieu” (O’Brien *The good*). The modern sensibilities of the heroes in the novel means that readers are given a clear indication of which characters to like, and what characters to dislike. Harvey also had issues with the representation of characters. In particular, she objected to the figure of Lionel Terry, who she thought was reduced to an inhuman caricature (Harvey *Ghost* 41). Nevertheless, the positive features of the novel were followed by Wong winning the Fiction Award at the 2010 New Zealand Post Book Awards. *As the Earth Turns Silver* was also shortlisted for the 2010 Australian

Prime Minister's Literary Awards and longlisted for the 2011 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

In what follows I discuss the narrative technique of *As The Earth Turns Silver*, and the implications of focusing on individual characters' inner-persuasive discourse to tell their own story through language, ethnic, gender and class boundaries. In my analysis I argue that this limited third-person focalisation, and occasional use of first person, engenders silence and secrets, as an unintended consequence of its narrative technique, which does not ultimately transcend language barriers, racist, gendered or class stratification that exist in both the Pakeha and Chinese community. Instead, the onus is on the reader to be a witness to the inter-generational effects of racism and sexism, and it becomes apparent that the characters are, in Newton's terms, a metonym for the "body politic within a field of social representation – the face of social (in)justice" (183). Katherine and Yung are the faces of the Other in the narrative who are expressing the contemporary issues of gender equality and multiculturalism. Building on these observations, I turn to discuss how Wong's thematising of cross-cultural and cross-gender encounters highlights the need to complicate Newton's conception of productive difference in terms of class, gender and ethnicity. The productive difference of gender in combination with ethnicity is not acknowledged in Newton's analysis, but the powerful effects of this combined stratification are on display in the portrayal of Katherine and Yung's relationship. Katherine and Yung attempt to see each other face-to-face in terms of ethnic difference, but their communication through the language of the body remains undercut by their different cultural experiences of gender inequality. Finally, I turn from the novel's central protagonists to its most maligned figure, the xenophobic Lionel Terry, in order to explore the limits Wong

establishes on the ethical burdens of her own narrative. Because Terry's portrayal relies heavily on primary sources, which keeps his consciousness out of the reach of readers, this does not allow the reader to encounter Terry face-to-face, therefore the reader has no insight into Terry's sanity at the time of the murder. In comparison, Wong's depiction of Robbie's consciousness demonstrates the author's ethical duty towards mental health, and directs readers' ethical responsibility to characters whose mental illness is the result of psychic trauma.

Focalisation and Productive Difference

The narrative perspective of *As the Earth Turns Silver* is divided in ethnic terms between Chinese and Pakeha.⁵ In telling the Chinese and Pakeha stories separately, Wong illustrates how separate the lives of the two groups were during twentieth century New Zealand. Wong has stated that she "made a deliberate choice to write the novel equally from Chinese and Pakeha points of view" (Lancashire 43). Wong expands on this point in "Personal Narrative" where she explains that "in those days Chinese and Pakeha views and experiences would be very different, even at times contradictory, and to tell the story from only one side seemed unbalanced" (68). Having two cultural views in the narrative allows Wong to balance the perspectives of the Chinese and Pakeha communities. However, the limited third person narration of the majority of the novel means that while individual characters have a voice in the narration, the divided narrative does not overcome language barriers nor the racist and gendered stratification existing in both communities. Such a strategy

⁵ Historian Michael King contends that the term Pakeha is derived from the Maori word pakepakeha "meaning fair-skinned folk." King believes it simply denotes people and influences that derive originally from Europe but which are no longer European ("Being Pakeha" 10). By using the word Pakeha in reference to Wong's novel, it denotes settlers of British extraction.

engenders silence and limits productive difference within the novel, thereby ensuring the reader is positioned as a bystander to racism, sexism and murder. Nonetheless, Wong only gives narrative space to those characters she considers a metonym for the face and bodies of social injustice.

The limited third person narration in *As the Earth Turns Silver* allows each character to share their perspective with the reader, but it also maintains silence between characters, and this limits their intersubjective knowledge. Katherine's relationship with the reader, and inability to voice her dissent about racism to other characters, are on display in the portrayal of Lionel Terry's visit to the McKechnie home. Katherine does not state her opposition to his views during the dinner, but the limited third person narration gives the reader access to her thoughts. We are told that she thinks about drawing "a thick black line through every one of [Terry's] words" (34). While the reader has access to Katherine's distrust of Terry, she does not express this to other characters during the dinner; instead Wong writes that she is "at a loss for words" and that the men "had enough conversation in them for the whole family" (31-2). Katherine feels silenced, both because of her gender and because of her perception of her aptitude with language. Of course, as readers we understand that the other characters in the text may interpret her silence as complicity with their racist opinions. The limited third person narration allows readers access to Katherine's thoughts but because she does not share her thoughts with other characters, this perpetuates silence and the impression of her complicity with racism.

The silence about Katherine's relationship with Yung keeps the members of the McKechnie family apart. Individually, the children reflect on their discovery of their mother's relationship with Yung, but neither child speaks to each other, or to their mother, about it. In Edie's case, she only talks to her mother about the relationship fleetingly after Yung's death. Newton suggests in his analysis of *Bleak*

House that “the *telling* or the *hoarding* of secrets serves as the glue which binds person to person, and only consequently, person to plot” (247). While members of the McKechnie family hoard secrets, and Katherine and Yung are connected, the limited third person perspective underlines the isolation they experience. While the individuals in the McKechnie family keep their secrets to themselves, those secrets bind the reader to the characters, and the plot, rather than connection existing between members of the McKechnie family.

The secrecy of Katherine’s relationship with Yung is solely due to her hesitation to make it publicly known because of Yung’s ethnicity. At the end of the novel Katherine wishes that she could have “changed his skin. But then who would he have been?” (229). In Newton’s terms, Katherine wishes to see Yung’s “self lying just beneath the skin” which seeks to neutralise features of appearance and leads to “faceless universalism” (184). Katherine wants to change Yung’s ethnic identity to be seen in public with him, and to be able to reveal their relationship openly, before considering that it is his ethnic identity which is a major factor in his selfhood. Katherine’s transition reflects Newton’s view that faces are “marked, sized, colored” and it’s only by acknowledging this that face-to-face encounters result in productive difference (184). While Katherine acknowledges Yung’s productive difference in their private interactions, in public Katherine displays an unwillingness to understand Yung’s cultural perspective. She does not attend the celebrations for the Republic (229), and at Yung’s funeral Katherine keeps her distance from the ceremony and does not join the group of mourners (235). Rather than confront the Pakeha community’s prejudice about Chinese residents, and intimate Chinese-Pakeha relationships, Katherine’s silence in the public domain negates the potential acknowledgement of societal productive difference between characters in the novel.

The limits of Newton's conception of productive difference are also illustrated by encounters between Pakeha women in the novel, who are equally marginalised within the patriarchal Pakeha community, yet the class division between Katherine and Mrs Newman also inhibits them seeing each other face-to-face. Katherine does attempt to tell her secret about her relationship with Yung to Mrs Newman, but the revelation only cuts-off her ability to tell her own story. Katherine is not allowed to voice her opinion directly in this section—dominated by Mrs Newman's dialogue and related exposition—instead Katherine's words and actions are interpreted by Mrs Newman. In his discussion of *Bleak House*, Newton explains Bakhtin's discourses: “the *authoritative* and *inner-persuasive*: the first is the voice of dogma and social control [...] and the second is predicated on self-assertion – ‘retelling in one’s own words’” (253). Mrs Newman’s authoritative discourse is “closed, finite, quoted” (253). The reader knows Katherine disagrees with Mrs Newman through her observations: “Katherine, don’t look at me like that, I’m only trying to open your eyes” (155). While Katherine’s narrative has been one of self-assertion, of telling her own story to the reader, Mrs Newman’s authoritative discourse is one of social control aimed at tempering Katherine’s self-assertion by reminding her of the risks in her expression. When Katherine tells her secret she is silenced by a voice of authority that closes the telling of her story. The limited third person narration silences Katherine’s opinions and reveals the power hierarchy between Katherine and her employer which limits their intersubjective knowledge. This limitation, in turn, leaves the reader with the sole ethical responsibility for understanding Katherine’s perspective.

Mrs Newman’s privileged independence as a Pakeha woman is set up in opposition to the patriarchal and ethnocentric views of Donald McKechnie and Lionel Terry. Donald and Terry’s status as men in a patriarchal society and their

aptitude with language gives them the ability to agitate for causes they believe in and maintain contacts with influential people. On the night Donald meets Terry, they have drinks with “*prominent* Members of Parliament” (29). Although Terry appears to be a “gentleman”, his effectiveness to agitate for his anti-Chinese cause is limited by his criminal actions and sanity. Donald’s capacity for influence is limited by his financial status and class. Nevertheless Donald’s employment at the newspaper gives him access to influential people, and he is considered a well-respected member of the community. Despite financial limitations, Donald’s employment gives him access to influential people which enables him to agitate for causes he believes in.

Despite their ethnic differences, Wong portrays the Pakeha and Chinese communities as similarly stratified by male privilege. While financial status divides Donald and Mrs Newman, Wong conveys Yung’s connection with the wives in China through the use of first- person narration, and this point-of-view shifts the ethical imperative onto the reader. Yung receives a letter from his son informing him that his wife has died, and his thoughts are related in first person. Yung says, “I remember the mother of my son’s smooth white skin and tender hands” (181). The use of the ‘I’ focuses on the individual’s pain, and enables Yung to express himself directly to the reader. Wong’s use of first-person narration maintains the ethical connection between the Yung and the reader, as it did when she employed it for the wives left in China, the only other characters who directly address the reader in *As the Earth Turns Silver*. Yung’s wife reflects on the events after her marriage, “My husband stayed with me six months, enough time to fill me with a son. Then he sailed for the New Gold Mountain and I came to his village” (103). The perspectival equivalence asserted in the novel between the wives and Yung illustrates the personal psychic and emotional cost of what Manying Ip describes as the “broken stem” (*Chinese* 163) and “live widowhood” (*Redefining* 152) communities created

by discriminatory immigration policies and gendered cultural practices that resulted in communities of men and women living separately. First-person narration makes a plea for a more intimate connection between Yung and the reader to see the effects of fragmented communities created by discriminatory social structures.

Katherine recognises discriminatory social structures when she distances herself from her maiden and married names, preferring to be known only as Katherine. Her assertion of individualism is an attempt to disassociate from the patriarchal power structure, yet its expression in the limited narrative perspective is shown to be naive. She notes that, “Katherine came first for her. Not McKechnie, which was only her husband’s name; not even Lachlan, her father’s name. Only Katherine. Whatever she could count on for herself” (133). By distancing herself from her surnames, Katherine is attempting to shrug off the connotations of patriarchy that the names carry and recognise herself as an individual. But at the moment Katherine distances herself from her names, she asks for “a Chinese name, an opening into his language” (134). While this is an attempt on Katherine’s part to understand Yung and develop a connection, she is also inviting herself into a language and culture that is also tied to patriarchy, status and obligation.

Katherine and Yung’s intersubjective knowledge about the difference in gender roles between cultures is limited, so Wong’s deliberate narrative strategy is to rely on the readers’ understanding of their respective disempowerment. In doing so, Wong implicates the reader in taking ethical responsibility for the characters. Katherine tells Yung that Donald took her life and had “used language and power against her” (186). Katherine feels that her role of wife and mother denied her autonomy and self-expression, but Yung disagrees saying, “Donald hadn’t stolen from her; she had given to him–freely” (186). Yung suggests that Katherine was complicit in the theft, and he gives examples of the role of women in China and their

illiteracy (and the illiteracy of some men) and limited rights in a patriarchal society to make Katherine realise that she does have language and can use it (186). While Yung encourages Katherine's empowerment and recognises the constraints of the female role for women in China, he does not see the conformity of gender roles for women in New Zealand society. Instead, he compares his sense of language disempowerment to racism rather than to her gendered disenfranchisement, saying, "You think I like boys saying Ching Chong Chinaman?" (186). Katherine and Yung fail to see how each other are Othered by language through gendered and ethnic stratification, and therefore do not see each other face-to-face. This failure leaves the reader with the burden of responsibility of acknowledging their limited intersubjective knowledge.

Yung and Katherine also argue over the cross-cultural roles of men, and this illustrates their lack of intersubjective knowledge about different cultural norms of masculinity. Yung compares Robbie's embarkation to War to his leaving China. Both men left home at the same age, and Yung can see the same level of sacrifice in their leave taking; both have left family behind and may or may not see them again (215). In her grief, Katherine does not want to hear about Yung's experience. She does not want to hear how he has never seen his son because, as she thinks, "he wasn't the one left behind. *He* was the one who left his wife and family. For *filthy lucre*" (215). Katherine suggests that Yung made a choice to leave China, and did so for money. Although Yung does not say why he came to New Zealand, Manying Ip explains that most Chinese immigrants to New Zealand were from Guangdong (known in English as "Kwangtung", the place where the brothers are from in *As the Earth Turns Silver*). This region was the one "most adversely affected by Western imperialist penetration because of the Opium Wars", and, as a result, Chinese sovereignty was eroded when treaty ports were set up on the southern Chinese coast

(“Chinese immigration” 158). The area was over-populated, affected by floods and famines, and the local Qing government was “repeatedly defeated by Britain and other European powers” (“Chinese immigration” 158). The ongoing environmental and political crises meant that young men were often pressured to leave the region to find their fortune in the “New Gold Hills” of Australia and New Zealand. There is also a suggestion that Yung felt obligated to come to New Zealand to help his elder brother, who with Yung’s assistance could bring his wife to New Zealand (7).

However, Robbie has made a choice to go to war. He trained hard and lied about his age to be admitted (203). Katherine fails to understand the reason for Yung’s immigration to New Zealand and therefore his level of sacrifice in doing so.

Katherine and Yung’s intersubjective knowledge about the competing cultural norms of masculine gender roles is limited on both sides. Katherine and Yung cannot see each other face-to-face in regards to gender stratification.

Up until Katherine and Yung’s discussion of cultural gender differences, the couple communicate through the language of the body to enact productive difference. Yung lets Katherine into the Chinese language, while Katherine introduces Yung into English. Yet within these languages there is “a gap between thought and its expression, especially in another language” (136). Expression of thoughts and feelings cannot always be translated into words, in your own language, or in the language of another. In the novel, this gap is filled with expressions of the body. In terms of Katherine and Yung’s relationship, this expression of feelings becomes intimate but the language of the body also reveals itself through everyday interactions. In the prologue Yung says that he does not need to understand English because the meaning of the English speaker’s words is “in a flicker of the eyes, the slight curl of a lip, in the muscles of the face, the way they set against us” (7).

Through the body people reveal their thoughts and feelings, which can enact productive difference, or indeed, reveal that lack of it.

In the third section of Wong's novel, the narrative shifts from an attempt to communicate through the language of the body to an exploration of the gendered differences between Chinese and New Zealand Pakeha cultures. When Katherine becomes aware that Yung is married her relationship with him starts to break down. Katherine notes the only similarity she has with his wife is that they are women and both bear children (189). Katherine sees Yung's wife face-to-face in terms of their gendered roles of wife and mother when she looks at a photograph of Yung's wife – whom she did not know existed until after her death – and says his wife appears “in the style of the severely married” (190). While Katherine is upset about Yung's wife's hair and how it is plucked for marriage, the use of the word *severe* suggests that Katherine sees the image as a symbol of the severity of marriage for Yung's wife. As she looks at the photograph Katherine wonders, “what the woman was thinking” (190), and later in the narrative expresses an affinity with Yung's wife when she tells him, “*He* was the one who left his wife and family” (215). This transition suggests that women of different ethnicities are more likely to see each other face-to-face because of the gender roles prescribed to them in a patriarchal society. For Katherine to relate to some elements of Yung's wife's life suggests a potential for intersubjective relationships between women of different ethnicities. Or, as Levinas would suggest, it shows a consideration of the Other as Katherine substitutes herself into the wife's shoes *being* before fully appreciating the substitution. It also suggests that gender norms may be more divisive than ethnic difference. In the novel's final transition from the language of the body to an exploration of gender differences, Katherine feels affinity with Yung's wife rather than Yung.

Maligned Madness and Psychic Trauma

Wong directs readers to those characters who embody a contemporary sensibility, but what are the ethical consequences of fictionalising a historical figure and reducing him to a type? Newton proposes that the way a person is appropriated or allegorised “endangers both intimacy and ethical duty,” as the person becomes a type rather than an individual, and this, in turn, distances the reader from the very person they are trying to exercise an ethical duty towards. The use of limited third person perspective in Wong’s novel means the reader focuses on the individual characters whose point of view is narrated directly to them - Katherine and her children, Edie and Robbie; Yung, and his brother Shun and concubine Mei-lin - and sees only them as ‘real’ people. Although Donald also speaks directly to the reader through limited third person narration, he only does so at Terry’s trial in his occupation as a reporter, which reveals him as sympathetic to a murderer and racist. The limited third person narration reduces Donald to a character type rather than a ‘real’ person. In the final section of my discussion of *As the Earth Turns Silver*, I compare the characterisation of Lionel Terry and Robbie McKechnie, both of whom are portrayed as violent racists who end up in Seacliff Asylum. Nevertheless, Wong only presents the public persona of Lionel Terry, and this silences his internal dialogue as well as the possibility of rendering his authentic experience of mental illness. Terry is reduced to a character type which distances the reader from exercising ethical responsibility towards him.

What O’Brien characterises as Wong’s “moral sleight of hand” could relate to the author’s responsibility towards the Chinese community in New Zealand (O’Brien). Wong has stated that some New Zealand literature she read growing up

had stereotypical and caricatured Chinese characters that she did not identify with, whereas Chinese literature did not speak to her experience as a Chinese New Zealander (“Writers” 24). Writing into this gap meant that Wong “did feel a responsibility to the Chinese community in NZ because there hadn’t been anything written about them, by them” (24). Wong clearly communicates to readers the characters to whom the readers’ empathetic duty lies, which does not give space in the narrative for the reader to encounter Terry face-to-face.

Wong’s portrayal of Lionel Terry relies so heavily on the historical record of his actions and opinions that he never emerges into the narrative as a fully realised character. When Donald invites Terry to his home for dinner, for example, Terry’s dialogue is pieced together out of quotes from his surviving letters and poetry, and Wong’s selections focus on expressions of his political views rather than offer any personal reflection to readers. Donald and Terry talk about Māori, and Terry states that, “As for the Maoris, there has never in the history of the world been a case of two races living together in the same country without the deterioration and decay of one or the other. The weakest race is always doomed . . . Maoris are now in such a state of moral, mental and physical degeneration that without complete and utter separation, their race will be beyond salvation” (33). Terry’s perspective is nearly word for word his opinion as laid out in his letter to Dr Pomare, the Minister for Native Affairs (Tod 26). The opinion he expresses on “race adulterers” is likewise borrowed from another one of his proposals (Tod 26). At the dinner, Terry’s reference to “the natural hatred between races” is drawn from the introduction to his poem “The Shadow” (Tod 172). If her reliance on historical sources wasn’t extensive enough, Wong’s novel also reprints verse six from that same poem (Tod189). Literary fiction offers writers the opportunity to expand character beyond the facts of historical documentation through the nuances available in such techniques as internal

monologue. As a character modelled exclusively on the sentiments expressed in his publications, however, the character of Terry is not imagined as a fully independent and multifaceted character. As a result, Terry doesn't have the same opportunity for fictional redemption as might be available to character who are not as closely tied to historical fact

While Wong conveys the historical fact of Terry's opinions by drawing on available primary sources she has depicted his consciousness with imaginative freedom, and this decision separates her approach to Terry from her portrayal of other characters in the novel because it evokes a different ethical response from the reader. While Wong has given marginalised characters a voice, she has omitted Terry's internal dialogue. On the one hand, this is understandable because Terry was racist and committed murder. He is also a minor character in a novel whose main purpose seems to be the illustration of the severe racism directed to members of the Chinese community in New Zealand. On the other hand, by withholding Terry's inner world, his xenophobia is not complicated by questions of his sanity (or, more broadly, other factors that produce racism). Although he denied it at his trial, the fact is that his family history of mental illness could have been a factor in his criminal actions (Tod 48). At the time, mental illness was associated with the degeneracy he accused 'evil aliens' of possessing. In 2011, Terry's police file was re-opened and revealed correspondence between the Prime Minister and Terry's parents detailing a family history of mental illness and suicide (*A flame*). By not accessing Terry's internal dialogue, Wong presents Terry as "an inhuman caricature" (Harvey 41). In withholding Terry's inner-world from the reader, Wong presents him as a one-dimensional character who represents extreme xenophobia. Indeed, not relating or re-imagining Terry's internal thought in *As the Earth Turns Silver*, posits Terry as a

type or caricature rather than an individual, and this positioning denies the readers' an ethical understanding of the various factors that lead to racism and violence.

While space is not given to Terry's mental illness in the novel, Wong does detail Robbie's experience of shell-shock and grief, and this portrayal conveys her ethical responsibility towards mental illness when it is the result of psychic trauma. Having felt his friend's brains splatter on his face during warfare, Robbie is mute and unresponsive by the time he is transferred to Seacliff Asylum with shell-shock. While recuperating, Robbie meets Lionel Terry, who is also a patient at Seacliff. After they are introduced, Robbie suddenly "remembered his father" (258). Robbie seems to conflate the two men together, but he does not consciously recognise his former connection to Terry, and instead he refers to him as a stranger. What the meeting does bring to the surface Robbie's grief in losing his father (258). Robbie recalls the last conversation he had with Donald, in which Donald ruminated on the futility of life. Robbie's stay at Seacliff reveals the extent of the psychic harm caused when his father died, which is brought to the fore during his experience of shell-shock.

Whereas Wong's depiction of Terry's racism is uncomplicated, Robbie's is shown to be learnt, inter-generational, and a product of grief rather than conscious thought. Throughout the novel Robbie has performed what Joyce McDougall would call his father's "internal drama" by continuing to support Donald's belief in Terry ("The Psychic Theater" 35). Wong posits that Robbie's grief and the performance of this "internal drama" was the reason Robbie killed Yung. At the moment that Robbie attacks Yung, Robbie feels like his voice is "separate from his body" and that "every movement [was] detached from his body" and his "hands which were not his own" (264). His body is seemingly acting on its own accord. Robbie does not acknowledge that the murder was premeditated, but he is drawn to Yung's shop

while he is thinking about upcoming battles. He imagines “heroism in the face of the enemy, of victory over evil, that he didn’t know where he was going, didn’t realise until he marched right into the light” (219). This lack of thought on Robbie’s part aligns with his dedication to his physical rather than mental being; however, given his abhorrence of his mother’s relationship with Yung, the influence of Donald and Terry’s racist beliefs on his psyche, and the emotional harm cause by Donald’s death, it appears his actions are largely unconscious. Robbie has dis-associated his mind from his body in order to perform his father’s “internal drama.”

Wong’s portrayal of Robbie in *Seacliff* moves from the focalisation of other characters to third person limited narration, allowing readers to exercise their ethical responsibility in regards to Robbie’s psychic trauma. When Robbie is first admitted to *Seacliff*, Edie and the Doctor talk about him, and Katherine speaks to Robbie, but we have no access to his internal thoughts. Instead, Robbie’s first days in *Seacliff* are focalised through his sister and mother. When Robbie’s condition is at its most extreme, the action is focalised through other characters. Psychoanalytical critic Clive Baldwin suggests that in cases of severe mental illness the individual cannot articulate a narrative because of a reduced cognitive ability, and/or a fear of the reaction of their thoughts on others (1022). While the reader does not hear Robbie speak to other characters, the narrative changes to limited third person focalised through Robbie where he recollects murdering Yung. It is this recollection that drives Robbie to suicide, and the reader is left to suppose that this action arose out of the accumulated psychic distress brought on by his guilt over murdering Yung, and/or his desire to keep the murder a secret. The silence of Robbie’s narrative in *Seacliff* moves from his inability to construct his story to fear of others’ reaction to his narrative. The readers’ knowledge of his act implicates their ethical

responsibility towards the text to understand the factors that lead to psychic harm, racism and violence.

Conclusion

In my discussion of Wong's novel I have argued that Newton's use of the term face-to-face must be expanded to acknowledge the means by which ethnicity, gender, class, and language can hinder productive difference. I have also highlighted the stratification that exists within the conception of the Other. Wong illustrates how language is subject to patriarchal and class power structures, and how Katherine and Yung's communication through the body is limited because it cannot articulate differences in cultural perspectives about gender. The limited third person narration (and occasional use of first person) perpetuates silence between characters. Therefore, the reader is positioned as a bystander to racism, sexism and murder, and, as a result, becomes ethically responsible for understanding the characters as a metonym for the face and bodies of social injustice. The reader is also left to understand how the issues facing the characters relate to contemporary issues of multiculturalism and gender. Wong's authorial choices about she allows to speak does not make this ethical task taxing for the reader. However, the contrast between the characterisation of Robbie's and Terry's mental health conditions differentiates the readers' ethical duty towards them. Wong's narrative strategies appear to direct the reader to sympathise with characters she thinks readers should exercise an ethical duty toward.

The ethical exercise of the novel is to voice the experience of Chinese migrants to New Zealand in the early 1900s. Wong recreates the racism experienced

by the Chinese community in New Zealand by using a limited third person (and sometimes first person) perspective that focuses on individual characters. While this accurately reflects the isolation felt by members of the Chinese community, it does not transcend or challenge racist attitudes. She also articulates the constraints of gender and class for members of the Chinese and Pakeha communities. At the end of the novel, readers' evaluate how the issues of racism and gender inequality are still affecting New Zealand society. While Wong's novel illustrates the isolation of racism and sexism, the novel does not offer a fictional reimagining into how we transcend those barriers in society.

Chapter 2: Representing Insider and Outsider Appropriation: Paula Morris's *Rangatira* (2011)

Introduction

Paula Morris's fourth adult novel *Rangatira* (2011) recreates aspects of the life of Morris's ancestor Paratene Te Manu (Ngati Wai) in two narrative frames. The first frame, in the novel's present, relates Paratene's life during 1886 in Auckland. It narrates his frustration and foreboding of the Land Court, and the period of sitting for his Gottfried Lindauer portrait. The second frame of the novel recounts Paratene's voyage to England in 1863 with a group of Rangatira from the far north of New Zealand. The historical tour party was organised by William Jenkins, a Wesleyan from Nelson who worked as a religious teacher and caretaker at the Wesleyan mission in Cloudy Bay. Jenkins's aim for the tour was to enlighten the minds of Māori about European life, and to reveal England's power and resources by taking them to England's principal cities and manufacturing sectors. In order to pay for the tour, the Rangatira would assist at lectures in England by giving "illustration of their manners and customs" (Mackrell 25). Paratene relates some information about the tour to Lindauer, whom he refers to as "the Bohemian," during sittings for his portrait. After the sittings, Paratene retires to the Native Hostel in Auckland to write about the tour.

Paratene had already been the inspiration for a short story Morris wrote during a 2003 Iowa workshop. It was with the encouragement of Witi Ihimaera and then-Penguin editor Geoff Walker that Morris developed the short story into a novel (Hay Paula Morris). Reviewer Nicholas Reid described the novel as "an extraordinary literary achievement and probably the best of recent New Zealand

historical novels” which only occasionally “spell[s] out the theme of cultural appropriation” (Reid *How they*) John McCrystal stated that Morris “adroitly manages the ambiguities of the promoters’ motivations [. . .][with] the paradoxical sophistication and naivety of the Maori on the one hand and the high-minded humanitarianism and gawping voyeurism of the British public on the other” (McCrystal *Rangatira*). Iain Sharp noted that the novel makes readers “think harder about the versions of New Zealand history that have come down to us, whose points of view they represent and whose they exclude” (*Sharp Review*). The impact of history was also mentioned by McCrystal, who observed “[i]t’s hard not to be moved by the historical note that is appended, describing his [Paratene’s] eviction from his ancestral land when he was in his nineties” (McCrystal *Rangatira*). *Rangatira* won the Fiction Award at the 2012 New Zealand Post Book Awards, and the Te Pakimaero (Fiction) category at the Ngā Kupu Ora Aotearoa Māori Book Awards in the same year.

Rangatira illustrates the tension between Paratene’s sense of injustice, arising from the appropriation of his land, stories and customs, and his enthusiasm for sharing his knowledge and culture through the principle of reciprocity to create a bicultural vision for New Zealand. Morris posits Paratene in the role of artist/writer to mediate this tension and highlight the differences between forms of insider and outsider appropriation.⁶ As an outsider, Jenkins’s lack of intersubjective knowledge is shown through the choice of Rangatira to take to England. This lack of knowledge is also illustrated in his appropriation of the Rangatira party’s cultural practices and

⁶ The following discussion employs Jonathan Hart’s definition of appropriation as “the making of what belongs to one individual or group into the property of another individual or group. That something can be tangible or intangible property. The appropriating can be achieved through ventriloquy, translation, or dispossession of land and other property. It can be figurative or literal” (138).

images for commodification while on the British tour. Jenkins turns the party members into objects for what Newton would call, “a crowd of gazers”, meaning that the Rangatira become representative of the Other who “become the object” of the British audience (183). Yet, this also creates a co-dependent relationship between Jenkins and the Rangatira. This ethical relationship is further complicated by Jenkins’s elevation of status in England as a result of his connection with the Rangatira. A second form of outsider appropriation is on display in Lindauer’s studio. Lindauer wishes to capture and manipulate Paratene’s image to portray him as “the last of the ancient warriors” (18). By contrast, Paratene’s writing attempts to enact a relationship of reciprocity between English and Māori Christians; however, by concluding the novel on the issue of land rights, and ending the novel with a non-fiction postscript about the fate of Paratene’s island home of Hauturu, Morris recognises her ethical responsibility to convey that the consequences of land appropriation are real and not invented. *Rangatira* highlights the risks and losses of insider and outsider appropriation of stories, draws attention to the ways that language and interpretation problematize productive difference and the transmission of culture to outsiders. By not tackling the appropriation of land in the novel, however, she questions the potential political efficacy and persuasiveness of fiction.

The contested status of appropriation in Morris’s novel further complicates Newton’s concepts of narrative ethics. If the British tour offers as an opportunity for productive difference Morris’s stress on language and interpretation problematize the term. Both the portrayal of the touring party, and Lindauer’s portraiture, challenge Newton’s conception of the “face” as central to the narrative construction of otherness. The touring party is drawn from Rangatira across the upper North Island, and this gives rise to a portrayal of the “Other” that is more fragmented than cohesive. At the same time, Lindauer’s portrait offers the possibility for an accurate

reflection of Paratene's face, for his intersubjectivity to be acknowledged, yet this opportunity is undermined by Lindauer's artistic interpretation. The portrait renders Paratene passive, yet Morris does not answer the political implications of the inaccuracies and interpretation of art. Finally, I will turn to the questions of insider appropriation raised by *Rangatira*: Paratene's role as an artist, and Morris's decision to base her narrative on a family story. Both these examples raise ethical responsibilities for the reader.

Productive Difference: “their own foolish business”?

The historical British tour of Willian Jenkins and the Rangatira in 1863 was ostensibly an opportunity for the Rangatira to learn about England, and for the English audiences to learn about the Rangatira. In the novel *Rangatira* Charley Davis, Government Translator and Interpreter, approaches Paratene about the trip and describes it as a kind of educational opportunity for the British public : “[p]eople would assemble in churches and schools, eager to hear us talk of our customs and old ways” (28). The premise of the tour was thus a chance for what Newton refers to as productive difference. Newton explains that it is only by acknowledging the differences in others that intercultural recognition can be attained so that we can see each other face-to-face (184). However, this rationale assumes that a single cultural group forms a cohesive unit without internal fragmentation. The selection of members for the touring party reveals a lack of intersubjective knowledge between tour organisers and the Rangatira.

Paratene explains that the Rangatira chosen for the trip to England “were from the North because a lot of Maori further south were busy getting ready to fight the government” (34). While the Governor envisioned that the returning Rangatira

would communicate the power of England and the futility of warfare against England to the southern tribes, the Rangatira of the north had little sympathy for the Taranaki War. Paratene repeats his friend, and fellow Rangatira, Wharepapa's claim that the Taranaki war "was their own foolish business . . . and nothing to do with us. It was all the fault of the so-called Maori King" (168). The Māori King movement started so that collective tribes would have more political power in the face of European settlement and demand for land (Rapa, Rahui, and Meredith). Wharepapa's comment, however, reveals that the far North tribes were not affiliated with the Māori King nor his influence in the Waikato or Taranaki.

Newton uses Levinas's concept of ethical transcendence to argue that the acknowledgement or repudiation of a face in a narrative can be a metonym for the "[b]ody politic within a field of social representation" (183). Newton critiques Stephen Crane's novel *The Monster* to illustrate how "the surface and the interior of a person" is considered the same when selfhood is determined racially (184). Morris's novel narrates a similar act of repudiation in order to show the limits of inter-cultural communication. While the Governor and Jenkins see the Rangatira as the face of the Other and believe that the Rangatira can communicate to other Māori, they do not recognise the tribal divisions between Māori. This oversight renders them unable to act as advocates for iwi with whom they do not see face-to-face. Neither Jenkins--nor Newton's application of Levinas--recognise that possible divisions within their conception of the Other culture might inhibit intra-cultural communication. Morris contrasts Jenkins' lack of recognition with Paratene's frequent acknowledgement that the Rangatira party is divided along tribal lines. He explains, "Some on this trip were not Northerners, which meant there was a natural divide between us" (34). While most of the Rangatira are from the North, Hapimana Ngapiko is from Taranaki, Takarei Ngawaka is from "down Taupo way", and

Kihirini Te Tuahu is from “the shore of Lake Tarawera” (34-5). For readers, the tribal divisions are evident from the beginning of the novel. Paratene says that Kihirini “was not a friendly man, preferring to keep to himself, and we all took against him from the start” (35). Hapimana from Taranaki shares a bunk with Kihirini, while Takarei “slept clinging to his precious box, as if he were afraid the Northerners would ransack it in the night” (40). From the start of the journey the northern Rangatira are separate from those further south, and there is an air of suspicion between them. The division along tribal lines within the Rangatira party illustrates of the limits of Newton’s concept of intersubjective knowledge.

Paratene articulates differences between tribal groups on the journey to England, and he becomes increasingly aware of the risks and losses of outsider appropriation of stories and customs. Jenkins asks the Rangatira to perform “special Maori songs and dances” on the journey to England, and while on their lecture tour (44). The younger members of the party oblige, while Paratene sees “no point to all this performance simply for the sake of applause from foreign ladies” (44). Paratene does not perform the peruperu on the ship because the situation is not appropriate for the intent of the peruperu, which should be “performed with weapons, facing down an enemy” (44). Instead, he agrees to “talk to the people of the old customs, and recite some of the old incantations” (45). Paratene chooses which stories and cultural practices to share because sharing cultural practices outside of their appropriate context risks the intent of those practice.

While Newton acknowledges faces are “always marked, sized, coloured” he does not acknowledge the inability to speak the same language, or understand the cultural practices that frame that language, and how this considerations further inhibit productive difference (184). Newton’s notion of productive difference relies heavily on the physical features of the face, which belies the importance of

recognising different cultural practices and language in achieving intercultural recognition. Although Jenkins can speak Te Reo Māori, his ignorance of tikanga negatively affects the translation and meaning of stories to outsiders, and this ignorance inhibits productive difference. One of the risks in sharing stories with outsiders is the interpretation of the story's content by its translation into a second language. In this reinterpretation there is the potential for Jenkins to misrepresent Paratene's stories in language and content. Towards the end of the tour, Paratene feels that Jenkins is misrepresenting his past by referring to him as, "a ferocious cannibal warrior" (212). Paratene values his past contribution to his people, whereas Jenkins dismisses it. Although Jenkins can speak Te Reo Māori, his interpretation is shown to be filtered through a European Christian perspective that seeks to repudiate Māori culture. Hirini Moko Mead explains that tikanga Māori "might be described as Māori philosophy in practice as the practical face of Māori knowledge" (7). Tikanga comes from the "accumulated knowledge of generations of Māori" - it links Māori to their "ancestors, to their knowledge base and to their wisdom" (13, 21). Mead also explains that an understanding of tikanga "is informed and mediated by the language of communication" (2). Those who speak Te Reo Māori will have a different understanding to those who learn Tikanga through English (2). In retelling Paratene's stories, Jenkins dismisses Paratene's knowledge and significance of the stories because his translation into English is not transmitted in a Tikanga Māori framework that recognises the accumulated knowledge of ancestors.

Jenkins appropriates and commodifies material from the Rangatira in order to make money to fund the tour; however the Rangatira tour also elevates his status in English society, and this alters the power dynamic between Jenkins and the Rangatira. Along with the telling of stories and performing haka, the Rangatira are asked to wear cloaks "because no one in England would pay to see us wearing our

usual coats and trousers" (47). The exchange of cultural artefacts for money sets up a financial relationship of co-dependence between Jenkins and the Rangatira. Jenkins depends on the performance of culture to fund the tour and ensure its success, and the money, in turn, ensures that the immediate needs of housing and food are supplied to the Rangatira party. Jenkins also relies on the group for the elevation of his status in England, which complicates this co-dependent relationship. On one occasion, Jenkins and the Rangatira visit the Duke of Marlborough and Queen Victoria. After their meeting with the Duke, Jenkins reflects on the opportunity, saying, "Who would think that I should have such honour?" In response, Paratene and Wharepapa articulate the growing complications of their co-dependence with Jenkins. Of the meeting with the Duke of Marlborough and Queen Victoria, Paratene notes, "The invitation was to us. The honour was ours. Jenkins was there to interpret our opinions and messages . . . Of course, his vision had made this trip possible for us, but the Prince of Wales didn't go about inviting obscure Wesleyans . . . to chat with him in his Saloon" (93). Members of the party realise Jenkins's status in England is elevated because of his association with them which challenges the party's co-dependence on Jenkins.

Art and Politics: transferring responsibility to the eye of the beholder

A recurrent theme throughout Morris's novel is the representation of the Rangatira in visual art, and this theme captures the power imbalance between the Rangatira party and Jenkins: as outsiders, he and the artists as are appropriating culture and problematizing what could be an opportunity for productive difference. In England, the touring party have their photograph taken for visiting cards, in which they have to

“pose in [their] native costume,” and the cards become a commodity to be purchased by the public (97-8). They also have their portrait painted by Mr Smetham, commissioned by the Wesleyan Missionary Society, in which Paratene and Horomona only recognise Jenkins’s image (261). Jenkins “was in the centre of things . . . In this picture he was an important man” (261). Whereas Paratene is a “small figure on the edge of things,” Wiremu Pou was standing “at the heart of the picture, gesturing to the sky as though he could see a vision of God” (262). The positioning of members of the Rangatira party in the image does not take into account the status of the individual as New Zealand Rangatira. While the photograph objectifies the Rangatira and commoditises their cultural artefacts, the painting also posits the party as savages who have been converted to Wesleyan Christianity. What both images have in common is the lack of control the Rangatira party have over their composition. Visual art reinscribes the Rangatira as colonised subjects as opposed to a relationship of co-dependence which could lead to acknowledgement of productive difference.

In Auckland, Paratene commissions Lindauer to paint his portrait in order to redress the power imbalance portrayed in images produced in England, and to assert his subjectivity and the possibility of productive intercultural difference. Yet, in the painting Lindauer has not recognised Paratene’s subjectivity as it is reflected in his moko and, therefore, cannot see him face-to-face. As in the case of Jenkins’ relationship with the group of Rangatira, the painter’s ignorance of Tikanga inhibits productive intercultural difference. Paratene wishes to take control of his image so that it reflects his status and whakapapa: “In this painting I will not crouch on the edge of things, or avert my eyes. People will look at it, and see my moko, and know who I am” (55). While Paratene is “looking straight ahead” in the image, his moko is “not quite right, the way the Bohemian has painted it” (253). Although Paratene is

facing the viewer, which suggests agency, the painting has not achieved his aim because the moko is distorted, and it is through the moko that viewers can see his lineage and status. The inaccuracy of the moko, then, calls into question the Bohemian's ability to read moko. Paratene says that the Bohemian, "can't read Maori faces any more than he can read Maori books" (254). The moko is a language of its own that Lindauer cannot interpret or copy for the painting. Lindauer's artistic interpretation of Paratene's moko reveals a lack of productive difference, and this inhibits the intercultural recognition that Paratene sought in commissioning the portrait in the first place.

The painting of Paratene instead posits him as a figure of antiquity, thereby avoiding the realities of British colonisation and Paratene's political agency. Lindauer's reiteration of Paratene's ancient warrior status suggests that he wishes to capture an imagined and idealised past rather than an accurate portrayal of Paratene's recent past or present existence. While Paratene has renounced his fighting days in the present frame of the novel, he notes that as a young man he fought alongside Hongi, and in those battles he did not wear a ngore, but a tattua (29). Paratene explains to Lindauer that during battle he only wore a tattua so he could be "fast and unencumbered, ready to fight" (101). A tattua is a belt which, in Paratene's case, he placed a patu or mere for hand-to-hand battle (Keane, and Morris 101). From a British perspective, Paratene and his taua were essentially naked during battle. Paratene notes that, "The missionaries said it was indecent" and that when the party touring England were asked to wear "our native costume . . . in England . . . nobody ever mean[nt] a tattua" (101). The ngore cloaks represent a desired romantic nobility that is relegated to an imagined ancient and peaceful past, while the tattua represents the Māori capacity for combat. The tattua represents conflict (inter-tribal and against the British colonisers) and political agency that the romantic drapery of Lindauer's

static images avoids. Painting Māori as figures of romantic antiquity idealised the past and avoided confronting inter-tribal warfare (that involved cannibalism) and the negative effects on Māori during British colonisation. Lindauer's painting renders Paratene as passive rather than a man of political agency and action which posits him as a colonised subject.

Morris uses the painting as a narrative frame to illustrate Paratene's passivity in contrast to his agency in writing his own narrative. Yet, the political implications of the inaccuracies and the final interpretation of Lindauer's art are left to the readers' assessment. Paratene recognises that the inaccuracies in the image are due to Lindauer's artistic interpretation. He writes, "He is an artist, not an historian. He has painted his version of my face just as Smetham did in London. I suppose that what I'm writing down this week is my version of the trip to England" (254).

Paratene posits himself as an artist in the writing of the trip, and as an artist figure he excuses the inaccuracies of art that occur through an artist's interpretation and appropriation. While Paratene acknowledges his subjectivity in his recollection of the tour, he also excuses any errors that he may have made during his appropriation of the trip to England, saying, "if Wharepara were to read it, he would disagree with half of what I say" (254). Despite his frustrations during the tour, and the impending appropriation of his land, Paratene understands the artistic interpretation of his (and the Rangatira party's) image in art from outsiders as well as his own appropriation of the tour into a narrative. However, the political implications of the inaccuracies and interpretation of art are not explored in the text. Instead, the onus is on the reader to evaluate the risks and benefits of artistic interpretation and appropriation.

Relying on the readers' evaluation of the risks and benefits of artistic interpretation and appropriation means that the artist transfers the ethical responsibility of the work onto the reader, whilst continuing to use the stories and

images from within, or from outside, of their culture, which places the author in an ambiguous ethical relationship to the text. Newton explains the transfer of responsibility from the author to the reader using Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas*: the artist "sits at the apex of a representational triangle . . . invisible as such, but twice reproduced through mirror effects" (20). The artist is both inside and outside of the image looking out to implicate the audience in responsibility for the image. Newton applies this 'looking out' to prose fiction to convey that response is an ethical act. In reading a story, the authority for it changes from the author to the reader (21).

Reciprocity and the faceless law

Jenkins's articulation of Paratene's past and conversion to Christianity places it on a colonised/colonizer continuum which fails to see Paratene's selfhood prior to his conversion to Christianity, and this positioning inhibits productive difference. Paratene, on the other hand, feels pride in his past and questions the 'good' of Christianity that does not acknowledge his or Hongi's intellect and service for their people. The trip to England, rather than cementing a Christian belief system, confuses Paratene and makes him question why he should "forget the knowledge of our ancestors" (21-22). At the tour party's lecture in Bath, Jenkins tells the audience that Paratene was a "notorious fighter, a ferocious cannibal warrior" with Hongi. He goes to reassure them Paratene had since been baptised and learnt "civilised ways and . . . was a good man" (212). Paratene reflects on this introduction in the passage that follows:

At one time in my life, I would have felt this to be a compliment, but after the fiftieth of these Conversaziones I was no longer sure.

Everything was made too simple; everything of the past was denigrated too readily. Who was Jenkins to stand in judgement over a great man like Hongi? Who was he to dismiss the service of my youth, my service to my people, as the acts of a simpleton or savage? (212).

Jenkins's speech implies that Paratene has simply forgotten his past because he is now a Christian, and while Paratene may have agreed with this once, he now questions why he should forget his pride in his actions and association with Hongi. Jenkins dismisses the warriors' actions as 'bad' and 'unchristian' without taking into account that Paratene and Hongi were acting in service to their people. Jenkins's failure to acknowledge Paratene's service to his people in the past inhibits intercultural productive difference.

Yet, in other intercultural interactions, seeing each other face-to-face would complicate the achievement of knowledge and commodity exchange. If Hongi and the missionary Thomas Kendall had achieved productive difference it would have hindered the achievement of their respective goals. Kendall learnt Te Reo Māori, which may suggest an act of reciprocity and an attempt to acknowledge the productive difference between himself and Māori. What's more, during the course of the mission at Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands Kendall confessed that "Maori ideas had 'almost turned me from a Christian to a Heathen'" (King *History* 141). While Kendall is influenced by Māori language and philosophy and the trip to England enables Hongi to see England and understand a European perspective, both men have an ulterior motive for helping the other. Kendall wants his book, *A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of New Zealand*, completed accurately, and Hongi wants muskets (Binney). In battles against Te Roroa, Te Rarawa and Te Aupouri in the north, Hongi became convinced of the effectiveness of the new

muskets and sought contact with Europeans to encourage trade in weapons and tools (Ballara). As Angela Ballara states, Hongi “was pursuing his own interests, not those of the missionaries.” Newton’s Levinasian conception of *face* does not acknowledge trade between people, whether in ideas or commodities, which encourages relationships of mutual benefit rather than productive difference. Kendall and Hongi’s relationship is based on knowledge and commodity exchange rather than productive difference.

The lack of reciprocity between the tour party and Jenkins, and the English audience, inhibits the possibility for productive difference. Paratene laments the lack of reciprocity, by saying, “Was there nothing we could teach the English? Were the English to have all the authority?” (155). The fact that Māori who chose to be baptised had to give up their prior beliefs suggests that there was nothing beneficial for the English in those beliefs, and yet for Māori giving up the ‘old ways’ meant that the framework of beliefs as the basis of their mana had gone, leaving them with pride but with no deeper cultural foundations. Paratene says that the tour party only had “pride. This was what was left to us, now that the old ways of doing and seeing things had been swept away. In England we had the attitude of Rangatira without any of the mana” (155). Paratene defines a Rangatira as someone who has, “a certain dignity, the ability to lead, the observations of protocol and custom, a respect for mana and tapu. An understanding of utu, the reciprocity on which our society depends so our lives would be in balance and our ancestors would be appeased” (154). Paratene would like to enact the mana of a Rangatira in his relationship with the English to acknowledge the ‘old ways’ of doing things, and encourage reciprocity.

The novel’s assertion of hybridity complicates the straightforward historical narrative of Pakeha oppression and appropriation. One example of this complication

may be found in framing the novel's chapters with religious epigraphs, thereby hybridising the Bible to enact a relationship of reciprocity between Māori and Pakeha Christians. Paratene was baptised into the Anglican Church by Henry Williams and gave up the 'old ways' of life; the customs he grew up with (211). At the lectures in England he echoes the Christian message saying, "I want to speak of Christian love, the best thing in the world" (213). However, he starts questioning the Christian belief system and the double standards he observes in England. One of the double standards that captures Paratene's attention is Jenkins' desire for the party to perform haka and songs in their cloaks: "In other words, everything the missionaries had made us promise never to perform again" (44). Another conflict with Christian beliefs that Paratene observes is the widespread poverty of London. Paratene questions why the missionaries are not helping people in their own capital city, rather than helping those in New Zealand. After being approached by a beggar, Paratene says, "Why were so many English missionaries in New Zealand, when the work to accomplish here, in London alone, was so mountainous an undertaking? The poor souls in this city were much worse off than the poorest of the poor in New Zealand (131)." Paratene questions Christianity, and uses the Bible as "a site of political negotiation . . . that opens up an interaction or dialogism of the powerful/powerless, and it is this site . . . which enables another distribution of meaning" (Bhabha 115). In its hybridised form, Christianity is not imposed onto people as if onto a blank slate. Rather, Paratene acknowledges both his Christianity and Tikanga and attempts a dialogue between them to distribute a new meaning in his writing that allows for productive difference.

Although Paratene can use English to negotiate his relationship to Christianity, the language of the court does not offer a space of intercultural

recognition. While both the law and Christianity are examples of ideological state apparatus, Christianity appears open to interaction and interpretation because the Bible itself can be read as a literary text, as well as the different denominations of belief, and the subjectivity of belief inherent in religion. However, the application of English law in New Zealand does not allow space for varying degrees of belief because it is written to avoid ambiguity. While the law has an appearance of equity, it distributes European ideology onto all New Zealand subjects regardless of any other belief system. This “faceless universalism”, as Newton phrases it, “neutralizes contingent features of appearance” which inhibits productive difference, and denies different cultural practices (184). Amanda Pask, in her discussion of cultural appropriation and the law, explains that the “structure of the law precludes the recognition of claims based in culture” (qtd. in Hart 143). The law does not acknowledge that other cultures have “other ways of doing things” (Hart 143). The universalising element of the law seeks to neutralize difference in physical appearance, and cultural practices.

The Land Court does not acknowledge the Māori concept of land occupation which elicits the readers’ empathy and ethical responsibility to Paratene’s plight. Paratene is in Auckland before the journey to England to attend the Native Land Court to restore his claim to Hauturu (20). Prior to European settlement the notion of individual land ownership through deed was not a concept with which Māori were familiar. Instead where the “home fires kept burning” indicated a claim to land through occupation, and fires could be burning at several different locations at once (82). Paratene notes that “Ngati Wai, [are] the ones who have kept our home fires burning there [at Hauturu] for as long as I can remember” (20). While the judge agrees with Paratene, Hauturu comes under counter-claim from other tribal groups (20). There appears to be no definitive decision when it comes to the ruling on

Hauturu: “every time we stand before a judge,” Paratene reflects, “he chooses a different group, and then years go by with more bad will and more arguments” (21). Decisions are changed; the law seems fluid rather than concrete, and this fact makes Paratene situation seem hopeless.

Paratene faces land appropriation at the conclusion of the novel, and this turn maintains the reader’s intimacy and ethical duty. Morris has stated the facts of Paratene’s life at the start and end of the novel in order that readers see him as both a fictional and a historically real figure. Rather than create an account of Paratene’s fight to keep Hauturu in the novel, the novel’s story arc ends with news of the Tarawera eruption and talk about the incident as vengeance from either God or Tama-o-hoi. The bad omen of the eruption seems to signal to Paratene that his island will be lost in the Land Court process, and he is left in the liminal space of the sea wall feeling helpless and afraid. While against the sea wall, Paratene imagines clouds drawing around “until [he] can no longer see the island. Hauturu is lost to [him], as though the mountain has exploded like Tarawera” (284). As a reader, we empathise with Paratene’s situation as he encounters the appropriation of Hauturu engendered by the Land Court. Newton proposes, through hermeneutic ethics, that a reader can become responsible for a text. A reader is responsible for “getting” the text, but Newton notes that in “getting” the story, the reader can also lose the “person as ‘real’” (19). The way a person is appropriated or allegorised “endangers both intimacy and ethical duty,” meaning that the person becomes a type rather than an individual; and this typing distances the reader from the very person they are trying to exercise an ethical duty towards. However, in Morris’s text, readers know the story is based on real people, and this knowledge alerts readers to the facts of Paratene’s life and reconfigures their ethical responsibility.

The non-fiction postscript in Morris's novel is her recognition of the ethical limits in reimagining Paratene's life. It serves as an illustration to readers that land appropriation is reality and not open to fictional reimagining. In the novel, Morris uses the non-fiction postscript to explain the contestation of Hauturu. In October 1886, Paratene Te Manu was named as one of the fourteen owners of Hauturu; over the next ten years the government negotiated with the owners on a sale price, while the Auckland Institute urged the government to make the island a bird preserve. Two additional complications were caused by a campaign by Ngati Whatua for ownership by parties exploiting the timber resources on the island. While Paratene agreed to sell his interest in the island for a fair price, the government compulsorily acquired the island in October 1894. Morris's great-great-grandparents continued to fight for the island, but to no avail. However, Morris's great-grandfather continued to visit the island and use its resources. The postscript reminds readers again that Paratene is a real person, and though Morris acknowledges where she has imaginatively reimagined some elements of his life, she states that “[t]he drawn-out court battles over Hauturu (Little Barrier) are, unfortunately, based on historical record” (289). The history of land appropriation is certifiable. As Susan Greenberg explains, while fiction dramatizes action and its consequences, nonfiction carries an “ethical recognition that the consequences are not invented but real” (518).

Morris's treatment of land issues in the epigraph to *Rangatira* contrasts strikingly with her earlier short story “Rangatira: Little Barrier Island 1895” (2003) where land appropriation is central to the plot. In the short story, Paratene is living on Hauturu with his nephew's wife who wishes to write down his stories for a Pakeha historian (an outsider wishing to appropriate Paratene's stories). While Paratene is relating his stories, officers of the Crown visit the island with summons to leave the island. Paratene insists he is not leaving the island, and will not attend court, while

the Pakeha tells him the “island has been declared a reserve for the preservation of native fauna” (214). When he receives the summons, Paratene dances “around the paper, jabbing the stick down at it, as though the paper is the prone body of an enemy, waiting for the lethal blow”, a response which evokes the warfare of Paratene’s past (214). Although Paratene will not go to court, his nephew does in an effort to fight the Crown’s possession of the island.

Towards the end of the story, the Commissioner and soldiers arrive to take Paratene off his land. Paratane has converted to Christianity and given up fighting, however when he sees the soldiers he says that he “hasn’t seen so much weaponry since my last war expedition” (224). As Paratene and his family are forcibly evicted from the island, he compares the soldiers to the Queen’s lions that he saw during his trip to England. Paratene had wished to fight the lions but was advised the Queen would not be happy if he did so. Although the Queen said to Paratene that she was “kindly disposed to the Māori race”, it is her government forces--her ‘lions’--who are evicting Paratene and his family from their land. At the end of the story, Paratene raises his “stick on the air, so the lions can see I’m ready to fight” (226). The story illustrates the Crown’s acquisition of land through the courts, and hypocrisy in encouraging Māori to lay down their weapons through Christian doctrine, while maintaining the physicality of their own forces. Paratene responds to this hypocrisy by drawing on his capacity to fight.

The contrast between the endings in Morris’s short story and novel illustrate the ethical value in the writing principle ‘show not tell.’ ‘Showing’ depends on the effect words may have on a reader, whereas when an author ‘tells’ they are explicitly presenting characters actions, thoughts and feelings. In the short story, Morris has Paratene literally ‘telling’ his story. Susan Greenberg suggests that the writing trope of ‘show not tell’ “contains both an ethical and aesthetic value” (Greenberg 521).

Morris ‘tells’ the reader about Paratene’s past and the agency he had, but the ending of the story ‘shows’ the upcoming battle for his island. This is a plot device for the short story form which generally illustrates a transformative moment for the main character. However, unless the reader knows the history of Hauturu and realises the significance of the date 1895 that accompanies the title, the story concludes with a sense that Paratene might reclaim his island. In *Rangatira*, Morris ‘tells’ Paratene’s despair at the conclusion, and this confirms the hopelessness of his situation, whereas the ending of the short story relies upon readers understanding of dramatic irony. The ethical responsibility the reader undertakes in the short story depends on their knowledge of Hauturu, whereas the novel is explicit in its ethical positioning of the readers’ responsibilities towards land appropriation.

The right to tell?

Paula Morris has engaged with the theme of cultural appropriation in her previous work. Ann Pistacchi has analysed how Morris’s Māori characters in her first three adult novels, and the short story, “Rangatira,” “identify and challenge, and at the same time are often complicit with, instances of Pakeha appropriation of indigenous stories, lands, and cultural artefacts” (“Any dead” 63). While Paratene and the party agree to go to England and to stage lectures, their initial co-dependence with Jenkins in the dissemination of culture turns into complete appropriation. Jenkin translates and interprets their stories, and sets the rules for the lectures to enable his appropriation for commercial gain, and to enhance his own status in English society. Paratene’s act of reciprocity attempts to temper this appropriation and make it equitable, however his exemption of artists to recreate and interpret images and

stories brings into question the role of the artist, and in particular, Morris's role as a writer who is interpreting a family story.

There are ethical risks in borrowing stories from your own culture. One of the risks is losing the force of the story in its retelling. The risks of appropriating stories from one culture to another is explored by Barry Barclay in his discussion of Peter Walker's *The Fox Boy: The Story of an Abducted Child* (2001). Walker recounts the story of Ngatau, who was abducted by government troops during a battle with Titokowaru's forces in 1868. Three years later, Ngatau was "taken into the house of Sir William and Lady Fox" to be educated and join English society (Barclay 167). In the book, Walker relates the intimacy between Lady Fox and Ngatau; and Barclay explains that the 'secret' information that Walker shares about Lady Fox and Ngatau was carried down through oral traditions by one family, rather than through public records. In its retelling, however, Barclay questions whether the story "is lost in some way, if it is perverted or squandered, then it may lose its force for the people of the future" (169). Prior to Walker's re-articulation of the story, it was a 'secret' story, a treasure for the one marae to share on appropriate occasions. Now the story is public and belongs to everyone. Barclay explains that there are "within Maori groups precious fact-based story heirlooms which are passed on in the oral tradition from generation to generation. An outsider appears and overnight tribal story heirlooms may be carried away into another tradition altogether" (170). An outsider appropriating a story takes it out of its cultural context and influences it with another. At the same time, there are risks in not sharing stories between cultures. The late Matiu Mareikura, filmmaker and member of the Film Commission, for instance, said, "We've got to be able to tell our stories, or else we'll vanish. We aren't anything without our stories" (qtd. in Barclay 169). While retaining stories

within marae means they keep their intent and meaning, by keeping them within an oral tradition, tellers risk losing these stories forever.

Morris's opinion about her 'right' to share her tupuna's story aligns with Mareikura's perspective. Morris, in an interview with Pistacchi, says that a cousin did question her right to tell Paratene's story. While Paratene is Morris's tupuna, Morris is from a lower branch of the family, with a different marae. In the interview with Pistacchi, Morris said,

It's better that the story of his life be made public through a work of fiction, however partial and subjective and 'untrue' elements of that story would be, inevitably, rather than held in ever-decreasing fragments of passed-down history at his home marae. The man [Paratene Te Manu] who goes to England (against the wishes of his relatives), who chose to sit for Lindauer, who chose to tell his life story at the request of a Pakeha [James Cowan] is not someone who wanted to live in secret. Seeing his portrait last week in the Auckland City Art Gallery storage facility made me even more resolved to engage with his story. I don't care who wants to tell me I can't. (77-8).

Morris asserts that her re-creation of Paratene's story in writing will ensure its longevity whereas the marae environment may, over time, lose elements of his story. She also notes that Paratene made parts of his life public, and was an active agent in the dissemination of his life story and image, which she believes validates her decision share his life in fiction. Morris also argues that "If we deny permission to our own, then a 'real' outsider . . . will swoop in at some point and tell our stories for us" (qtd. in Pistacchi 63). Morris recognises herself as part of Paratene's whakapapa,

and as an ‘insider’ and feels she has a ‘right’ to re-create and share Paratene’s story before an ‘outsider’ does.

Although Morris believes she has the right to re-tell Paratene’s story, she does hint in the novel at lapses of memory that occur in the re-constructed narrative that could allow for re-interpretation of Paratene’s story, and leads readers to question the validity of Morris’s reconstruction. Paratene says that, “the more I think, the less clearly I remember, and the less certain I am … I don’t know what I remember and what I was told, or what we pieced together afterwards when the place and our memories of it were distant” (117). Paratene’s admission of memory lapses and indecision as to whether he was in attendance in particular scenes conveys how the narrative of their journey has been constructed over time. It suggests that its accuracy was always questioned because the main actors cannot remember the specifics of their journey. These gaps of memory also suggest that elements of the story are already lost through oral reiterations. At the same time, such gaps allow for varying interpretations of the journey, whether from Paratene’s perspective, or from another Rangatira. The self-consciously acknowledged construction of Paratene’s story calls to mind Morris’s conflict about her insider/outsider status, and leads the reader to evaluate the ethical divide between insider and outsider appropriation.

Morris constructs *Rangatira* in English rather than Te Reo or a hybrid form of the languages to ensure the story is communicated to readers who do not speak Te Reo. Paratene decides to write his story in English as well because, “There must be a record. So much depends, as I have discovered, on things that are written down on paper” (30). That there must be a record marries with Morris’s belief in the sharing of stories outside of the marae, and it also conveys the frustration Paratene feels about contractual rights and obligations, in particular the fluidity of those

negotiations with Jenkins and the Land Court. It also reflects the fact that Morris does not speak Te Reo and that the story will be communicated to others who do not speak Te Reo.⁷ Paratene has learnt the language of the coloniser in order to communicate his perspective about the tour, and his vision of a truly bicultural New Zealand, while Morris, as one of his descendants, has written the novel in English because she does not have command of Te Reo Māori, but also because in English she can share it with a wider audience.

Paratene's use of English to retell his story encompasses elements of authoritative and inner-persuasive ideologies, and this negotiation with the authority of the coloniser expands Newton's use of the ideologies to question the power relations in translation. Newton uses Bakhtin's terms 'authoritative' and 'inner-persuasive' to illustrate how both narrators in the novel use inner-persuasive narration to negotiate voices of authority: 'Inner-persuasive' ideology is "predicated on self-assertion – 'retelling in one's own words'; whereas, 'authoritative' "is the voice of dogma and social control" (253). Paratene uses the language of the coloniser to question their authority and to share his perspective of the tour. Paratene says that, "English is our weapon, hidden deep within the fold of our tutua. We reveal it only when we need to, because a surprise attack is often best" (222). Paratene's use of English is an adaptation to a new battlefield, while self-assertion is a retelling "in one's own words" (253). While Newton adapts Bakhtin's ideology to Dickens, he does not take into account the use of another's language to communicate an inner-persuasive narrative, or what is lost in translation, or the relations of power involved in that translation. Translation, Barry Barclay explains, involves an "artistic reworking of the original, not mere replication" (151). Art and language are

⁷ Alice Te Punga Somerville notes that Morris "spoke only English growing up" (177).

acts of translation and interpretation in which gaps between meaning and intent can occur which reveal hierarchies of power.

Questions about the language the novel is written in circle back to the questions of retelling and dissemination of story, and these questions link to the reader's ethical responsibility. During the tour of England, Paratene visits Kingswood School in Bath with Reihana and Jenkins, and he finds the visit so profound that he wants to open a school on his return to New Zealand. He says,

That was the day I understood why I had come to that country . . . To receive new shoes, a copper kettle and the like was all very agreeable, but these things wear out in time. A school goes on, and is of use to generation after generation of mokopuna . . . I was determined that when I returned to New Zealand, I would build a school . . . My school would be open to Maori and Pakeha children, and within its walls they would learn all they must know to make our country as great as England. (175)

Paratene envisions a bicultural future for his descendants and for New Zealand, but in this vision only English is spoken. The school represents his vision of knowledge sharing, coexistence, and understanding between Māori and Pakeha Paratene does, in fact, build the school in 1870 with assistance from his taina, Henare Te Moananui, and the Church Missionary Society. He shares his experiences at the school, saying sometimes “[I] would sit quietly at the back, and listen to their lessons. This is how I learned English” (280). While there is specific reference to English being taught at the school, there is no mention of Te Reo. It is likely that the lessons were transmitted in English because in 1847 “Sir George Grey introduced the Education Ordinance . . . which required that education be carried out in English. This was followed by a proliferation of legislation and education policy that has had a colossal

negative impact on the Māori language” (Higgins, Rawinia and Keane). Does Paratene’s retelling in English risk its intent and meaning that would be evident in a retelling on a marae in Te Reo Māori? Or, should his story be shared by a wider English speaking (Māori and non-Māori) audience to ensure his story is not lost? This question is not definitively answered in the text, and the reader is left to decide on the role of the artist in the appropriation and interpretation of culture.

Conclusion

Morris’s novel articulates the issues of insider and outsider cultural appropriation, and the hierarchies of power involved in that appropriation. Morris’s illustration of appropriation exposes the fact that Newton’s notion of face-to-face does not acknowledge the possible fragmentation within the category of the Other. Furthermore, Newton’s focus on physicality does not acknowledge how language and its interpretation problematizes productive difference. True acknowledgement of productive difference would enable the universal court system to acknowledge that different cultures have different practises of determining land occupation. The ethical question at the conclusion of the novel, which ends on a postscript about the contestation of Hauturu, is one about narrative form: can fiction propel readers into political action to contest land appropriation when writers rely on a readers’ interpretation to “get” that history, especially when they may (or may not) be invested in that version of history? On a practical level, Morris’s engagement with the Land Court process would need to be an inter-generational project that continues after Paratene’s death. However, Morris’s acknowledgement of the ethical risk in fictionalising land claims suggests that readers need to be ‘told’ about land appropriation so they know the consequences are real. This telling does not take

account of the persuasive effect of fiction or its ability to agitate for acknowledgement of the past and to reframe the future. When readers are “told” the facts, it does not give them a creative framework to imagine an alternative vision for the future. I return to these issues in the final novel I discuss, Kelly Ana Morey’s *Bloom*, which adopts a very different series of narrative strategies for imagining the loss and recovery of land and culture.

Chapter 3: Cultural renaissance and the (mis)remembering of history: Kelly Ana Morey's *Bloom* (2003)

Introduction

Kelly Ana Morey's debut novel *Bloom* (2003) narrates how the women in the Spry family remember their personal narratives and reclaim their cultural identity after years of physical and violent dispossession from their tūrangawaewae—their place to stand. Reviews applauded the novel for its quirky humour. Liz Fraser, in her on-line blog, described Morey's writing as “a wonderful combination of quirky one-liners and atmospheric prose” (Fraser *NZ Book Council*). Jolisa Gracewood praised Morey's cinematic settings, and said that Morey “has a sharp ear for speech, and her command of ensemble scenes is masterful” (Gracewood *By all means*). By contrast, Isa Moynihan felt there were too many unresolved mysteries for the reader (*Moynihan Family*). Moynihan states that “since the reader expects a dropped hint to have a later significance, an unexplained mystery can be annoying rather than tantalising” (*Moynihan Family*). Gracewood also found some of the novel's mysteries “unhelpfully murky” (Gracewood *By all means*). She felt that Connie's vague and wandering narrative style made it “difficult for the reader to participate in the task of compiling a history” of the Women Spry, which is the main focus of the novel, “but also its weak point” (Gracewood *By all means*). While reviewers found faults with Morey's debut novel, they also posited her as a rising star on the New Zealand literary scene. Moynihan states that Morey's novel “is a stunning effort as a first novel” and her promise as a debut novelist was acknowledged with the New Zealand Society of Authors Hubert Church Best First Book Award (2004), the Todd

New Writers' Bursary, and she was one of the two inaugural recipients of the Janet Frame Literary Trust Awards 2005 (Moynihan *Family* and NZ Book Council).

Bloom begins with the narrator Constance (Connie) writing a mystery novel in her Auckland flat when the ghost of Nanny Smack visits. When she was alive, Nanny was a member of the Hauhau, an arm of the Pai Marire prophetic movement that in the nineteenth century was concerned with bringing about justice for the dispossession of Māori from their land (Elsmore 170). Nanny befriended Connie when she was a toddler living in Goshen (Taranaki) with her mother Rose, sister Hebe, and Grandmother Algebra, and she continues to visit Constance as a spectral presence returning to the present in between battles during the nineteenth-century Taranaki Land Wars. Connie's flat in the beginning of *Bloom* is her place of forgetting. All the women in her family, Connie tells the reader, "have a talent for forgetting" (7). But Nanny tells Connie that it's her job to remember and "keep the home fires burning" (14). During her visits, Nanny narrates stories from the Land Wars and encourages Connie to remember and write something more meaningful than mystery novels. While Nanny wants Connie to keep the home fires burning, it is Algebra who calls Connie back to the family home, "a pub on a crossroads in the middle of nowhere" in the fictional township of Goshen on the coast of Taranaki (67). Algebra wants to tell Connie "the things that she no longer wished to remember" before she dies (37). Connie returns to Goshen and becomes the family's historian, collating Algebra, Hebe, and Rose's personal histories, and sharing her own story in the process.

In what follows, I will illustrate how Morey's use of Māori cosmology and the concept of whakamā (shame) create a different ethical relationship to the past than is seen in Wong and Morris's works, by actively linking the past violence to present cultural dispossession at the same time as foregrounding the ongoing ruptures

in identity brought about by past crimes. The narrative highlights Rose and Connie's attempts at reclaiming their culture and whakapapa through photography and family history, which exceed the physicality implied in Newton's use of the term *face*; the novel also stresses how much knowledge can be recovered from the past. Further distinguishing and complicating the ethical project of *Bloom*, however, is Morey's adoption of an ironic, playful mode to portray her female protagonists and its often jarring juxtaposition with their experiences of loss. Informed by Morey's accounts of her writing journey and desire to write from her cultural standpoint, I will suggest that *Bloom*'s playful irony creates a conflicted ethical relationship to the past and the present. Because that irony is given licence by the pathos of history, the novel's ethical core resides in a claim to historical truth that it does always sustain. And because that irony functions as a form of resistance to received narratives and oppressive cultural norms, it tends toward the retrieval of individual cultural identity at the expense of being able to invoke a collective cultural and political responsibility for the characters and readers.

Māori Cosmology as Inner Persuasive Discourse

Morey's use of Māori cosmology is an example of inner-persuasive discourse which enables the characters to engage, articulate, and reclaim their past within their cultural perspective of time and history. The use of Māori cosmology as inner-persuasive discourse is an ethical act that influences readers' notions of temporality, and illustrates how the violence of the past is linked to the present. Inner-persuasive discourse is about self-assertion, the ability to tell your story in your own words, and as such is "open, experimental, [and] assimilated . . . to negotiate and oppose voices of authority" (Newton 253). Through the presence of Nanny Smack, Morey

draws on Māori cosmology and a tradition of Māori literature written in English to enable the real and the phantasmic to exist side by side in order to allow Nanny to tell her story in her own words. The characterisation of Nanny Smack allows the existence of a ghost amongst the living, and it brings the past into the present. Nanny has an extensive knowledge of the past, “her own lifetime was a mere fraction of the knowledge that she plucked from the ether” (175). While such devices have typically been associated with magical realism, critics such as Bridget Orr have argued that they are, in fact, shaped by a specific Maori worldview. Writing of Witi Ihimaera’s *The Matriarch*, Orr argues that its “mythological and realist modes of narration” may initially bring to mind magic realism but its “schema is in fact determined by specifically Maori views of time and history” (84). In a similar fashion, the existence of Nanny Smack in Morey’s novel signals an awareness that the past, present and future mingle together and are indivisible. This indivisibility suggests a united or undivided Māori perspective on time and history. Similarly, Miriama Evans notes that there is an “indivisibility of past, present and future into discrete segments” for Māori (19-20). Jon Battista’s analysis of Māori literary aesthetics makes the case that Māori writers writing in English convey a thematic preoccupation with the capacity of the past to influence and inform the present and future (59-60). In *Bloom*, Morey utilises the indivisibility of time and history as an element of a Māori aesthetic in her characterisation and inner-persuasive discourse of Nanny Smack to reveal how the past has influenced the present cultural dispossession of the women Spry and to contest authoritative discourses which attempt to silence the influence of the past on the present, and future

Bloom further complicates its account of the past by employing the concept of whakamā (shame) as inner-persuasive discourse to express the impact of colonial and personal violence upon Māori historical memory and cultural identity. Mereana

Selby explains that “whakamā is a human response which has a form particular to Māori” and refers to “the shame experienced as a result of an inappropriate act or failure to meet an expectation [that] had a powerful effect on the perpetrator, and, often, those close to or associated with them” (80). In keeping with its complex sense of historical continuity and rupture, *Bloom* traces the effects of whakamā back to the first generation of the Spry women, Algebra. Ann Pistacchi argues, in her thesis *Spiralling Subversions*, that the Māori concept of whakamā best describes Algebra’s guilt for her “burning the house down with my parents inside” (54). As punishment for this act her family burnt her arms “with hot matches so I wouldn’t light any more fires” (54). Algebra accepts the blame for this incident, and this sense of shame is exacerbated by having witnesses to the event. Algebra’s community know what she did, and her scars are a constant reminder (Pistacchi *Spiralling Subversions* 177). John Tairua explains that whakamā also “occurs when your feelings of self-worth is totally shattered” (qtd. in Metge 61). Algebra wants to leave these feelings behind and turns to pornography, alcohol and opium in order to forget that her parents have died and with them has gone knowledge of the family. Her loss of family is further exacerbated by the community expelling her (48-9). Rather than remembering her home and family, Algebra forgets her past, and knowledge of her family is lost through an act of (unintentional) violence.

Whakamā continues to deform the sensibility of the second generation of Spry women through Rose, Algebra’s daughter, whose inner-persuasive discourse articulates her experience of whakamā as a child. Her whakamā is exacerbated when she suffers from violence when separated from her home and community, and this violence, in turn, further estranges Rose from her history and whakapapa. Rose’s experience of whakamā expresses the ongoing nature of colonial and personal violence upon historical memory and cultural identity. During childhood Rose is not

often acknowledged by her mother, and Rose “fancied sometimes that she did not exist at all” (63). Rose’s vagueness during childhood continues when she studies in Auckland and does not keep in touch with Algebra and Han even after the birth of Hebe. Rose does not keep in touch with the Chins either, who live downstairs and helped her look after Hebe after she moves to the commune with her partner Elias. These actions cut Rose off from the support system of family . Joan Metge notes that during whakamā people “cut [are] off from social support just when they need it most” (108). Rose and Elias’s relationship deteriorates at the commune, and ends in a car accident after Elias hits Rose and she retaliates by hitting him “blindly, furiously, with something that she would only ever be able to remember as a manifestation, disconnected and half-solid” (234). Metge notes that sufferers of whakamā turn to violence through anger and frustration, especially if they have a history of whakamā and they feel they have no escape from their current situation (113). Rose feels powerless in her relationship with Elias, and it is this powerlessness that causes her to strike out. Elias dies in the accident and Rose carries the blame for it even though she believes “what had really killed Elias was the badness in his heart” (236). After the accident Rose loses her memory, withdraws from her children, and feels as if her life is over (243). Like her mother, Rose does not remember her past. Rose’s experience of whakamā illustrates how the violence of the past is directly linked to her memory loss and present cultural estrangement.

The sensibility of a third generation of Spry women is affected by whakamā when Hebe’s inner-persuasive discourse articulates her experience of violence which separates Hebe from her cultural identity. Hebe is physically abused by her husband, Philip. The abuse starts when Philip realises ‘his’ land is, in fact, leasehold property owned by the Wairangiwhenuas, and, further, that his lease expires in two years (182). Hebe does not talk about the abuse, but instead says that she “tripped over

one of the cats and fell through the French doors” (182), and Constance comments that her sister became “increasingly clumsy” (182). The abuse ends when Philip accidentally shoots himself defending the property, leaving Hebe a widow at the age of 21 (185). After a brief respite in Goshen, Hebe leaves “in search of other territories in which to settle . . . roots” (191). Hebe experiences whakamā, and she, too, has scars that remind her of the past, a past that she escapes by traveling overseas. The violence and shame Hebe experiences is the result of the continuation of land contestation which expels her from her personal past and cultural identity. Acts of violence have cut Algebra, Rose and Hebe off from their personal past and their home.

Morey’s novel contests Newton’s narrowly physical Levinasian notion of face-to-face in her depiction of inter-cultural recognition that depends on cultural practices and cosmology. Newton’s concept of the face-to-face refers to the “culture of definition,” reducing those who are culturally ‘marked’ to physicality which legitimises disfigurement (183). Newton’s examples discuss African American characters who are dehumanised by the white characters in each of the texts he investigates. He argues that the face acts as a pre-text, “as a phenomenal fact prior to an image of writing or figuration” (183). Newton believes that it is only by acknowledging “productive difference” in intercultural recognition that we can see face-to-face because “faces are always marked, sized, [and] colored” (184). However, in Morey’s novel, the characters’ acknowledgement of cultural identity is not determined by physical characteristics, or by an outside power determining their cultural affiliation. While reclaiming cultural identity is the driving concern of the narrative, it is not a category that is ever explicitly stated. Instead, cultural affiliation is illustrated by individuals (and others in the cultural group) recognising their affiliation to the same cultural practices and cosmology.

Throughout the narrative there is no strong evidence of the women Spry's whakapapa, and, therefore, the women are unable to acknowledge their personal history and cultural identity face-to-face. The absence of whakapapa expresses the impact of colonial and personal violence upon the women Spry's historical memory and cultural identity in the present. In *Bloom* there is an almost literal absence of faces to anchor the Spry's sense of identity. A photograph purported to be of Algebra's companion, Han, turns out to be either Ho Chi Minh (100) or Mao Tse Tung (103). Eventually Rose and Constance find a photo which they believe to be Han, but even then they do not know for sure whether the image is him(137). Algebra does not know who Rose's father was (57) yet Nanny Smack thinks that Hebe's son looks like "such a little Maori with those big brown eyes" (168). Nanny ironically says of Rose's picture, "you'd almost think she was a Maori looking like that . . . I reckon her birth certificate is about [as] authentic as yours, Cookie" (250). Cultural identity is central to the concerns of *Bloom*, yet it is not a category that is ever pinned down in the narrative. The Spry women's personal history is unknowable: Algebra's parents are deceased, Rose does not know who her father is (though Algebra has her suspicions), and Constance and Hebe have no recollection of their father. For all of the Spry women, there does not appear to be a clear biological connection on the paternal side of the family. The Spry women have no photographs of their family displayed: at the Goshen "[t]here were no photographs . . . of any of us. None of my father, Mrs Spry or even Hebe and me" (138). The lack of photographs suggests they do not want to remember, or do not know, their connections to people from the past. The lack of connection to the past illustrates that the women have been alienated from their whakapapa by a history of violence, and demonstrates the difficulty of reclaiming whakapapa and cultural identity.

Picturing the past: photographs and palimpsest

The Spry women's doubt over their personal history is contrasted with the Wairangiwhenuas, members of the unnamed local iwi at Goshen, whose active sense of their whakapapa is symbolised by their use of photographs as a cultural practice to connect the past to the present and therefore 'face' their inter-cultural connections to whakapapa. The Wairangiwhenuas display their clear knowledge of their lineage in the many photographs that line the walls of their lounge. "Nanny and Pop Wai," Connie writes, "knew every single relationship and drew lines backwards and forwards over the faces, connecting them like a dot-to-dot, as they told me who was who" (115). Angela Wanahalla notes that "For Maori, the painted portrait as well as photographs breathed life into ancestors" (117). Michael King explains that Māori adopted photography and used photographs of "dead people and their pre-deceased relatives around bodies at tangi", as well as hanging portraits inside meeting houses which elaborated "the concept of meeting houses as ancestral spirits and representations of genealogies" (*Maori 2*). It is through photographs and portraits that ancestors are linked to the present. In *Bloom*, Connie explains "The old people don't believe anyone's dead, just moved house" (147). Photographs function as a way of keeping the memory of ancestors alive and acknowledging your whakapapa. The Wairangiwhenuas remember, and 'face' their inter-cultural connections through the cultural practice of photography. The Wairangiwhenuas use of photographs expands Levinas's emphasis on the physicality of the term *face* by including the cultural practice of photography to illustrate belonging to whakapapa, and the connection between the past and the present.

Throughout the novel, Rose is shown to be constructing or reconstructing her cultural heritage through physical and artistic cultural practices that enable her to remember her past, and therefore acknowledge her cultural affiliation to Taranaki. This reconstruction relies on cultural practices which exceed the physicality implied in Newton's use of the term *face*. Rose's seemingly instinctive Māori sensibility is illustrated in her relationship with the land of the Taranaki region, which is presented as her Tūrangawaewae. Tūrangawaewae is "a place to stand" and such locations "are places where we feel especially empowered and connected. They are our foundation, our place in the world, our home" (Royal). The literal translation of the word is tūranga (standing place) and waewae (feet) (Royal), and Rose often has her feet literally in the soil at Goshen: Rose "liked to stand in the garden burying her toes in the soil" (125). Rose also connects with the land through gardening. While Rose has a physical connection, there is also a sense of a spiritual link, as it is while gardening that she wants to remember: "this is indeed what she wanted to do when she worked with the land" (228). Rose often takes photos of the mountain, and she is also involved in a museum project to retrieve Māori images from the past (245). Constance refers to a cable that connects Rose to her camera "as an umbilical cord" (244). While the reference suggests that the camera is Rose's 'baby', it also suggests that her home, her tūrangawaewae, is informing her work. Witi Ihimaera explains that tūrangawaewae "acknowledges that we have a pito, an umbilical, that ... informs our works and makes it Māori" (qtd. in Pistacchi *Spiralling Subversions* 17). By being in her garden, and retrieving images from the past, Rose undertakes cultural practices to connect and remember her home and cultural heritage that do not rely on the physicality implied in Newton's term *face*.

Rose's "place to stand" is in the same territory as the nineteenth-century pacifist Māori prophetic movement centred on Parihaka, and she rebuilds her

connection to it through the cultural practice of photography, thus enabling her cultural affiliation to be acknowledged by others within her cultural group rather than by an outside authority, as Newton suggests in his use of the term *face*. One photograph that Rose develops when working at the museum is of a domestic scene of a woman with her two children and a dog (246). The woman and children in the photograph have “white feathers in their hair” and the image “sings” to Rose and Constance, suggesting a profound yet unclear connection between them across the generations (247). The strong inference in the passage is that the people were followers of Te Whiti at Parihaka, as white feathers were given to family members whose husbands and/or fathers had been imprisoned for protesting European confiscation of land (Scott 181). Te Whiti had proposed the building of an open village between Mount Taranaki and the sea where peace would be a strategy to end fighting, and therefore preserve life while maintaining Māori land (Scott 28). His aim had been to negotiate a land treaty for Taranaki to enable Māori to keep their chieftainship, frustrating successive governments who wished to have the land for settlers. Michael King notes that when the Native Minister ordered troops to invade Parihaka in November 1881, they were “met by singing children” (*Penguin History* 220). Rose tells Constance that all the images sing, but that one of the woman with the feather sings loudest (247). While the photograph appears to be a record of the peace movement at Parihaka and the Government’s response to it, it also suggests that the woman sings to Rose because she recognises Rose’s cultural affiliation and connection to Parihaka. Photography brings the past into the present, and breathes life into ancestors, so that Rose can acknowledge her cultural affiliation and the history of her tūrangawaewae. The photograph also enacts intercultural recognition between Rose and the woman. This intercultural recognition may be distinguished from Newton’s use of the term ‘face’, a notion of an intercultural identity determined

by an outside authority. Morey suggests that cultural affiliation can be reclaimed after years of violence and dispossession through cultural practices rather than solely through biological links to whakapapa.

Rose takes the image of the singing woman into her whakapapa to reconstruct her cultural affiliation and enact intercultural recognition with her ancestors through the cultural practice of photography. She notes at the time of developing the image that it has “no whakapapa so to speak” (246), however the composition of the people in the image (a woman with two children and a dog) resembles Rose’s own domesticity. Rose mimics the image by taking a self-portrait with “a white feather in her hair” (249). Up to that point Rose has taken other self-portraits where she has imagined herself as her mother and children, and taken a photograph of her partner Eli. In imitating the image in the photo, Morey suggests that Rose is acknowledging the people (and the photograph itself) as part of her whakapapa.

Constance’s cultural re-identification begins when she acknowledges the fusion of the past, present and future in Māori cosmology, rather than through physical characteristics, as suggested by Newton’s use of the concept face-to-face. Constance’s reimaging of cultural affiliation in *Bloom* is controversial in that it does not rely on the biological connection of whakapapa as a foundation of cultural identity. Instead, cultural identity is rebuilt by learning how the past effects Constance’s current cultural dispossession. Constance’s flat in Auckland is her place of forgetting where she seeks to exist in the present while not acknowledging the past (8). However, when she first moves into her Auckland flat, “boxes of books caught up with me and forgetting once again became harder than remembering” (16). While readers are not told explicitly what genre the books are, they symbolise knowledge: in particular, the knowledge of her family’s and the region’s past that Constance has

tried to forget. When Constance is called back to Goshen by her Grandmother, Constance packs up her flat and tells her flatmate that she is taking the books home to “start at the beginning again” (27). By starting again Constance stops suppressing her knowledge and therefore ends her period of forgetting. Constance is only able to move into the future when she acknowledges her connection to the past, and this sets the plot in motion

Nanny Smack recognises Constance’s cultural affiliation and ancestral connection to Taranaki, and encourages her to see how the violence of the past relates to her present cultural dispossession. Nanny hopes the reiteration of this knowledge will persuade Constance to occupy her land. Nanny has been sending Constance the books, and in one delivery she leaves a note that says, “keep the home fires burning in the land of light and abundance” (88). The note is a reference to the phrase *Ahi kā roa*, which means “long burning fires of occupation – title to land through occupation” (*Ahi kā roa*). It is a distinct Māori image and political statement about land occupation. The combination of the books and the phrase suggest that through knowledge Constance will be able to claim her past and occupy her land. Like her mother, Constance is shown to have an affinity with Māori culture and its worldview; when her flatmate asks her whether she is upset about her grandmother dying, she says, “Honestly, Lydia, sometimes you’re such a Pakeha” (27). This reply indicates her identification with the Māori belief that although ancestors are in another realm, they are still part of life. Growing up, Constance also feels an affinity with the neighbouring Wairangiwhenua family, whose active sense of their Māori identity is signalled through their language and sense of whakapapa. Pop Wai calls Constance *Ahi kā roa* which suggests that he too recognises Connie’s cultural affiliation and task of remembering (117). Connie’s connection to Māori culture appears constant over the narrative, which the correct spelling of her name Constant

suggests (15). While Connie's cultural re-identification is not as pronounced as Rose's, the narrative suggests that by returning home to gather up knowledge of her family and the Taranaki region she can keep the "home fires burning". The reiteration of knowledge of the past will ensure the importance of maintaining land in the present and future.

When Constance journeys back to Goshen her knowledge is extended through conversations with Nanny Smack, and these enable Connie to recognise that recalling and reiterating knowledge maintains the link between past and present, and the importance of occupying land. Constance's interactions with Nanny Smack convey the influence of an oral tradition, and illustrate the ways that dialogue links land contestation in the past to the present cultural dispossession. Nanny particularly passes on her knowledge about life during the Taranaki Wars when she was fighting for land. She says to Constance when she meets her in Te Kuiti, "Have I ever told you about those years us Hauhau were separated from our homelands on that god-forsaken island?" (30). This identifies her as one of a number of Māori in Tūranganui-a-Kiwa who converted to the Hauhau movement in 1865, who subsequently "clashed with government forces," and were exiled to the Chatham Islands (Binney "Prophetic"). Te Kooti was also exiled to the Chatham Islands in 1866, and it was there that he dreamt that God had spoken to him, telling him to lead his people (Binney "Prophetic"). In July 1868, Te Kooti led 300 political prisoners on the Chatham Islands to escape and they sailed successfully to Gisborne where they began a campaign of anti-colonial violence. It is through conversation that Nanny tells Constance about her life and the Hauhau movement, and its repetition means that the knowledge is recalled and reiterated. Constance recalls her knowledge about Te Kooti and his relationship to Te Kuiti. She says, "The King Country, I knew, was where Te Kooti sought sanctuary with Tawhiao, the Maori

King” (29). Her description sees the land like a palimpsest where layers of history, though not necessarily visible to the eye, are visible through her knowledge (29). It is this knowledge that reiterates the struggle, and the importance, of maintaining land.

The lack of acknowledgement of the ongoing psychic consequences caused by land confiscation inhibits productive difference between Pakeha and Māori. By talking to Nanny Smack, Constance not only receives details about the past, but through her new understanding of Māori cosmology she also learns to understand the ongoing psychic and physical consequences of violence and dispossession, rather than the ongoing consequences being determined by the “culture of definition” who may not acknowledge the ongoing consequences that limit intercultural productive difference. Constance shows Nanny Smack her school history textbook on the Land Wars, to which Nanny replies, “I’m familiar with this version of events” (175). This comment suggests that there are different versions of history. Yet, Nanny suggests that the land wars are ongoing, claiming, “Your books tell you that the Land Wars finished in 1870 or 1909 or whatever trendy new date the current crop of revisionists are putting their life savings on. But you know they’re wrong. Same war, still going, but a different way of fighting now” (14). For Nanny, the war is not over.

Irony and Cultural Dislocation

The first person narrator of *Bloom* speaks directly to the reader in a deeply ironic tone which requires the reader’s appreciation in order to function successfully. This appreciation is challenged by Morey’s playful use of language, in particular the fluidity of memory, fact and fiction which potentially undermines the transformative

effect of the novel. Newton explains that ironic fiction “demands belief of a certain kind” and that an ironist “bids, teases, flirts with readers . . . so readers in consequence are flattered, gratified, and seduced by the ironist’s assumption that they will appreciate his [or her] ironies” (274). Newton explains that flattery is *how* readers believe in irony, but *why* they believe is determined by their trust in its quality (274). Morey uses a quote from Clare Williamson in *Artlink* as the epigraph of the novel to suggest the fluidity of memory, fact and fiction in reconstructing identities: “We create history out of memory and fiction as much as from fact. Portraits and the family album are the residue from which we reconstruct famous identities, loved ones and even ourselves” (2). Many critics have commented on Morey’s humour, with Pistacchi arguing that Morey “expertly deploys humour and irony . . . as strategic and transformative devices” (*Spiralling* 209). Pistacchi aligns Morey’s humour with the figure of the trickster who, in Ricki Stefanie Tannen’s definition, stands “at the crossroads of feminism, humor, depth psychology and postmodernism, ready for us to unpack her bag of multiple meanings” and “manifests the capacity to transform both an individual life and the collective consciousness of the culture she becomes visible to” (qtd. in Pistacchi *Spiralling* 167). As a trickster, Morey is able to re-examine aspects of Māori culture in a contemporary context, and helps to build “a new historical consciousness” for cultural survival (Pistacchi *Spiralling* 209). Morey’s use of irony has the potential to enact a gratifying and intimate relationship with the reader, and be transformative for the collective and individual consciousness of Māori culture by reconstructing history from memory and fiction.

Yet Morey’s playful and ironic tone, which relies on the readers’ seduction, is destabilised by her reliance on historical fact to provide an underlying pathos that energises the novel’s ethical and political stakes. In *How to Read a Book* Morey

says, “Literature, I found, wasn’t unlike history (which I was also studying) but without all the pesky dates and insistence on truth” (15). Morey suggests that history tells stories, but that there is increased freedom in the stories of literature because it is not tied to the facts of history. This statement seconds the suggestion in the epilogue of *Bloom* by Clare Williamson. In her epilogue, Williamson illustrates the melding of fact, fiction and memory in creating history. However, Morey also states, in the afterword of the novel, that “Without History all would be lost,” and she thanks the historians who have written about the Māori Prophetic movements (252). One the one hand, Morey enjoys the fluidity of history (which nearly resembles fiction), but, on the other hand, she acknowledges that *Bloom*’s foundations are rooted in facts. Morey’s ambiguous attitude towards the fluidity of history and the importance of facts leads readers to question the quality of her irony, and this questioning limits the novel’s transformative potential for the individual and collective consciousness of Māori culture.

Morey’s ambiguous attitude towards the fluidity of history is exemplified by Nanny’s account of her battle with Von Tempsky’s men, which provides the novel’s most clear-cut example of colonial trauma and yet depends on changing the outcome of one of the period’s most famous anticolonial victories. Altering the details of the battle risks distorting the message of physical and cultural trauma experienced by Māori during the land wars, and losing readers’ trust in the quality of the novel’s irony. Nanny visits Constance with a bullet wound and tells Constance “of the pa of the curved beak falling to Von Tempsky’s men and of the one-eyed Titokowaru and his faithful” (106). Nanny tells Constance that the battle was lost, which upsets Constance and she starts crying (107). When Nanny tells her that there is “No point crying about it now”, Constance notices that Nanny’s “kete is missing” (107). However, this account is in striking contrast to the historical record. King writes that

Titokowaru's base at Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu was attacked twice, and both assaults were aborted by the colonial troops. A third assault resulted in a "full scale battle and the defeat" of colonial forces, including the death of the talismanic Gustavus von Tempsky (*Penguin History* 218). As the retelling of the battle carries the main ideological message of the novel, Morey could have changed the details of the battle to reinforce the message in the epilogue of the novel of the melding of memory, fact and fiction in creating history. Instead she risks undercutting her message of the trauma and cultural dislocation experienced by Māori during the Land Wars.

Reading tasks the reader with the ethical responsibilities for the text. It calls for us our critique of of fictional world's reflection of society. Reading carries responsibilities, and Newton articulates this relationship using Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas*. In *Las Meninas*, the artist "sits at the apex of a representational triangle . . . invisible as such, but twice reproduced through mirror effects" (20). The artist is both inside and outside of the image looking out to implicate the audience in responsibility for the image. Newton applies this 'looking out' to prose fiction to convey that response is an ethical act. In the act of critically reading a story, the authority for it changes from the author to the reader (21). Morey's interplay of a fictional family with the Māori prophetic movement in Taranaki calls for "mimetic performative acts from readers" (Newton 22). This mimetic performance means that the fictional world is seen to imitate the reality of society. Therefore, we initially expect that the reported outcome of the battle in *Bloom* will be true. Although there is a boundary between fiction and reality, readers conflate "authorial and narrative audiences," and literary fiction is usually seen to be an accurate reflection of life (Newton 22). If readers believe the outcome of the battle in *Bloom* is accurate, how does this affect the reader's response to the novel? Changing the outcome of the battle has different outcomes depending on Morey's readers' knowledge: this

revision risks undermining her project of articulating cultural and psychic dispossession. Moreover, while changing the battle details may suit Morey's plot, it can also give the reader an inaccurate impression of the Māori anti-colonial struggle.

When Nanny tells Connie about the battle with Von Tempsky's men, Connie notices that Nanny's "kete is missing" (107). The sentence stands alone as a paragraph in the text and may, therefore, be seen as an important metaphoric statement. However, what readers are meant to 'get' from this statement depends on the knowledge they have about the prophetic movement, and the ethical work of critique the reader is prepared to do. Is the point here simply that Nanny has lost her kete in battle, or that she has been estranged from her knowledge because of the continual battle for land? Or is it Connie recognising Nanny's error in her recollection of the battle due to her estrangement from her land and cultural knowledge? Has Morey simply made a mistake in rewriting the battle, or is Morey playing with the readers' expectation of the outcome of the battle? The ironic tone and playfulness of Morey's narrative leaves ambiguities as to the intent of Nanny's mis-remembering the battle, and appears as a use of irony which may limit the transformative potential of the text.

"Home-on-the marae" writing

The ambiguity in *Bloom* results from Morey trying to situate herself within her cultural standpoint and the cultural capital of Māori traditions, while also using the notion of "creative ignorance" to write what is considered literary fiction. When Morey recognised the value of her short story "Maori Bread," she discovered that her writer's voice was situated in her cultural standpoint. The short story is about Lillian Te Paa preparing Māori bread for her mokopuna who are coming to her house after

school. It is the title of the story, and the use of Te Reo that suggests it involves Māori characters. Lillian's surname is Te Paa, a name that draws on the word pā to suggest a Māori settlement, and she speaks in hybridised English-Māori, such as, "Better get a move on, girl, the mokos'll be home soon" (183). While there is humour and irony in the story, the intent of the narrative is never ambiguous. Rather, it demonstrates Lillian's affection for her mokopuna, and the domestic scene is driven by the description of the cooking process. Morey thought that the story was "so desperately unliterary and old-fashioned and, well, *brown*. But I am an idiot. Because in those 500 words I discovered me, the way I saw and wrote the world" (35).

However, soon after the story's publication, Morey attended an undergraduate writing programme where she changed her writing voice. On the course Morey, "ditched the home-on-the marae feel and became self-consciously literary" ("How to Read a Book" 18). Given the increasing influence of academic institutions in creative writing, the ethical consequence of western-style structured education on indigenous expression bears closer examination. Newton's analysis of narrative ethics does not engage with "economic, cultural, or erotic power relations" (27), the Marxist critic Fredric Jameson, however, theorises the relationship between ideology and cultural texts, and Jameson maintains that the production of any text is conditioned by the environment in which it is created: "the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (79). Morey may have changed her writing style during the undergraduate writing programme to resolve the contradiction she felt between literature based in university programmes and "marae-style" writing.

This switch from writing from a cultural standpoint to ‘literature’ suggests that Morey was attempting to write what she does not know. What is the ethical risk of “creative ignorance” when a writer attempts to change their writing style to fit this ethos? In his introduction to *Mutes and Earthquakes: Bill Manhire’s Creative Writing Course at Victoria* (1997), Manhire offers two pieces of advice, “[w]rite what you know, and [...w]rite what you don’t know” (9). Manhire says that writing what you know is easy, whereas writing “what you don’t know is harder, but much more rewarding” (9). Manhire suggests that,

If you know too much before you begin, you won’t find your way to characters or stories which you yourself find interesting . . . you will write in the stale phrases we’ve all heard somewhere else, rather than letting the words be instruments of exploration, part of the actual process of discovery. The need for creative ignorance is something which all kinds of writers seem to agree on (12).

Morey does not explicitly say why she rejected her “home-on-the-marae” writing, but changing her style while on the programme suggests the influence of the writing programme made her feel that her “marae-style” writing would not be recognised as literary.

Morey relates her writing process to her cultural perspective, but she also places importance on her role as an individual within that culture. In *How to Read a Book* Morey connects her writing process directly to her cultural standpoint when she says, “like the good Maori girl I am, *all is journey*” (69). On the other hand, in her interview with Pistacchi, Morey claims that she “was always going to plough (Parihaka inference intended) my own land to a certain extent” (*Spiralling* 158). While Morey refers to her cultural heritage, she does so as an individual, and this

contrasts with the previous collective statement. Pistacchi argues that Morey's positing herself in the collective and as an individual makes her a diasporic subject because she articulates her belonging while also illustrating the ways she has "spiralled out from, through, and beyond the personal, cultural, and literary whakapapa that proceeds her" (*Spiralling* 158). Writing from both ends of the binary (collective/individual) could be seen as an attempt to retain both elements while collapsing the power relationship between them, as Alan Lawson argues in his essay on Second-World literature (69). Nevertheless, the resulting ambiguity in *Bloom* results from the use of literary tropes alongside her cultural heritage, and this risks limiting the novel's transformative potential, as Morey's exploration results in misrepresentation of historical facts which may impact a readers' trust in the quality of Morey's novel.

Individual and collective?

Morey's positioning as both an individual and a member of a cultural collective is reflected in Constance's conception of self at the conclusion of the *Bloom*. Constance has been given the important task of collecting her family's history so that they can reclaim their cultural identity and occupy their "place to stand"; conversely, the end of the novel suggests that while it is important to retrieve and remember the past, it is also important to move forward into the future as an individual. At the conclusion of the novel Constance seems more focused on her mystery novel and her romantic attachment than on the Māori dispossession from the land. The novel ends with the italicised excerpt of a mystery novel that began the narrative. On the one hand, ending with Constance's writing suggests that the mystery of the family has been solved, while on the other it seems that Constance has returned to formulaic

writing rather than extending herself to write something more meaningful. The return to formulaic writing suggests that the reciprocal claims of narrative ethics that connect life and art, reader and text, have reached their conclusion, and suggests that any ethical imperative the reader has to recognise Māori anti-colonial struggle in the future is up to the individual. Nanny encourages Constance to contact a teacher coming into the district (248), and tells her that it's time for her to "write your own ending, Cookie Let it finish" (250). Nanny seems to be suggesting that Constance leave her family and region's history behind in order to start focusing on her own life. The novel does not suggest that Constance use the history of the Land Wars (which according to Nanny are ongoing) for any political aim. Rather, the shift to a focus on the individual suggests a European neo-liberal stance that might be seen to run counter to the Māori prophetic movement's emphasis on the collective. The ending of the novel seems to suggest that Constance has completed her task and can now turn to the future as an individual, and this, in turn, calls to a close the connection between life and art, reader and text. Any ethical imperative the reader could carry into the future regarding recognising Māori anti-colonial struggle is left up to the individual.

Morey herself has expressed concerns about the ending of *Bloom*. In *How to Read A Book* she mentions that the novel was edited too much, and that, as readers, we should keep in mind that "the author may be having second thoughts, especially about the ending" (73-4). While Morey does not expand explicitly on her reservations about the ending of *Bloom*, she ends *How to Read a Book* by repeating the ending of *Bloom* without the italicised mystery novel.

Meanwhile, it's time, Nanny says.

“Time for what?” I ask, idly opening up a word-processing document for the sake of something to do.

“It’s time to write your own ending, Cookie.”

“You think?”

“Yes,” my ghost says, pulling tomorrow’s sky from her kete. “Let it finish.”

The women in my family have always been late bloomers.

Leaving out the segment of the mystery novel in her re-stated ending to *Bloom* suggests that Morey has had second thoughts about the return to formulaic writing. Instead, when Connie opens the word document on the computer while talking to Nanny, it suggests that Connie is empowered to write her own narratives. Connie’s reiteration of the fact that the “women in my family have always been late bloomers” suggests that Connie will continue to feel empowered in her future (250). However, the notion of moving on with her life, and the focus on the individual rather than the community, remains largely the same. The focus on the individual prominent in the ending of *Bloom* may relate to Morey’s own expressed sense of identity. In her interview with Ann Pistacchi, for instance, Morey says, “I’ve never really been a joiner. I’ve always known exactly who I am . . . but I’ve always been the pain in the ass who wanted to row her own waka in her own way” (*Spiralling* 157). Pistacchi argues that Morey’s “rowing of her own waka” illustrates how she has acknowledged her literary whakapapa while maintaining her self-determination (*Spiralling* 158). While maintaining individualism is important to Morey, this belies the political importance of the collective Prophetic movement and its ability to contest land confiscation. Nanny asserts that the Land Wars are “still going, but a different way

of fighting now". However, Morey's focus on individualism suggests that by investigating the Women Sprys' past she has fought their battle, and with Nanny's encouragement to "write your own ending, Cookie", Connie can move on to her own individualistic future (30, 250).

Constance's lack of direction for the future of the collective could be related to the future being deemed Hebe's task; however at the end of the novel she, too, is looking to the past. Constance says that the future "is Hebe's speciality ... not my own" (250), and when Constance tries to get Hebe interested in ghosts from the past, Hebe says, it's "Not my field" (26), which seems to reinforce her preoccupation with the future. Part of this future involves Hebe trying to match her sister up with a partner. It is Hebe, for instance, who emails the details about the academic's visit to Goshen, the third man Hebe has tried to match her sister up with throughout the course of the novel. The future that Hebe is preoccupied with is on the level of her immediate family: her sister and her son. The birth of Hebe's son seems to assure a paternal line for the family, which is somewhat puzzling choice of sex by Morey given that the novel conveys the strength of the maternal line to reclaim their history. At the end of the novel, Hebe is also interested in the past, and she tells Constance about a photographic collection in which the images could be Algebra (250). While it could be said that Hebe has come to understand the importance of the past, the fact that Constance reiterates Hebe's connection to the future at the end of the novel seems to call this into question. These features may not compromise the importance of temporality and gender in the novel, but they do reveal a narrative that at times has lost awareness of the connotations of some of its symbolism. This lack of awareness can frustrate readers' ethical exchange and make them question their obligation to the text.

The overriding redeeming theme of *Bloom* is that of women reclaiming their history and cultural affiliation after a history of violence; yet the author's adoption of a Māori perspective on the indivisibility of time and collectivism leaves the reader wanting to know how Constance will use her knowledge for the future. Constance does "keep the home fires burning" in that she retrieves the past and occupies the land at Goshen in the present, but the third element in Māori temporality, the future, is not addressed conclusively. There is a suggestion that Rose will continue to develop images and, with Constance's words, she will publish these works. On the one hand, this seems a small gesture in the face of the legal battles to redress confiscation of land. Nonetheless, it may be a gesture that will enable Constance and Rose to share the stories from the past with Pakeha New Zealanders who will gain a greater understanding of the Māori anti-colonial struggle and understand why upholding the Treaty of Waitangi is important in reparation of the past.

While publication may reach a general audience, the role of universities (where Hebe and her partner Hugh teach) and the visiting academic point to knowledge being held and disseminated within institutions, rather than lived cultural experience. Because Morey juxtaposes the family's cultural reclamation alongside the Prophetic movement and their belief in collectivism, it does leave the reader wondering what Constance will *do* with her knowledge, not just for herself but for the collective. The fact that future is not addressed perhaps points to the difficulty of gathering people together who have been dispossessed of their land and cultural heritage.

Conclusion

While Constance has gained knowledge and gathered the history of her family by using inner-persuasive discourse that depends on readers' alliance with her ironic tone, she does not communicate an impetus to share this knowledge widely for political action. Instead she, too, focuses on her own future. *Bloom* successfully depicts how the violence that Algebra, Rose and Hebe experience separates them from their whakapapa. The violence the women experience is juxtaposed with the brutality of the Land Wars to illustrate how violence not only dispossesses a people of their land but also of their cultural affiliation and whakapapa. The Land Wars serve as an example of how this dispossession occurred at a collective level, whereas the women Spry exemplify how the dispossession affects individuals. The progression from dispossession to cultural renaissance is shown most successfully in Rose, who confronts her past and starts to rebuild her whakapapa. Yet Rose's reclamation is the task of an individual. The cultural reclamation in *Bloom* conveys the limitations in Newton's positing productive difference in physicality alone. Morey illustrates that cultural practices, cosmology, and the recognition of others reveal belonging within a cultural group. While Morey's novel shows the reclamation of the past, it offers no direction for the future of the collective, and this illustrates the difficulty of regrouping the collective after dispossession. The absence of direction also means the reader has no ethical imperative for political action to recognise Māori anti-colonial struggle. Morey's writing journey, and her use of irony to describe that journey, reveals the ambiguity that can arise when an attempt is made to write from a cultural collective standpoint while maintaining individualism and using literary tropes. The ambiguity risks the readers' ethical obligation to the text, and the inter-relationship between art and life.

Conclusion to the Critical Component

In the critical section of my thesis I act as a reader and critic who attempts to take ethical responsibility for fictional discourses. As a writer, I aim to explore which narrative strategies are most successful in the reclamation of historical family narratives. Wong's novel has a direct relationship with my creative work in terms of the characterisation of people with mental illness. While I found her depiction of Robbie's mental health convincing and ethically responsible, Wong's caricature of Terry (and Donald) in the novel mirrors the caricature of Chinese characters in early New Zealand fiction. The narrative techniques Wong uses (third person limited, and first-person narration) clearly indicate how Wong wants the reader to position their ethical relationship with her novel. The reader of *As the Earth Turns Silver* is a bystander to racism, sexism and murder, and she becomes ethically responsible for understanding that the characters are a metonym for the face and bodies of social injustice.

Morris's novel investigates the issues of insider and outsider appropriation, and the hierarchies of power involved in that appropriation. Morris's illustration of appropriation reveals the inadequacies of Newton's notion of face-to-face, which does not acknowledge the possible fragmentation within the category of the Other. Furthermore, Newton's focus on physicality does not acknowledge how language and its interpretation problematizes productive difference. The ethical issue at the conclusion of Morris's novel, which ends on a postscript about the contestation of Hauturu, is one related to narrative form: can fiction be used as political activism for land appropriation when relying on a readers' interpretation to "get" that history, especially when they may (or may not) be invested in that version of history? Morris's acknowledgement of the ethical risk in fictionalising land claims suggests

that readers need to be told about land appropriation so they know the consequences are real, yet this does not take into account the persuasive effect of fiction or its ability to agitate for acknowledgement of the past and reframe the future.

Morey's novel does relate the consequences of land appropriation for individuals but the ambiguity of her ironic tone risks undermining the message of psychic harm caused when Nanny misremembers a battle. What Morris and Morey's novels question is whether land appropriation should be fictionalised--and if it is, they ask whether the facts should be fixed or fluid, given the political ramifications for the past, present, and future. While the ending of Morris's novel may deflate the ability of fiction to politically persuade readers, Morey's ambiguous use of history hinders the transformative potential of her fiction. The persuasive power of fiction lies in readers' ability to readily accept the fictional world. In this world, the reader interacts with people and situations they may not ordinarily encounter, and, as a result, they learn to understand the motivations for the characters' actions as well as how they live in and cope with different socio-political environments. Learning about the experience of others enacts an ethical and empathic response from the reader which can be related outside of the fictional world in everyday life.

Reading is a communicative experience and its transactive connection means that fiction has real-world personal and political implications. While both fiction and non-fiction persuade readers, Vera Nünning argues that fiction "is just as powerful, if not more so" than non-fiction (39). Whereas readers may question the validity of fact, readers of fiction become emotionally immersed in the fictional world which "goes hand in hand with accepting it" (Nünning 39). Fiction can illustrate values and change readers' beliefs. Readers of fiction also, "exercise cognitive and affective processes that are important for pro-social behaviour and for understanding others" (Nünning 40). Wong's novel clearly presents the racism and sexism of

nineteenth century New Zealand, and, in turn, the reader is left to understand how the issues facing the characters relate to contemporary issues of multiculturalism and gender. If Morey had been clearer with her intent of the misremembered battle in *Bloom*, the reader may more keenly accept the truth of the ongoing individual consequences of land appropriation. In *Rangatira* Morris's choice of non-fiction to explain land appropriation could result in readers questioning the value of Morris's fiction.

All three novelists illustrate that a narrative ethics framework is useful for demonstrating relationships within the text, and that “[p]olitical and historical contexts often writ large the intersubjective details of narrative encounter” (Newton 27). In articulating an ethnic, gender, class, and language stratification, Wong conveys how characters are Othered, and along with Morris, she expands Newton's notion of the Other to illustrate how internal divisions within one group inhibit productive difference. While Newton focuses on the physicality of characters, Morey's novel demonstrates how cultural practices and belief systems illustrate belonging which the individual negotiates in the absence of an explicit power structure (in the contemporary setting of the novel). Basing culture in practices and belief systems also challenges Newton's argument that “faceless universalism . . . [that] neutralizes contingent features of appearance” is utopian (184). Physicality is not important in Morey's novel because what you do and what you believe demonstrates belonging to a cultural group rather than how you look. All three novelists illustrate the critical potential as well as the limitations of Newton's narrative ethics.

Historical fiction calls on hermeneutic ethics to understand what a recreation of the past has to do with our present understandings of self in society. Wong's novel does this most explicitly as readers question multiculturalism and gender roles

in current New Zealand society. While Morey's novel reclaims the past, and makes readers see how her characters' lives are affected by the past, a future of individualism is indicated that does not agitate to right the wrongs of the past through the Land Court. Morris's novel conveys the fear Paratene experiences at the end of the novel *Rangatira*, and then explains how his land was appropriated. Both writers illustrate the reality of psychic pain in being separated from your land, but neither articulates a collective vision for the future. This is left to the reader. Roger Simon says that historical fiction demands an ethical relationship because it "arrives asking, demanding something of us" (qtd. in den Heyer 144). This "something" is an acknowledgement of our colonial history of cultural, physical and intellectual appropriation and asks us to consider whether, in Nanny's words, it's the "[s]ame war, still going" and whether a focus on the individual promotes collective action.

The three novelists have shown their ethical responsibilities to their subjects and readers in different ways. Wong most explicitly directs readers to those characters she thinks we should exhibit an ethical responsibility towards, whilst reducing some other characters to types. Morris, by focusing on Paratene, elicits the readers' ethical responsibility towards him as a real-life person, and as readers we see the risks of cultural appropriation and Paratene's frustration that the bicultural vision of New Zealand will not be fully realised. While Wong spells out her ethical concerns to the reader, Morris leaves the evaluation of cultural appropriation to the reader. Ending *Rangatira* with a non-fiction postscript suggests that Morris draws a line as to what subject matter can be usefully fictionalised. The irony and ambiguity of Morey's novel, in particular the misremembered battle, risks confusing the reader and obscuring their ethical imperative towards the work.

Narrative ethics is a useful tool for approaching New Zealand historical fiction about family history because it looks to the risks and losses of appropriating

family for use in fictional narratives for the author, their subjects, and readers.

Narrative ethics is a humanist response that highlights the interconnection between life and art, which can have political implications for the collective rather than just the individual or family portrayed in fiction. A study of narrative ethics highlights the relationship between characters within the text, as well as how those characters influence readers and their ethical imperative in the real-world for the future. For a writer, it ensures they acknowledge the ethical implications of their work, not just for their own family, but for collective understanding.

Creative Component

Introduction to the Creative Component

The impetus for this novel came from my mother, Janice, who was researching our family history. Janice particularly wanted to know more about the German side of our family. Her investigation led to Papers Past – a website run by the National Library where digitised records of New Zealand newspapers and periodicals from 1839-1948 are held. When my mother typed in her maiden name Patrick's life came to light. Headlines, such as, "The Dunedin Tragedy: [last name] before Court" and "Killed his Pal: Mates since Boyhood" came up on the result list. Patrick had a psychotic delusional episode and violently killed his best friend at the Railways Hotel in Dunedin on 3 May 1926. After handing himself in after the act, Patrick spent the rest of his life, another 18 years, in Seacliff Asylum which was north of Dunedin city (the site is now the Truby King Memorial Park). The details of Patrick's life were a complete surprise to my mother, and the rest of the family, however Janice went to see her Aunt who could recollect hushed family stories about the shame Patrick's act produced.

My immediate reaction to Patrick was shock and disbelief. On being shown – was I at my parent's house in Timaru when I was told? Did mum have the newspaper articles printed out and inserted into a clear file? Was I living in Dunedin, and received an email, or a telephone call where mum said, "you'll never guess what I found out", I cannot remember – and I cannot remember what I said. But I do remember the morbid fascination about Patrick's act of murder and his insanity, which raised questions. How did Patrick get so ill, or did he always suffer from mental health issues, and if he did, did other members of his family similarly suffer? It made me look sideways at my family, and at our extended family. Could we all go mad? I also speculated whether Patrick's act meant his brother Thomas

(my great great grandfather) moved from Dunedin to Timaru (where most of my extended family on my mother's side now live). The fundamental question, for me, was how did Patrick end up like this? And, was there any hope for him in Seacliff? While his crime meant there was no chance of release, did he at least return to mental fitness? Did he get better? Was my imagined horror of mental asylums real? What was it really like inside? While some facts about Patrick were available through newspaper reports, to get the whole story – or as near to it as I could – I would need to look at mental health in that era, and social history to see how Patrick lived his life in Dunedin up until 1926. I started writing the novel because I wanted answers to these questions for myself, and for my family.

In my initial conception of Patrick's story I wanted to write from his perspective to show his mental decline, and understand his perspective, and to give him a chance to speak after so much familial silence. While the historical record gave me information about what Patrick did, the limitation of history is that it doesn't reveal an individual's train of thought. I can surmise a certain amount but I can never know what he was thinking. This is where imagination bridges the gap between what is known and unknowable. But bridging this gap carries with it ethical risks, and bought up the following question: how can I write about the experience of severe mental illness with accuracy and empathy, and without turning Patrick into a caricature?

I also acknowledge, in writing about the accuracy and empathy of writing about mental illness, Janet Frame's work, in particular, *Owls Do Cry* and *Faces in the Water* which drew on her own experience of mental illness and being a voluntary patient at Seacliff. Frame was at Seacliff for eight years (1947-1954), and while she was there she was misdiagnosed as schizophrenic, and received 200 electric shock treatments. While I acknowledge Frame's work as a model for my own writing,

there are important differences. Patrick's experience was by no means voluntary, and he did not have the same intellectual or creative resources to draw on to put his experience into perspective. Also, I'm not writing out of an autobiographical or female experience of mental illness, and I'm distanced in time from the events. Also, Patrick's experience of psychiatric care was different because he was there earlier than Frame (1926-1944). For example, electric shock treatment wasn't available at Seacliff until 1945.

Howard Sklar notes that writers "are not the others whom they wish to represent, and this makes the effort to portray the emotions and thoughts of another speculative at best" (167). On one level this seems obvious, I'm not my characters but I try to perceive what they are feeling and to make that convincing. But when I am writing about a person who is identifiable with severe mental illness, how can I get inside Patrick's head with accuracy and empathy? Accuracy, for Sklar, means being "true to the types of experiences" that people in a particular group go through "regardless [of] whether they have actually gone through them themselves" (171).

I take from this that it's appropriate for me to detail experiences of mental health patients during the era that Patrick was at Seacliff, regardless of whether they actually happened to Patrick. This definition of accuracy leaves a gap for imagination were I could speculate and reimagine the trips to the races that patients went on, and when bands would come and play at the asylum, and also the various medical treatments that took place. While Sklar does not suggest writers only write about people like themselves, he notes that writing about others "calls upon them to develop unusually high levels of insight and sensitivity, or to recognise, that in literature, as in life, there are shared borders of identity that we are compelled to recognise but cannot cross . . . without great care" (172). If a writer chooses to cross

that identity border, Sklar believes that border crossing should be subject to examination regarding the accuracy of the work, the experience must seem true.

Yet, how could I make Patrick's narrative of severe mental illness true not having experienced severe mental illness myself? Clive Baldwin notes that severe mental illness "may compromise the individual's ability to construct a recognizable narrative owing to the cognitive disturbance or neuropathology and/or the reaction of others to that disturbance or pathology" (1022). We are all narrative beings, we constitute ourselves through stories, but an experience of severe mental illness challenges our ability to narrate our lives. So what can I write if Patrick's condition meant that he was unable to narrate his life while at Seacliff, and if he were able to, what of his fear of the reactions of others to his story? How can I 'tell' what he cannot construct, and fears to say because of the negative reaction of those around him?

In the first draft of my novel I tried to 'tell' Patrick's experiences. I started writing Patrick's narrative from a first-person perspective. I tried to see Seacliff through his eyes: the way the building was disintegrating, and how in his paranoia he thought the disintegration was about him. I wrote about the other patients he sat with in the day room, the treatments, and the solitary confinement. Initially it was okay but then I started repeating myself, and it was getting boring and predictable. Patrick's perspective was limited and different to my own, and to reflect this accurately and with empathy resulted in a tension with narrative conventions; it became increasingly fragmented and repetitive which was not satisfying to read.

Baldwin states that one of the challenges to the narrative enterprise for those with severe mental illness is narrative agency due to loss of cognitive function. Another challenge in narrativising the severely mentally ill is the loss of language they experience, which means individuals could lose the ability to construct stories;

and their isolation from others means the opportunity to tell and maintain stories with others is lost. While I was attempting to give Patrick agency, this agency was limited due to Patrick's cognitive function and his limited audience of medical staff and fellow patients. At the start of his stay at Seacliff, Patrick did have his story about why he murdered his friend, he believed his friend was after his money and killed him to ensure the theft didn't happen. However, the longer he is in Seacliff his medical notes describe him as inaccessible – he seldom speaks. He is silent, solitary. When he does speak his statements are delusional and agitated, and make no sense to the medical staff who write up his notes. Patrick's motivations and ambitions are not coherent to outsiders, which makes it hard for me, and readers, to invest in the outcome of the narrative for the character, without evoking pity. While Patrick was constructing a narrative, it wasn't understood as one by the staff, but rather it was determined as further proof of his delusions.

Brendan Stone notes that severe mental illness is characterised variously as “fragmentation, amorphousness, entropy, chaos, silence, senselessness Such being-states do not fit well with narrative’s drive to organise and arrange experience: whether the author is describing his or her experience from *within* madness, or from a position ostensibly situated outside it, there would appear to be a disjunction between the content to be narrated and the possibilities inhering in conventional narrative forms” (Stone 18). Stone defines traditional narrative form as taking raw events and reordering them into a coherent plot, and using language to produce meaning via order and sequence, but this, he believes, is inimical to the expression of mental illness because the experience of mental illness is “profoundly anti-narrational in character” (Stone 17).

Patrick's experience of mental illness was anti-narrational. I wrote about his delusion, his silences, his many suicide attempts and the reaction of the medical staff

to his episodes. The result was short fragmented chapters that showed Patrick getting steadily worse. It was repetitive, and although I detailed the medical practices of the time accurately, doing so meant Patrick's story was devoid of hope. While in Seacliff his condition got worse, he was increasingly depressed, delusional, and inaccessible, and the medical treatments could not help him. Eighteen years after first being admitted, he died there without having received a single visitor and is buried in a pauper's grave.

While my first attempts at writing Patrick's story were accurate, and I hope showed enough sensitivity and insight to be considered empathic, I didn't have a plot. This raised two issues: firstly, how do I narrate Patrick's anti-narrational experience and attitudes; secondly, how do I plot the ethical questions about my family's relationship to Patrick as well to my narration of his life. I had followed Patrick's story (through primary sources) and while I had picked incidents to concentrate on, I hadn't changed them greatly. I had just put up his bad experiences to be witnessed. So Patrick had a miserable life, so what? What does Patrick's story mean? And what are the ethical consequences of laying Patrick's life out like that, and of sympathising with a murderer? In terms of ethics I had tried to 'do no harm' in the 'telling' of the story, but that's only one side of the coin. What I hadn't done was show causality. According to Adam Zachery Newton, narrative ethics involves "interactive dramas of encounter and recognition" (12). In the telling of Patrick's story I was so focused on him and his experience that I hadn't interacted with it, I hadn't recognised the effect his story could have on other characters in the narrative, me, my family, the victim's family, or general readers.

This realisation lead me to change the structure of my narrative in two significant ways to show the two-fold relationship of narrative ethics – the story being told (Patrick's life), and the telling of that story (the effect of Patrick's story on

characters within the narrative, my family, and readers). I changed the narrative perspective to third person, which allowed me to enter into multiple points of view to see how Patrick was affecting others. I also added a contemporary strand to the novel focalised through Charlie, which gives me the distance of time to reflect on Patrick's life and how it would affect my family, now. Charlie is a woman in her early thirties who works as a librarian at the National Library where she's working through documentation from a medical historian's life work on mental illness, which includes a file about Patrick (renamed Ennis in the novel). Charlie reads about Ennis's life while she is in a relationship, of sorts, with Hunter, a single father who is in the middle of a depressive episode. The new narrative structure of my novel is an attempt to reflect the transactive nature of narrative ethics.

The structure of my novel reflects the connection between life and art, and reader and text. Writing historical fiction naturally invites comparisons to the present. Mandy Koolen notes that "historical fiction may use the past to comment on issues of contemporary concern and, by establishing temporal distance between readers and characters, makes difficult social critiques more likely to be heard and taken seriously" (372). Thinking about Patrick's experience of mental health begged the question - what are mental health services like now, and are the environmental factors that lead to mental illness the same in the present, as they were in 1900s Dunedin? Hunter's experience of mental illness allowed me to investigate that question, and allow for some hope to exist in the novel, while also highlighting environmental factors that can lead to mental illness. Paralleling Ennis's (Patrick) and Hunter's experience draws on the readers sensibilities to reflect on their attitudes towards mental illness.

Yet, in the final draft of the novel Thom Conroy suggested that I radically change the structure of the novel. The novel now opens with Hunter's suicide

attempt, and his admission into hospital, and the dissolution of his relationship with Charlie. This change allows readers to see the difference in hospitalisation for mental illness now, and it also shows Hunter getting better and getting on with his life. The change in structure reveals that recovery is possible for those who suffer from mental illness.

The other change in the novel's structure is that Ennis's story is told in reverse. I start with his death and move backwards detailing his incarceration in Seacliff and move back to a stage in his life when he was well. This change has the benefit of leaving the reader with the impression of Ennis as a young and naïve man who was hardworking, a man who was well liked in his community. Another result of this change in structure is that the murder occurs three quarters of the way through the novel which adds to the narrative drive for readers. Ultimately, the reader is left with the impression of Ennis as a young man before illness took hold.

The majority of the novel is Charlie's interaction with Ennis's story by recreating elements of his life through the fragments of his medical file, and papers on the factors that influenced mental health for men in the early 1900s. Charlie's process is not entirely dissimilar to my own. It is a self-conscious examination of what I felt investigating Patrick (Ennis). Yet there are important differences. Charlie is motivated by fear of mental illness and she reads Ennis's file looking for clues and/or similarities she shares with Ennis to see whether she will suffer from a similar fate. In the back of her mind she also knows that her maternal Aunt had polycystic ovaries, like Charlie, and suffered from depression. Charlie is investigating whether genes and/or social structures affect mental wellness, and I want to leave readers with the impression that if you have mental illness in your family history it is not inevitable that you will inherit it. I also wanted to suggest that environmental factors

– such as work and social stigma – have a great, if not greater – influence on mental wellbeing.

Wayne Booth asks the question, “Just how much exploitation of family intimacies can be defended?” (130). In order to allow for a kind of fictional exchange with Patrick, I wrote about Charlie’s diagnoses of polycystic ovaries, a condition I share. In this exchange between Patrick and me, I am sharing my secret and also investigating a physical condition that can lead to depression, which is also influenced by gender. Narrating Charlie’s condition is a way of investigating the physical and environmental factors of mental illness. Of course, I have the agency to make the decision to reveal, whereas Patrick did not. Nevertheless, by including it, I am making an exchange with Patrick, and setting myself up for revelation on two fronts: a family history of mental illness and polycystic ovaries.

Charlie’s narration of Ennis’s story is an example of hermeneutic ethics that illustrates the “extent and limits of intersubjective knowledge in persons’ reading of each other, and the ethical price exacted from readers by texts” (Newton 25). Charlie, as a reader of Ennis’s file, is ethically responsible for ‘getting’ the text, and her writing in the novel is her attempt to understand his life. Her intersubjective knowledge is limited, however, due to the distance in time and Ennis’ mental illness. These limits lead to Charlie putting herself in Ennis’s shoes—and she sees similarities in their characters that she ascertains from notes in Ennis’s medical file. Her writing, in turn, echoes her own concerns and frailties. The metafictional aspects of Ennis’s story as written by Charlie and her own story have a similar tone because of the limits of intersubjective knowledge between Charlie and Ennis.

Charlie’s representation of Ennis has gains and losses when she narrates his imagined life. The gains are that Charlie understands Ennis and learns about the factors that lead to mental illness for men of the era, and relates to his experience of

loneliness and empathises with him – her empathy, in some ways, closes the gap between the present and past. She also attempts to redeem Ennis, and the end of the novel suggests she will share the story with others. The potential loss, however, is that Ennis's narrative is a projection of Charlie's own and we lose Ennis as real. Yet, I would argue, that Ennis's mental illness means he could not have expressed himself. In order to be represented, Ennis needed someone else to tell his story and bring it into narrative conventions in order for it to be understood which means the voice of it is similar to that of the person who tells it: Charlie. I would also suggest that the similar tone closes the gap between the past and the present – a contemporary tone keeps the concerns of past directly related to the present. While there are representational risks to Charlie telling Ennis's story in a similar tone, I think the benefit of the story being told out-weights the risks.

The question of an author's ethical responsibility towards their subjects, especially in historical family narratives, brought me to a narrative ethics enquiry of the novels of three contemporary New Zealand female writers. In analysing the novels by Alison Wong, Paula Morris and Kelly Ana Morey, I wanted to see what authorial decisions they made to construct their historical family narratives, and the resulting ethical consequences. Who spoke in the novels? What right did the authors have to share their family story? How did they construct the past, and how did it link it to the present? Did their construction of the past look like the past as we perceive it, or was it radically different?

What really happened with the critical section of my thesis was an increasing awareness of the socio-political ethical consequences of authorial decisions. In Wong's novel the message for readers is multiculturalism, for Morris it is the risks and losses of the appropriation of culture, and for Morey, it is land appropriation and

the ongoing and inter-generational effects of being disconnected from your tūrangawaewae. While Wong's message is explicit, and Morris leaves the issues of appropriation for her readers to answer, Morey's ironic tone risks the readers' comprehension of her message. As a writer, my aim is to be clearer than Morey, and yet not be as explicit as Wong. Morris's novel is important in reversing the coloniser-colonised gaze, and ending the novel with a non-fiction postscript about the Land Court reinforces the importance of reminding readers where fictional reimagining ends, and facts begin, especially in relation to – what some people would consider - contestable histories.

The value of linking the critical and creative elements of my thesis is to see how the writers reconstruct history, and how that reconstruction can affect our vision for the future. It made me think about my characters relationship to history, what I was saying about the relationship between the past and present, and how this could affect the future. The past is not fixed, but open to change and reinterpretation. Stephen Koch articulates the connection between the past and present: "The past is not static; it is linked to the present; it is in a state of constant, dynamic change" (137). This dynamic change also affects the future. As Patricia Grace says, "The past is ahead of you" (Wichtel). Writing, or rewriting, history is a reconstruction of the world around us that opens up new understandings and possibilities for the future.

What am I saying about the past, and future, of mental health services? I hope I am saying that mental wellbeing is linked to societal influences and is not inherent. I want to say that mental health services are getting better, though I believe they still have a long way to go. But could I say, at least in Hunter's case, that mental illness – what is determined as normal cognitive behaviour – is socially constructed as well? What the novels in my critical analysis have highlighted to me, is that if my book reaches the public domain, it will affect how readers envision

mental health, and what changes they can make in their behaviour to make the experience of mental illness a little easier.

A narrative ethics analysis has highlighted my dual role as reader/critic and writer. Wayne C. Booth's discussion of narrative ethics emphasises the connection between writer, character and their readers. Newton expands on this transactive connection and shows the ethical consequences of narrating story and fictionalising people, and the reciprocal claims connecting teller, listener, witness and reader in that process (11). As a reader, I took on an ethical responsibility to understand the texts, and as a writer, I attempted to understand the effect of my characters and readers of the book's content. Connecting my critical and creative components with a narrative ethics framework ensures that I see both sides of narrative ethics.

Inherited Body
A Novel

For Janice

It was possible that I did owe something to my family and the families
of my friends. That is, to tell their stories as simply as possible,
in order, you might say, to save a few lives.

Grace Paley "Debts" (1983)

Prologue

‘Purged’ has been stamped over a scrawl in the space that answers *probable cause of disorder on admission*. A question mark hangs to the right of the word that’s been stamped over, but could equally be a question about the word *purged*. It makes her think of vomiting, of feeling saliva increase in your mouth, warning you, before the rush of your last meal - or if your stomach is empty, green bile - forces its way up your body.

A can of tuna has been opened and the smell of it wafts through the open planned office. She momentarily feels saliva pool in her mouth. She clenches her teeth, opens her desk draw and pushes a peppermint out of the tube of lollies and into her mouth.

A trolley piled with boxes is at the end of her desk, and her workmates have similar ones. Some stacked with books and journals, others with boxes of material waiting to be sorted, described and entered into the collection. She can hear the hum of the air conditioning, and fingers tapping computer keys. Chairs squeak as people roll them from one end of the desk to the other.

Class five paranoia has been written in sloping handwriting – proper handwriting, not printing. The s’s swell like waves, and the c looks more like a six because the pen didn’t leave the paper before forming the l — it rounded back before going forward.

At the bottom of the page someone has written, in what appears to be a thick-nibbed ink pen, *Part IV* and then (*sec 31.2*), which has been double under-lined.

She is aware of people trying not to talk too loudly but their whispers are just as distracting. She looks up and sees workmates who wear open toed, flat leather sandals looking over manuscripts of their own. To the left of them there is a rectangle of light steeling into the room and sliding across the floor.

The New Zealand shield is top and centre on the form, in between the words New and Zealand, and beneath it is typed *Seacliff* – the words mental hospital pre-populated. *Mitt-88* – whatever that means, and registration number 7330 sit in the top right-hand corner.

The patient's name is Ennis John Schmidt, and beneath it, admitted 3 August 1926. Written in another hand – died 26 June 1944. The *j* of June loops and reminds her of her mother's handwriting. So many hands have held this admission slip – five at least going by the different writing styles – and who's to say how many more have read it, and like her, tried to decipher some meaning from it.

All she recognises is the surname — it's the same as hers.

One

The nurse who called Charlie asking her to collect Hunter from Kenepuru mentioned lacerations to his left arm. He had tried to kill himself.

The train sidles beside the sea. Somes Island, its body the shape of a turtle, lies in the middle of the harbour. On the opposite shore the Rimutaka Ranges stand behind Eastbourne. The landscape is spectacular. On an ordinary day she could spend hours identifying the variant shades of blue, green and brown, but today, despite looking out onto the harbour she sees nothing. Instead, she thinks about Hunter holding a knife to his forearm and running the blade along a thick blue vein just to feel the cold steel against his skin. The blade would leave a white trace line. Then he would colour the line in, not applying too much pressure, just millimetres at a time. Red would spill over the lines.

The train leaves the shoreline and runs behind the backside of discount outlets stores. It passes through stations where there is little more than a hut for shelter.

She imagines Hunter watching the blood, and how it ran so freely, so quickly, from a fine thin cut. How it flowed down his arm and onto the grouting between the kitchen tiles on the bench. When he saw the blood stopped by the fragments of flour in the grouting, did he remember that only yesterday he had stood in the same spot and made chocolate chip cookies with Ruby? Did Hunter watch the blood, somewhat admiringly, as it clotted around the cut? He would be fascinated by the platelets, plasma, and bodily chemicals joining forces to dam the flow. Was it then, when he could see his body's intricacies, its will to survive, how hard it was working to heal itself, despite his waning energy, that he panicked and realised he wanted to live?

"I'm leaving soon," a man at the front of the carriage says. "I'm outta here," to no one in particular.

The man's outburst disrupts her thoughts. He is a tall man, wearing track pants and a sweatshirt. He wears a sleep mask reversed so it looks like he has eyes in the back of his head. She wonders whether he knows that he's talking out aloud. Sometimes she thinks things that she hopes she hasn't inadvertently said, not often, just when she's been distracted. Sometimes she talks to herself, a symptom of living alone.

"That guy is dangerous, drinks too much piss," the man continues. The passengers on the train keep their eyes on their phones and make furtive glances up to the commotion. "I'm getting out of here."

She catches the eye of a woman opposite her. She's a Gold Card traveller wearing walking shorts and tramping boots who rolls her eyes at Charlie in acknowledgement and amusement at the man's delusions. Charlie smiles half-heartedly before turning to look out the window. She doesn't want to be rude to the woman, but she doesn't want to poke fun at the man, or start a conversation either.

When the man gets off the train the woman says, "We've struck them today." Charlie pretends she didn't hear.

The suburbs stretch back towards the hills to the west and north. The clothes lines and state houses, and little settlements of brown brick townhouses with perfectly manicured gardens that all look the same, seem endless. She wants to get off the train, to see Hunter, but at the same time she wants to stay on-board. She could spend the day riding the trains, and try to reason why Hunter didn't call her before picking up the knife. She is his trusted support person--and newly acquired girlfriend. It's what he had agreed to do if he had suicidal thoughts. She'd gone with

him to the doctor's to discuss suicidal ideation. They had sat down and developed a plan in case it happened again. He was meant to call her.

She says her name to the receptionist at the Emergency Department.

Eventually, a nurse comes to collect her and takes her through to the cubicle Hunter's sitting in. The nurse has fake red hair, and her smock hangs off her underweight body. There are other nurses and doctors congregating in the centre of the emergency room. Some are on the phone, and others are talking to receptionists, discussing patient files. Around the edge of the room are cubicles, some curtained off, some open. The curtains are white, as is the floor, walls, and uniforms.

So much white is hard on her eyes, the glare like sun on snow. It makes her think of the newspaper reports of a plane crash in Antarctica that she studied at Intermediate School. The ice had preserved the scene of the crash, blood a startling contrast to the white ice, and therefore easy for the rescuers to see. Perhaps that's why they have so much white in the emergency room, the staff can see where they need to clean up, who they need to fix first.

She is led around the cubicles. She tries not to look sideways at the people either lying or sitting up in bed. The curtains perversely make the people inside look like they are on a stage either waiting for the next act, or performing it. There isn't much dialogue in the performances, there is silence, and stares out into the audience, or at the white floor. The sense of purpose is coming from the doctors and nurses. It is they who hold the plot twists.

The nurse pushes back the curtain. "Your pick-up is here, Mr Vincent."

He doesn't look up when the nurse says his name. Instead he picks up the white plastic bag that has his name and *NHI* number written on in black vivid. Inside the bag, she imagines, is Hunter's bloodied shirt. She watches him gingerly slide off the gurney using his right hand as a brace to propel his body forward. He keeps his

left arm at a distance from his body, whether in protection or repulsion she can't tell. He is wearing a long-sleeved hoodie that covers the bandages. She opens her arms to him and he leans in slightly, but his body is tense and his limbs stay at his side unwilling to return the embrace. She reaches out her hand to touch his left arm as a gesture of acknowledgement and support, but he moves away.

"Shall we get going?" She asks him.

He starts walking out of the cubicle.

"He's sedated," the nurse says to Charlie, "they're expecting you at ward 27 before tea."

In the carpark Hunter rummages in the white plastic bag for his car keys and passes them to Charlie. As she unlocks the driver's door she hears a car driving by with the music up too loud. The bass booms around the carpark and into her chest. The car is out of sight quickly but the thump remains in her body. It makes her feel constricted. She keeps telling herself to release the breaths she catches in her chest.

The multi-lane motorway into Wellington that will glide her into the city without much thought as to direction is comforting. It's all tar-seal and hills until suddenly the sea is in front of them, and then beside them as the city reveals itself. Wooden villas climb up Mount Vic from Oriental Parade, and light glints off the CBD apartments and complexes and glass towers which are all eyes without a face. Arriving in the city by the motorway usually inspires a sense of awe, but not today.

She keeps thinking about Hunter taking a swing at the nurses. This outburst of violence, as well as the violence he inflicted on himself, has made her worry for her own physical safety for the first time that she's been with him. Sitting beside him in the car now she can feel her body close in on itself, as if more than a glacial movement will cause an explosion. Although she knows he is sedated, and is calmly

looking out at the harbour, her body constricts at the prospect at having to defend itself from a sudden movement.

At work yesterday, she had been thinking about what her relationship with his daughter Ruby would be like, when she dropped the *State Housing in New Zealand* book she was holding. It fell open to a ‘Typical layout of a housing system of about 600 units.’ The layout was the shape of a head; a head full of houses. The main road north started at the base of the throat, and ran parallel to the railway line that was laid along the nape of the neck. If you kept on the main road, and turned north-east up Cairfield Road, you’d end up in a cul de sac with two rounded ends that looked like tonsils. There was no mouth as such, but rectangle quarter acre sections plastered over the lips and nose. The railway line continued up the back of the head. At a recess for eyes a church was marked, and up on the forehead a rugby field.

On the cover of the book were stencilled cabbage trees and houses so familiar and simple that she still sees the layout of her Grandparents state house. The rippled glass of the front door opened into the wide hallway. The first door to the right was the main bedroom with Grandma’s piano piled up with clothes, and there was a clock with a blue metallic face on the wall. Opposite Grandma’s bedroom was a hall cupboard with a green velvet curtain right beside the telephone table where she made nightly calls to her children – and on which sat a vase filled with yellow roses from her garden. Blooms splayed out and petals were left where they fell as if decomposition was as beautiful as a bloom’s first blush. The sitting room had a swivel green tartan arm chair, and a black and white porcelain cocker spaniel sat on the hearth. Just down from the sitting room, on the right, was another bedroom, and then another bedroom with another piano that Charlie would tap-on – amazed at the thunder and the tinkle of the keys at either end. There were always two single beds

in that room, and white venetian blinds that shut away the garage and shingle driveway.

Opposite the bedroom was the kitchen. It was carpeted, and the cupboards painted forest green with a white in-lay. The small fan heater plugged into the oven would always be on. The radio had a ledge to itself just above where Grandma sat at the table, within a metre of the kitchen sink. Out the back door, to the left, was the washhouse with the wringer and tubs, and fridge. The soda stream sat on a small table just in the foyer of the backdoor, and there was the smell of ripe apricots in a thin pine wooden box in summer. Down the back steps were two sheds, and further down a glass house on the edge of the vegetable garden.

Hunter lives in a state house – not the same layout as Charlie's grandparents but it is immediately comforting. It's always the lounge she thinks of first. The heat and crackle of the fire and the multi-coloured rug of felt balls. Colour and heat. It soaks into her bones. They sit on the floor, legs over the rug, and they pull the seat covers from the sofa and lean them between their backs and the sofa. Lean into each other.

She looks across at him briefly and imagines the housing scheme overlaid on his skull. In the temporal lobe, the lobe of sequencing and organisation is a single cul de sac that looks like an outstretched arm that ends in a fist.

Two

“Don’t they have some kind of activities?” She turns to Hunter who is looking intently at the floor. He hasn’t met her eye since she arrived.

He shakes his head which makes her think that there are, but he hasn’t taken part.

“Is there really nothing to do?”

He shrugs.

“If there is a class, or activities, I think it would be a good idea to do something, to fill up the day if nothing else. It must seem like a long day. Can you walk down to Newtown, go shopping or anything?”

“I dunno.”

“What are the other people like? Do you talk to them?”

He just keeps looking at the floor, at the grey swirls of lino that look like the swirl of sugar in a boiled lolly that he’ll crack between his teeth.

There is instant coffee in the corner of the room. A couple of men come in and re-fill their cups, heaping in sugar and granulated coffee, and pushing down the red-water lever on the Zip. One of the men has an unlit cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He looks like an office worker about to go outside and have his afternoon smoko. He is smartly dressed; his black shirt tucked into his dark jeans. His face looks red and raw like he has just had a shave. His companion wears an oversized basketball top with long shorts and basketball shoes. He keeps his head bowed a little so all she can see is his straggly blond hair escaping out of his cap. The men go out the sliding door to the concrete yard that backs onto the hospital incinerator.

She turns back to Hunter, who is watching the men as well.

“The basketball guy’s bipolar. He never swallows his drugs.”

The water in the zip comes to a boil and then goes quiet.

She looks out the glass sliding door and sees the basketball guy leaning against the concrete wall, one leg propped up behind him. He is watching the pigeons pecking the concrete.

“When I worked in the UK a pigeon flew into our first floor office.” She turns to Hunter. “The boss was all freaked out about it. He grabbed a tea towel and managed to catch the bird after it’d dazed itself banging against the window, and threw it outside. He said it was bad luck to touch a bird that came inside. I’m not sure why.”

“The morning Mum died, before I knew she had passed away, I was at home and a fantail flew in the backdoor” Hunter says. “It did a lap around the lounge and then flew back out the door, like it knew where it was going. Then the phone rang. It was my sister, telling me about Mum.”

In her mind’s eye she watches the bird circle Hunter’s lounge – a circuit around the art on his walls. The postcard he bought at the Art Gallery’s gift shop of Dick Frizzell’s *Mickey to Tiki*, a photo taken from Waiheke Island looking back to Auckland, alongside Ruby’s drawing of a black crayoned canoe with rounded high ends, which Charlie thought could double as a monster, on a bright blue sea. And the bare boards of Graham Sydney’s *Dog Trail Room* with its small window open to an expanse of blue and gold landscape that the occupant was either protected from, expelled, or scared.

“I think the bird was Mum coming to say goodbye, having one final look at me before she went off.”

She nods, and turns as she hears something drop to the floor but can’t see where the sound has come from. She looks at Hunter.

“Where is your greenstone?” She curls up her hand and places it on her chest as if she were holding the pendant of a necklace.

“They took it off me.” He opens his mouth to say more but no words come.

She can hear rubber soles squeak on the lino and nurses talking about the new ramen place just down from the supermarket.

“Have they put it in a safe or something? Do you want me to take it home?”

“Did you go to work?” Hunter asks. She watches him look at her empire line navy dress that rides up to her mid-thigh when she’s sitting, and down to her tan forties-style loafers, as if it’s not work appropriate. She looks down at her dress, to see what he sees, and notices how the dress bulges at her hips. She lifts up slightly in her chair and pulls the hem of the dress down over her thighs. Long blond hairs on her thighs flatten under the travelling hem. The bulges smooth, temporarily.

“Yeah, it was a long day. I’m still going through the McDougall medical history collection. In a couple of weeks I’ll be done with it.”

He nods.

Every time she had tried to settle into her work the silence of the car ride into town yesterday seeped into her and made her mute. Like the sea fog that settles over Wellington and silences the airport.

“I went to the blessing of the boats on the weekend at Island Bay.”

“Yeah.”

“There were heaps of people there, and stalls. There was a man on a tall tricycle-type thing, it must have been seven foot high, and he juggled basketballs while on top of it.”

“Cool.”

A tired, flat-toned *cool*.

"Lots of boats lined up to be blessed. They sailed around the island, one after the other, and then close to the beach a priest was in a boat and threw water on them as they went by. There were even people in canoes. I went with Fe, from work."

She only told him about it because they had been to Island Bay together. She thought it would remind him of a happier time. They had walked from Newtown to Island Bay. He had talked about playing bass in a band, and how they practised in a friend's family garage.

"The acoustics were pretty shit," he said, "but it was a good space for thrashing out ideas." He had played air guitar as they walked. It had embarrassed her a little but she was happy to see him animated. She had told him how she learnt guitar when she was nine.

"Mum booked me in for lessons" Charlie had said. "Apparently that Christmas I'd whined for a guitar, but by the time she had booked lessons for February I had completely forgotten about it, and didn't want to go. I made it through the year. I still remember that the first chord we learnt was A. I should have kept it up. I only stopped out of stubbornness, to prove that I didn't really want to learn. I remember when the teacher rang the following year to see whether I wanted to continue and I said no, while thinking that I should probably say yes. Silly really."

She had stopped talking, feeling self-conscious in her revelation even though there was no reason to be. They had walked to the fish and chip shop, and ate them while sitting on the sea wall. The air was still, the water gentle, and the chips salty. It had seemed a perfect outing in its simplicity, in their mutual good humour. But maybe she's just romanticising an occasion because their relationship so far has been devoid of romance.

Now, a nurse walks past the open lounge door, notes the men outside, and Hunter sitting on the chair. Charlie turns to look at the nurse. He's about her age

with brown dreads curled up on his head like a turban. He wears baggy jeans and a white smock top with green and blue stripes along the breast pocket; the colours of the District Health Board. The nurse doesn't say anything, just acknowledges Hunter with raised eyebrows and then keeps walking down the hall.

"Obs," he says.

"Obs?"

"Observation, keeping an eye on me. He'll have to write down that he saw us here and what we were doing. Same for those two out there."

"Oh. That's kinda creepy, being watched all the time."

"That's what we're in here for, to be looked at and monitored." He smirks, which only highlights his uncomfortable awareness of why he is in here.

"How often do they check?"

"Every half hour to an hour, day and night."

"Even in the middle of the night?"

"Yeah, I hear them open the flap that's on my door. They wake me up every time."

"I guess they're just doing their job."

"Yeah, they watch and try to control my thoughts."

"Are you joking? They're just making sure everyone is safe." *You did just try and kill yourself*, she stops herself from saying. And then you took a swing at the nurses, which meant he had to be transferred into Wellington.

Hunter shrugs.

She can't look at him now, can't rest one more set of eyes upon him. She had no idea the ward would be so blank and staring. She thought it would be more nurturing, less sterile, more hugs than drugs, but she realises she was being completely naïve.

Before she arrived at the hospital, she wondered whether Rochelle would bring Ruby in to see her father, but now Charlie doesn't know whether it is such a good idea. It is so clinical in here, and he is so tired looking. Plus the other patients might scare the little girl. It's hard to tell though, she might be more resilient than all of them put together because she won't understand what's happening beyond knowing that her dad is sick and is trying to get better.

"Y' alright, Charlie girl?"

She smiles, remembering the first boyfriend who called her that. He would always greet her with, *Hey there Charlie girl*. No one else had called her that but she liked it. It made her feel special. It had a sense of fun that the name Charlotte didn't have. It became a habit, calling herself Charlie, even after they had split up. He was a shelf stacker and she was a checkout girl. She wanted to go overseas but he didn't. She hasn't seen him since.

"I think I'm the one meant to be asking if you're alright."

Hunter's gaze is unblinking.

The basketball guy and the other man come into the lounge and get another cup of coffee before going out again.

"How many coffees do they have a day?"

"I've lost count. You can't blame them, it's all there is to do all day, smoke and drink coffee. I've thought of lighting up myself, just to pass the time. It's like a smoko break on a never-ending Monday morning in here."

"I don't think smoking is a good idea."

"I was only joking, I wasn't seriously considering it." His anger flashes and makes her feel prudish for chastising smoking, prudish and embarrassed at her lack of humour, at her seriousness.

"Of course, sorry. What would pass the time? DVDs? Reading? Do you want to write some lyrics? I could get you some stationery."

"The doctor suggested that already, writing. Writing about my parents," he puts on a voice, a middle-class high octave voice which she assumes is imitating the doctor. "*My relationship and my attitude to parenthood.*"

"Do you think you'll do it? You could just write about anything, really, it doesn't have to be what the doctor says." Hunter doesn't respond, he is not interested, or is incapable of being so. "You could write a letter to Ruby."

"We've been talking on the phone. She knows I'm not feeling well but doesn't know all of the details, obviously."

"How often do you talk?"

"Every night. It's the one thing I look forward to every day. If it wasn't for her..."

He starts worrying at the cuff on his long sleeved t-shirt and doesn't complete his sentence. She can see the faint outline of bandages up his arm.

While she knows that Hunter's daughter is his number one girl, his saying it, his implying that it is her who is keeping him alive, stings. She knows that it shouldn't, that of course it is the way it should be, that love between a child and father is different from a relationship between a man and woman. She knows this, and yet, still. At some level she had imagined that his daughter and girlfriend were his motivations for staying alive. But no, just the daughter. Not a two-for-one deal.

"I suppose I had better get going, let you rest."

Hunter nods, a look of resignation on his face. Charlie wonders whether he is thinking of resigning from her.

"I'll come back in a day or so, is that okay?"

"Sure, course."

"Do you want me to get you anything?"

He shakes his head.

"Okay then." She stands, and leans towards Hunter who remains sitting, and kisses him on the check. He doesn't reciprocate or move towards her. For a moment she thought she felt his hand at her side, but it is just her handbag repositioning itself as she bent toward him.

She walks down the passage way. There is a yellow cleaning sign outside the nurses' station where she signs out. The dread-locked nurse raises his eyebrows in acknowledgement of Charlie as she leaves. Someone yells goodbye behind her, and she turns to see the basketball guy, waving, animated. She waves back, puzzled at his sudden burst of affection towards her while realising that on some level it isn't real, he is just 'up' for the moment, whether from his illness or too much coffee she isn't sure. It is nice to have some enthusiasm shouted in her direction though, even if it isn't real.

When she turns up her driveway on the way back from the hospital, she sees men in the park on the other side of the street drinking beer while sitting on benches. During school terms the Catholic school next to the park uses it as a playground. Charlie hears the kids sometimes, laughing. In winter, the park is cold, and becomes colder as she walks through it, revealing that the land used to be swamp. The chill lessens when she climbs the steps to street level.

She feels cold now, despite the sun. The cold of the ward sticks to her clothes. She rubs her arms as she walks past the orange rough-cast house that has two garages that look like stable doors, and onto the steep tar sealed driveway past a single story wooden house jammed in-between her building and the orange place. These neighbours have a quince tree whose dropped fruit is never picked up. Up the driveway a bit further is the path to her flat. The wooden fence is green with

weather, and leans slightly towards the driveway. As she walks up three steps she can see chunks of bedrock from the building's foundations falling away. Along the path and up another step, and a moderate incline all the way to another step – right by the front flat's verandah – and the around the side of the house to flat C – her place.

The two-storey wooden building used to be the French Consulate. She imagines it, back then, a large house on top of the hill with no other dwelling close-by. Just sloping lawns and acres of gardens perhaps modelled on Versailles Orangerie that she's never visited. Would the wind whip right around the house and through the gardens, and would neighbours look up and see the house battered and know that there isn't enough sun in this climate for the oranges to grow.

The late sun shows up all the dust on the curves of the front door's frosted window. Inside she is comforted by the lemon walls, and the throws on the couches tucked into the cushions. With the pine sea chest polished-up, and the magazines squared together with the TV remote. It's not the first time she's thought it doesn't look like anyone lives here, that it's far too tidy for a full life.

She drops her handbag by the sea chest, sits on the couch – pulls the throw off the cushions and wraps it round herself – and cries. The red woollen throw, its strands pulled, only gives slight comfort.

Three

“Ennis is your great-great Uncle,” Heather, her mum, says.

She had been processing Professor McDougall’s files on the history of New Zealand mental health when she came across her own surname – Schmidt. She’d called her mum, who called her aunt, to confirm whether Ennis was related to them.

The file says that Ennis Schmidt was removed from His Majesty’s prison, where he was awaiting trial for the murder of Frank MacAlister, to the Mental Hospital at Seacliff under Section 66 (2) of the Mental Defectives Act 1911. The Medical Officer who completed the Preliminary Statement as to the Mental and Bodily Condition said that Ennis had suffered from persecutory delusions which culminated in his murdering an old friend who had come under suspicion.

“What else did Aunt Betty say?”

“They were ashamed.”

“Nothing about the murder? Or visiting Ennis at Seacliff?”

“She was too young. All she remembers is whispers and half-heard conversations between her mother and her siblings. She kept repeating ‘the shame of it.’ The family moved away.”

“I don’t know that it’s shame that I feel, as much as shock.”

“I’d say Ennis’s siblings felt both.”

From the slight echo to her voice she can tell her mother is standing in the kitchen holding the cordless phone over one ear, while her right arm is wrapped around her waist, and looking out the window over the town Ennis’s family moved to – Timaru. Only two and a bit hours drive north from Dunedin now, but then the steep and narrow Kilmog was a formidable barrier.

She'll be able to see the grain cylinders at the port, and maybe the dredge moving sand from one end of the bay to the other. The red bricked and wooden houses slide down towards the highway, and then up to the Bay Hill. There are cafes and bars where a dairy, hairdresser and light shop used to be. Opposite the bars, and alongside the railway line, are phoenix palms whose exotic fronds are fit for postcards but seem out of place in real life. She may even hear the drone of traffic as commuters bypass the main street.

"What do you think about it?" Charlie asks.

"It makes me think of Sheryl. You remember Sheryl, don't you?"

"She had depression, though. She wasn't delusional."

"Aren't they different arms of the same beast?"

"They're separate illnesses, but having both in my genes seems like a bum deal."

"You've never had any trouble, though." Heather's tone is matter of fact at first but her voice rises in question at the end of her sentence.

"No, I haven't."

If she had, would she keep this information from her mother? Charlie doesn't imagine that she would. And yet, she hasn't told her mother about Hunter. She wants to make sure the relationship has a future first. If she told her mother that her new boyfriend was in ward 27 Heather would think she was the crazy one. And maybe she is.

Besides, they've never been good at talking on the phone. They both perceive a phone call as transactional - a need for information - rather than a medium for personal revelation. It's only when Charlie visits her parents, and after they've had dinner, when her father has gone to bed, that they sit in the lounge on the orange

reclining chairs and talk about their lives in any detail. These conversations need to be eased into.

“It does make me think,” Charlie concedes, “that’s there’s an increased potential, a susceptibility that people without the family history don’t have.”

“Sheryl always had these blue episodes” Heather says. “We didn’t call it depression then. She withdrew from us. I’d go round there and she’d still be in her dressing gown at the kitchen table just staring out onto the street and the school, saying nothing. I think she liked me going around but she never said so. After Barry left I took her shopping on Tuesdays. The episodes lasted longer after he left.”

Charlie can remember the kitchen table at Aunt Sheryl’s. It was round and beige. She would sit at the table and look across to the primary school’s orange brick fence. The bricks were rounded at the top, and every two metres there was a step down, and then another two metres of brick before another step. The fence got lower and lower until the boundary was reached. When Sheryl was well enough for her to stay over they’d go for walks and as they got nearer to the house she would hold Sheryl’s hand as she walked on the top of the brick fence.

“Why did Barry leave?” Charlie asks.

“He couldn’t handle Sheryl’s episodes, and then they couldn’t have kids. It got a bit too much for him.”

“Why couldn’t they have kids?”

“Sheryl had a hormone imbalance” Heather says. “She was devastated. Half the time I couldn’t tell whether she was depressed or grieving for the children she never had.”

Why didn’t you tell me that before, she thinks but doesn’t say. Instead she leaves silence and wonders whether her mother will pick up on it, whether she’ll realise what she’s said and how closely it affects her.

Sheryl died when Charlie was eleven. She just died in her sleep, is how her mum explained it, but Charlie knew there was more to it. There were hushed tones when her mum spoke about her aunt to other relations. She was sent to the shop to get milk when she knew they had plenty. Even now she doesn't know the real reason, and she is hesitant to ask.

"Are you going to keep looking through Ennis's file?" Heather asks.

"I guess so." She knows she will but doesn't want to give her mother any satisfaction in the knowledge. She'll keep it from her, keep her guessing. It is petty, but all the more satisfying for it being so. And now as she looks through the file, she will be looking for any character traits that match her own, any clues that could suggest that she has the same mental frailties as her relations.

"Can you send me a copy?"

"No," Charlie says. "I can't do that. It isn't processed yet and I don't know what access restrictions it will have. Medical information is usually embargoed for 100 years, and then it's only open to relations who write in asking for it."

"Well, we're related, aren't we?"

"Yes, but it's the National Library--boxes need to be ticked."

Ennis's file is surprisingly slim considering he was in Seacliff for 20 years. At the front of the file are Ennis's photocopied death notices: one is handwritten by a doctor, and the other has been typed. It states that Ennis had *No known relatives* and had *not been visited recently*. She leans back in her office chair and looks abstractedly at the wall trying to come to terms with the fact that her family abandoned Ennis at Seacliff. Not only was he out of his mind, he was completely alone. His family's absence another form of punishment.

While Aunt Betty remembered the shame felt by Ennis's siblings, Charlie feels more ashamed of her family's reaction. Her mum said there were siblings living in Dunedin, it would have been easy enough to get a train up the line to Seacliff.

When she thinks of the word *shame*, she sees a white converse sneaker poking out of a toilet stall in the Rialto cinema. The cinema used to be in a triangle of land between Wakefield and Cable Streets. She had gone by herself to see a film she now can't recall. All she sees is the sneaker, and realising that for the leg to be at that angle the person would have to be laying down. Laying down in a toilet stall on a winter's evening. Her first thoughts were if the person had taken ill, or had taken something – injected or swallowed, and then collapsed. They needed medical attention, she thought. She should tell the staff. Instead, she sat on the toilet – her jeans at her ankles – thinking about what to do while waiting for the leg to move, to show some signs of life. Nothing.

She wiped herself, pulled up her pants, all the while hoping for movement next door, while simultaneously thinking she was mistaken, that the woman was fine. She took her handbag off the hook of the stall door and put it over her shoulder – still nothing. She unlatched the door, and loitered over washing her hands hoping someone would use the stall she'd come out of and raise the alarm. She lathered, rinsed and lathered again. The soap smelt of fake cherry. From the basins she couldn't see the leg, she'd need to crouch down, but she didn't. Instead she pulled at the hand towels and thoroughly dried her hands until the towel was a pulpy mass.

She slid her lips together, distributing the gloss on her lips, and checked herself in the mirror. Her pale face looked even paler under the florescent light, and the dark circles creep from one corner of her eye to the other. Her black bob was straight but the fringe too thin to stay in place. She shifted it into place knowing that

as soon as she moved, it would too. Her eyes looked more blue than hazel —she wished they would make up their mind one way or the other.

She could tell the staff, they could check it out. This rational option propelled her out of the bathroom, and up to the queue.

People bought tickets and maple walnut Movenpick ice-creams. All the while she looked at the bathroom door hoping someone would come rushing out, or that the sneakered woman would walk out, that all along it was a trick of light or imagination.

“How can I help?”

Popcorn squeaks on teeth, and salt and butter is licked from fingers.

“What session are you after?”

She bought a ticket and a Movenpick. She struggled to pick up the ice-cream and receive the change while she had her wallet in her other hand. So she crammed the five dollar note and coins into the change section of the purse and zipped it up.

Someone else will see her, she tells herself, the staff will help.

She sits up in her chair and looks through the rest of the photocopied pages of Ennis’s medical file. The original is kept by the Southern District Health Board. The other files McDougall collected are similarly bound in manila folders with steel clasps. She imagines the original files are kept in a storeroom at the Health Board. The only sounds in the room would be the temperature control, and the occasional clunk-clunk of the florescent lights being turned on by an archive assistant retrieving files. Ennis’s file is no more than a centimetre thick. Mental decline is a slim volume. A3 pages of his medical notes have been folded in half, and A4 sheets of official forms either typed up or handwritten. The doctor’s handwriting is stereotypically bad; the ink is thick and scrawled across the pages. She will need

more time to go through it carefully, word by word. But even if she reads Ennis's file, what is she meant to do with this ghost?

Charlie and Fe are at the café attached to the National Library. Home, it's called, and the wait staff wear white t-shirts with the words 'Home Girl' or 'Home Boy' written in black across their chests. This play on hip-hop speak may be lost on the mainly retired crowd.

The barista bangs the portafilter onto a high plastic tube to get rid of the coffee grounds before tempering the next espresso. Charlie catches a whiff of caffeine as she watches the public servants queuing at the counter look listless and pressed in their dry-cleaned jackets.

Charlie is perched on an Ottoman-type block and tries to sit up straight but doesn't hold out long before her back curves into a C. The coffee table between them is low, and another group sits at the other end. She notices how straight their backs are, and how one woman has put her right foot up on the Ottoman, with her right arm slung around her leg, while her other leg hangs over the edge. It's like her limbs are so long she doesn't know what to do with them.

In the courtyard between the Library and the small shopping arcade, people walk to and from offices crammed onto the block. Only the sun makes the courtyard inviting –bouncing off the pebbles mixed through the concrete pavers.

"Penny for them?"

"What? Oh, sorry," Charlie says.

"You alright? You seem miles away?"

"Yeah, just not with it today. Didn't sleep well"

She manages to withstand Fe's doubtful gaze.

She hasn't told Fe about Hunter's. It feels so distant and indistinct, like an impressionist painting and she needs to squint her eyes to bring it into focus. It also feels like a failure on her part; Charlie should have called Hunter that day. She was just at work, she had time. There's also the reoccurring thought that her love is not enough to sustain him. Charlie hasn't told Fe about Ennis either. Charlie feels as if she's about to combust with all this information but keeping silent contains any explosion. She can just focus on her work and get lost in binary codes and keywords, on the exactitudes of describing information. The rules stop her from deviating into unknown territory.

She looks out the window to the courtyard and watches a woman wearing a long beige coat that nearly conceals the large bump of her belly. Her black top clings to her form, so tight in fact it looks like her clothes are holding her baby inside. The woman turns to the café briefly, as if sensing she's being watched, and looks straight at Charlie, who turns away.

"Do you know her?"

"Who?"

"The woman you were looking at?"

"No," Charlie can feel herself blush, so she reaches for her coffee in an attempt to divert attention from her face. She takes a sip, it's bitter. The cup rattles back onto the saucer.

"She'll have some sleepless nights ahead, whoever she is," Fe says.

She turns back to the woman who is just exiting the courtyard but somehow feels miles away.

Four

She's never been to the Bolton Street cemetery before. Fe suggested going. She's researching her family tree and knows of one ancestor who is buried there. She's excited that it still exists because a lot of the plots were moved to make way for the construction of the motorway in and out of Wellington. The bodies were interred in a mass grave. On the drive to the cemetery, Fe told her about the outrage it caused in the community. People protested about the desecration of the cemetery for 'progress.' When construction began Rita Angus drew sketches on a weekly basis documenting the changes, but in the end, the boundary line of the motorway, marked out with pegs and strings across the cemetery, was adhered to. Bodies were relocated. Headstones were removed and placed randomly in what was left of the graveyard. The mention of mass graves makes Charlie think of war: Bosnia, Serbia, and concentration camps, rather than her own country.

They look at the chapel on the edge of the cemetery where plaques are posted detailing the history of the site. Some of the plaques relate how some people died.

"Look at this," Fe says.

A fire engine arrived at a house in time to save it, but there was no water to pump. A mother and her five children died. Her husband had died some years before.

"And this one, the whole family died of influenza."

Charlie shakes her head, unable to comprehend the grief of a mother watching each of her children die one by one. After that, the mother's own death would be welcome, there being only so much pain a parent can take.

The chapel is a reproduction - the original was in the highway's way. It doesn't have the same charm that age brings to a building. The timber floorboards

are too highly polished, too bright, and almost plastic looking. In the Sexton's Cottage, next to the Chapel, there is a half-empty plastic water bottle on a wooden table with a small glass beside it. The bed up against the wall is unmade. The bedding is white. She hadn't realised someone lived there.

They walk along the path that leads to the mass grave. At first sight it looks like an amphitheatre. Charlie imagines people sitting on the blue stone edged steps listening to musicians positioned on the grass, before she realises that the grass area is the mass grave. A thin wooden boundary, no higher than the grass, indicates the edge of the grave. On the surface it seems small. She wonders at its depth, and how the people are stacked upon each other.

"When I used to work at the Ministry, I would come here and eat my lunch." Fe points to the steps that are bathed in sunlight. "It's a bit of a sun trap, and sheltered from the wind."

Charlie can hear the traffic going up and down the highway, and the cicadas that sound like the firing of electrical currents, but the cemetery itself feels calm amongst so much to-ing and fro-ing. They walk along the shingle path through the original graves. While the weather has worn away the lettering on some of the tombstones, on others Charlie can see the age of the deceased: 34, 36, 38, 54. And children, too, sometimes several children from the same family: 2, 3, 18 months. She thinks about the parents who no longer get out of bed because of grief, the husbands and wives who soldier on because they're meant to. On one grave, the surviving partner lived thirty years longer than their deceased spouse. Their time alone longer than their marriage. While there is grief, the site itself is calm, settled. Time has healed and forgotten.

"Who are we looking for?" She should be helping rather than wallowing in morbidity.

“Williamson, Daphne Williamson. She’s my great-great-grandmother. I’ve looked at the cemetery’s plot plan, and she should be around here.”

Fe has taken her prescription glasses off so she can see clearly to the distant tombstones. She’s wearing a polar fleece jacket, baby pink, and light-wash demin jeans with black converse sneakers. Charlie has never seen Fe wear a frock, she’s always in jeans and sweaters, even at work. Her jewellery is minimalist too, just silver studs in her ears and a silver band on her right ring finger that was a 21st present from her parents. She admires the simplicity of her dress style but sometimes wonders what Fe would look like all dressed up.

“Here she is.” Fe turns around, looking for Charlie, and then puts her hands on her hips in the satisfaction of the find.

“She died young.” Charlie calculates the dates. “44, is that right?”

“Yeah, her death certificate says cause of death was congestion of the heart.”

“You could probably take a pill for that now.”

There are a few other people walking around the cemetery. Some have cameras around their necks. She wonders whether they are tracing their family tree as well, and whether it’s appropriate to take photos of grave sites.

Fe turns her backpack around, gets a pencil from out of the front pocket, and a pad of A4 paper from the inside.

“I’ll just do a rubbing, and then we can go and see Seddon’s grave, if you like?”

Fe crouches down, and holds a sheet of paper up against half of the tombstone. She starts drawing her pencil back and forth over the indented words. ‘Beloved mo’ fits on one sheet, and then she puts up another sheet on the other side of the tombstone and ‘ther and wife’ completes the statement. The husband is in the

same plot. Some of the letters aren't very clear because of the moss that has grown in the stencilling but enough shows so that she can read the inscription.

Charlie can see the attraction of researching your family tree, wanting to see when your ancestors came to New Zealand, where they lived, and the attempt to imagine how they lived. Hard and short it seems, from the ages on the tombstones. Although you can discover where your ancestors came from, and the streets they lived in in New Zealand, their birth and death dates, it doesn't really tell you much about the people. The facts don't tell you why they came out to New Zealand – for a better life is the much quoted reason--and there are facts to back up how miserable people's lives were in Europe, but it doesn't tell you whether your great-great-grandmother was a card shark, whether she was kind or a tyrant, or the tone of her voice. The ancestors are family after all, and who gets on with everyone in their family? If Great-great-grandmother was walking the street you might find yourself crossing the road to avoid her because she was a meddlesome woman, and yet, somehow, the investigation in ancestors is meant to reflect well on the forebearers, you're meant to be proud of these colonial adventurers who made great sacrifices.

No one expects to find a criminal or a madman in the family tree. Or two.

"Do you do rubbings of all your family's graves?" Charlie asks.

"Yeah, where I can. I put them up in my office at home."

"Oh, is that a bit . . . ?"

"Maudlin? A little perhaps." Fe smiles wryly, as if acknowledging her oddness but also accepting of the way she is.

"Um, no, I was thinking more depressing--to have so many reminders of death around you."

"Having their tombstones on the wall reminds me that they were loved and grieved for, it makes them real for me, in a way. It reminds me I'm working with people rather than just names, dates and places."

"Wouldn't a photo be better?"

"I don't have any photos, none have survived anyway. From what I can gather they were working-class people so they probably couldn't afford to get their photo taken, let alone own a camera. In some ways I'm glad there's no photos, it gives space for my imagination to wonder about what they were like."

"What do you imagine your Great-great-grandmother was like?" She asks as they start walking out of the cemetery to the car.

"I know she was a wife and mother. She married young, so I imagine she was swept off her feet and knocked up before she knew what was happening. Then I think her husband came home from work in a factory with this bright idea that they emigrate to New Zealand. He would be holding some poster that indicated green fields and space, neither of them having been out into the country, they lived in London their whole lives . . . He would be all for it but she would be against it, with worrying about the child, and the 'natives', but in the end she would have no choice because he was the bread winner."

Fe unlocks the car and they get in. She sits in the car holding the keys, not putting them in the ignition. "So, on the boat they'd come out, vomiting most of the way . . . there would be building resentment that he's made her come out but she says nothing, though she feels trapped in the boat and by the distance. She'll wonder if her husband is all that he's cracked up to be, whether he can actually make a go of it in the new country. Maybe she'll suspect that the tenderness he displays towards her will be a hindrance, that he'll be too soft for the colonial life."

Charlie can see Fe colour slightly, like she has revealed too much, or feels foolish for the extent of her imaginings. Her speech becomes full of hesitations.

“And, anyway, he’ll find a job, somewhere . . . maybe he’ll try gold, or maybe he’ll be a merchant, or work in a shop, nothing too physically taxing, he’s a smallish man . . . he’ll make a go of it, and she’ll be surprised at his hidden depths, his strength, and yeah, that’s as far as I’ve thought about it.”

Fe puts the key in the ignition.

“You should write it all down, make a story of it.”

“Oh no, I don’t think so, it’ll just end up being silly romantic rubbish.”

“I don’t think so.” She tries to reassure her so she won’t feel embarrassed, but she is surprised at Fe’s romantic thoughts. “You should give it a try.”

The car fires up Bolton Street. Charlie hangs onto the edge of the car seat and laughs nervously. The take-off felt more like launch than pulling out of a park because of the steepness of the street. She notices some old tram tracks in the middle of the road and thinks about how hair raising it would have been going down in a rickety old tram, and how close history is, how it has many layers seen and unseen: clay, tram tracks and tar-seal.

“I found an interesting file at work. You know those McDougall papers on mental health, well, I found a relation in there.”

“Who is it, then?”

“Ennis, my great-great Uncle,” she takes a deep breath before revealing what she considers the damning details of Ennis’s life. “He had a delusional episode, and killed his best friend at a hotel in Dunedin in 1926. He was transferred straight to Seacliff Mental Hospital.” As she says it, she thinks, that wasn’t all of his life, surely. What was he like before the illness, and how did he get so sick?

“Have you gone through the file?”

“Not yet, I will do. Seeing you with your rubbings I feel like I need to do something to acknowledge his life. Maybe I should follow my own advice and write about him. Try to imagine what life was like for him in Seacliff, and before he got ill.”

“You could look up Papers Past to give you some information from the trial. I’m guessing the murder would’ve made headlines too.”

Fe finds a park outside the cricket club. Men wearing white are dotted around the field. Charlie can hear the smack of ball on bat, and the wrench of the handbrake.

They walk towards the memorial. Charlie can see a cloaked figure on top of a plinth looking down upon the city.

“I could try and imagine Ennis’s condition, and whether he was getting any treatments, too.” Delving into Ennis’s file and writing about it would be a way to see if there are any similarities between her, Ennis and Sheryl. Is there some base characteristic that they share that determines their susceptibility to madness? Is there some flaw she shares that would tip Charlie over the edge if she were to try for a baby?

There is a cat playing with leaves in the fenced-off memorial to Richard Seddon, the longest-serving New Zealand Prime Minister.

“I always get him mixed up with Savage, the name I mean. Hunter wears a t-shirt with a picture of Savage on it.”

“How is it going with Hunter?”

For a moment she considers lying, saying it’s great, but she’s not sure she could carry it off. In some ways she’s glad of a direct question because she’s not sure how to start a discussion about him. Do you just say he tried to kill himself? To drop that in seems as abrupt as the act itself.

"Not good. He's in ward 27." She doesn't make eye contact with Fe, and instead looks over to the graveyard down from Seddon's memorial.

What happened?"

"He tried to kill himself, but halfway through he regretted it and got to the hospital. The doctor says it's depression, but he thinks it's the grief from his previous relationship break-up, and losing his parents too." She tries to separate the words from their impact and repeat by rote what she knows.

Fe moves over to Charlie and puts her arm around her. She leans into the hug. She hadn't realised how much she needed it.

"Do you think it's wise to continue the relationship if he's going through a depressive episode? Should you wait until he's better?"

"I don't know. Probably, but I don't feel like I can just leave him when he's so vulnerable." She reaches into her jeans pocket hoping to find a tissue even though she knows she doesn't have one. Fe reaches into the pocket of her bag and hands Charlie a mini-pack of tissues.

"But maybe taking the relationship pressure off would help him. It sounds like he has a lot to work through."

Charlie rips at the sticky tab of the tissue packet and the plastic front rips away. She flicks open the rectangle of tissue and blows her nose before putting the spent tissue in her pocket.

"He does, and you're probably right, I just can't bring myself to make the decision yet."

Charlie holds onto the iron bars around the memorial as if they will keep her emotionally propped up. The bars are warm from the mid-afternoon sun, and the heat gives her additional comfort.

Maybe investigating Ennis's decline could be a way of understanding why she should let Hunter go. She knows their illnesses are different, but maybe for all of us there's a moment when the balance is tipped.

Five

“You’re looking better. You’ve got more colour,” Charlie says to Hunter while bringing her hand up to her cheekbone to indicate where. “So, how’s it been?”

They’re meeting in the same room with the blank walls, and the view to the courtyard where smokers and pigeons gather. She can hear water in the urn boil, release steam, simmer. It’s warm in the ward, but she’s thankful for it this time. The seasons have slid and there is an autumnal chill to the air outside that the sun fails to penetrate. If she was called upon to name her favourite season she would say autumn, but autumn down South where the trees change colour. In her first autumn in Wellington, she had waited and waited for trees to turn but they didn’t. Someone at work told her about the indigenous evergreen trees and she felt like she had committed environmental blasphemy by wishing for the reds and yellows of the imports.

“It’s been okay,” Hunter says.

She widens her eyes and brings her head forward a little indicating to Hunter that she’d like more information.

He sighs heavily, and says, “I’ve had more sessions with the doctor, and more drugs. They reckon I’m making progress.”

“How much longer do you think you’ll be here for?”

“A couple of weeks or so.” He looks down at his t-shirt which has a print of a tree with creatures that look like sperm crawling up it.

“What’s on your t-shirt?”

“A tree, it’s a Radiohead t-shirt.”

“It looks like a sperm tree.”

He laughs. “It’s meant to be an oak tree, somewhere in England.”

“I don’t think that explanation would stand up to a Freudian analysis.”

She’s still looking at the t-shirt, her lips thin, and her eyes question whether it actually looks like an oak tree.

“Stop looking at the sperm tree, or I’ll start analysing you.”

She draws her eyes away and smiles. “It’s rather distracting.”

“How’s life on the outside?”

She decides not to remind him he’s not in prison. “It’s okay. Just work and hanging out with Fe, nothing out of the ordinary.”

“How’s that project you’re doing at work?”

She’s surprised. She didn’t think he was paying attention when she mentioned it before.

“I’ve found a file on one of my relations who ended up in Seacliff, so I’m going to do some research on him.”

He raises his eyes but asks no more questions about the file. She wonders if his lack of questions is because he doesn’t have the space for anyone else’s malady when he’s dealing with his own, or perhaps he thinks her insensitive for bringing it up.

“I’ve been thinking about finishing my library studies qual,” he says.

They first met, a decade ago, at a library studies course at polytech. She can remember when he walked into the classroom, he had his head slightly down, and moved his body slowly, trying to hide his nerves. When he walked into the room, she thought, *I guess it will be him then*. She was in the mood to meet somebody. To be had by somebody.

He was one of the few males in the library studies class. He was into adult graphic novels before it was cool, and wanted to be surrounded by books, and talk to people about books. The management classes were a bore for him, and were endured

by Charlie. He dropped out, citing the bureaucracy of library management. She had tried to tell him to just get through it, that once they passed they would get to the books, and the people. He was writing lyrics for a band and wanted to see where that took him. He had hugged her tightly and left. He was wearing the same clothes that she'd seen him wearing at the pub the previous night. Her classmate reckoned he was seeing someone.

Weeks before he left polytech, he'd cooked dinner for Charlie. It was pasta and she ate it except for the black olives. They had watched rugby and league on the TV. The fire had been lit. Flatmates were away. He flatted in a house that still had the servant bells connected. It also had a huge driveway where trees had been planted alongside both sides of the shingle driveway. She didn't know what kind of trees they were. She only knew that they were tall and made her feel small and lost. After dinner, and the league, he'd started smoking marijuana by the fireside. He looked at her with hazy drug-induced-come-hither eyes.

She'd wanted him to look at her in a come-hither way, but it was the drugs she didn't like. She tried not to show that she didn't like the weed, wasn't familiar with it. He offered her some and she shook her head. The pungent and oily smell lingered between them. Despite her dislike of the drug she still wanted him to reach out for her. But even under the influence he didn't make a move, and neither did she. At the time she thought her hesitation was down to the wine or the fact that she thought they were just friends, or that she was just too slow to pick up on his signals. But she had sat there waiting for him to reach out for her, and he didn't. And she didn't.

It was a decade later when they met up again. He had moved up north, and they lost touch, but he had come back to Wellington because his partner got a job in the public service. Charlie waited for him, sitting on the edge of the Cuba Street

fountain, out of the sun. Momentarily she had wondered whether she would recognise him after all this time but she knew him as soon as she saw him. He wore long shorts, t-shirt, and jandals. He looked surprised when he saw her. He tripped on the guttering, and scuffed his jandal on the bricks when he recovered his step. After being so long apart she lost her hesitation, not from a surge of confidence in her own attractiveness, but from a fear of missing out again.

The smell of bleach emanating from a cleaner's trolley brings her back into the starkness of the ward. She needs to encourage any of Hunter's ambitions that manage to germinate in the astringent atmosphere.

"You'd be a great librarian."

She turns her head around into the centre of the room, says, "It seems quiet in here today. Is that basketball guy still here?"

"Yeah, he's still around."

"Do you chat to anyone else?"

"Everyone in here is nuts. It's not like I'm here to make life-long friends."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to . . . I just don't know what to say sometimes . . . I'm just trying to understand what it's like for you. I know it must be hard."

"Yeah . . . it's hard." The words reluctantly fall from his mouth. "And it's hard to explain when it's not straight in my own head, not yet anyway."

He looks at her. She suddenly feels self-conscious as he looks at the way she has crossed her legs at her ankle, and has tucked her feet under the chair, how her black oversized patent leather handbag is still slung over her shoulder and held against her chest. When she was getting dressed this morning, she noticed how her collarbone jutted out of her low cut t-shirt, and how pale she is. She pulled a bright green cardigan out of the wardrobe to wear to add some colour.

"Are you keeping alright?"

She doesn't expect the question - she's the visitor, not the patient. "Yeah, sure," she says, "course I am."

"It looks like you've lost some weight."

"I doubt it." She repositions her handbag to give herself more coverage from his gaze.

He turns away from her and looks at his hands that are held in his lap. "I know this isn't easy for you either . . . that things aren't really . . . defined with us."

"No." She says it too quickly, and then doesn't know what to follow it up with. It's what she came here today to discuss, but now that Hunter has brought it up she wants to avoid the conversation. The word *defined* makes her think she can refer to a dictionary to find the meaning of their relationship. 'Charlie and Hunter' written in bold cobalt blue, like her Oxford Dictionary at home, and then 'noun' and the list of meanings. 1. Friends. 2. Lovers. 3 is blank.

Since her conversation with Fe, her indecision has been making her feel miserable. The endless yes or no. Should she stick with him or let him go? She knows she should put his needs first, but her own need for a partner, for a family, struggles against what's best for Hunter.

"You know, it's going to take me a while to get back on my feet."

"Yeah, I know."

"So maybe it's best . . ."

"If we're just friends?" She finishes Hunter's sentence, she could feel the word coming, the f-word, and knew it was the right one, and wanted some ownership of the situation. Pretend the idea was hers when she didn't yet have the courage to make the decision.

"Yeah. I've been talking to my doctor about it." He looks relieved, so obviously relieved, he's smiling a little. But then realises he is, and reins it in. "I mean . . . I don't know how I'm going to feel . . . later on."

"No, me neither." She looks at him directly, trying to take some power back when she feels it depleting.

"I don't think we should make any promises to each other, because we won't know how we'll feel . . . later. We can still keep in touch."

"Sure, yeah, I'd like to hear how you're getting on, y'know, once you're out of here."

"I am grateful for your help."

She hears the sliding door open behind her, and turns around to see who it is. It's not a patient she recognises from last time. The solidly built man wears an orange and yellow sarong tied around his waist and a white singlet top. A tattoo spirals up his bicep, a triangle pattern chipped into his skin. The man leans against the concrete wall, lights his cigarette, squinting as he inhales the first mouthful of smoke, and widens his eyes as he looks into the lounge trying to see past his own reflection.

She turns back to Hunter who pulls at a thread on his jeans where the fabric has worn. He has let his beard grow similarly dishevelled.

"I guess I should go," she says, but she makes no attempt to move. She half-heartedly waits for him to protest a little, but he doesn't.

He looks up from pulling the thread. "Okay then.

Six

“We broke up,” Charlie replies when Fe asks what’s wrong. They are in the staffroom, empty aside from themselves. Her eyes are red but her face is drained of all colour.

Fe puts her hand on Charlie’s shoulder. “How about we get out of here and go for a walk along the waterfront. Some air could help.”

She doesn’t know whether it will, but she feels the need to be taken in hand, for someone else to take charge of her. They slip out of the building via the back staff entrance, and out onto the street. They don’t talk as they walk to the crossing on the one way north.

“How about we sit here?” Fe points to a space under a tree on the edge of the waterfront. They sit and rest their feet on rocks that have been put up against the wharf to fend off erosion. There is only a slight breeze. Charlie watches the red fat-lipped tug boats go out to meet a container ship, while the Days Bay ferry comes into the city after transporting tourists to the bay where Katherine Mansfield spent her summer holidays as a child.

“Are you okay? Do you need help?”

“I don’t know, I don’t think so. I just feel a bit raw, that’s all.”

She’s never been comfortable talking about her feelings. People think she’s secretive and imagine she has hidden depths, but there are times when she thinks there’s just nothing there, nothing to share, nothing to worry about. Her life is comfortable, she has a job, she’s healthy and her life has been uncomplicated by long-term relationships or parenthood. She feels like a blank slate, waiting for someone to come along to give her meaning.

Charlie looks at an empty salt n' vinegar chip packet lodged in between two rocks. The green of the packet has faded in the sun and has completely lost its metallic reflection. She stares at the packet when she speaks.

"We just left my Aunt Sheryl in hospital and she died there. I didn't even visit, my mum wouldn't let me. I was only 11."

"Aunt Sheryl?" asks Fe.

"She couldn't have kids and it exacerbated her depression," Charlie says.

"Is what Hunter's going through the same as your Aunt went through?"

"Both have depression."

"It sounds like you feel you've abandoned Sheryl," Fe says, "but you were only a kid, and leaving Hunter isn't *abandoning* him. It was a mutual decision, wasn't it?"

"He bought it up first."

"I know it's not easy, but I do think you need to give him some space to get better. And besides, staying with Hunter won't help your Aunt, and I'm pretty sure it's not going to help you."

Charlie doesn't look up from the chip packet.

She feels lost.

"I do understand where you're coming from, on some level, y'know, wanting to stay with him." Fe looks out across the bay. "We're at the age where everyone's matching up with someone, and I would like that myself, but, I don't think it should be as hard as it is for you. You should have some happinesssome support. It was all a one-way street with Hunter."

Charlie turns to Fe and reaches out her arm to put around Fe's shoulder.

"Yes, I guess it has been. It's just" -- her nose tickles and she can feel tears form,

she takes a breath to keep them back, just until she can finish what she's saying—
“it's going to take some time to get used to.”

They sit in silence. She can tell that Fe is waiting to see whether she wants to talk some more, but she can't think of what else to say.

Her friendship is so valuable to her that thinking about it makes her well up again. They had both started working at the library on the same day, and did the extensive arrangement and description training together. They had gone to the pub and talked about their mutual bamboozlement and excitement at being early career librarians. They were as happy as students used in university promotional material; all white teeth, youth and intelligence in primary colours.

Some of their enthusiasm had worn off in the Monday to Friday routine, the office politics, and being continually told that technology meant they were working in a transitional time for libraries. But their friendship had deepened over the years. They liked going to shows together. They've been to gigs at Bodega – the most recent a British performance poet rapping about social inequality and materialism that was so loud Charlie had had to shut her eyes and bend down to shelter her body from the rapid beats.

A few years back Fe's dad died. Charlie went to the funeral and spent many afternoons with her afterwards walking around Wellington – from the gardens to Mt Kaukau and along the Southern coast line – in an attempt to work through Fe's grief. Fe said the walks helped to fill up her weekends, and gave her purpose, and besides, Fe said, “walks are cheaper than drugs. Or so I believe.”

They had laughed at their conservative recreational coping mechanisms. “I've been reading Ennis's file,” Charlie says. She wants to change the subject, and yet she knows her coping mechanism for letting Hunter go and holding onto the file are related.

Ethically, looking at someone's medical file is dubious, but given the time elapsed and her relationship to Ennis, Charlie feels justified. Taking it home however, is a complete no-no. If she lost or damaged the file she could lose her job, so she has furtively copied pages when others in her work pod were at meetings, and a few mornings she started work before anyone else arrived to get the copying done. When she walked out of the library work room with the copied pages in her handbag she was paranoid she would be stopped and searched. Not that anything like that had ever happened before. Generally, Librarians are trustworthy and followed proper procedure, but she worried that a colleague might have cracked onto what she was doing and told her manager, Anna. But nobody tapped Charlie on the shoulder that evening when she walked out with the pages. She's never done anything like this before, and knows she should have followed procedure, but she doesn't want her colleagues or anybody else to know about Ennis before she does.

"There's not that much information in the file really," Charlie continues. She doesn't tell Fe what she's done because it could get them both in trouble. "Considering how long he was in there. Every six months the doctor wrote a sentence summatting Ennis's condition, and that's it, aside from the admittance forms at the back of the file."

"What was his condition?" Fe asks.

"Not good. *Depressed, delusional, and suicidal* are the terms most often used. There's a lot of observation notices, meaning he was on suicide watch."

"Was there any treatment?"

"I can't really tell. There's a few terms I can't make out. I'll have to look into it." Charlie turns to Fe, "Really, the file just seems so *bare*. It tells me about his life on the one hand, but on the other, it tells me nothing. There's no flesh and blood behind the doctor's notes."

"You could write about it," Fe says. "That would flesh it out."

"Yeah, maybe." It was something Charlie had suggested to Fe but applying the same advice to herself suddenly seems obvious.

As they walk back to work, Charlie thinks about where she would start writing. The file is in reverse chronological order, starting with Ennis's death. It's the only detail she knows for certain. She could start writing the end and peel back the years, the layers of Ennis's life. She can remember, on a trip to the Catlins, being shown a cliff face where stratum of rock had settled and lay on top of each other. Sharp fragments of shell stuck out, and the earth held the memory of floods, sand, drought and lava. Maybe she will be able to see such changes in Ennis's life, and chip through each layer, one by one, to see whether his madness was in the foundations, or whether it settled somewhere near the surface. And perhaps amongst the earth's layers she will find some calm, a trace of an Indian summer maybe, or just a period where the world was settled enough to find a home in.

Seven

1944

Coffin size 5.5 x 1.4.

*Ennis John Schmidt ceased at 7pm on the 26 July 1944 in the presence of
Attendant Mr J. Turnbull.*

Matthew, Ennis's psychiatrist, signs his name beneath the note in Ennis's casebook. The Medical Officer has typed up the death certificate. Ennis died of congestive heart failure: valvular disease of heart, but paranoia has also been listed. No inquest was necessary. Ennis had no known relatives.

The doctor closes the casebook on his desk, and leans back in his chair. Ennis doesn't have any money. He will be buried a pauper in the Andy Bay Cemetery this afternoon. Twenty years of Ennis's life was spent in the asylum. The thought saddens Matthew, saddens him because he could not heal Ennis's mind. Matthew could only keep him comfortable, keep him calm, sedated.

Matthew has attended every funeral of the patients who have died in his care to remind himself that there is still so much work to be done. He still has hope that the answer is within medical science. He's resigned to the fact that he won't find the answer, he is getting too old. The new doctors will pick up the task. Matthew will tell them what he knows, though he thinks it is very little.

The attendants don't usually come to the funerals, but since Turnbull was a special favourite of Ennis's, Matthew asked him to come along.

At Andy Bay cemetery the southerly blasts straight from Antarctica. There are rows and rows of headstones but Ennis won't have one. Grass will grow over his grave, and the grave of many others who can't afford a plot. The undertaker -

McLean and Sons - is there when Matthew and Ennis arrive. The coffin is laid down beside the grave.

"He should've had a Mass, Doctor, he was Roman Catholic."

"Yes, Turnbull, he probably should have, but I couldn't locate the family."

"They are still around, there is a brother up north, but they won't come forward."

The men get out of the car and walk towards the grave site. The doctor nods at the undertaker and the proceedings start. Matthew looks out to the coast. For all he knows a Japanese submarine could have got this far down the coast. There were reports further up the country, around Cook Strait. He has been fortunate that he is too old for this second war, but not too old to treat the shell-shocked men.

The undertakers lower Ennis into the ground.

Turnbull walks towards the grave. He picks up some earth, and lets it fall down slowly on Ennis's coffin.



It's highly fanciful that the doctor would've gone to the funeral, but the thought of Ennis being buried without someone familiar to him there seems too stark and sad. Surely someone had to care enough to be there, despite the fact that on the death certificate it says Ennis had no known relatives. So Charlie has made up Matthew and Turnbull to help her see Ennis, to get alongside him every day, to ensure he's not alone.

The death certificate is typed. The words are not quite centred on the page, and she wonders whether this page – which has been stamped *DUPPLICATE* – is missing the fields that have been filled in: name, age, occupation, relatives. The answers look like a poem where the words have been placed to make use of the white space. There is a shadow of another form that has been placed upside down at the

bottom of the death certificate. The shadow figures look like numbers rather than words. The death certificate may have got caught up with some carbon paper, and so the details of another patient's file got onto Ennis's.

Charlie can remember her mum using carbon paper. She would hold up the words chipped out of the dark blue film, and then turn the film over to see the sentences reversed and try to read them backwards. It feels like the same process with Ennis's file. She turns the pages over as if there is a different perspective on the same words available on the other side of the page. There is nothing. Only her version will offer a different perspective on the same events.

She sits on the couch. She can hear pots clanging against plates next door as they do their dishes. She finds such background noises reassuring rather than annoying. It's nice to know there's someone behind the wall of her bedroom even though she doesn't know their names. He has blond sea-salt clumped hair, wears overalls and carries a tool bag. They pass each other on the driveway occasionally. She's heard a woman's voice next door too, but has never seen her.

Her writing book is open on an upturned tray that sits on her lap. She used to study in the same position, with the same tray, when she got sick of sitting at the desk and staring at the blank lemon wall it was up against.

Writing has taken up her whole evening, which is something of a relief. The time between dinner and bed seems the loneliest because of the lack of distraction, so she thought it was the ideal time to write. Otherwise, her mind wanders to Hunter. The only aspects of her life that seem concrete now are her work and the small steps into her writing. She looks back to the word *DUPPLICATE* and wonders whether she's living her real life or whether this is the faded copy.

Eight

On the way home from work Charlie pops into the Newtown supermarket. Usually there are men loitering and smoking outside the Assyrian Association, their taxi cabs parked outside, but tonight the men have gathered at the driveway to McDonalds, just beside St Thomas's. She crosses the road, and moves amongst the crowd. She looks in the direction they are. There is thick black smoke billowing from a house up above the McDonald's car park.

Everyone is still, watching.

"Are there people inside?" she asks no one in particular.

A woman beside Charlie turns towards her. "No, it's a doss house. A few of the homeless guys go there from time to time to rest, or get tanked up, but I haven't seen anyone in there today."

When she went to work this morning she saw a plastic water bottle in the gutter. A short piece of hose had been inserted into the front of the bottle.

She nods. The woman looks official and seems to naturally command attention.

"I work at City Mission," she says. She points her thumb at the concrete brick of the St Thomas church on the edge of the McDonald's carpark.

The fire appliances arrive in a blur of sirens and red. They drive into the car park so they can get close to the property. She thinks of the incurable women at Seacliff who perished in the fire on Ward Five in 1942. She described McDougall's paper on it today. It would be pure terror, wanting to get out of a locked room that was filling with smoke and knowing that you couldn't, that sooner rather than later the smoke would overcome you completely, and then the flames. At first you'd think that someone would come to rescue you, and then the realisation that no one

could, that in the attempt the rescuer would die, but the women kept screaming until they couldn't scream anymore. Did they all scream? Did some just lie down and wait for death? She wonders what she would do, how much fight she has in her body.



The nurse checks the lock on every single room in Ward Five. It's not her ward but with the nurse shortages it has become part of her nightly routine. The nurse knows that each window that looks out of the ward will be locked on the inside; the girls are not going anywhere. The dormitory, where twenty women sleep, is also locked, both the windows and the doors. These women are the worst ones, the nurse thinks, with sympathy. Babies have died inside them, and when the child came away, something in the women's heads went with it. They are hysterical with grief, with nervousness - they are bound up with their female maladies.

Some of them had husbands who brought them here, at their wits end, not knowing what to do with their disturbed wives who couldn't get out of bed each day to do the housework, to cook the meals. Other men brought their spouses for the slightest misadventure, for being too quiet, too timid, for going on walks for hours on end and leaving the coal range to burn itself out, and then not being able to say where they'd been when they returned. Some of the women turned violent, wielded knives at their husbands' throats but never stuck them in. Most of the women have just been overworked, are exhausted and rendered mute.

One of them the nurse remembers clearly because the incident was in the newspaper. It was one of them whose husband had died, and she ended up getting pregnant to a transient farm worker and hid the baby in the barn. She raised it like an animal, until it was discovered by the neighbour who went to have a poke around in

the shed after hearing some suspicious noises. The nurse wonders how it happens, how the women turn out like this, how their reproductive faculties, and sexual impulses are not controlled, how their bodies overtake their minds.

The floorboards creak. Women snore and the air smells trapped and congested. Some women murmur in their sleep, but the nurse can't understand what they are saying. As she shines her torch into the dorm, some of the women turn to her, she can see their eyes illuminate under the torch light. It's like finding the outline of a ghost.

The southerly makes the windows rattle in their frames; the wood has weathered. She will be glad when the last of the erratic weather stops and summer finally settles in time for Christmas. She will be glad when she is off nights.

Turnbull the attendant is coming back from the village. He's been playing bridge at the club. It had been a long night and he lost, badly. The walk back to the asylum, being pushed along by the southerly, is invigorating. It dispels his bad mood, his disquiet about losing. Losing wasn't so bad in itself, but Fred gloating at winning really got on his goat. When Fred knew he had the winning cards, he would place them down slowly, precisely, and grin like a banshee. Turnbull wanted to wipe the grin off Fred's face, and Fred could tell, which annoyed Turnbull more. He shakes his head as if trying to shake out the memory for the southerly to whisk away.

When he gets closer to the asylum he can hear a crackle. It sounds reassuring, familiar but at the same time he knows she shouldn't hear it, not out here. There's something disconcerting about it.

He keeps walking, keeps being pushed by the southerly, watching his step over the long tufts of grass and sheep shit. The animals scatter on his approach into a corner. Hooves stamp against the earth, marking their ground.

Turnbull sniffs as the briskness of his walk affects his sinuses. It does nothing to stem the flow, so he puts his index finger over his right nostril and blows snot out of the left, leaning over a little west so he doesn't end up wearing it. It does the trick. It's a habit he picked up during long marches during the war when both decorum and handkerchiefs were in short supply.

He breathes in deeply. He smells smoke. It must be a burn-off, and now he realises what the crackle sound is – like flames in the fireplace but magnified in volume and appetite as it raises a paddock. But when he turns to the east and west he doesn't see anything amiss. Seacliff sleeps. He thinks he can hear a train but knows nothing runs at this time, not until the goods train in the early hours. It puzzles him, the sound and smell of fire with no source. Perhaps he's dreaming, had one too-many whiskeys, but he feels sure of his feet and when he had stepped out of the warm and cigarette filled hall into the cold wind he had felt instantly sober. That and the door-stop sausage roll he ate that Mrs Baxter had sent along with Fred gave him a second wind.

As he walks, the smell and sound intensifies. He comes up over the hill from the village and sees the asylum alight. The flames illuminate the dew on the paddocks, and he wonders how long it'll take for the moisture to evaporate from the heat. He's transfixed by the glow of the paddocks, and the bellowing smoke two shades lighter than the night sky puffing like a steam engine but going nowhere.

"Move your arse," a voice inside him yells, and he obeys, sprinting down the hill, his body jarring against the earth which makes his false teeth rattle in his head. As he gets closer, he sees the flames wrapping around ward five, the incurable female ward. He can't see any lights on anywhere else in the buildings, no signs or urgency or life.

Turnbull cuts through the park and runs through the pines as he sprints to the asylum. He's not sure where his speed is coming from, but he's glad that it's found his legs. He uses the full force of his body to ring the bell that rouses patients in the morning. He expects the bell's rope to be warm but it is cold and slippery with lichen on its fibres. The clanging bell's urgency doesn't seem urgent, but attendants and nurses come running, and Turnbull yells at them, "get everybody out, get everybody out, it's ward five, tell the doctor it's ward five! Someone ring the station!"

"You two, come with me." The young men nod and run with Turnbull, only just keeping up with his pace as they run to the small fire station on the property. A few of the other men run to join them – their loose fitting pyjamas pressed against their bodies by the wind and sweat, their boots unlaced and rattle against their bare feet as they run. The men grab a hose in each hand at the station and drag them along the grass, along the dirt of the shingle driveway, the wind now pushing against them, pushing them back, arms aching. Turnbull's body overheats, but he can't afford to stop and take his jacket off because he's not sure he'll get started again. He turns the water main around and around until water rushes through the hoses and up at him

Amongst the crackle and roaring of flames he can hear voices, bewildered voices screaming and laughing as they evacuate the building. He looks up and sees patients wrapped in blankets, huddled together, and thinks of the sheep he saw earlier in the paddock, and the flames that flash at the lenses of their glistening eyes.

Now he's stopped running, he can hear the women screaming and shrilling, words muffled and distorted but the meaning clearly understood as they rage against the locked and barred windows. Turnbull looks up and sees thin white forearms pressed against the glass trying to smash through, then the arms slide down the

window, slowly at first, a glacial movement. He looks away, but the image stays in his head like a negative of a photograph never developed. He looks back to make the scene real, to confirm that his eyes don't deceive him, but now smoke obscures the view into the ward, but there is still shrilling. The high-pitch screams put a chill down his spine and deflects any heat from the flames. And then there are no voices but just the sound of flames eating wood, and whooshes of air as the top floor collapses into the first.

More patients join the huddle on the far corner of the park. They are quieter now, scared but quiet, their excitement subdued while fending off the reality of the situation, as Turnbull is, as they all are, not wanting to believe that the fire is happening, that not everyone is getting out. Turnbull looks at the ward and is transfixed but not from morbid fascination -- these women need a witness to their lives and how they fought to live.

Matthew flew like one of Francie's birds into the weather and into the asylum while other people were rushing out. They didn't stop him, or tell him to turn around, they let him run towards the flames because they knew he had to, he's the doctor, it's his job not theirs. He's the captain and this is his ship – though at this moment he wishes he wasn't, he wishes he could run out and run away, but shame and obligation keep him striding forward. He holds tight in his right hand the cold brass master key that digs into his palm but he does nothing to stop the pain. He feels he should be physically pained, in some way.

Bed pans and bedding are left bedraggled along the corridors in the rush to get out, and smoke loiters at the ceiling – thin and wispy at first and then thicker and lower the closer he gets to the ward. And then he can't see, smoke envelopes him before he quite realises and can't see his way out. All he can hear is his heart in his

ears -- he brings his pyjama top up over his nose and mouth, before realising it would be easier to take it off and cover them. He worries that his singlet won't be enough to protect him from flames but pushes the thought aside and walks, knowing the corridors by heart.

He thinks he can hear his feet on the wooden boards but that can't be right, not with the flames and cracking of timber but what he can't hear is voices, there is not a murmur when he expects violent screams – screams he's not unfamiliar with in his line of work. The silence is unwelcome, though in a burst of optimism he thinks everyone got out, that's why he can't hear anyone, but he keeps walking until he can feel the hairs on his arms burn – he screams then, and brushes at his arms, dropping the key, and then squatting down and frantically searching for it, not wanting to brush it away in his haste to hold it.

His little finger nail flicks against the brass and he wraps the keys in his palm. He keeps low, slower now, the heat burns his skin and he's a good ten yards from the door, or so he thinks but with the smoke surrounding him he could be closer or further away, or even upside down because the smoke is so disorientating.

He splutters against his pyjama top, tries to hold his breath but it will not stay in his lungs, it splutters out as the smoke moves in – invading every cavity. Is this the last thing the women felt, he thinks, did they know this was the beginning of the end – that's if they were even awake when the fire broke out – maybe it snuffed them before they had a chance to fight.

His feet back away before he consciously realises it, and when he does he turns and runs in what he hopes is away from the fire rather than further into it. His lungs gasp for air and feel like they are burning in his chest and he thinks he's left it too late, that he'll run out of breath before the smoke clears but his legs keep moving until there is air.

Matthew buckles over, walking with a hand at his waist and the other hand still holding the key, his knuckle grazing his thigh. Out in the main body of the building, well clear of smoke, he realises he is alone. He's never been alone in the asylum before.

He walks outside into the frigid air, which gives immediate relief until he feels his skin tighten around his face, chest and arms. A constriction that makes him think of a man from a circus with a python wrapped around his body. He pulls his shirt on more for propriety than protection from the weather.

The fire engine from the village has arrived, and Matthew stands and stares not too far off from the firefighters. His hands are on his head, in what's left of his hair.

The doctor takes his hands off his head and moves towards Turnbull.
“Turn the hose off.” His voice is quiet, resigned. “It’s no use now Turnbull, no use.”

Turnbull notices that the doctor's night shirt is singed and blackened from smoke. When the doctor notices Turnbull's eyes upon him, he looks down at his clothes.

“I couldn’t get near them . . . the flames were just too hot. Two women managed to get out because their windows weren’t locked, but the others . . . I had the key in my hand . . .”

Matthew looks at his wrists and up his arms where the hair is singed. His face feels like sunburn.

He thinks of the song he has heard some of the patients sing about Seacliff:

Build a bonfire, build a bonfire,

Put a Super on the top,

Put the nurses in the middle,

And burn the bloody lot.

Nine

Charlie wakes up with a dull thud in her head and the last snippet of a dream sliding away before she can catch it. As she quietens the alarm clock, and pulls back the covers, she has a sense of her Aunt Sheryl being in her dream before thinking it is mere fancy. It's just writing about the women at Seacliff that makes her think of Sheryl. Charlie has a sense that all of these women relate to her somehow, but like the dream the thread connecting them escapes her for the moment.

As the water from the shower slowly wakes her up, the question of how Sheryl died reoccurs. The answer can't be anything worse than what she's read about the women at Seacliff, or from Ennis's file. She should just ask her mother, she's surely past the age of needing to be protected from the truth.

Heather will be out of bed by now. She can remember from when she lived at home that mornings were always the best time to ask questions because her mother would be in a brisk mood. Ablutions, breakfast, and conversation were dealt with quickly in order to get out the door, and on with the day.

“How did Auntie Sheryl die?”

Heather expels her breathe in a dismissive, oh.

“What, why are you asking, I told you, didn’t I?”

“Just with Ennis, it’s made me think about Sheryl, that’s all.”

“Well, I’ve hardly got time for that now, I’m going to work.”

She can hear Heather’s impatience rising, whether from her asking the question or from a genuine concern about being late for work, she can’t quite tell.

“Are you home tonight? I’ll call back then.”

“No, I’ve got a badminton meeting.” Now she sounds irritated with everything, “I’m

home tomorrow night. Call then, after seven.”

Charlie puts the landline back in its cradle. She only has the landline to call family, and at such brevity of conversation she wonders whether the line rental is really worth it.

Next door is showering. The cascading water hits the wall on the other side of her lounge. It's a one bed next door with a huge bay window that looks to the south. She has an annoying voice – all nasal, and she says, ‘oh, I know’ a lot when she’s on the phone or has guests. She wears a lot of active wear and Charlie often sees her with a pilates mat under her arm.

She was doing the dishes the other day – the sink faces next door’s front door – when she was saying goodbye to guests. It was a woman of similar age with a toddler wrapped around her. The curly-headed child was nestling into her mother, snoozy but still content rather than whiney and past-it.

“One day it’ll be you,” the guest said, and a knowing look passed between them.

Charlie stayed at the sink, not wishing to pry or listen but not feeling she should leave the dishes, but thankful for the net curtain that partly concealed her from view.

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” next door said, but the tone was indecipherable – was it said with irony or with honest indecision?

“Oh, you’d be a natural.”

Next door looked suitably flattered as she waved her guests goodbye.

Charlie looked down at the dissolving suds. The water now so dirty it wouldn’t clean anything. As she heard the door-snib shut she wondered what was going through her neighbour’s head, whether she’d dismissed the comment immediately, or thought, oh yeah, one day that will be me. Is it only Charlie that

stews over such comments, of people trying to reach into your life and pull out a fact to discuss and share.

When she worked at the Public Library, a young girl, Lucy, helped her behind the counter on Saturday mornings. Lucy would arrive just before 11am with her mum. They would empty the re-useable supermarket bags full of books on the returns counter, and then Lucy would come behind the counter and help Charlie return them. Lucy would line the book's spine up against the sensor and glide it along until the red beam found the barcode and clunked in recognition. She'd them look at the screen to see whether it could be shelved, or had to go to another Library. She worked slowly but thoroughly.

She had long blonde hair tied up in a ponytail and usually wore jeans or track pants and t-shirts. She was a child happy to talk to adults – seemingly used to the questions about school and sports and friends, as there was no tone of boredom or duty in her responses. She would go to music after the Library – the family seemed to have a long schedule of activities on Saturday mornings.

“You’ve got a wee helper today, eh?” One of the book club ladies would say as she returned her books, while other patrons didn’t notice, or looked in irritability at the child behind the counter.

“Is this your wee one?” others would ask, and she would say, no. There wasn’t even a trace of physical resemblance between them.

In-between helping Lucy would go and choose books: graphic novels with girl detectives, Harry Potter, of course, and Wimpey Kid alongside a book on African animals and an Astrix comic. Charlie didn’t mind working on Saturday mornings. The sun would stream through the double-sliding doors, and the familiar old men would be first in to read the newspaper and set the world to rights. Then the

JP would come in at 10.30am and stay for an hour. The morning ticked on with issues and change for the photocopier, slips for internet time.

Lucy would come to the counter with her mother who taught at one of the local primary schools. Sometimes they'd chat about the new picture books, or what they were doing for the rest of the day – Charlie finished at 12.30pm. But this one day she'd asked how her kids were, and Charlie said that she didn't have any.

"Oh, I'm sorry."

It wasn't the words that bothered her so much as the look that went with them. At first she thought she'd been mistaken with someone else – she has one of those faces – but Lucy's mum blushed and looked down at her wallet for longer than necessary to get the 80 cents for the DVD, and when she looked up and gave the money over, Charlie felt examined. She could almost see her trying to figure her age and whether or not there was time, or whether there was something wrong 'down-there'.

"I'm sorry," she said again.

"There's really no need." She pursed her lips and shook her head in a 'no worries' gesture while also trying to be rational about it: she didn't have kids – a fact stated and accepted.

Lucy packed the books into the supermarket bags, and her mother gathered her wallet and wrapped her jacket about her.

"See you next week, Lucy," Charlie said as they walked away.

All that day that look came back to her. She'd be reading and half-way through a paragraph the conversation would come back into her head. Or she'd be grating a carrot and there it was again, that look of judgement for what she doesn't have.



From her bedroom window Francie watches the sunrise poised over the remains of Ward Five. It mimics the colours of the fire, making it look like the embers are still burning. The birds don't fossick amongst the twisted iron bed stands or the black roofing iron. They know that everything in the pile of debris is dead. She can smell the smoke even though all of the windows are closed. It is so pervasive it has crept under the window frames, through gaps in the building's exterior.

Francie had made tea and sandwiches for the staff. Matthew had told her to stay put when the fire alarm was raised but she needed to do something. They didn't drink any tea but held the china cups in their hands and stared into space. The sandwiches were uneaten – the bread curled. Francie had watched Turnbull's face grimace in recollection of the flames, the screams. Matthew had put his hand on Turnbull's shoulder and said, "What would we do without you?" Turnbull's eyes glistened. He excused himself. The white aprons and head scarves of the nurses' uniforms were grey with smoke. A nurse wondered aloud how many washes would be needed to get them back to white. No one offered an opinion.

Francie looks from the blackened remains to the bed she shares with Matthew. The white bedspread on his side is cool and smooth. After the tea and sandwiches Matthew had sent her to bed, so she went and lay waiting for him. Laying there, Francie heard voices in the distance – screams from distressed patients who witnessed the fire when they were evacuated, and commands from distressed staff – until eventually the night was quiet, and the wind died down. So quiet that Francie heard a morepork calling to its mate. She doesn't imagine anyone slept, and today will be spent reliving the events of last night. The police and fire chief have already arrived to start their investigation.

Matthew came up to the room briefly. He reeked of smoke and sweat. Francie persuaded him to bathe before seeing the authorities to revive whatever strength remained in his body. Matthew's shoulders were so slumped that Francie could almost see the weight on his shoulders.

"What more could I have done?" he asked.

"You did everything you could," she replied.

"Why did I insist we lock those damn windows?"

"You know why." The windows were locked to stop the women doing exactly what they needed to do last night – escape. There had been instances of women flinging themselves to their death, or running into the village.

"How am I going to explain it to their families? What am I to say?"

They sat together on the edge of the bed. Francie had her right arm around Matthew's shoulders, and her left hand rested on his thigh. His tweed trousers felt thin and worn. He closed his eyes and Francie could see soot settled in the recesses of his eyelids before he opened them again.

"I've got an appointment in town first thing, but I can stay here and send telegrams," Francie said.

"No, you go. It's my duty to contact the families. When you're back you could help with luncheon for the police and fire inspector."

Francie and Matthew have been married for years and still no baby. They've talked about it, of her seeing a specialist physician to see what the problem is. Francie never went. She knew it was her fault – her periods have never been regular, she can go six months to a year without one – so she resisted confirmation of her fears. She had kept on with her ornithology, and was happy watching and sketching birds, but lately the question of her fertility has nagged. Once, not knowing had been a perverse way of keeping hope alive, but now her hope is nearly exhausted, and she

wants to be able to imagine her future be it with children or without. Francie's going to the doctor's today for the results.

The Station Master tells her what a terrible business it was last night, and that the smoke was seen from Palmerston. Francie feels conspicuous as a source of information about the fire for the community, so she avoids eye contact in the carriage as the train rolls on. How could she convey to anyone the pitch of the women's screams, their terror, and the complete impotence of the staff?

The women were in the ward mostly because of female problems. She imagines herself behind the locked windows and wonders whether she would scream to be saved. If she couldn't have a baby and she ended up in there from the desperation of longing, would she scream at all, or would she lie down and welcome escape from her barren body?

She's never been up to Ward Five. When they first moved here, Matthew used to talk about the patients in the ward.

"Mrs Bates has had another miscarriage," or "Mrs Cuthbertson had a still born," or "Mrs Rice has no children, her husband has bought her in."

Women not fit for purpose and exhausted in the effort to be so. Matthew hasn't talked about them to Francie for years now, now that it is becoming evident that Francie is not in working order. But his sensitivity to her feelings has only exacerbated her feelings of uselessness. She would prefer he still talked about them, and pretended nothing was wrong.

Sometimes, when Francie walked out to the grounds to do sketches of parson birds, she looked up at the Ward and saw women clutching at the barred windows. Pale faces with hair pulled back. They were like souls in purgatory making up for the sins of their bodies. Francie's denial of her infertility has been to avoid a similar fate.

"I'm afraid it's bad news."

Francie nods so the doctor knows she comprehends what he is saying. She smiles. She is always unnaturally cheerful when she receives bad news. It's a defence. Smile until you can get out of the room.

"Thank you, Doctor," Francie says. She notices his glass cabinet of metal implements. The sight of the cold steel tools, and clear clean glass, makes Francie brace herself. Like swimming in a freshwater lake she becomes aware of every part of her body. She can feel her legs and arms pushing against the water for warmth, and her heart pumping. How the chill smacks against her pubic bone, and enters her. Francie can feel what parts of her body work, despite the cold, and which parts are dormant. She knows that she is alive, and is grateful. It feels like her head has been pushed under the water, and she pushes back, rises to the surface, and fills her lungs with air. Enough breath to scream.



Over the road from Home – the café – an office tower is being demolished. An earthquake ruptured its structural integrity; an earthquake that didn't even knock a cup out of her cupboard. A tall yellow crane with a chopping head looks like a mechanical dinosaur that survived because its diet consists of concrete. The tube of hydraulics that runs parallel along its body make it look like the forearm of a senior citizen who has been left to fend for themselves in their own house for too long.

Their flesh wasted away leaving a gap between the ulna and radius bones of the arm.

The wires were ripped out first, and then the crane started up the top corner of the building smashing through glass and opening up walls so you could see the partitions used to carve up the office floor. People had been living there. A family. The landlord said he was just trying to help them out. In the papers he was accused of being a slum landlord. Charlie looks at the building every day, when she gets her coffee for morning tea, to see whether the family left any personal affects. A painting of a cat stuck to a fridge, a pair of socks left hanging on a plastic clothes horse, but she hasn't seen anything, just piles of concrete behind the perimeter fence, and plastic orange cones to stop people parking alongside the demolition.

As the crane chomped, water was sprayed to keep the asbestos that lined the walls and ceiling out of the air.

She had thought they'd take each storey off at a time, but they moved from top to bottom. First, the south east facing corner from the tenth floor down to the ground, and then along a bit, two windows width, and started again at the top and went right down to the bottom. The building was eaten away in this methodical manner until all that was left was an emaciated north-west facing structure that even a pigeon wouldn't attempt to call home.

She hasn't been the only one watching. Each morning there are toddlers with hands spread wide on the glass and nose pressed up again the window. People have stood with hands on hips commentating on the progress, and relating what they'd read about it in the paper, and what will replace it.

"Some God-awful building, no doubt," a woman with bright red lipstick and black framed round glasses said.

It'll only be a matter of days until there is nothing left but a bare concrete section. She worries about seeing the empty section, of how the building will only exist in her mind rather than in its physical presence. Once all the dust has been swept up, the orange cones stacked, and rubbish removed she's not sure she can imagine something new in its place. The blades of grass that will appear in the cracked concrete, and the spray painted tags of curses and crews will seem to her signs of dereliction rather than transition to anything better. She could stand in the bare space and scream but rather than her words echo, they will be dowsed like the asbestos and removed from the atmosphere.

Her name is called. The cardboard coffee cup is warm in her hand – its ridges corrugated. She drags her fingers across them before taking a sip, but she only gets foam through the small slit in the cup's lid. She hates drinking with the lid on but she can't have it at her desk otherwise. Caffeine stained primary sources are not a good look. Which reminds her of McDougall's papers about the Seacliff building. She had read an essay yesterday that noted that the building was as unstable as the patients; it slipped and slid for years before the fire. Parts of the building were demolished a wing at a time like limbs being amputated. What did Ennis make of the building's movements, of the demolition? Tonight, she will try to imagine what was going through his head.

Ten

The F1 wing at the north end of the building is clipped. The bricks are removed. The engineers rifle through them and see the irregularity in their shape. Some are burnt and brittle, and crumble in the engineer's hands like dried sea sponge. The piles have completely rotted away from the earth and look like decaying teeth pulling away from the gum. Colonies of fungus have settled in the floor boards and disintegrated the wood. What wood remains intact is removed by the demolition men, and piled onto trucks for removal. There is a lot of head shaking and lips sliding into thin toothless grimaces.

Ennis didn't see the wood or bricks but he could hear the wing being demolished. When he was well enough he sat in the airing yard, and felt the vibrations of the trucks coming up the drive before he saw them. The conifer trees on either side of the driveway stood like marshals directing traffic. The dust from the demolition fell slowly. It reminded Ennis of his parents' bedroom. He would pull the curtains for Ma in the morning, and see the dust kicked up, and slowly drift down in the sunlight. The dust in his mother's room seemed to carry light, but the dust from the demolition is dull, absorbing the light rather than reflecting it. The dust settles on his skin, his arms, and his hair.

Ennis believes that the detectives plan to bury him in the dust, covering him up like a statue at first, and then the dust will absorb all of the moisture from his body and slowly suffocate him. Ennis stands up and shakes the dust off him - a frenzy of shaking and patting, beating himself like a rug hung on the washing line. White puffs of dust expel from his body.

He is taken inside and sat in the dayroom where he listens to tools slam into the wing. He feels the building's vibrations like his own body shaking. Ennis

wonders momentarily whether his own body is making the building shake or vice versa.

"They're taking the ward down Ennis, it's rotting away. It's nothing to worry about." The attendant, Mr Turnbull, is strong in a wiry way. He is all muscle and bone. His cheek bones are prominent, creating hollows in his face which makes his nose look longer than it would if he had more flesh. Turnbull has one hand on his hip, and the other is on Ennis's shoulder persuading him to stay still in the same way an obedience trainer does to a dog.

Ennis says, "They're the detectives, they're the detectives out to get me, the building will fall on me and I'll fall down dead." He looks pleadingly to his fellow patient and friend Michael, who sits in a chair opposite Ennis. Michael turns his head around slightly away from Ennis, as if conferring with the miniature God he claims sits on his shoulder as to whether Ennis's story is correct.

"Enough of that nonsense, Ennis," Turnbull says. "They're not detectives, they're engineers who check over the health of the building. This building needs a few operations to make it better."

Turnbull stays at Ennis's side looking out the dayroom window. He can't see much past the walnut trees and conifers. Upstairs he gets the best view. He likes to climb the winding staircase in the turrets in the evenings, around and around, up and up, and out of the small doors onto the battlements at the front of the building. From there he can see the Pacific, and to the south the hills that tumble towards Dunedin, and to the north the hills that tumble away. Turnbull stands on the battlements, hands on his hips, and imagines armies descending over the hills to take over his castle.

The invading army, he imagines, are always Roman in appearance, they wear sandals on their feet, and swathes of white cloth across their bodies, strong arms hold

shields in one hand and spears in the other. Their metal helmets reveal eyes and mouth. The sound of their marching resounds around the village like the melodious peel of the bell in the tower that rings out at 6am every day. Mr Turnbull's army has gunpowder and horses, and wear blue like confederate forces. Once the battle is won by the confederates, Turnbull climbs the steep wooden staircase in the tower, as steep as a ship's ladder into the hold, into a small room which opens out onto four small balconies. From each of these balconies he surveys his domain like an aristocrat looking down onto his tenanted land, and he watches as his army pile the expired bodies onto wagons for disposal.

Turnbull has heard that the turrets and tower are to be dismantled. It grieves him more than he can fully comprehend.

Matthew looks over Ennis's notes. The word 'inaccessible' is written in every six-monthly entry for the past 18 months. He is inaccessible and solitary, but clean and tidy. He eats well. Physically, he's not in bad shape for a man of his age. The doctor recommends Ennis have insulin therapy.

Matthew used to feel excited when a new treatment was developed and tested on patients--he felt hope in the medical advancements, but now he can't seem to gather any enthusiasm. Most days it doesn't feel like anything has advanced beyond feeding the patients good food, giving them a purpose to their day through work, and ensuring they have enough rest. Everything else is just sedation, or picnics, or other entertainments to keep the patients amused.

The Salvation Army band came up last week, and set up on the front lawn of the property. The sun bounced off the brass instruments, onto the external wall of the building, and into people's faces. It was a charming enough setting, the doctor

thought, the band on the lawn, like a garden party. Patients sat on rugs on the grass. There was a smell of freshness in the air which probably came off a particular plant, though the doctor could not identify or name it. One of the band members had a large drum, and he let some patients bang on it. Some smiled as they banged, and stood like they could feel each and every reverberation of the drum through their body, whereas others banged it and ran quickly away, startled at the noise, that they could make such a sound, such an impact on the world.

The doctor watches a fantail dip and flutter around the rubble of the demolished F1 wing.

He says, “Can you see the bird, Ennis, the fantail?”

The doctor points as best he can to the fantail as it darts around the bricks looking for slaters and spiders that have crawled out of their demolished home.

Ennis moves his head in the direction that the doctor points, but can move no other part of his body because he has been placed in restraints. As soon as Ennis felt the vibrations of demolition through the building he became increasingly agitated and started calling out, “They are trying to kill me, they are trying to kill me.” He started banging his body against the wall of the lounge, as if in reply to the knocks against the building.

Matthew watches Ennis, how his eyes follow the fantail, its freedom of movement. He tries to move his arms, but the thick calico keeps them bound to his body.

He turns and looks out the window into the grey autumn light made duller because of the dust from the demolition sticking to the glass. The dust reminds the doctor of snow in England, and how he misses the stillness once it has settled on the ground. It has snowed at Seacliff, but because of the wind, and how close they are to sea level, it never settles for long.

"Did you know, Ennis, that the back of a ship is called a fantail?" Matthew says. He turns around to his patient who is looking dazed from the drugs, and from the exertion of his screams. "It has to do with the timbers, the way they fan them out to form the deck at the back of the ship, so it too is referred to as a fantail, like the bird. Huh! It is curious the way the names of things come about."

The doctor takes a small torch out of his pocket, and shines the light into Ennis's eyes which the doctor has pried apart using his thumb and forefinger. "On the way out from England my wife and I heard the deck referred to as a fantail. My wife studies birds, you see. She found it fascinating and wondered whether a ship builder had named the bird in New Zealand. She was going to do some research. I can't recall if she did."

Ennis smells bitter tea on the doctor's breath as he leans forward to look into Ennis's eyes.

"How are you feeling, Ennis?" The doctor takes his fingers away from Ennis's eyes and sits back in his chair.

Matthew looks at Ennis in his off-white straitjacket, discoloured from multiple launderings. The only difference between his coat and the doctor's white jacket, Matthew thinks, is the tie at the back.

"Where . . . where is my . . . money?"

The doctor sighs heavily.

"I need my money, I need to keep it from the David Street gang, they're coming to get it, they're coming to get me. I can't let them have it, it's my money, money for my family." His words are unrestrained, unlike his body.

"Come on now, Ennis, calm yourself. I've explained before now, haven't I, there's no gang, that no one's after you. You're safe here, Ennis."

"Safe as houses, safe as houses, safe as houses." The tone of Ennis's voice becomes increasingly hysterical with every repetition. "The house is coming down around me, that's how they'll get me, knock me down with the house, with the house, dust dust dust."

The doctor indicates to the attendant, Turnbull, to come quickly.

"Turnbull, we need to sedate Ennis, immediately. He is still agitated."

"Certainly, Doctor." Turnbull goes to retrieve the paraldehyde and is back promptly.

The only clear space on Ennis's body is his neck. The attendant holds Ennis's head still, while the doctor plunges the needle into his neck, into his blood stream.

When Turnbull releases Ennis, he shakes his head, shakes them away and then is still, pliable. His body collapses. Turnbull lifts Ennis onto a wheelchair and carts him away to solitary confinement.

The doctor returns to the window. The men and trucks will come tomorrow to clear the site. It will probably start Ennis up again, the sound of the trucks and the thud of concrete and bricks being dropped into the trailers. He'll keep Ennis in solitary, keep him sedated but take away the restraints. Ennis believes that the actions around the building relate directly to him, that a gang is still after his money - money he's put aside for a family - and there is no way of shifting his patient's perspective now, it's a sign of Ennis's ideas of persecution. Unlike the building, Ennis's mind is permanently fixed. There is no insight. He believes he can still have a family, even though he is far too old and weak now for any of that, even if he could get out of the asylum. Matthew doubts the insulin therapy will work but he has to try something. It feels futile not to.

When the doctor was studying in London he was taken around a psychiatric ward and shown the patients who had been there for years. The men and their histories of drunkenness, of parents who died or left, of solitary years, of drifting through life attached to no one, and to nothing. They finally ended up in an asylum because of some dangerous or lewd behaviour that showed signs of schizophrenia, alcoholism, depression.

There was one man who was found wearing a suit standing on the riverbed of the Ravensbourne with his suitcase. The suitcase was empty. The man's suit was brown. It was only when he got close that the doctor could see stains on the jacket and trousers. Drink, he supposed, from the wheat stale smell of beer that lingered on the man. Mud was caked to the man's shoes, and on the seat of his pants where he must have sat at some stage on the riverbed. The man stood staring at the river as if deciding whether or not to jump on a bus. The doctor had read the police report, complete with the local's statement, while Matthew's supervisor gave information about the man's condition.

"His mental delusions are attributed to alcoholic insanity, a disease of his own volition. We are, at present, working on the character of the man."

Matthew wondered whether it was the man's character that meant he was alone as well. Was it just because he was an unpleasant person that meant he was alone, drifting and drunk, and about to jump into a river? Or was it life that had dealt him a set of cards he couldn't play?



Charlie puts down her pen. It's well after seven now, but she tries her mother on the off-chance she's still up. She wants to know the set of cards Sheryl was dealt.

"Oh, it's you." Heather sounds on edge and impatient, like she's been waiting all night for this phone call but is now irritated that the phone's rung.

“Sorry I’m late, I was just...” her words trail off before starting up again,
“how are you?”

“Fine.”

Charlie dithers between cutting the conversation short or asking about Sheryl. It seems obvious her mother is worked up about the conversation. She can see her in her lazy-boy chair with her legs crossed and right arm wrapped around her waist, with the portable phone in her left hand, her index finger extended up the receiver. She needs to start the conversation but given her mother’s discomfort she can’t quite summon the right way to bring it up.

“Have you got time to talk about Sheryl?”

“Yes, I’ve been waiting for you to call, haven’t I. What do you want to know?”

Charlie tries to stop the tide of defensiveness slide into her own voice and keep calm in response.

“She had depression?”

“Yes, she’d always had it, these blue patches, moodiness our mother called it.” Heather expels slowly at the mention of her mother, and with that breath Charlie can almost see the unspoken memories let loose into her mother’s living room.

“I remember you picking me up from school, the day Sheryl died.”

“Did I?”

The fact genuinely seems to have dropped out of Heather’s mind.

“Yes, I was out waiting for the bus when you pulled up. I was glad I didn’t have to get it.” She’d hated the bus – the seats were always taken by the time she got picked up.

"We had the mazda then." It was flat and gold, and had a black visor on the rear window and faux fur seat covers in the front. She had barely sat in the front seat when Heather told her Sheryl had died.

Charlie hadn't known how to react – she just sat stunned waiting for some emotion and alarmed that nothing came. Wasn't it meant to be immediate – there wasn't meant to be this long pause – shouldn't she be crying?

They drove through the wide Timaru streets that she didn't think were wide then, just normal. She hadn't dared look her mother in the face, she just saw her hand come up to her eyes every now and then to wipe away tears so she could see where she was going. When they'd pulled up Grandma and Aunt Cathy were already there sitting on the concrete slab porch. They'd barely got out of the car when her Grandma said, "I knew we shouldn't have put her back in there."

"It's not the time for that," Cathy said.

"I've just lost a daughter don't damn well tell me what time it is."

Cathy had gone to Heather and hugged her, whispered into her ear as she held her.

Her mum had given Charlie the keys to open the sliding door. The ordinary task seemed marked with importance, that it wasn't something to be mucked up by trying to insert the wrong key - they all needed to get inside quickly. And they did, the door slid back and let them in.

Heather dropped her handbag in the usual place by the brown two-seater in the dining room, before heading to the kitchen to put the jug on. The air was taut and it was Grandma and her mother holding each end.

"How about you go to the diary and get a bottle of milk?"

Too scared to speak Charlie did what she was told. She ran down the concrete driveway that had a thin grass strip up the middle, and up the hill to the

diary. Although the atmosphere at the dining room had scared her, she wanted to get back to hear what she wasn't meant to. She didn't want to run with the blue-top milk bottle cos she might drop it, and then halfway down the hill she worried that she was meant to get silver top for Grandma.

"Yes, the mazda. I was glad to get rid of it."

"I remember Grandma was angry when we'd got home that day." Charlie hopes this is opening enough, that her mother's words will flow.

"Well, you would be too if you'd lost a daughter."

"How did she lose her?"

"Sheryl was in Sunnyside. She'd been there a few times."

"Was she a volunteer patient?"

"In the beginning."

"How many times did she go?"

"Oh, I don't know four, five, six something like that." The defensiveness has gone from her voice and is replaced by an almost dream quality, like she's watching a film of her memories while she's talking.

"Did she have treatment in there?"

"I should've made a cup of tea before you called."

"Eh?"

"I'm gasping now."

"Well, make one. You're on the cordless, aren't you?" Charlie can hear her mother's impatient tone creep into her own voice like they've swapped sides suddenly.

She hears the lazy-boy foot rest collapse into the chair, and her mother's slippers scuff along the carpet.

"Had she been in Sunnyside before?"

“Hang-on, I’ve just got to put the phone down.”

The sound of a cupboard opening and a Temuka pottery mug being placed on the bench, the flick of the kettle, and the pop of the cork-topped sugar jar being opened, scooped at and shut. The fridge opened, and the plastic milk bottle placed on the bench while the seal of the fridge door slowly closes on its body. The sounds, the ordinary sounds, make her own home seem incredibly quiet. She can’t even hear her neighbours.

Charlie hears the muffled sound of a hand over the mouthpiece as her mother picks up the phone.

“She’d been there before four, five or six times, something like that.”

She had thought the tea making was an effort on her mother’s part to avoid the question. Perhaps it had been but as the jug came to the boil she’d changed her mind.

“What happened while she was there?”

“I wasn’t sure, really, when she first started going. I just knew she was better when she came back. Back from her wee rests, as she called them.” Heather gives a jovial huff at the recollection before slurping at her tea.

“It became an annual thing. Usually in winter. The cold made it worse.

When Barry came along she was right for ages. Love had cured her, she said. They’d gotten married in the gardens, down by the pond where all the daffies are.”

“Near the band rotunda.”

“Yes, very whimsical it was. She wore this god-awful orange taffeta monstrosity. She wanted her happiness to show through colour, through nature, she said. Your Grandmother had thunder on her face for the whole ceremony. Everyone else went along with it but not your grandmother. She had a face like a spring southerly, Sheryl said.”

Heather huffs and slurps again.

“Anyway, she was pretty happy for a while, but after a year or so it started up again. It was worse. I think she’d thought marriage had cured her, and that children would banish it forever. But the children never came.”

Charlie looks up from her lap and to the fruit bowl that holds half a mouldy lemon, its skin grated leaving patches of bare pith.

“It took a toll on the marriage, of course, so there were more stays, and for longer. But it didn’t work the same. It was like something inside her was broken and wouldn’t mend.”

There’s a couple of gloves of garlic too, the thin skin of the bulb litters the bowl like the wings of dead moths.

“And then Barry just took off while she was in there.”

“Top bloke.”

“He was out of his depth, we all were.”

The orange light from the council flats next door shines through the window above the door. A small rectangle of artificial light.

“I think the ECT happened then, or maybe she’d had it before and didn’t tell us. We didn’t ask as many questions as we should’ve.”

“ECT?”

“Yes.”

“They were still using it then?”

“Evidently,” Heather’s impatience returns, “it was either that or the drugs, and the drugs weren’t working.”

She looks up at the light flowing in from next door. She has the lamp on in the lounge so the orange spills onto the carpet and on the scotch chest she uses as a coffee table. She feels safety in this muted light because it’s like no one is home. If

anybody knocked she could pretend she's not here because the darkness camouflages her solitary state. Once, when she drove through the back-blocks of Timaru she had been alarmed at the houses in the middle of paddocks with their lights blazing through undrawn curtains. It had seemed so exposed, with no bank of trees to shield them, the light showed up the empty rooms, the walls with no hung pictures. It would be better, she thought, to have the lights off, to disappear from passerbys and be safe in the fact that no one would see you.

Heather yawns into the phone.

"Sorry, it's passed my bedtime."

Charlie leans forward to pick up her watch that she'd removed earlier and put on the scotch chest.

"But how did she die? Did the ECT not work either, did she...," give-up are the words in her mind but she knows they aren't really what she means, "did she run out of hope?"

"Kill herself, is that what you're trying to say?"

"Well..."

"No, she didn't kill herself. The ECT did that for her. She had a heart attack during it, and they couldn't get her back."

The phrase makes Charlie see a woman continually pulling on a rope to drag whoever is on the other end of it ashore, to only end up with the other end of the rope.

Eleven

“How have you been?” Fe asks, “Have you heard from Hunter?”

Charlie and Fe are at a café in Newtown waiting for an open mic poetry session to begin. The café is up a flight of wooden stairs. Charlie looks out the front window of the café and sees the cables for the electric buses and into the second storey of a French café on the other side of the street where a woman sits at a table wearing a white singlet t-shirt.

“No, I guess he’ll tell me when he’s out,” she says. She is looking forward to hearing that he’s better but at the same time is dreading renewing contact for fear that it will jump start the loss that she’s been attempting to conceal.

Chairs scrape against the wooden floorboards as people get up from their table and go to the counter. Near the window, a woman wearing a tie-dyed scarf in her hair is setting up a microphone. The names of poets – Steve, Gemma, Pat – have been written on a whiteboard. Sun streams through the arch shaped windows. She can hear the traffic whoosh by and wonders how they’ll hear the poets over the noise even with the aid of a microphone.

“How’s the writing going? Is it hard getting inside Ennis’s head?”

“I’m writing around him. I’ve got a doctor and attendant, and I try to see Ennis through them because otherwise when I try and put words in his mouth he sounds like a caricature.” She takes a sip of her flat white and says, “McDougall says that delusional and depressed patients speak erratically, that they can’t construct a story with a beginning, middle and end, not one that anyone else could understand anyway.”

“That sounds so incredibly lonely.”

“And frightening. He thought a gang was after him and his money--money he was saving for a family. One that he could never have, of course.”

"Is there any hope for him?"

"If there is, I haven't found it yet. From what I've read his preoccupation with money for his family continues until he dies." In the back of her mind she wonders whether writing his story backwards, back to how he was before his illness is the only hope. Perhaps she can write back to a crossroads that Ennis faced and change his life's direction. There is a part of her that tries to keep the miserable facts of Ennis's life at a distance because if she lets them closer they may reflect her image. She's glad she doesn't have a photograph of him. To see their physical similarities would somehow make it harder to thwart the idea that she is like him, that if his face is like her face, then surely his mind could be the same as hers. It is enough to know he was short and quiet, two traits – one physical and one temperamental – that they share.

"I do wonder what he was like before his illness", Charlie says. 'He can't have always been like this."

"You're writing at home?" Fe asks. "You've got a good memory to be able to remember everything from the file. Do you write notes at work? You probably should get approval to use this file you know."

"Hmmm." She looks towards the counter as if dithering over whether to buy an oversized chocolate chip cookie.

"What have you done, Charlie?" Fe demands. 'Why are you avoiding eye contact?"

"Nothing, I just--I can't tell you. You might get into trouble."

"You haven't taken his file home? You'd be in serious shit if anyone found out, if anything happened to it."

"Not exactly, no. I copied it."

Fe lowers her voice as if suddenly conscious of what they're discussing and wary of flapping ears. She says, "You know there's a procedure, why didn't you follow it? You're risking your job."

"I know it was stupid," Charlie says, "but I couldn't resist, I had to know what was in the file, so I copied it. And anyway, he's my relation why should an academic or a library have it over me?"

"You know none of that is going to wash with Anna. There's a process that you completely ignored."

Charlie turns around. The café is full. There is a nervous anticipation in the air as newbies practise reading their words and wait for their moment in front of the mic. One man, hipster beard and white ironed shirt, looks towards the mic stand with barely concealed fear. Beside him, a woman wearing a straw boater hat and a thin yellow dress is talking, and then she stops, tilts her head side-on to get a look at his face, and to hear his response. He keeps looking at the microphone. There is the whirr of a blender. The woman rights herself, and reaches for her coffee.

Twelve

The woman sitting on the bench at the bus stop scratches her forehead with her blue ATM card while her companion saves his Biblical Library stand from falling over in the northerly. The man's curly hair is cropped to his scalp, and the cuffs of his brown trousers are rolled up. When he sits down again, he places his hand on the woman's knee, but removes it when two other women walk by. Charlie isn't sure whether he is being modest, or keeping his options open.

She is on her way to see Hunter. She knows it's a bad idea but she's going anyway. She hasn't told Fe, she hasn't told anyone.

"Thanks for coming to see me."

She nods. "It's no problem. You're looking well."

"I'm feeling it. Thanks."

She nods again, and becomes self-conscious that she's repeating her body movements, so distracts herself with the menu.

"What do you feel like? Do you want a meal or just a snack?"

The pub in Island Bay is new. The leather couch is maroon and shiny, but the seat is worn. Only people in Island Bay would buy something new that looks old. Most other people would just go to the Salvation Army if they wanted second-hand furniture.

"Maybe just a snack." She takes this to mean that he can spare half an hour, rather than one, or two.

He has tied his hair with a navy band at the back of his neck. She wonders whether he has borrowed the hair tie from his daughter. It matches the colour of his denim jacket.

She says, “So, how have you been?”

She had toyed with the idea of leaving him to do all the talking, but at the first sound of silence she has jumped in with a question.

“I’m back at the Station choosing tunes, started last week,” Hunter says. He starts nodding now, affirming every statement he makes. “I’ve got my girl back a couple of nights a week.”

She can see his joy at having Ruby back and she smiles, happy that he is happy.

“That’s great.” She goes to ask about his ex but holds off, thinking that if he wants her to know, he’ll tell her.

“Her mother and I have gone off to the lawyer, too, to formalise custody arrangements, just so we both know where we are. It’s taken a weight off my mind.”

“It’s good to know where you stand,” She says. The statement sounds a bit revealing to her, like somehow she was asking Hunter where she stood with him, when she thought she knew, she thought she had adjusted to that. She covers up the thought with another question. “So, is there anything else to be sorted out, anything else bothering you, I mean, you know, in terms of moving on?”

The further she tries to get the emphasis off herself the more she digs herself in although Hunter is completely unaware, completely self-absorbed, because Charlie has already been ticked off the list of things to ‘contain’ on the road to recovery.

“No, not really,’ he says. ‘I still have bouts--you know--grief, depression, whatever. But the doctor said I need to get out of the house more, go for a run, get out amongst people. But baby steps, eh. I’m still seeing a counsellor, and taking my drugs.”

She reaches for her merlot. She shouldn’t have ordered it because the colour of the tannins have gone straight to her face. She hopes the chips arrive soon so they

can soak up some of the alcohol. As she puts her glass down she sees that he's drinking a coke.

He notices her noticing and says, "I'm just trying to lay off the alcohol."

He doesn't ask how she is, or what she's been up to. If he had, she may have told him about her writing, about Ennis. She can't gauge Hunter's mood. He is fidgety, and not really listening or looking directly at her. She doesn't want to share the information with someone who won't treat it with care, which just makes her realise just how emotionally imbalanced their relationship is—*was*--that she didn't feel able to share anything with him.

"Y'know, I just wanted to say sorry for what happened with us. I probably never should've started anything. I wasn't in the right space, y'know, it just wasn't--*isn't*--a good time, for me. It's nothing personal, I've always liked you."

She felt a little bolt of rejection in her heart when he started speaking. He couldn't look at her when he said it. She says, "Sure, of course. I understand, it's fine, really."

"Hand-cut chips?" The bartender hovers the bowl of chips over the coffee table, and lowers it when Charlie and Hunter nod.

She stuffs her mouth with chips.

"Oh, shit!" She opens her mouth to let some steam out, lowers her face, and waves her hand across it, as if that will help get the heat out. "Shit, they're hot!"

He's finished his drink and picks up his car keys.

He says, "I've got to go pick up Ruby." He looks at his watch. "Is it okay if I take off?"

"Of course, go." She tries to look generous rather than relieved.

"Okay, thanks." He stands, turns away, and then turns back, "Thanks again."

She watches him walk out of the bar. She leans back on the faux oldie couch, and brings her cold hand to her hot face. She feels burnt, singed, inside and out. She wishes he hadn't bothered. He could've just sent an email to say he was out and feeling better. It was a meeting of obligation rather than sentiment. Though, she concedes, it was good to see him well, and to see the treatment working. It's certainly more hopeful than what she's been reading about Ennis's treatments. On some level she'd like to believe that the treatments Ennis went through in some way have led to the treatments now, that Ennis's pain wasn't for nothing.

She walks up The Parade on the way home to Newtown. People are playing soccer on the artificial pitch across the road from the Community Garden. The cicadas have quietened, and the air is cool and calm. Moths gather around the floodlights over the soccer field. She can see clearly now that Hunter is in no place for a relationship. It's something she admits grudgingly, knowing that she should acknowledge it for her own sake, while also knowing that there's a part of her that doesn't want to believe it because with that recognition, hope of a family in the near future leaves.

Thirteen

"It's time for your jab, Ennis." Turnbull, the attendant, refers to his clip board with the list of patient names who are due for insulin treatment. The syringes had been prepared and placed in his cart at breakfast time. Ennis rolls his sleeve up, obedient. He turns away and screws up his face when the needle pierces his skin, but he doesn't let out a cry. Some of the other patients cower away from Turnbull, and others have to be held down while he jabs them.

Turnbull can see Ennis starting to fade. His body becomes increasingly pliable and Turnbull lays him down on the clinic bed. The N. Z. Government insignia is branded onto the white sheet. It is the last thing Ennis sees before falling into a coma. Turnbull notes the time. He will leave Ennis under for an hour and a half before coming back and administering the glucose solution.

Other attendants are in charge of other patients. It is a busy morning administering the treatments. The doctor goes from one patient to the next. Turnbull goes to check on the other patients who received jabs. A few of them are due to go under today, and a few more the following morning, but it's best to keep an eye on them in case they go down a day early. The calculations of insulin quantities to induce a coma are based on how much the patient could tolerate the last time, and could change due to changes in weight.

"You must monitor them closely," the doctor had told Turnbull, "because they could slip away from us if we don't catch them in time."

Turnbull has always had a soft spot for Ennis. He knows that Ennis murdered his best friend but cannot imagine him in a fit of violence so severe. Ennis is so quiet and generally obedient. It's only when he gets anxious and believes that the detectives are after him, and that the building is going to collapse that he gets

agitated and needs seclusion. Ennis is a small man, so he's easy to handle, easy to bale up and put him away for a bit when he gets out of hand. Ennis never starts a conversation but whenever Turnbull asks him a question he converses easily enough. Ennis likes to get outside when Turnbull can accompany him, at least Turnbull thinks he does. Ennis turns his face up to the sky when they walk out the door to feel the sun or southerly. He takes an interest in the plants. Sometimes Ennis will pull a leaf off a tree or shrub and study it, looking at the lines and shape of the leaf, rubbing his fingers along it to feel the texture, whether it's smooth or furry, and whether there are berries or flowers on the plant. Turnbull asks Ennis if he knows the name of the plant, but he never does.

Sometimes he takes Ennis, and his mate Michael, down to the tennis court at the front of the asylum grounds, and they watch other patients or staff play. Ennis never plays himself, but Turnbull encourages him to be the ball boy. Being small and low to the ground it's an ideal occupation for him. Of course, Ennis quickly tires of it. He is too used to being sedentary, and he's getting on a bit now, getting too old in the tooth for chasing after a ball, but the brief bouts of exercise do him good. He is always keen to give it a try.

The tennis court is close to the main entrance of the asylum. The gate there is always closed. Some patients make a run for the gate, but not Ennis. He doesn't even seem to notice it, or realise the potential for escape. If he'd timed it right, and knew when the train arrived at Seacliff Station, it would be easy enough to make a get-away. It's only a ten minute run to the station from the asylum, and the train makes a brief stop before making its way north. It'd be no good getting the train south because it stops in Dunedin and the authorities would catch up with him too easy. Mind you, the Station Master would probably recognise a patient jumping on the train and sound the alarm - he's always on the lookout for strays.

Turnbull doesn't think that Ennis is so mad that he doesn't realise where he is, more than he is resigned to his fate, his punishment and condition. Either that or he just doesn't have the imagination for escape. Or, worse of all, no one to go to if he did get out. Ennis doesn't get any visitors, though Turnbull knows a few of his sisters live in Dunedin. It would be easy enough to come up the line and see him. They never do. It's shame most likely, and their own fear of madness.

Turnbull wheels Ennis back to his bed where he sleeps off the treatment. He won't be able to feed himself or take himself to the toilet for a few days. The treatment seems to wipe the slate clean, and the patients forget how to do the most basic things. They pick it all up again soon enough, but only after several sheet changes. The doctor reckons it is helping with some of the patients, but Turnbull sees no evidence of change in Ennis. He is just quieter than usual for several days, and then resumes his usual routine of solitude interrupted with bouts of delusion and depression, and, of course, the ongoing fear of the detectives. He's been here too long, Turnbull suspects, for the treatment to have any effect. But the doctor persists in his hope for his patients, and he always puts his trust in the new treatments.

"Has he had an aftershock?" the doctor asks Turnbull, who sits beside Ennis's still body.

"No sir, just sleeping it off."

"Keep an eye on him, Turnbull, I don't want him falling back into coma."

"Let's get some air, eh."

The next day, Turnbull has put Ennis into a wheelchair, and tucked a tartan rug around his knees. The bright red, brown, and green patterning highlights how pale Ennis's face has become.

"You're looking like a ghost in the garden, Ennis. Let's see if we can find some sunshine to give you some colour."

Ennis smiles but says nothing. The insulin and glucose is still making him a bit dopey.

"Michael's undergoing the treatment today, so he can't come for a walk. Maybe later on in the week he can join us."

In some ways Turnbull is glad not to have Michael come along. He is more unpredictable, not as well behaved as Ennis. Varying degrees of madness, Turnbull assumes, is the difference in their dispositions.

They all used to be shoved in together, regardless of how far gone they were. If they weren't mad as hatters before they came in, a few nights amongst those who were made them so. Now the doctor assesses the patients as they arrive, and then directs them to various parts of the building, or villas, depending on the degree of insanity. During, and at the end of the First World War, there was separate accommodation for the returning soldiers who had shell shock. Turnbull had seen it himself on the front, these big strong men paralysed with fear, immobile or crying. He had thought the men were malingering, the officers included, until men that were usually hard working were struck down with these emotional maladies, hysterical, like women. Turnbull worked at Seacliff before the war, before he volunteered for the front. Being a male attendant, he didn't work in the female ward but he had seen some hysterical woman and heard their screeching cries--more like animals than humans--and their violence, their kicking and biting, until they were given a sedative. It was always something to do with their female parts that made them violent and

argumentative. There was no rationalising. These men, the shell-shocked ones, would show the same signs.

The shell-shocked men were quickly taken away from the front. Turnbull didn't agree with it at first because that's what the men wanted, wasn't it, to be taken away, to shirk their work? But he kept his mouth closed. A lot of the men recovered, though they always seem a bit touched in the head after.

"Did you go to war, Ennis?"

Turnbull and Ennis are on the north end of the property.

Ennis shakes his head. He wants to tell Turnbull that he was a reserve but he never got called up, but the words don't come.

"You won't remember the shell-shocked patients coming here, will you Ennis? It was before your time, I think. There's a villa built about a mile up the road, it's being used again for this war's soldiers."

Ennis can remember snippets of talk on the factory floor about returned soldiers going 'up the line', or around the Peninsula to Larnach's. War had changed the soldiers, people said, made the strong men cry, or worse, made them violent. Wives' obliging husbands returned to slap their spouse around for the slightest misdemeanour. And the drink didn't help matters.

"They got better, the soldiers, so there's hope for you yet, Ennis, hope for you yet. Some of the patients who've had insulin therapy, like you have, have walked out of here better men." But then, Turnbull remembers, Ennis won't be going anywhere. This is his prison, and would his sentence be easier to serve in madness or sanity?

They have different treatment, the soldiers, so Turnbull heard, talking cures, persuasion, psycho-something or other. It sounds like nonsense to him, and the doctor must have agreed because the same treatment isn't used on the existing

patients. The soldiers are different from the rest of the hospital population. They got mad doing heroic things, whereas Ennis and the like were already mad in the head, and had been for years. The soldiers are a better class of men, and that's why they mended quickly, Turnbull thinks.

"It must be time to head back indoors, eh. The wind is coming up strong and straight off the Antarctic."

Turnbull wheels the chair away from the trees and heads back to the asylum.

Fourteen

"I need to get out, I need to get out." Ennis repeats the phrase over and over again to the doctor who stares at him.

"Where do you need out of, Ennis?"

Ennis points to his head repeatedly, "Here, here, here." Ennis hits his head so hard that the doctor leans forward and holds Ennis's hands, and puts them down at his side. Matthew had thought Ennis wanted out of the asylum.

"You need to calm yourself, Ennis, otherwise I'll have no option but to use the restraints."

Ennis shakes his head. His whole body appears to be moving - his agitation has crept out of his mind, and is running through his body, overtaking the nourishment the asylum staff feed him.

"Tell me what is causing this shaking, Ennis." The doctor has raised his voice, not through anger, but wanting to get through to him, wanting to make some impact on Ennis's psychosis.

Ennis's eyes are streaming. He shakes and streams, shakes and streams.

"You're not mentally fit to occupy yourself at present." The doctor sounds resigned. He leans back in his chair feeling defeated, but Ennis doesn't register anything the doctor says, let alone his tone or movements.

"I had to do it, I had to do it."

"What did you have to do Ennis?" The doctor leans forward again, his head cocked so that his good ear is closest to Ennis's mouth.

"I had to do it, I had to do it. He would've killed me."

"Who would've killed you?"

The doctor knows who: Frank. This is the same conversation the doctor and Ennis have had at every six monthly check-up for years.

"He was going to take my money, him and the David Street gang, bastards, *bastards* the whole bloody lot of them up to no good, no good. Throwing bricks, that's all they do all day, throw bricks. They don't work, wouldn't know a good day's work, that's why they were going to steal my money."

The doctor leans back in his chair. He had read the reports in the paper a few years ago about the David Street gang throwing bricks at children as they walked around South Dunedin. It was only a matter of time, the paper said, before some innocent got killed, got caught in the cross fire.

The mention of the bricks makes the doctor recall that he has an appointment with the engineers shortly. The F1 wing is moving again. The doctor looked at the exposed walls this morning, and could see the plaster cracking. He touched it, and it dusted his fingers. When the doctor spoke to the engineer to make the appointment, the engineer said he had made some enquiries about the build. There were rumours that the wing was made with substandard bricks; seconds going cheap. Behind the plaster the bricks stacked up against each other and tried to resist the movement of the earth, but couldn't, and cracked like brittle teeth.

The doctor looks at Ennis's file. When Ennis was admitted he only had his upper dentures, the lower ones were completely missing. The lack of teeth exacerbated Ennis's weak chin, it was like the lower part of his face had slipped. The hospital staff had fixed him some dentures that propped up his face but the scaffolding was just that, scaffolding - temporary and easily collapsed when Ennis took the teeth out.

As the doctor watches Ennis rock, he puts his left hand in his pocket and worries at the hole in the cool, smooth lining. He will give it to Betty to mend.

Betty is his housekeeper and patient at Seacliff. She comes to his house, which is in the grounds of the asylum, first thing in the morning. Betty fixes breakfast before making beds and maintaining the cleanliness of the house. At the end of the day, she returns to her room at the asylum. All Betty had needed was some rest to restore her nervous and emotional exhaustion after the still birth. When Betty was fully rested, the doctor had given her the job to see whether she could cope with the chores of daily life, similar to the ones she would be confronted with when she returned home. Betty seems to enjoy working at the house, it gives her some purpose, she says, rather than being stuck in the day room. The doctor feels satisfied in her recovery. She is about ready to go home.

When she had first arrived, Betty's hair was cut into a stylish bob, but now it is long. She has taken to wearing it in a loose bun at the back of her head. The doctor wonders whether she will cut her hair again, or let it stay long when she returns home. He will miss watching the waft of loose strands escaping from her bun as she walks with purpose down the hall, not noticing him at all. After a while Betty won't remember the doctor, she will try to get on, put it behind her, as anyone would.

Ennis, on the other hand, is hopeless. Hope, hopeful and hopeless, these are the categories the doctor learnt at medical school. There was a time when the doctor thought Ennis was hopeful. He had worked in the garden, and most of the time Ennis partakes in conversation, but his instances of delusion, of depression, are more frequent now. Much like the destabilisation of the building, Ennis's mind is crumbling, and although the doctor can jimmy something up to stop the damage momentarily, it does not hold for long.

Ennis rocks back and forth.

The doctor calls an attendant, and asks him to put Ennis into solitary for the time being, until he has calmed down, to stop him from hurting himself.

Ennis pulls away when the attendant takes his arm, but then settles down when they start walking away.

Fifteen

The engineers chipped away at the crumbling parts of Seacliff like a surgeon removing nerve tracks to and from the brain in a prefrontal lobotomy. She is thankful that Ennis was dead before the procedure came in at Seacliff. The operation was meant to stop the patients' tendency to *overelaboration*, to stop their emotional discomfort. McDougall cites cases where it did and didn't work.

The doctor's definition of hopeless was right. Ennis was trapped in the building, in his mind, in the strait jacket. It makes her jump up from the lounge chair and walk around the coffee table such is the feeling of constriction that takes hold of her, but such a short distance is not enough, she walks into the backyard. It's night. The air is cold, she can feel dew settling. The rotary clothes line is empty and the grass overgrown. She looks out on the backs of other houses, and sees lights in lounges and bedrooms, cars up driveways. An occasional voice, shout, or murmur comes across the valley at the back of her flat. There is a sense of collective peace in the neighbourhood which calms her. She sits down at the end of the concrete path and leans back against the pole of the clothes line, her feet on the wet grass.

Hopeless. To live without hope. For there to be no hope. No wonder Ennis tried to kill himself so many times. His file has several 'Constant Observation' notices. She flicked through the file and counted them up when she realised every form meant that he was on suicide watch. There are twenty forms. Every nurse attendant had to read the notice, and sign it, before caring for Ennis.

She would rather have false hope than live without any hope at all. That's why she occasionally thinks of Hunter, that he may come back to her, that perhaps she can have a child. She tries to banish these thoughts by writing, and concentrating on her work, but they still come back in those moments before she goes to sleep.

They are a kind of lullaby that gives her some peace and helps her rest, but in the morning she reprimands herself for letting those thoughts in. She has to be stronger, she has to force the thoughts out and make room for new ones.

Shrill voices come from the Council flats next door. Giggles and the click-clacking of high heels on concrete.

“He’ll be right for a Sunday morning,” one of the women says, and the rest laugh.

Through the gaps in the wooden fence she watches the women walk down the path towards the street. She feels conspicuous in her solitude. She keeps still so the group won’t notice her. Even though she doesn’t know anyone in the group, even to say hello to on the way to work, she feels excluded from their fun. That’s what she should be doing, she thinks, going out, drinking, and wearing a dress that wouldn’t be appropriate to don in daylight. She’ll never find a partner sitting by her clothesline on a Saturday night, and if she did happen across one in her yard, he’d probably just be pissing on the camellia bush – caught short and lost on the way home. She smiles thinly at her wry and self-deprecating humour. She hears the dull thud of a camellia bud drop to the ground and thinks it’s the perfect sound to illuminate loneliness.

As the group get closer she can see one of the women wearing a tiara with a veil. A hen’s night. They will go from pub to pub drawing attention to themselves. There may be claims of virginity, a stripper, or a game of pin the penis on the man. Such crass fun, but fun nonetheless.

They are passing a bottle of wine between them. Under so much bronzer and blusher it’s hard to tell how old the women are. Not yet thirty, she thinks. They are beautiful in their enthusiasm and spirit. In comparison, she feels depleted and pale, and missing some base element of femininity both in demeanour and appearance.

She can't remember the last time she had a few wines and laughed like the women are laughing. She tells herself that it's just because she's getting over Hunter, coupled with the bleakness of Ennis's file, and that soon her spirit will return.

Sixteen

Ennis watches the women who are sitting cross legged on upturned tables singing, *row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream.* They move their arms from one side of the boat to the other as if they hold an oar. Their starched dresses flounce as their movements become faster, as they row faster, as they sing faster, as if the speed of their words means they will get to shore quicker.

The matron finds them before they get off their canoes. She hollers for order. She holds a jar that smells like beer. Foam has dried on the side of the jar. The matron damns them all, and the patients giggle at their damnation. The patients are ripped off their vessels by the matron and a few of the nursing staff she has managed to wrangle to help out. The patients are put in individual rooms. The female patient the matron suspects of having the home brew recipe, and nicking the ingredients from the pantry, is kept in solitary confinement for a few days longer than the other patients.

When the women were ushered away the tables stayed turned upside down in the day room. Ennis can hear a waltz being played – the last two beats like the current pulling the boat rope taut, and then releasing. Ennis thinks of the female dancers watching their feet slip into the space left by their partner, and the men who move their feet backwards hoping they will not slam into another couple or the wall, remembering not to go back in a straight line, that they will have to curve around. There is a lot to think about while dancing. Ennis sits in a canoe. He does not row, but feels the da-da da-da movement pull the canoe back and forth.

Some of the women had their hair in rags. Scraps of sheets on their way to being dusters, torn into strips to tie around their locks. Ennis's sisters used to do it too – if they were going to the pictures with a beau. They would leave the rags in

until the last minute to make sure the curl would stay and not fall out too quickly. Rags in their hair and clothes freshly ironed; pressed up against men going to war. Ennis never went to war. He was a Reserve never called on. He was never pressed upon.

"We couldn't figure out if the sky covered all of the world," one of the women said on her release from a single room. "Is the sky like a circle of clear film that covers preserves, bound to the earth by a rubber band? If I tap my finger on the taut sky, is it like a drum, a drum of fruit and sugar, and vinegar and spices? Or does it make no sound at all? Would my hand go right through it?"

Ennis can't even reach the bare bulb in the communal room, so perhaps he should not worry about the sky and whether it covers the whole world, or whether he can touch it. But there are no ordinary things to think about in here: food, shelter, and warmth are taken care of. Sometimes Ennis thinks about the weather, and if he can sit out in the park today. They are ushered onto the framed concrete and wooden benches, down wooden steps that you can see through when walking up which makes Ennis feel self-conscious of his footing. He sits in the south-east corner, the breeze behind him, sheltered by the wall, and wonders why the wind is named from where it comes from, rather than where it's going.

The sun has a light touch today. He can hear the wood pigeons' whoop whoop of wings through the trees and their heavy landings, branches sway. The wood pigeons are like the fat lady at the circus doing trapeze. He can smell the sea. There is the general natter of the asylum - workers chat, and furniture seems to continually be in need of shifting; wood scrapes. Some of the patients smoke in the yard. They drag quick and hard, and expel slowly. Others sit and stare, or stand and stare, or run up and down the concrete, back and forth, back and forth. The yard is not water tight. Rain seeps in and shifts the earth, but it never takes them away.



The next night, sitting on the couch with her makeshift tray/desk with her writing book open, Charlie asks herself whether she is writing about Ennis's loneliness, her own, or both. The trouble with archiving, she guesses, is that the past starts to displace the present, as if she can reach out and touch it and even project herself onto it because those who have passed have no opportunity to reply. Or tell her to leave because she doesn't belong there.

In his file it says he keeps to himself. McDougall spoke to some former patients and they told her how they had to make their own fun amongst so much routine and boredom. It was just a shame they got caught and punished. She wonders whether Ennis could, or would, have joined in but suspects he was too distressed, but still, she has a faint hope that in witnessing fun he felt light hearted. To think otherwise is too desperately lonely and yet, to understand such loneliness is to understand his need for escape by his own hand. Only death promised relief because no one could do anything to help him, the doctors say as much.

She thinks about Hunter's suicide attempt and wonders at his loneliness, his feelings of isolation and his need for escape from those feelings. It's only now, in the attempt to understand Ennis that she can begin to comprehend the depths of Hunter's pain. Before, she told herself she understood it, and knew that his loss was terrible in the way people discuss tragedies that make the news – fatalities in car accidents, and young cancer victims – in a 'isn't that terrible' morning tea discussion before going on with their day. Those events did touch her, she would stop reading the paper and watching the news so they wouldn't affect her, so she wouldn't take on their pain, and she'd used the same emotional distancing with Hunter because understanding the depth of his pain would be too overwhelming. And to fully

acknowledge his pain would be to delay what she saw for their future rather than see what Hunter needed, now. In her emotional defence she ignored his pain because it stood in the way of her future and her own emotional needs and fears.

She tells herself such a realisation doesn't make her a terrible person but her protestations fall short. In pushing Hunter's pain away for her own needs she's no better than Ennis's siblings who didn't visit him in the asylum. Perhaps ignoring Ennis was the only way they could get on with the future and not be overwhelmed.

The next day when they are having lunch together at the café down the road from work Charlie tells Fe about her emotional defensiveness in relation to Hunter, how she didn't want to see his pain because it interfered with her vision of their future.

"Do you really think you're that terrible?" Fe asks. "Isn't it more a case of you and Hunter being in different spaces and needing different things?"

"On some level, but still, I should've recognised how unwell Hunter was."

Fe is picking at her salad, and Charlie eats her sushi.

Charlie says, "It's not like you to be so picky with your food."

Fe puts her fork down. "No," she says. "I need to talk to you. I want you to put those copies from the file back and get proper approval from Anna to look at it."

Charlie leans back into her chair distancing herself from Fe's words.

"If Anna asks me about it," Fe continues, "I'll have to tell her what I know. I can't afford to get embroiled in your defence."

"I don't expect you to lie," Charlie says. "If Anna asks, you tell her. I don't want you to jeopardise your career."

"But my even knowing about it and doing nothing is damning. You need to get approval to copy those files."

"I'm just not ready to do that," Charlie says. She looks from Fe down to her plate where a dash of wasabi has been smeared, and then meets Fe's gaze.

Fe looks exasperated. It's the first time Charlie has ever seen her like that. She's usually so pragmatic and rational that any nuisance is easily thought through and remedied, but today Fe is annoyed at her because she won't do the sensible thing. While she concedes it is the sensible thing to do, she can't risk not having access to the file – her application could be declined - not when she's starting to have some insight into Ennis, and Hunter, and herself. She doesn't care if it costs her friendship with Fe, and her job. At the back of her mind she knows this is too high a price to pay, but she refuses to return the copies. She is already up to the entries when Ennis was first admitted.

She has been thinking about the outside factors in Hunter's illness – the break-up with Rochelle and his parents dying – and wonders whether there were any similar factors in Ennis's life, or whether, like her, work was the sole determinant of status for Ennis. She knows he didn't have any kids. Even though work is all she has right now, she's risking it. She feels like she's tempting dismissal, bad fortune, to see what it'll do to her, to see whether she gets to a tipping point.

She has planned on taking some of McDougall's papers home tonight, an essay on the societal factors in mental health. While the bulk of the essay is available in an online journal, McDougall has written notes on a few pages attached to the essay that may give her a few extra clues as to whether mental illness occurs when bad things happen to you, or whether the illness is already within you.

She is lost in her thoughts, and lulled by the contented natter of other patrons in the café, when Fe begins to speak.

"I'll always be your friend," she says. "I do understand your connection to the file, I just wish you went about it a different way. At the moment you're risking an awful lot."

Seventeen

The peaks formed when the land was harrowed are now green with health. The seed potatoes had been small, soft, and dirty water grey. There seemed little chance of growth but they have sprouted.

Ennis thinks that they must look like a bunch of chows toiling in the gardens, picking out the weeds, hoeing in between the rows. All they need are those pointy hats. Mammy would buy fruit and vegetables from chows on King Edward Street. In the seconds' bin she would find her family's nourishment. Bruised apples for bruised skin. Pips eaten as if the goodness from fruit not yet bloomed would enter the body. Swede chopped and boiled, and dished mashed and watery.

The carrot tops fall like hair from a ponytail. Hair that will be lopped off and fed to the cattle and dairy cows whose trail of hooves and shit can be seen rising over the hill to the milking station. Brown cows too fat with milk to jump over a moon - milk so fat that it coats Ennis's mouth completely. He can taste its residue hours after he has had a drink, and feels it forming a second lining in his stomach. Since Ennis came here he has put on weight. The doctor is happy with that.

The doctor tells him that he is a tidy man in appearance. He writes in Ennis's book as he talks, and Ennis wonders whether he is just reading his writing aloud, taking his own dictation, or is actually speaking to his patient. The doctor's writing is a black ink scrawl. He makes two full stops. He takes two full stares. If he weren't a doctor it would be rude to stare the way he does.

There are men who come to inspect the building, detectives. They come wearing the same clothes that visitors wear, loose suits. Shirts coloured like dirt under fingernails. They bring tape measures, and look up at the ceiling at the patches of water that have spread along the plaster, which looks like a mattress after a child

has peed in their bed. Ennis remembers dragging a heavy sodden mattress out to the yard to dry in the sun, and propping it up against the corrugated iron fence. The sun took the moisture, but there was still the stain and the smell. It was Mammy's mattress. She was pissed and pissed in her sleep. He wasn't to tell anyone. The benevolent society would come and take him if he did.

Your mother doesn't need charity, his father said, *just some sense*.

Ennis can't tell the detectives about the mattress. He's not to tell anyone.

They look at every wall of the building, and brush their hands along its surface. They use their fingers to get in between the bricks and flick away at the concrete, and tsk a lot. They mutter at the building, but it is nothing that the building doesn't know. The men write in their notebooks like the doctor writes in Ennis's casebook. They too speak aloud as they write. They write down what they think the walls are saying. Their fingers are coated with concrete dust. The building will not stay still, no matter how much the men would like it to. Lines on the map mark the water table. The water table spreads less in summer than in winter. The little dashes on the building map that mark the water line look like stitches, but instead of bringing the building together it is unpicking. Remedial work has been done, but it does not fix the spread of water, it just stems it for a little while. The men shake their heads a lot, rattling the water inside their skulls, and decide to fill in the line of the blind gully.



At the start of Ennis's life at Seacliff, he worked in the garden. The doctor notes that Ennis *continues to be a good worker*. McDougall says the patients had jobs around the asylum to keep them occupied, to give them a sense of purpose as they recovered. This seems fair enough to Charlie, though she can see that it could be open to exploitation. It meant the hospital saved on the cost of labour and food. But Ennis's

time in the garden does not last for long. Within the space of a year, the doctor writes, *this man is now kept in the park on account of acute depression*. Ennis loses his job, and loses his name in the doctor's description, and spends his days in a recreation area.

1928 is the year that Ennis slides into his depression and ideas of persecution, and doesn't come back out. In every entry, the doctor says, *this man is greatly depressed as a result of his persecution ideas*, or, *Very depressed, miserable, emotional, agitated*. There is no improvement. *This man*, she repeats the phrase to herself. It annoys her that Ennis is referred to by his sex, rather than his name, when he is no longer fit for work, when there seems no hope of recovery.

It's getting harder to write about Ennis. *His mind is impenetrable*, the doctor says. If the doctor, who was right beside him, couldn't get a foothold into Ennis's mind, how can she, separated from him by so much time? He can't have always been like this but amongst the adjectives with which the doctor describes Ennis any thought of him ever being stable or even content is hard to imagine.

There are questions that Mary, Ennis's sister, has completed at the back of the casebook. *Have any relations been addicted to excessive drinking or other vices?* Mary replies, *Mother addicted to drink and Father very quiet and good living man*. The casebook notes go through Ennis's particulars: date of birth, whether he was born in New Zealand. And then it asks, *Had he a strong will, had he good power of self-control*, Mary answers *Yes*. The questions about Ennis's character go on, but one in particular always catches Charlie's attention when she looks through Ennis's notes. *Was he affectionate? Yes, very affectionate, great love for little children.*

Eighteen

McDougall's papers surround Charlie's desk. There are so many boxes she feels like she's in the middle of a child's fort built in a lounge on a rainy day. Each box represents at least a decade of McDougall's life's work. In one ring binder McDougall has sketched an outline of Seaciff. She imagines McDougall was looking at a map in an archive that would have been too difficult to photocopy. McDougall has attempted to draw an outline of the building. Her lines are solid for the main section, but the wings that were demolished are marked out with small dashes like a section at the bottom of a newsletter that she would bring home from school indicating where her mother had to tear off and sign the notice, and return it to school. The buildings wings were torn off.

The airing court was on the north side of the building. It was an enclosed space where patients could enjoy the benefits of clement weather while still being locked in. The huge gardens on either side of the main avenue up to the building McDougall has indicated with a circular squiggly line. There is an old road, and a new road, and the District Road that leads to the Railway Station. If she didn't know better she would think the property looks like an English County Estate, a setting worthy of a mini-series.

On another page McDougall has written about the routines at Seaciff. If a patient was put in seclusion they would be put in a cell all day, for days on end, until the illness *quietened*. Does that just mean the patient learnt to be quiet? The only thing in a seclusion cell was a straw mattress, and often patients were put in there naked so they wouldn't hang themselves with their own clothes. This makes her feel cold. She imagines goose bumped skin, the chill coming off the stone walls, South

Island frosts, and the vulnerability of exposure that a straw mattress would never halt. Did they strip Ennis bare, dose him with paraldehyde to sedate him after a suicide attempt, and leave him there for days on end until his malady *quietened*?

She had thought the early days of Ennis's enclosure would be the most gentle as he settled in, gathered first impressions, and attempted to make friends if he could make sense of the other patients' stories, but she was naïve. When she reads about locked gloves as a method of restraint that went out of fashion in the 1920s she closes the folder, looks behind her, sees no one looking, and slides the folder into her oversized handbag that she keeps under her desk. She tries to zip the bag up but the file is too large so she leaves it like that. No one would know, she rationalises, that it is McDougall's work, it just looks like an ordinary folder, and no one will notice that it's gone with so many documents to be processed.

The rest of her Friday afternoon is reasonably productive. She's described quite a few items from McDougall's work, items that weren't as enticing as the folder that sits in her bag. Throughout the day she's had pangs of paranoia that a co-worker will see the folder and ask her what it is, but she's prepared a reply just in case. "It's just writing I've been working on," is what she'll say. It's specific enough and yet so generic that it won't arouse suspicion, or interest.

She packs up her things and walks out of work – it's easy, just like before. It's hot, the air-conditioned office had protected her from the reality of the weather. People are wearing office clothes and sunglasses. She doesn't have any so she squints, and fans her hand in front of her face to feel some air. Unusually for Wellington, it is still.

As she walks to the station she can hear the buses slow down as they slide through the overhead electric wires before accelerating away. Cars stream along the arteries to the motorway. There is so much heat and rush. Up ahead she can see Fe.

Ordinarily she would quicken her pace and grab the same bus as Fe but she slows down, recalling her last conversation with Fe and what is in her handbag. Fe must have sensed someone looking at her because she turns around, sees her, and waves before stepping out of the flow of people and waits for her.

Charlie thinks about draping her cardigan over her handbag, or holding it differently to conceal the folder, but any action would only draw attention to it, so she leaves it and keeps walking.

“You going my way?” Fe asks jokingly, knowing full well she is.

They walk to the bus stop. Charlie watches people jump off buses and then rush towards trains. It’s moments like these – watching the to-and-fro of the city – that make her feel like an automaton. Her actions are without thought, programmed into her body by an idea of a good work ethic, of the work that is to precede play.

“Penny for them,” Fe says.

“Oh, I was thinking I need a break from this routine.”

It’s not really that, she thinks, but she can’t really explain what it is. A sense of futility maybe, of numbness through endless repetition of the same routine, but she’s not sure whether she’s talking of her own experience, or the imagined experiences of Ennis. She should be grateful for this life in comparison to Ennis’s. There must have been stages when he dreamed of the mundane and shared ordinary experiences.

“Shall we go for a drink?” Fe asks, “It’s Friday evening after all.”

“I don’t really feel like it.” The truth is, she would like a drink, but having the folder prevents her. Over the course of the evening Fe would likely spot it, and start asking questions. “How about tomorrow night?” She says as a consolation.

“Alright then.”

She would like to sit down at the stop but all the seats are taken. She swivels around to see if there is one behind her and accidentally whacks Fe with her bag.

“Jeez, have you got a brick in there?” Fe laughs.

“Not quite,” she says, too quickly, and then says sorry and looks to the floor when she sees Fe look into her unzipped bag.

“What’s in the folder?”

“Oh, just some,” she hesitates with her prepared excuse thinking that Fe will want to read it if she tells her it’s her writing, but she can’t think of anything else, “writing.”

“That’s an old folder. I used to have one of those at primary school,” Fe says.

It’s red, made of thick card rather than plastic, and is worn down to its grey cardboard innards on the spine.

“Yeah, I um, found it around home.” She looks up at Fe’s questioning face and shrugs like an adolescent caught lying by their parents.

“Is it your writing?”

Charlie sees their bus swing around and make its way to the stop. She goes to walk up to join the queue when Fe takes hold of her elbow.

“Answer me,” Fe says. “We can get the next bus.”

Fe’s voice is commanding and her grip is firm which makes Charlie’s eyes glisten. She is embarrassed, and looks around her in the hope no one is eavesdropping but she needn’t have worried because most people within earshot are looking at, or are plugged into a device. The tips of Fe’s fingers are white from applying pressure on Charlie’s elbow.

“You don’t need to know what it is. Fe,” Charlie answers. “It’s better that you don’t.”

“That folder looks like an original document not just a copy.”

Charlie nods slowly, knowing that her concealment only confirms Fe's suspicions.

"I want you to take it back to work now."

"No."

"If you don't, I'm going to go back to work now and report you to Anna."

When Charlie looks at Fe with a hurt and angry expression, Fe says, "It's for your own good, this has gone on long enough. You're risking everything."

"Only if you tell."

"I'm giving you a chance to take it back now," Fe says. "Will you take it?"

"No."

"Then you leave me no choice."

Fe releases her elbow and starts walking against the flow of people back to the Library. She watches her determinedly duck and dive through people who are too mentally distracted to watch where they're going or to realise someone is coming the other way.

She turns back to the bus and jumps on, the last passenger before the doors are closed. She doesn't get to a seat before the bus jerks forward tipping her off balance. She only just manages to grab the back of a chair to right herself. She sits down with a thud, and puts her bag on her lap, and looks at the innocuous folder that has caused so much trouble. She momentarily feels defiant and thinks this is her release from being an automaton, and remembers that she's got some savings put aside if she loses her job, before her stomach turns hard. But she stays on the bus and holds onto the folder. She can't let it go despite the shit she finds herself in.

Nineteen

The weekend seems to expand in length because of the tension she has created over the file. Charlie wants time to slow so that Monday never comes, and yet she wants it to speed up so whatever consequences are lined up she can deal with them quickly. Either way she can't enjoy her weekend speculating on what's ahead.

Sometimes she wakes up on Saturday morning remembering an email she forgot to send or a task left unattended, and can't enjoy her leisure in the thought of being inefficient, and it's the similar feeling now, but worse. Those minor inefficiencies won't lose her her job, whereas taking the folder might. It could be construed as theft as a servant. And not any old theft, but an original document, irreplaceable. It's a moral and ethical transgression on her profession, she knows, and yet, she tells herself that this is her family and she should be able to have the folder no matter what Fe says, or their boss, Anna.

She leaves the house in an attempt to alleviate her thoughts, and go through the motions of a normal Saturday.

A man plays a metal saw with a violin bow. It is high-pitched hillbilly. The sound wobbles. A few coins have been thrown into a straw hat which the busker has placed on the concrete in front of him. Kids play on the jungle gym. Languages and laughter swing from bar to bar. Parents rest their bags of fruit and vegetables down on the yellow painted hopscotch lines and watch their children, in between conversations with the mums and dads of their children's friends.

The prefab school buildings frame the market. Through the classroom windows Charlie can see *kia kaha* cut out of black card and stapled on the wall. The white lines of four-square and netball courts on the concrete are covered by crates of spring onions, bok choy, and leafy greens. She buys broccoli, potatoes, cherry

tomatoes, pineapple, rock melon and aubergine, and hands her money over to the grocers who speak Cantonese, and add up the prices in their head. It is one of the main reasons she comes to the market, to see their mathematical skill. The cloth-swathed women walk amongst the stalls. The smell of roti and coffee lingers, mixing their notes with that of the violin bow, accompanied by the Mana Party busker who has a Tino Rangatiratanga flag stuck to his amp, and pronounces that men who beat their women are soft cocks.

Second-hand clothes are spread on the bare timber veranda. Children's puffer jackets, women's handbags, a Pearl Jam CD, and cracked vinyl sneakers with brand new white laces. There is the continual natter of customers who carry recycled shopping bags, carts or baskets. And the cries of children who want to go home, who want to go play, who want something to eat, *No! Not an apple*. Outside the market Labour Party members want people to sign to save our assets, and Girl Guides sell biscuits.

Hunter said he would live here if he could. It's where he imagines himself to be, instead of in Porirua. Titahi Bay, he always says, as if disassociating himself with Porirua, though he likes to name drop Te Rauparaha. It was one of the first stories Hunter told her about Wellington, how Te Rauparaha would draw his waka right up to the Thistle Inn for a whiskey.

She hasn't thought about Hunter for a few days, but it's like her problems at work have made her scout around for other problems in her life, other failures, as a distraction in the first instance, and then to multiply her problems to show her how badly her life is turning out.

There is a grey-headed man who has a wiry body bent forward slightly as if crouching down into himself. He is muttering and this talk is interspersed with the occasional, *Fuck!* The man's apparent madness makes people turn away and look at

courgettes or snow peas to avoid eye contact. The man walks quickly through the market with a bounding stride. His speed and stride reminds her of the Radleys who used to live around the corner from her when she was a kid.

The Radleys were two tall, lean boys with bouncing walks. Each footstep was exaggerated; you could almost see a cartoon ‘boing’ after each step. They would wave exaggerated waves and say, *Hello*. Her aunt knew their mother, who, for some reason, gave birth to bouncing boys. The Radleys would walk up and down the dip and hollow of Cain Street, past her house. Sometimes they would come in and give her their piles of *Archie* comics. In the comics Veronica had black hair, and Jughead had a stunted Pinocchio nose and wore a crown. Her mother would talk to the Radleys. She doesn’t know what her mother said to them because she took off when she saw the brothers in the porch by the sliding door bouncing up and down.

It’s only now that she realises that the Radleys would have been men, not boys.

Once, when she walked home from the pool with her mother, they passed the Radleys’ house and her mum said, *Look*. Charlie’s eyes followed the path up to the top of the Radleys’ house. At the top of the hill was the top of a statue, a Madonna, though at the time she had no idea what a Madonna was. It was grey. Head bowed forward. It seemed foreboding. Now she would call it gothic, but then it was unnerving and seemed to signal some undetermined fear as it clasped its palms together. It didn’t feel like protection. She realised years later that the statue would have stood on the hill of the Catholic school grounds. Every time she walked passed the house she would turn and look at the statue in some kind of temptation of fear, the thrill of looking where you shouldn’t look, as if looking at it too long meant she would give birth to a bouncing boy. Her mother didn’t say why she pointed it out

but Charlie could hear the fear in her voice, and felt her need not to experience it alone.

They must be dead now, the Radleys. It is strange to think of one dying before the other because they were always a pair with their matching deformities. Their difference was easy to see, whereas Charlie's deformity -- well, the doctor didn't use those words . . . she said it was a variation on normal -- *polycystic ovaries is a variation on normal*. She was first diagnosed when she was 15. Her periods had stopped. She might not be able to have a baby.

Yet, in recent years the doctor made it sound like she could have a baby. Like there was still a chance. She has to go to the doctor every six months for a prescription for the pill which controls her periods, and the obvious side effects of polycystic ovaries – the hair and acne – not the possible infertility, but lately the Doctor has been asking the same question.

“Are you thinking of starting a family.”

“I don’t know,” she has answered each time.

“Well, at your age, it’s time to give it some thought.”

Hunter said that he was used to make a baby. His anger stung Charlie and she doesn’t know why. She wasn’t the one who used him. She doesn’t think she was noble enough to be insulted on behalf of women, though she should have said something about him being in control of his fertility. Perhaps it was the anger itself, the balled-up resentment that he threw at her, and she didn’t have her arms out to catch it, so it smashed in her face.

She walks home with her cloth bag filled with produce and mulls over how she is single, possibly about to be unemployed, and perhaps friendless. She wonders whether she should text Fe. She had suggested that they have a drink tonight — it could be an opportunity to talk things through, for Fe to tell Charlie what she told

Anna. She puts the cloth bag on the kitchen bench and pulls her phone out of her handbag.

Shall we have that drink, she writes, I want us to talk about what happened yesterday? 7pm at The Office in Newtown?

She sends the message and leaves the phone on the bench hoping for a speedy reply. Fe doesn't usually muck around.

She puts her groceries away, and tidies the flat, and checks her phone every ten minutes or so even though she knows she'd hear it if it beeps. She rationalises that Fe will be doing Saturday morning chores too, or at the gym, or...something.

The day slides into lunch. She forces avocado on toast down into her churning stomach as the same questions rotate over and over in her head:

Fe wouldn't ignore her, would she?

What if she doesn't text back, does she go to the pub on the off chance she turns up?

Has what she's done enough to finish their friendship?

Should she text again, say sorry, even though part of her is defiant? There's this stubbornness that she has to hold onto Ennis and the folder, as if handing it over means she'll lose him again, and that within the pages there's an answer for her, some answer that will reveal the blueprint of her character.

Anna, her boss, will be disappointed. Ever since they started work at the Library Anna has treated them like her protégés and has been generous with her time and knowledge. Anna may take her misdemeanour personally. She is sorry that she's let Anna and Fe down but at the same time she doesn't regret her actions. Taking the information is a means to an end, an end she will only get to if she keeps writing. She retrieves the folder from her handbag where she left it last night, and

reaches for her writing book and tray. Now that she has the information she may as well use it.

Twenty

The soil shifts. Grains run against each other. It almost feels tidal, the way the earth creeps slowly away from the swamp in search of dry land, and moves back again.

This building is not a fixed structure at all but a ship wanting to dock, to be tied up to something secure. It creaks, tries to flex its concrete and red brick, and move away.

But it is captured in the swamp -- not sea and not land but reclaimed enough to build on.

Sometimes Ennis watches the heat of the sun ripple on the blue walls like gentle waves and feels like he is underwater, that he has finally subsided.

From his cell he sees the beach. Water settles at the changing of the tide before it is finally absorbed into the sand. Ennis likes the moment when the sun sets on the water. It is bright. Hurt your eyes bright. He enjoys the startling pain of it. It fades slowly into brown grey compacted sand, and although it is easier on his eyes, the pain is somehow greater.

Ennis has walked down there. They bundled his body into a straitjacket and he walked without swinging his arms. It is harder than you'd think. Ennis bowed his body a little closer to the earth so that if he fell the impact would be a little less. Three guards walked with him -- one at each side and one behind him. They talked about a rugby match, their words like a ball being thrown over his head and behind him. Ennis was the piggy in the middle who was unable to catch.

There were pipis on the beach that had managed to avoid the seagulls. The heat of the sun barely penetrated Ennis's jacket and he had an overwhelming urge to be naked and feel the sun's full warmth on his skin. But the guards would not let him out of the jacket. He didn't even ask, even he knew that they were words that should not be spoken aloud. Feelings that should not be felt.

Later, in his cell, he could taste the salt on his lips, and feel the sand's abrasion on his face.

In the next cell there is a man who shot a man. He's mad as well and tries to run away. He dug a tunnel through the dirt floor with a spoon and covered the hole with his straw squab mattress. He didn't make it very far. The trains weren't running at that time of night and it's a long way to Dunedin. The guards don't leave utensils in the cells anymore, and are always checking under the mattresses for escape routes. They check in on the man every half hour now, night and day, to make sure he is there. Ennis couldn't crawl through the earth like that. He wouldn't want to be trapped in the shifting soil. The man in the next cell is only let out twice a day in his strait jacket to walk a 100 yards and back. Not enough time for his eyes to adjust to the light, just enough time to blind him.



Her phone hasn't beeped all day. Not even a text from her phone provider telling her that payment is due for the month. At 6.45pm she puts her pen down. She had to let Ennis out of the cell, despite McDougall's evidence to the contrary. It seemed too cruel to repeat such injustices, even though they are accurate. Instead she allowed for change, for the chance of something better. She checks her phone again, and decides to go to the pub down the road on the off chance Fe will be there.

The Office doesn't really attract the after work admin types that the name suggests, or maybe it's that she's missed the point, and the name is ironic. Men wearing singlets, shorts, and work boots stand at the high tables nested at the front of the pub by the window. Jugs of beer and half pint glasses dot the tables. The men turn to the door as she walks in, look at her, and then turn away and resume their talk while watching the Riccarton trots on one screen and the cricket – New Zealand

versus Australia – on the other. To the right of the entrance is a room of pokies. She catches sight of sliding numbers and flashing florescent lights as she walks to the bar.

“A glass of house red, please.”

The bartender is large and tall, a perfect size to intimidate and evacuate noisy patrons. The bottom row of his teeth are caked with tartar. She tries not to feel physically repulsed.

She takes her drink to a small booth at the other end of the pub by the door to the smoking area, and watches the cricket on the TV above the dining tables. She hasn’t watched cricket for years. One summer, when she was about 13, she had watched one-dayers and learnt the rules from the commentators’ banter and her own observations. It had filled up the boredom of the summer holidays. Now, she only knows a match is on if she catches it on the news.

She looks from the screen, to the pub’s door, to her phone. Still no Fe. Not that she really expects her, she would’ve said if she was going to be here. It’s just her hopefulness, and to sate a fear that Fe did text but it somehow didn’t come through.

The sun streams through the window that looks out onto the smokers. As she looks towards the sun she feels a movement in the cushions of the booth’s padded seat, and turns, hoping it is Fe, but it is a man sliding into the seat next to her. He says hello. His accent is South African.

“Hi,” she replies. She tries to think whether she’s met him before but if she has she can’t remember.

“Are you into the cricket? I play here in Wellington, I coach too.”

The man, who introduced himself as Darren, doesn’t give her much of a chance to reply in his urgency to tell Charlie about his sporting abilities.

"I wasn't quite good enough to play top level in South Africa, but I came out here as a professional. I have an aunt here, she helped with the paperwork."

"How long have you been here?" Charlie manages to say.

"Two years," Darren says. "I used to live with my aunt but uncle was giving me a hard time, cramping my style, so I live in Newtown now. I work at the rest home on Mount Victoria."

"I'm a Librarian." Charlie volunteers the information because she doubts Darren will ask.

Darren goes on to tell her about his new flat with a fellow cricketer, and an incident involving Darren eating a banana that was in fact his flatmate's who was pissed off about it. Darren laughs the incident off, saying that the flatmate said he could help himself to the fruit. He doesn't seem to notice that she finds the conversation banal. She can see, however, that he is still annoyed at the incident, still feels personally slighted at being accused of theft.

She watches the cricket. A Kiwi belts a six. Darren tells her all about the team, what he knows of the players, and makes it sound as if he knows some of the team members. She imagines he is trying to impress her, but she is unmoved.

She drains her glass. Darren buys them both another, and brings them back to the table with a menu.

"Shall we eat?"

"Sure." She can't summon the energy to tell him to go away, and wonders why he stays when she is so uncommunicative, but perhaps that's what he likes, an audience rather than a conversation. And she's not sure she wants to be alone. She keeps thinking of the man in Seacliff trying to escape his cell.

While Darren is talking – about his local team and the kids he coaches after school – she checks him out. He is slight but strong, the body of an athlete she

supposes under his light blue shirt. When he had walked to the bar she noticed how his shirt grazed the belt of his jeans, and that his black leather shoes looked new. Darren's hair is short but she can see a slight curl to the strands. His skin is dark, like he is of mixed ethnic parentage, and she wants him to talk about his country, the complexities of South Africa but he doesn't, and she doesn't ask because she can't get a word in.

She eats her burger, drinks the wine, and pretends she feels flattered while knowing it's loneliness that keeps her seated. She wonders whether he stays because he can sense her vulnerability.

She checks her phone now and then to see whether Fe has texted, but there's nothing.

"Have you been stood up?" Darren asks when he sees her look at her phone.

"Kind of. It wasn't a fixed date."

"He's not worth it, eh." She doesn't correct him or add comment. She doesn't want to explain anything to him.

New Zealand have to get four runs off the last ball. The commentators are excited, the crowd at the stadium are on their feet chanting. The men at the front of the bar stand at the tall tables with one hand on their hip, and the other hand around a glass, and lean back slightly in anticipation of the next ball.

"McCallum will muck this up," Darren says, "he's too much of a hot head."

He doesn't muck it up. The last ball goes for six.

She smiles and claps along with the other people in the bar.

"At least it made you smile," Darren says. "Do you want to head off?" he asks.

"Where to?"

"My place."

She looks away from Darren to the smokers outside. The last vivid light falls.

The streets are quiet as they walk up Coromandel Street and turn into Owen. The street lights show young thin trees planted on the edge of the footpath. The trees seem exposed and too thin. They walk past wooden cottages in various states of redecoration. One has been converted into a preschool, and another into a holistic medical centre. Lights are turned on in kitchens, and through lounge windows she sees the flickering blue light of television screens.

Darren doesn't talk much on the way. His incessant chatter was like the hum of air conditioning which when suddenly turned off makes her realise how loud it was. Her body relaxes. She shouldn't have agreed to this, and yet, walking to his house, she thinks about having unprotected sex just to see what would, if anything, happen. On one level she knows getting pregnant isn't that easy, and yet on another, you do hear of people getting pregnant the first time they try. If she did get pregnant at least she'd have something to fill up the vast emptiness inside her. She thinks of her menstrual cycle, and recollects that she's on the first sugar pill--she should insist on protection.

"Good, Jim is out," Darren says, "Come on through."

Darren turns the light on. She squints in the sudden brightness. There is a faint smell of sweat.

The lounge is bare, just a couch and a TV. No magazines or books to indicate the residents' interests, just somewhere to sit and a screen to stare at. The curtains are coming off the railing along the top of the front window; the ruffled top edge hangs like an extended piano accordion. There is no radio or ipad dock, no photos or art. The space is so blank that it seems that both men are unwilling to put their personalities on display, or just don't care about such comforts.

Darren pulls the curtain in his bedroom. His bed is unmade. There is a large bag of cricket gear – bats, balls, gloves and pads – that smells like grass and bleach beside the wardrobe. He has hung white shirts to dry on picture hooks along the south wall of his room.

“They’re my cricket whites.”

Darren’s skin is warm. His kisses gentler and slower than his motoring mouth would suggest. He undoes his belt, drops his trousers and pulls his shirt over his head. His chest is muscular, smooth and filmed in sweat. She pulls her top and bra off and pushes her naked chest against his, and is enveloped while his hands search her, and her hands search him.

She should ask about protection. She feels momentarily reckless, defiant in her attempt to get what she wants, to test her body, and yet her silence is passive, a betrayal of what she should insist on for the sake of her body. Pregnancy is only one side-effect.

Darren guides her to the bed and lies on top of her. He reaches over to his bedside table and rattles around in there until he finds a condom. He tears the packet open with his teeth, and puts the condom on. As she watches him pull the sheath on she wants to say no, leave it, I’m on the pill, but he enters her before she can bring herself to say the words.

She insists on walking home. It’s not that far, she says, when Darren asks her where she lives. He kisses her at the door, a towel wrapped around his waist. He gives her his number but she knows she’ll never ring it and doesn’t give him hers.

Twenty One

The next morning, lying in bed, she can hear the lions roaring at the zoo.

They growl for their breakfast. It's not the only sound that comes from the zoo, the other cry she hears she cannot put an animal to. It is a haunting cry, a cross between a wolf's howl and the violin bow drawn across the metal saw that she heard at the market yesterday. She thinks of it as the sound of the Madonna, the sound of emptiness inside her.

She pulls the duvet up around her neck and shoulders, and asks herself whether she'd feel better if she had unprotected sex last night, or whether she'd be rushing to the chemist for the morning after pill as if the first sparks of life and regret can be extinguished with a soluble tablet taken with water.

She can feel tears form and fall.

She didn't even like Darren. It was like he swooped onto her vulnerability and she took up his invitation to be able to feel something, to be close to someone, to tempt the potential of life in her body but it has just left her feeling exposed and somehow reduced. Her body feels so flat against the bed.

The sun shines through the curtains highlighting the strands of cotton and how the parallel lines intersect with the vertical. Cicadas have started up. The summer is clutching onto the autumn months. She wants to open a window to let in some air, she wants to blow her nose that has filled with fluid as her tears flow, but doesn't as a kind of penance, as some need to feel the suffocation that has resulted from her recent decisions. What is she doing? Stealing archives, risking dismissal, losing a friend, and a-one-night stand where only Darren's condom saved her from complete stupidity. She thanks him for that.

She thinks about Ennis's bare cell. The darkness of the room, and the thin mattress his only comfort and source of warmth. She can almost smell the dirt floor and the sensation of dirt under her fingernails, the damp.

She pushes the bed covers off, and slides her legs off the bed and onto the floor. She moves gingerly towards the window and draws the curtain. Momentarily blinded by the sunshine, she leans against the window sill to steady her wavering body. She closes her eyes and watches the black spots flicker in her retinas before opening her eyes. Opening the window, she breathes in the late summer air and its scent of dying vegetation, and feels the vitality that warmth and sunshine brings to the creaking cicadas. For now, it's enough to know that decay and vitality can exist side by side.

She walks into the lounge wearing her dressing gown, her feet thudding on the carpet unwilling to feel too vital too soon. The first thing she sees is the red folder, the archive. She knows she has to take it back to work tomorrow to have any chance of making amends with Fe, of keeping her job, but first she'll go through it and write what she can about Ennis's first days in Seacliff.



Michael thinks that God nestles in the nape of his neck. Ennis doesn't think that God would be so small. He imagines him the same size as any human. God hangs onto Michael by holding a few stray strands of hair, so even if he runs and jumps, God stays in the nape of Michael's neck. Ennis has looked at Michael's nape but he hasn't seen God. Maybe he crawls up into Michael's hair to hide if he suspects someone else is looking. Ennis is not chosen after all. He's probably not meant to see God in miniature.

Isn't there a story about a small boy that hangs onto a giant dog as it bounds along? Or is it a mouse that travels across the river on the back of a wolf and hopes that the wolf doesn't eat it? God talks to Michael, told him to knife his mother. Ennis isn't sure whether Michael is the wolf or the mouse.

On days of rain there is nothing to be done except stare at the rain. It comes in from the south at forty-five degrees. Its intensity varies. The wind pushes it a little harder every now and then. The birds like the rain, they come out and sing, and bathe themselves. The parson birds especially like it. They warble in a choir like the big-breasted ladies in church who look old but sound young. Ennis's mother believed in an Irish Catholic God from County Cork. His father doesn't believe in anything that he can't touch. His mother is dead. She cannot be touched by Ennis's madness. His father thanked his wife's God.

It was Ennis's sister who said he should save his money. Have your own house one day, she said, a family. Something solid. It's what a man should aim for, at your age. She said it like some kind of apologetic accusation. A gentle shove. Ennis would somehow become more desirable with more money, with brick walls around him, and carpet to tread on. That's when he decided to invite Frank to live in the boarding house. It was a saving, and some company for him. He'd known Frank since primary school. He used to live down the road, and Ennis would kick around with him during the weekends. They would go to the dunes and slide down. Other times they would go to Andy Bay and watch men sail model boats on the still water. The boats made the men look like giants. Ennis found it a little queer those boats – building something that only a mouse could sail in.

Ennis didn't know how the invisible line from the controller to the boat worked. How did it receive messages to change the sail to suit the wind conditions, how did it know to follow the race outline and then come into shore? When he

should have been looking at the match race Ennis would look at the men with the controllers. Buttons being turned from side to side. The men's faces looked tense or relaxed depending on how well the race was going. After the race the men would wipe the boats clean, and talk about repairs. A paint touch-up. A sail that would need re-rigged. So much time, pride, and love went into those boats.

Even though Ennis is mad, he is allowed to go to the Waikouaiti races. Wack-a-why it's called for short. The medical superintendent said Ennis posed no immediate risk to the public. He will need to wear good clothes and a hat. Ennis had felt apprehensive about that because he doesn't have any good clothes, but the nurse said not to worry, that the asylum will provide some. His initial relief gave way to more concern that somehow the clothes will be marked with the asylum. Perhaps the word Seacliff will be embroidered onto the shirt pocket, or other words like *mad* or *murderer*.

"We'll ride there in the bus, and one of the guards will be assigned to look after you." Michael says it like it is a positive thing, having a mate for a day rather than a minder.

"You won't get any money to bet on the horses, mind you, and you're not allowed in the grandstand. But you can sit on a rug on the grass and watch from there. No booze, but soda and sandwiches. It'll be a corker day. The sunburn lasts for days so when you're back in the bin, laying on your bed, you can close your eyes, and imagine that you're still at the races."

Michael's enthusiasm makes Ennis momentarily forget about his anxieties.

When Ennis first arrived at Seacliff the nurse said, "Here's the body, then." She wrote something on the form the prison guard gave her and handed it back like it was a receipt after payment for a sack of potatoes. Perhaps it was because Ennis was out

of his mind that only his body was accounted for. Whatever form of consciousness he formerly possessed, it was the asylum's job to entice it back.

The nurse looked at the bruises around Ennis's neck.

"He tried to do away with himself in the cell," the guard said.

The nurse tutted and shook her head and reached for a straightjacket. Its thick cotton bound Ennis like an Egyptian mummy. Wrapped up like death, but not allowed to die.

Ennis can recollect how he put pressure on his windpipe, how he fixed his fingers on his throat, it was like pressing a finger down over a hole on a recorder, and he could choose to release the sound or not. He didn't choose to but the policeman wrenched Ennis's hand away from his throat.

She wonders whether there a fraction of a second, after the policeman came across Ennis trying to strangle himself, when the policeman thought about letting Ennis die? But he didn't, the policeman saved Ennis. Was it just because it was the policeman's job, or was it because the policeman knew Ennis, knew the man before the murder?

Ennis worked for 20 years at Donaghy's rope factory. The questionnaire that Mary, Ennis's sister, completes asks whether he stuck long at one job, or was inclined to be shifty? The written response, in the Doctor's hand – she assumes – rather than Mary's, says that he was not shifty. This positive character trait would have been a small consolation.

The more she finds out about Ennis, the more questions are raised. Frank worked with Ennis, but did Ennis have any other workmates? Did Ennis manage to cover-up his symptoms enough to do his work? The only clue to Ennis's illness, that Mary alludes to, was that he was worried, and could not sleep. *He was excitable*

over trifles, Mary says. Did these trifles occur over work? Did the doctor note all of Mary's words? Charlie wants to know the trifles.

Twenty Two

It would be an ordinary morning if it wasn't for her sense of dread. She wonders whether this will be the last morning that she has to get up early, that she has to wear an ironed shirt. On the way to the bus stop she feels a heightened awareness of her surroundings. The air is free from humidity. She catches the sweet scent of the orange and yellow lilies with splayed petals that grow tall at the house on the corner. If the lilies were inside their scent would be overpowering but out here in the still air the smell is subtle.

The ginger fluffy cat that usually demands the attention of passersby flops at her feet. She bends down to pat it. Drapes are still drawn across front rooms of the wooden villas along Wilson Street. The two-storeyed villa with a *God is Good* sign facing out of their front room has two mini vans parked on the concrete outside their front door. She can smell cinnamon emanating from the Mexican restaurant and remembers when she had a coffee there spiked with the spice. It had filled her with warmth and surprise at the depth of flavour.

A tall skinny man with a bounding walk wearing a Black Sabbath t-shirt tucked into his light blue jeans, and carrying a 2.5 litre bottle of coke, stands at the corner of Wilson and Riddiford Streets. He smiles broadly and says hello to those he recognises. She sees him at the café sometimes. He comes in to talk to the staff and distribute community newsletters. He doesn't say hello to her though.

She stands at the bus stop outside a clothing store. A white female mannequin in the shop window is draped in a sari of maroon with a gold speckled band, and wears gold coloured shoes. The pants beneath the sari are gold too. The male mannequin has a beige coloured shirt, long sleeved with a small V, and a few

buttons at the neck. His pants more yellow than gold. She feels dull and old fashioned wearing black.

She sees familiar faces at the bus stop. The young woman who wears a David Bain styled jumper in greys and natural wool. They are in fashion with the boho set, matched with Victorian-esque boots and a short leather skirt. It makes them look like aristocratic lady farmers about to go to the top paddock to sort out some ewes in a modern take on a Thomas Hardy novel. Or perhaps she is just getting old.

Across the street, at the opposite bus stop outside Mr Bun, a man wears black shorts that come to his knees, and a black anorak jacket covers his bare torso. He moves like the 1970s version of The Incredible Hulk. Seeing him, she remembers how she used to watch the Hulk on Saturday mornings when she was a kid. He scared her because she couldn't quite believe the kindness that came from his large green frame. She knew that was the point though, that scary looking people don't necessarily do scary things.

Ennis didn't look scary, or so she imagines, yet he did a scary thing. He was short, five feet five according to the coffin measurements stated on his handwritten death certificate. It's hard to imagine that someone so short could be imposing, and the doctor continually says how quiet and shy Ennis was. He wouldn't speak unless spoken to. And yet, Ennis managed such a fury of emotion, and anxiety, in order to kill Frank. His best friend.

Fe, her best friend, who Charlie pushed to the wall and forced to act in accordance with her principles, and against her. Fe had to do it to protect her own livelihood. Maybe Frank acted for Ennis's own good and this was misconstrued by Ennis. Perhaps the only difference between Ennis and herself degrees of perspective.

The bus pulls up and people pile on. It pulls out and passes a bus going in the other direction. She watches people with their bored expressions pass by. Boredom now seems like a desired state to her given the storm of drama she has created around herself. The archive folder is in her bag. She gleamed all she could from it, but wonders whether she would be taking it back if she hadn't, yet she realises that taking it back will count for something with Fe and Anna. It might be the difference between having and losing her job, between having and losing a friend.

She says good morning to her colleagues and makes her way to her desk. Fe isn't sitting at her desk, her monitor is off, and there's no sign of her bag or jacket which is unusual. She's usually the first one here. This makes Charlie's breath quicken. She hadn't realised how upset Fe would be with her. Fe is always so pragmatic that it seems hard to upset her, but maybe this betrayal of loyalty, her trespassing on what should have been shared values about the protection of archives, about the protection of friendship, has been too much. Fe gave her so much support when she broke up with Hunter and this is how she repays her.

She opens her email and sees an appointment with Anna has been set up for 10am. Fe has been invited to the meeting too. She clicks on accept – after considering briefly clicking on the decline tab before acknowledging she has no grounds for defiance. The title of the meeting in the subject line is *Review of McDougall Files* and marked urgent. The red exclamation mark is the only hint of...of what? Anger, impatience, dismay, disappointment, she can only guess. Anna has probably had to get in touch with Human Resources to work out how far she has exceeded the boundaries of appropriate and contractual behaviour.

Charlie considers how she could defend herself if taking the folder is defined as theft. She did take an archive document home, and she can't genuinely say that she had intended to return it. If Fe hadn't discovered it she would have probably

kept it. At least she has brought it back now, and she quietly thanks God that she's displayed some sense, but even then, she could be sacked for taking it in the first place. She wishes she knew what Fe has said to Anna. Has Fe spilled her whole sorry story – dumped by a man with depression who had a suicide attempt, and who knows, her own preoccupation with the future could have driven him to it, and she thinks she's infertile, and has discovered a mad relation, no, make that two, to whom she bears some resemblance.

Charlie feels tears form. She is overtaken by the necessity to get somewhere private, quickly. She stands and walks away from her desk, keeping her head down to avoid any eye contact. The carpet that resembles stones from a river bed blurs into shingle. If she can just get to the toilets and sit for five minutes to get it out of her system, she rationalises, she'll be okay.

The gleaming white stalls are free, the toilet seat already down, and the smell of bleach suffocating. She turns the latch to *Engaged* and sits, and cries. The tears flow as steady and determined as rain in a southerly storm trying to cross the city, and a northerly flow halts it from passing over. She tries to be quiet and keep alert to anyone else coming into the bathroom.

She doesn't quite understand where these tears have come from, she thought she got it out of her system yesterday, and yet she knows it has something to do with Ennis, and the threat of losing her job and Fe along with it. She feels exposed and alone with only a dead mad man for company. Is this the tipping point she wonders, and considers her stupidity in bringing herself this far.

In losing Hunter and the possibility of kids with him, or with anyone else, and possibly losing her job, she has shot to pieces parts of her identity, the narrative of her *self*. If she loses Fe too she'll have nothing left. Is that what happened to Ennis? Was his sense of self shot to pieces? Couldn't he bring the strands of his narrative

together, or are these disparate and sparse elements that she has managed to attain all there was. And maybe this wasn't enough to stabilise his mind or form an identity.

There is a knock on the stall door. It startles her, she hadn't heard anyone come into the bathroom.

"It's time for the meeting with Anna, Charlie," Fe says.

She doesn't ask how Fe knows it's her in the stall. Instead she grabs more toilet paper, blows her nose, and attempts to straighten herself out before opening the stall. She knows she looks terrible, and Fe's startled reaction to her face confirms it. She looks away, an act of cowardice, she knows, but she can't bring herself to be brave.

Fe puts a hand on her shoulder and draws her into a hug. Fe's body is warm and soft. In comparison Charlie's body feels inflexible like the arthritic branches of a magnolia tree in winter.

"It's going to be alright," Fe says. She holds Charlie tight and close, so close she can smell her apple shampoo, and feels the dome on her shirt pocket press against her chest. They draw apart.

"I told Anna what you've been dealing with lately. And I see you've bought back the file," Fe says. "I know it doesn't seem so, but I've only done this to help you. I'm sorry I didn't text back on Saturday, I was just too angry to talk to you. But it's okay now, it's going to be alright."

She's so glugged up with snot and tears that her words, "thank you," catch in her throat.

"Let's get going," Fe says. "We don't want to be late."

Anna stands when they come into her office. Anna is incredibly thin, and always wears tailored shirts and skirts from Veronica Maine. She looks as though the

clothes were specifically made for her body. On first impression Anna's polished appearance is intimidating but as soon as she walks towards Charlie, and speaks she is gently enveloping and giving like a favourite aunt. Realising this, her tears start up again.

"Oh dear, come on now, sit down," Anna points to the two leather tub chairs in front of her desk. "We're not the firing squad, just concerned about some recent behaviour." Anna looks at Fe to include her in the 'we're' before handing Charlie the box of tissues on her desk when they sit down.

She can't look at either of them. Instead she stares intently at the tissues in her hand and notices how they're wadded together with her tears.

When she speaks, Anna's tone is kind yet firm. It's more than Charlie feels she deserves.

"In light of what's happened with the folder, and what Fe has told me about your private life, perhaps it's best that we arrange some domestic leave for you, until you're a hundred percent."

"What do you think?" Fe adds when Charlie remains unresponsive.

Charlie feels lulled by the white noise of the computers, lights and air-con in the room. Suddenly she's very tired. She says, "That might be best. Thank you." She looks up, "I'm sorry Anna for disappointing you, and you too, Fe." She looks at Fe who responds with a smile of reassurance.

"The best thing now, is for you to get some rest," Anna says. "And it may give you an opportunity to think about the importance of your work, and of archiving for the use of everyone for the present, and in the future."

"Will the McDougall files be transferred onto someone else?" she asks Anna.

"Yes. And a written warning will be going on your HR file." Anna turns directly to her, looking for understanding of the serious consequences of the incident.

"I understand," she says.

Anna's tone softens now the formalities are over. "If you want to access your ancestor's information, you need to go through the appropriate channels."

While Charlie nods in agreement, in her petulant heart she doesn't see why she can't have the file, Ennis is her family after all, and who will really care for him in the archive? Ennis's file has gone from one institution to another, and in both he has been secreted away, silenced.

Anna stands, her declaration that the meeting is over. After she clarifies the date Charlie is to return to work, she tells her to "go well" before opening the office door.

Charlie walks out onto the street, shielding her eyes from the sun with her hand, and waits for Fe who is collecting her stuff from her desk to avoid questions and stares from her colleagues.

"Are you going to be alright?" she asks as she hands her handbag over.

"Yes, I think so."

"Maybe this fortnight off will give you a chance to finish your writing, to get it out of your system."

Twenty Three

Before murdering Frank, Ennis had tried to kill himself at Lawyers Head. It's in the newspaper reports from the trial. It doesn't go into the particulars, just mentions a suit left in Ennis's dresser drawer, wet. The sopping wet suit fascinates her. The salty water must have soaked through to all of his other clothes in the drawer, if he had any. It would have smelt of the sea. There would be sand in the suit's folds, which would have littered the boarding room floor. He would've walked back from Lawyers Head in a drenched suit through the streets of south Dunedin.

It seems strange, and yet entirely reasonable, that he would put his good suit on to kill himself. You would want to make your suicide as tidy as you could, she assumes. This fact seems to illuminate Ennis, and yet, in isolation she's not sure what it adds up to.

The doctor wrote in Ennis's file about his concern about money, his continual repetition of where it was hidden, and who could steal it. Ennis thought Frank would steal his money, it's why he murdered Frank, a man no one has written about. The murderer's motive and illness is of more interest to McDougall than the life of his victim. She is more interested in Ennis, too, she wants to understand how it happened, which means that his victim is, if not forgotten, sidelined. She's not sure how she will remedy that. Although she wonders what the nature of their relationship was, she can't blame Frank for something he didn't see coming.

It says in Ennis's file how he loved children, but was shy with strangers. She imagines that Ennis would have wanted a family, the stumbling block being that he couldn't start a romantic relationship, given his reserve. In that interpretation she can see herself in Ennis, how she too is thinking about the idea of family, and why she's not in one, why she is still alone. These similarities make her feel a kinship with

Ennis, that on some level she knows him, but on another level it makes her feel deeply uncomfortable because she thinks there is some essence that they share that cannot be extracted from her mind, if indeed mental illness is born from a combination of chemicals. Yet the fixations on family and money feels like society bearing down on Ennis and his identity, telling him what a man should and shouldn't be.



Ennis's suit is made of tweed so thick that the hardest of frosts could not permeate it. Even the easterly wind that seems to be permanently blowing through South Dunedin does not infiltrate his suit, though the cuffs of the sleeves are showing signs of faltering resistance. Ennis did not look in the mirror to check his appearance after he had put the suit on, he is shy about his looks, and was in too much of a hurry to be distracted by his thin face and slight body. Instead, he picked up a sack of stones that had been deposited by the door, threw the sack over his shoulder, donned his hat with his free hand, and shut the door behind him. There was no one on the boarding house stairs, only the sound of the kauri grain stretching under his footsteps.

King Edward Street is deserted on a Sunday morning. Shop fronts closed, blinds drawn like eyelids closed in sleep. He feels the heaviness of his own eyes. He had slept in fits and starts last night, too restless in thought about the next day's task to sleep soundly. Church bells are ringing. When Ennis was a child his mother would clasp her hands, connect her thumbs together and say, "here is the church", and then she would bring her pinkie fingers together, "here is the steeple, open the door," and she would turn her hands over to reveal her fingers wiggling, "and here

are all the people.” Ennis crosses himself. Aside from sin, it’s about all he can remember of religion.

There will be more people out and about this afternoon promenading at St Clair. Ennis usually goes to watch the people. Couples, young and old, arm in arm. Children run and are told to slow down by mothers who want to walk at a leisurely pace. It looks so easy, the attachment that people have to each other, that despite the trials of the week the couples and families had their Sunday afternoons which made the arguments and compromises of the week worthwhile. He always feels conspicuous at St Clair. It was an effort to go there, only to be exposed to the southerly and look at the golden sand that was seldom warm enough to stand barefoot in. Just being there wasn’t enough though, he needed to talk to people, mingle, but it never came easy, and not many people made an effort to talk to a person standing alone. They huddled in their groups and regarded Ennis with suspicion if he smiled at them.

More often than not Ennis would stand staring out at the small island in the bay. It was a mound of rock. Nobody lived there but Ennis would stand there thinking about living on the island. It would be easy enough to get a little boat to come back and forth to get supplies, but on the island he would be exposed to easterly and southerly winds. The sea whips up quickly. He could drown out there and no one would know. At the conclusion of every Sunday he would dismiss his thoughts of living on the island. But every Sunday Ennis would come back to St Clair in the hope that someone would smile back.

He didn’t always go alone to St Clair, sometimes he went with his cobber, Frank, but not lately. Lately they haven’t been seeing eye-to-eye. They have been arguing about money.

“I know where you hide it.”

“Hide what?”

“The money,” Frank replied.

“No you don’t.”

“I do so. You’ve made a false bottom in your dresser drawers. Don’t worry, I’m not going to steal it.”

Ennis can’t read Frank’s smile. It is cheeky, like maybe he will steal it and is trying to make light of it.

“You won’t tell anyone, will you?”

“How long have you known me? If you’re that bloody worried, put it in the bank.”

“The bank stole the last lot, using it for other people’s business. I like my money where I can see it.”

Frank shakes his head. He says, “They haven’t stolen it, that’s just how banking works. You just go along there, and they’ll give the money back to you.”

Ennis had tried to do that. He walked through the door in between the two limestone columns of the New Zealand bank and saw dirt from work boots on the timber floor. Men in suits were behind the counter, counting, filling out forms. There were lines of men waiting, looking straight ahead rather than talking amongst themselves. Ennis could smell their sweat, their vulnerability about their bank balance, the difference between what amount they wanted and what they would have to make do on. In comparison, the men behind the counter looked smug in their authority, in their ability to say yes or no depending on how flexible they were feeling about the rules of lending. Ennis started to smell his own fear, so he turned around, and walked back out the door.

“I like it where I can see it, and get my hands on it quickly, if I need to.”

"Why do you need money quickly? All you spend it on is board and food, it's not like you're some fancy man with a dolly bird." Frank was attempting to be reassuring, to make light of the situation, but Ennis didn't take it that way. Instead, it was a slight. A reminder that he wasn't the man he wanted to be.

A couple of days later, Ennis saw Frank talking to a man from the David Street gang. The gang were a bunch of petty thieves, and general rat bags, who had nothing better to do on South Dunedin streets than be a nuisance. Ennis had asked Frank why he was talking to the man. Frank replied that he was just conversing with a fella who was trying to scratch a living.

"It's tough times, you know that, Ennis."

"Are you going to join up with them?"

Frank just turned away and took a draught of beer in reply to the question. He was tired of Ennis's suspicions, he was getting dafter by the day.

"You didn't tell him about my money, did you?"

"Why would I tell him when I've gone to the trouble of taking out a full page ad in Monday's paper? I'll tell every bastard in Dunedin about your God-damned money. For Christ's sake Ennis--put it in the damn bank, and put your mind at rest. I don't want to hear another word about it."

Frank left the pub, and Ennis went upstairs to their shared room. He opened the dresser drawer and counted up his 93 pounds. The bank had taken 250 pounds. It was more money than Ennis had ever had, yet it didn't seem enough, or it didn't seem to make any difference. He was still living in the same way, he was still thinking of the island. Ennis continued to count and recount the money, pretending he was a bank clerk who could give out money or take it away.

Why hadn't Frank said yes or no to his question about joining the gang?

Frank had just turned away, and this troubled Ennis. Perhaps Frank had gone now to

David Street to tell the man about his money, and plot to take it from him. It could be part of his initiation. It would make Frank a big man in the gang to steal that amount of money. Instead of putting the money back in the drawer, Ennis put it in a draw-string bag and pinned it to the inside of his singlet. Ennis decided that if Frank wanted the money, he would have to fight him for it, and even kill Ennis if he had to. Ennis was too close to having the money for a family, and he wasn't giving it up now.

As soon as Ennis had resolved to fight he felt overwhelmed with the idea that Frank would have to kill him for the money. Ennis wasn't concerned that he would die, rather that he would make a murderer out of Frank.

The sand at St Kilda is white. Through the tussock Ennis walks towards Lawyers Head. He takes the sack off his shoulder, and puts the stones into his pockets. He can see St Clair though it's miles away at the other end of the same stretch of sand. It's too early for promenading, but he imagines that people have begun to gather there, arm in arm. That is his only sadness - he never got to walk arm in arm with someone at St Clair. Ennis puts the smooth stones in between his singlet and shirt, and hopes that the tucked-in tails will hold them there. He walks towards the waves, crossing himself again for his mother's sake, knowing that he is about to commit a sin. But stealing and murder are also sins, and he is saving Frank from committing both. The weight of the stones is reassuring, and he believes that his tweed suit will insulate him from most of the pain.

He collected the stones yesterday, the day after he had seen Frank talk to the man from the gang. Ennis had thought about going up to the gorge to collect rocks, but there was a pile of stones amongst the rubbish at the factory.

"What in the name of Jesus?" Frank had accidentally kicked the bag as he walked in the room last night. Ennis had pretended he was asleep. "Are you burying

your fortune now, is that it? Eejit.” Frank had slumped on his bed and into sleep, and left early the next morning to breakfast with his sister’s family before attending Sunday service.

Ennis wades out. The waves are as heavy as his body, but more forceful. They push him down. And up. The stones fall from his belly. He tries to roll over so that his face is in the water, but the waves roll him up again, and again, like he is causing it indigestion and the sea wishes to spit him out. He is washed onto shore. Ennis lies on the beach with the sea in his ears. He looks up at the cliff face thinking it would have been easier to fall onto the rocks than to drown. The sand sticks to his suit, and the wind is cold. He is aware of his shaking, but is unable to stop his body moving. The sun is barely making a dent in the sky. He manages to stand, and tries to dust what sand he can off the suit. Some grains have gotten in between his skin and clothes, and rub against his flesh.

The boarding house stairs seem steeper. Ennis is conscious of leaving dribbles of water on the kauri surface, grains of sand.

The suit is hard to get off. The weight of the water sticks it to his skin and his arms and legs are tired, too tired to wrestle it from his body. It takes ages. Or it seems to. When he is naked, he dries himself off and dresses in dry clothes. Their warmth is instant relief. He folds up the suit neatly, places it in the duchess drawer, and returns the sodden money to the false bottom beneath it. Ennis lies down on the thin mattress on the iron-framed bed. The house is quiet. The shutters closed.

She looks up from her writing. She has been to St Clair. She went there with a library colleague in early December when she was down in Dunedin for work experience. It was warm, for Dunedin. They took the bus from the central city which drove through the Octagon where Robert Burns recites to the seagulls and

pigeons, who shit on his head in reply. The city rises steeply behind Burns, but the bus continued south, where the city used to thrive. The bus had stopped at the traffic lights next to the old Bank of New Zealand, its columns of Oamaru stone doing their best to convey European permanence. The bus changed gears as they passed The Exchange. The area is still referred to by that name, even though the wires are no longer connected by operators there.

“That’s such an amazing building.” She had turned to her companion, Jen, and pointed, her finger touching the glass of the bus window.

“The Exchange, yeah it is. Empty now. Some developer is going to make it into a hotel apparently, nothing’s happened though. It’s been like that for years. This time last year some loon got in there and was going to jump from the top. They managed to talk him down. Traffic was diverted and everything. It was a Tuesday morning. I was late for work.”

She had nodded while thinking that Jen’s language was unsympathetic towards the jumper. She’d noticed that Jen was like that at work, too, quick to judge, and thinking only of the effects of other peoples’ actions on her life, rather than being concerned for the people themselves. She had wondered why Jen had offered to take her around town, do the tourist thing, but she accepted the offer because she appreciated the company.

The bus went under a railway bridge that was posted with advertisements for beer that displayed a woman’s nether regions, rather than her face or torso.

“That used to be an old movie theatre, and around the corner there was one, too.”

There were second-hand stores beside both of the old theatres, and on her left the yellow of a supermarket chain. There was a Labour Party office by the Doctor’s

and pharmacy, which was opposite a window advertising the polytechnic's free beginners' computer classes. The bus turned right.

"On the right here there used to be factories--gone now, of course."

Most of the properties on the right hand side of the street were boarded up with corrugated iron. Posters for upcoming concerts were pasted onto it, and a few tags sprayed on.

On the left-hand side of the road she saw some gang members milling around a park. They wore black jeans, and a black jacket with red markings, but she couldn't clearly see what the design was.

At the roundabout, they headed down the road to St Clair past the large wooden and brick houses with landscaped gardens. Land Rovers were parked on the wide street.

"This is the end of the line." Jen stood and got off the bus, and she followed.
"Shall we have a wee walk and then come back for a cuppa?"

There were park benches along the promenade area. They walked down some concrete stairs littered with sand onto the beach and walked north.

"When I was younger, I used to bus out here and walk all the way around the coast. Had to be careful and know when the tide was out."

They had barely walked a hundred metres and Jen was already out of breath,
"I couldn't do it now though, oh, I'm puffing like billy-o."

The sand stretched on and on to the north. The tide was out. Charlie walked up to the water, slipped out of her jandals and felt the slap of cold water hit her feet. Her body visibly absorbed the shock.

"It's bloody freezing," she said. "You'd need to wear a wet suit."

“You wouldn’t catch me in there. The salt water pools are nice though, on a hot day.” Jen pointed to the south where the pools were snuggled up to a cliff for some shelter from the southerly.

Charlie asked, “What’s the name of the island?” Island seemed too big a word for the mound of earth just off the coast.

“White Island.”

They had walked along the beach for a bit. Charlie noticed that there were very few shells on the beach. They headed to one of the cafes. It was packed with mothers and babies. Dogs were tied up outside. It was obviously a popular place to drop into and have a drink after a walk. She was glad she hadn’t come alone. Everyone else in the café was with someone else. It had a contented and chatty feel, and yet, in some way she felt excluded but couldn’t work out why.

When she had gone to Island Bay with Hunter they had sat on the seawall eating fish and chips. Steam escaped from the gap they made in the top of the newspaper parcel of food. They had bought a couple of sachets of tomato sauce and tore the film away as best they could with greasy fingers, hoping the sauce wouldn’t splatter.

She had told Hunter the story about the island.

“Kupe stood on that island and saw Muturangi’s octopus, which he chased to the South Island and killed. Tapu Te Ranga Motu the island is called.”

She had turned away from the island back to Hunter who reached for his can of Sparkling Duet. When the aluminium can connected with the concrete sea wall with a metallic ting, he started speaking.

“That’s what it feels like most days, like I am being pursued like the octopus but when I turn around to defend myself, I see that I am Kupe as well, that at the same time I am chasing, I am also running away from myself. It’s exhausting. I

would like to swim out to that island and hide away.” He had turned to her. “Not forever, just until I feel better.”

She held him. No words seemed appropriate to console. They had walked back to Newtown and spent the night together. But that conversation has been lurking in her consciousness and has come out in Ennis, their shared need to escape from the world in order to rest, and feel better again. In some ways the institutions they have ended up in are island-like in their separation from the world but that sense of self-determination, being able to decide when to come and go from the island, is absent. They were more captive than castaway.

Twenty Four

The barest of light comes through. Frank is in bed, his eyelids flicker. Ennis gets out of bed, carefully, quietly. He takes hold of the blue peter bottle on the windowsill. It is cold and smells of stale beer. Ennis walks behind Frank's bed, and smashes the bottle over Frank's head. Ennis jumps back, startled by his actions, and by the sound of glass on skull, but he's started it now, so he'll have to finish it, quickly. Frank rouses a little, his left leg moving as if to get up. Ennis grabs his razor off the washstand. He uses his fingers to make the loose skin of Frank's neck taut, and slits it beneath his jaw line. The razor is sharp. Ennis applies more pressure, feeling panic as his strength behind the blade makes little progress.

He wants it to be over quickly, so Frank doesn't feel too much pain, but Ennis's muscles are failing him. Ennis pushes the blade deeper and deeper, his face contorts with the effort. His arms shake as he draws more strength from his biceps, and keeps pushing until he can be sure Frank is dead. Frank's blood spreads up the sleeve on Ennis's right arm. The blood is warm, and the warmth of Frank's body spilling onto the bedding creates condensation in the room.

"I did the right thing." Ennis says. "I did the right thing."

Ennis takes his money out from the duchess drawer and walks out to the street, past the sounds of people rising, and running water. The day is stinging cold. Ennis throws his money away as he walks. Coinage rolls and clatters. The notes are still damp. He does not realise that he is still wearing his night clothes.

"I have murdered Frank MacAlister. I did the right thing. He would have killed me and taken my money."

The Policeman looks up. It's not until he sees the blood up Ennis's arm that he puts down his mug of tea, and walks around from his desk towards him.



She closes her notebook quickly as if turning the pages over will make the murder disappear, so she won't have to think about it, but it's not much use.

Ennis hurt the person closest to him. She suspects their emotional bond was strong. It would have to be after knowing each other since childhood, and then cohabitating as adults. Why do we hurt the ones we're closest to? It feels like she's just acted for her own selfish needs and disregarded her friendship with Fe. Ennis's instinct was to protect Frank but his way of doing so was obviously deluded. Yet her instinct was self-interest, the result being a disregard for Fe and her beliefs, her job. She forced Fe into self-preservation but Fe did so while still protecting her. Is that what Frank tried to do with Ennis? Perhaps that's the reason they lived together, so Frank could support Ennis, and Frank ended up paying the ultimate price for friendship.

Murder and stealing archives aren't comparable in their severity, she reminds herself, but comparing Ennis's motivations with her own, she notes her single-mindedness in contrast to Ennis's deluded notion of protection, and doesn't think she comes out on top.

There was more to Ennis's motivations for murder, of course, and she wonders whether the feeling that you're not achieving what society thinks you should really leads to such extremes, or is it a bit of brain chemistry and expectations that confounded Ennis? If it was pressure from outside of Ennis, does she feel this pressure too, is this where her concern about fertility comes from, that it's not so much the physical condition of polycystic ovaries that will tip her over the edge, but

the societal pressure or expectation to have children? The doctor didn't tell her much about polycystic ovaries when she was first diagnosed but she looked it up and found out that genetics do play a part. And the condition can lead to depression.

She can remember being completely terrified about it, when her mother broached the subject of periods.

It's probably about time, her mum said to her older sister, *that Charlotte had the talk.*

They were all sitting in the lounge, not watching TV, but just sitting. It was raining and there was condensation on the windows.

Her older sister had stood up, and placed her hands like the head of an arrow flat on her pelvis just inside her hip bones, and said, *well,* she hooked her thumbs, *this is the place of your ovaries.*

Her mind blanks after that. She knows the conversation ended but doesn't know how. All she remembers later is sitting in the parked car - they must have gone somewhere to break up the dull afternoon - and watching the rain on the windshield and wondering what the hell her sister and her mother were talking about. She didn't want anything to change. Didn't think anything would change. It panicked her. She silently wished that nothing would change in her body, ever. Years later she wondered whether that wish was answered because her ovaries don't work, they don't generate the potential for life that the Tampax tampon booklet given out during Health class in Form One promised.

First of all there was a lot of blood. And then there wasn't any.

Her body was imbalanced, hairy, and seemed more male than female. Before she was diagnosed she would religiously shave her legs, as if that somehow negated the hair that was growing elsewhere, as if that meant people wouldn't notice it on her chin. She was putting on weight too, while her hair was thinning on her head and

growing on her chin, she was putting on weight around her middle, and at the tops of her thighs. When she crouched down to get something off the floor she would be momentarily transfixed by the fat of her thighs, how wide and firm they were. Although she was getting bigger, and hairier, and more visible, she also felt invisible. Invisible as a woman because the essential elements of femaleness: clean and clear skin - clear of pimples and hair – being thin, and having your monthly were not attributes she had. And yet she wasn't a girl anymore because she had boobs, and her periods had started. But when they stopped she wasn't really a woman, either. The hair growth made her look like a man. She became invisible as a woman, and yet visible as some other entity, as not quite a man either, but heading in that direction. Left in some no (wo)man's land.

And then there were her moods. She retreated. She'd stay in her room on Sunday afternoons and listen to *Rick Dee's Weekly Top 40* on the radio rather than hang out with friends, of which there were only a few. She'd have conversations with the members of New Kids on the Block whose posters adorned her bedroom.

She had a Walkman shaped liked a triangle and yellow like the segments of cheddar cheese she sometimes got in her lunches. It had a strap so she could wear it like a handbag but she never did. She plugged in her headphones and listened to NKOTB and escaped inside herself in an attempt to ignore her freak of a body and imagine that it could be as desirable as the girls the band members sang about. She could trick herself for a while, but only a while. To the people outside of her bedroom her body made her a point of interest, someone to be stared at, talked about, and teased.

She had felt very alone, and trapped inside her body. She knows that writing about Francie, the doctor's wife, is a projection of her condition, but she couldn't give her all the side effects of the condition that Charlie suffered. It would have been

accurate of course, but that accuracy seemed too cruel to repeat. And Francie's feeling of being alive and being grateful despite the fallibility of her body is what she wants to feel, but at times she's not sure, at times she feels like she could turn out like Aunt Sheryl.

She remembers her mum explaining what her aunt's illness was like when she was a kid. Heather had said, "It's just like your body gets sick, instead it's your head, and it needs a rest to get better." That the mind is as vulnerable to illness as the body made sense to her, and still does. Though that conversation with her mother was seemly unrelated to her body at the time, now it's not, the consequences are real to her. There may be genes lurking in her body ready to react if life gets too much for her. She got unlucky with inheriting the dodgy ovaries, but what if the genes for Ennis's and Aunt Sheryl's mental illness are there too?

She does wonder whether her lack of intimate relationships is a form of protection. In avoiding connecting emotionally the question of children hasn't come up. She hasn't tested her fertility because of her fear of coming up short, of not being a mother, of failing a partner. She's not sure what that emotional rollercoaster could do to her. Her Aunt didn't come through it unscathed. Even though she wants a family, since Hunter left she's kept the idea at arm's length in order to avoid disappointment. But it could be that very lack of connection, and desire for it, that ends up driving her mad, like Ennis. She feels damned either way.

Twenty Five

Frank worked with Ennis at Donaghy's rope works in the preparing room. They would place the sisal into the machine which prepared it for carding, which was what the women did. The fibre was dry and roughened Ennis's hands until his palms were thick with calluses. He would use a razor blade to cut them away when they got too thick, so thick there was no movement in his palm. The hard yellow skin was the same colour as the fibre and curled like wood shavings. Ennis was careful not to cut too close to his skin and moved the blade slowly beneath the calluses. Sometimes he would nip his palm with the blade and blood would seep quickly, but it was easily stemmed with pressure. When he looked close at the cut-off dead skin he could see thin lines running through it, imprinted off his palm. It smelt like sweat. His hand always felt lighter afterwards, more flexible, freer. His mind felt lighter, too.

Every hour, Frank and Ennis would swap between gathering the sisal, and feeding it into the machine. To feed it they had to lay it out at an even thickness and ease it into the machine with their hands. It was easier than bending and gathering up the sisal but the variety was good. It was hot on the factory floor. There were glass panels in the ceiling which the sun beamed through, and with the noise and heat coming off the machines it would be unbearable in summer. Ennis would sweat so much that it felt like his body was sliding away.



Is that a trifle, that his sister Mary said Ennis was excitable about in his file, feeling constricted by your own skin and needing to cut it away? She can't imagine working so hard physically. Bending down, picking up, and feeding. She thinks she's in top physical form when she swims, and walks home from work, but compared to Ennis's

work, it's nothing. Ennis's body would have been all bones and muscle, not an inch of fat on him after so much labour. Was the physicality of his work the first step towards his mental exhaustion? Did the tiredness and worry come from a fatigued body? She knows herself, when she's tired, she doesn't think straight, that it's best to go to bed and make decisions in the morning. Perhaps Ennis's exhaustion went beyond self-awareness.

All men were meant to work hard, back then. So McDougall says. Work was a source of a man's identity, along with having a family. Ennis didn't have a family, so perhaps he overcompensated with work. Stayed longer hours, worked through his breaks, who knows? All she knows, is that in the end, it didn't do him any good.

Is it the same now, work and family being the source of identity? Not just for men, but women too? Given her recent scare at work she suspects so. It seems to be the only element of her life that is concrete and gives her purpose while also giving her some cultural cache. Without a family it has become her sole focus, her sole defining feature. If she met a grisly end, it would be on the news, and she would be defined as a Librarian. *Charlie Schmidt, Librarian*. Like the pizza worker who was murdered a few years ago. It annoys her that she can only remember his job rather than his name, or any other personal details. But now the papers and the public remember him as a pizza worker. And it wouldn't matter what job the man had, but the fact that he is defined solely by it that annoys her. From an occupation a whole lot of characteristics are assumed and an identity formed.



Women worked at the factory. Girls, too. They would work the spinning machines while Ennis and the other men would do the physical work of feeding in the fibre. The women watched the fibre as it was wound into ropes. They monitored the tension.

There was one girl called Rosemary. She was about the same age as Ennis. Her hair was in a bob, and the sleeves of her shirt were short and showed her taut arm muscles. Ennis watched her muscles flex as she worked.

A few of the men didn't like having the women at the factory. They were cheap labour and doing an easy job that some of the older men could do, and probably do better. The men reasoned that the bosses didn't want to get the gorse out of their pockets and pay for some decent labour. And they were forever having morning teas for women who were leaving and getting married, never to return to the factory. The older men would argue that if the bosses just employed men they'd have a more stable work force, and wouldn't have to keep replacing the machine workers every five minutes.

Ennis nodded along with the other men to these arguments, but he liked having the women there. Not because of any labour force argument, but because he didn't often talk with women, aside from his sisters. His work was the only place out of the home that he saw women, and had the possibility to interact with them. Not that he said much. Most of the time the women just told him and the other men to hurry up with the sisal, or to put more or less in. Although the women had the lowest paying jobs, it was they who controlled the output because they operated the machines. This was the biggest contention that the older male workers had, that the women controlled the rate of work.

Ennis would often think of Rosemary's arms flexed around his body. His desires were of the innocent variety. He imagined them both clothed but bodies

touching, no kissing but perhaps the feeling of her hair against his face as they held each other. He might be able to feel her breasts against his chest, but only if they held each other tight enough. His desires were innocent because he wasn't entirely sure what to do beyond holding and kissing. Ennis certainly felt a quickening in his privates, but wasn't sure what to do with it beyond taking care of it himself, and then feeling ashamed about it. The idea of Rosemary holding him, of his entering her were not things that had ever been discussed with him. His father hadn't sat him down and talked about it. It was after marriage that all was to be revealed, so Ennis's mother insisted, whenever talk of boyfriends or girlfriends came up, which was seldom and usually in reference to Ennis's sisters.

When he was older, and started going to the pub in the evening, he picked up more through the innuendo of some men's talk. The men's mouths would run after a few drinks - run into no good, so the men would have Ennis believe.

Sometimes during summer, at lunch, the men would play cricket on the green beside the factory. A wooden box would be used as wickets, and whoever managed to bowl or catch the batter out would make their way to the pitch. Ennis wouldn't often get a turn at bat, instead he would lurk in the outfield waiting for the ball to head in his direction. The other men were more boisterous. One of them represented the region in cricket and liked to show off his fast bowling style which no one could return, until eventually someone would say, *come on mate, give us a break*, which he did, satisfied that everyone knew of his sporting prowess.

Some of the women would watch. They would bring their sandwiches outside, sit in the shade, and chat while the ball thwacked against the bat. When the ball did head in Ennis's direction he would feel self-conscious about his running and aware that everyone would be looking at him, judging the way he picked up the ball and returned it. He wasn't the strongest man but his throw was as good as any. He

returned it to the wicket keeper and felt relieved. Rosemary would watch. She would sit down on an old sack that was laid on the grass, and bring her legs close to her body and watch the match. She would clap at a powerful hit or at a wicket taken. Ennis imagined she was clapping at his skill.

Ennis didn't get anywhere with Rosemary. He barely spoke to her, but in his mind they had had in-depth conversations about the future. They talked about the house they would live in, and when they got married she would leave the factory to raise their children. He couldn't have his wife working outside of the home. Before marriage they would have courted, gone to the films, and a few dances at the Scottish Hall. They would promenade along St Clair beach on Sunday afternoons. Ennis would run his hand through her hair and feel how the sea salt had thickened it.

These thoughts of the future made Ennis happy, if only temporarily. He would spend whole afternoons in a snug of day dreams while he worked. Sometimes Frank would ask him what he was smiling about, and Ennis would say, *nothing*.

In the end it was nothing. There was a morning tea for Rosemary. She had been seeing one of the other men in the factory and it had escaped Ennis's notice. What had felt real to Ennis was relegated to dreams, foolish dreams that he was too passive to act on. He had only ever said hello, or good evening, or how are you to Rosemary, and even that had seemed like a tremendous effort on his part. Her clipped responses Ennis took as shyness when all the time she hadn't been interested in him at all. All this time she had been intent on promenading with someone else.

After a while there were other girls at the factory that he had fixated on, and did nothing about.

Twenty Six

Ennis has been hacking up great globs of bile. It is black. There is a moment when it sticks in Ennis's throat, and he doesn't think that he has the strength to bring it up, that it will plug his throat and suffocate him, but it dislodges eventually and drops into the toilet bowl. It always feels so big in his throat, but when Ennis looks at it in the dirty water of the toilet it is small. Once he has spat it up he feels better, like the balance of his body has momentarily corrected, until the next build-up of bile.

Ennis's mother, before she started drinking, was always concerned with the body's balance. She was in constant vigilance of her children's bowel movements. If she saw a slight flush to any of her children's cheeks she would ask them to stick their tongue out to see whether white globules coated their tongues, a sure sign of the body's imbalance. The tall blue bottle of milk of magnesia would be administered to the screwed-up faces of her children so that the balance could be restored.

She was religious in her devotion to bathing as well, except that Ennis noticed on occasion his eldest sisters would be exempt from the tub which made him jealous. He didn't like the water, and resisted being scrubbed clean by his mother's rough, germ-seeking hands.

"How can I see to them if they're invisible, the god-forsaken things."

She hunted for them behind Ennis's ears, under his chin and down his back, and on his knees that seemed to be continually scabbed.

"Clean yourself between your legs," she'd say, the only part of his body where her vigilance was discreet.

Ennis would ask how come his sisters didn't have to have a bath, and he was told to mind his own.

He didn't equate his sister's lack of bathing to the white linen strips that hung from the washing line that his mother and sisters had to scrub clean every month. Ennis would watch the wind slap the sanitary napkins together, not that he knew what they were called; Ennis only remembers being told to get away from the washing line.

His mother had never bathed during her period because the heat of the water would upset the body's balance, and make the bleeding stop which was no good, it had to come away. Too much cold could stop it, too, so there was no bathing in the pool or eating ice cream, not that she had much occasion to bathe in South Dunedin, and while she'd save for the children to have an ice-cream treat, she would often go without.

Ennis had always been prone to mucus which his mother encouraged him to hack up, slapping him on the back to hasten its movement.

"You've got water on your lungs," she'd say, "it needs to come up."

In winter time, when the fluid was particularly bad, Ennis would be plonked near the fire in an attempt to dry him out. While the heat was initially pleasant, it quickly became unbearable. He would ask to be moved, but his mother insisted he stay beside the fire to sweat out the fluid. It wasn't until he was sweating profusely, when his mother could see the fluid leaving his body, that Ennis was able to move away from the fire into the cool of his bedroom.

This was all before his mother started drinking.

It was just a wee nip of whiskey at first, to calm her nerves. There were a lot of children's bodies to be kept in balance, and when the baby died it seemed like evidence of her lack of housekeeping ability because a germ had got in somewhere.

It was the silence of the house that had alerted the rest of the family members to the death of the baby. At first the silence was welcomed, until the family

members felt the strangeness of the silence, how unnatural it was. They thought of the baby and how it would usually be awake by now, but they could only hear the timber of the house creaking, and next door leaving for the early shift at the yards. The eldest girls lay in bed knowing that they should be up by now getting breakfast, but they lay there, fearful, knowing something was wrong because Ma hadn't started bellowing instructions, and father hadn't left for work. He was usually the first one up and out of the house.

Then they heard footsteps, heavy, their father's. He tapped on the girls' bedroom door before opening it, and stepped one foot in. He knew they were awake, waiting.

"The baby has died in the night. Your mother is in bed, holding him, if you want to say goodbye to it."

The child now an 'it' like when it was first born, and they were still getting used to the child. What is it? What is its name? It needs feeding, it needs a sleep. The 'it' becoming 'baby' and then growing into the name of Mark. The father of the child had started the same process, but in reverse. He had lifted Mark out of his crib and given the cold baby to its mother, and said, "here it is," not from callousness, but from a need to accept, and accept quickly, that the baby was dead.

His wife had wrapped Mark up as if for warmth, and sat in bed holding him. The child was slightly blue, but apart from that looked perfect, too perfect, like a doll. She wanted to tip Mark's head back to see if its eyelids would open. In its swaddle the mother was warding off feeling the cold of her baby's body. She didn't want that to be the last memory of Mark, she had never understood why people want to touch the dead.

She hadn't done anything different from what she had done for the other babies, and they had all survived. This fact doesn't stop her from going over and

over in her head the care she gave Mark. She wonders whether she left him in the draught, whether she burped him enough after a feed, and whether her breast milk was nourishing enough. Was the bath water too hot, or too cold? There must have been some point when she didn't keep Mark's body in balance for him to slip away in his sleep. There had been reports in the paper about doctors discovering cells, and she had meant to read them but hadn't. She chastised herself, told herself she should've kept up to date with what the medical men were saying, and then maybe Mark's death could have been avoided.

Mark was christened, as were all the children, though his father didn't believe in that doolen rubbish. Now, the ceremony was a small mercy for his wife. Although she couldn't care properly for Mark's body at least his soul was taken care of.

"You shouldn't be blaming yourself, these things happen," her husband told her.

"Of course I bleedin' blame myself, I was his mother, I should've taken care of him better."

"Your continual suffering won't bring him back."

"Don't talk to me about suffering, you wouldn't know the first thing about my suffering. A woman's grief is tenfold that of a man's."

"And a Catholic woman's ten times more."

"Don't you go blaming the church for my suffering, it's the church that is looking after your dead son's soul, and not the bleedin' rationalists or free-feckless-thinkers."

When babies are born it becomes incomprehensible that there was any time before the baby, that somehow the child has always existed. While the rest of her family

gradually remembered the time before Mark, his mother couldn't. After a time her husband was unsure whether she drank to forget Mark or in order to keep his memory alive. Her husband tried to rationalise with her, reminding her of her children still living, and pointing out the other mothers in the community had lost children, but still managed to get out of bed each day and face life. None of his messages got through to her. She continued to slide down into the bottle, and took the housekeeping money with her until he put a stop to that. He put the eldest girl, Virginia, in charge of the household.

He had tried to hide the booze or tip it down the sink, and didn't give her any money but somehow she got hold of the liquor. At first she had begged Virginia for some money and the girl gave it to her, not knowing how to refuse her mother. He had to reprimand them both for that, which only meant he had his daughter crying and his wife swearing at him, curses he had never heard her utter. His wife had become increasingly angry, increasingly bewildered. Once, she was in the front yard when a Constable walked passed the house. The Constable looked at her and doffed his hat, and his wife asked him what the fuck he was gawking at. She was fined for swearing. It was in the papers. The men at his work looked at him sideways or pretended not to have read about it. The shame of it, that he couldn't control his own wife.

He had made a deal with his wife after that, that he would keep her supplied with booze so long as she kept to her room and never ventured outside. If she did, the booze would be cut off and he'd take her to the bin. It was the threat of the bin that made her toe the line. That he compared her to the loons, the people with no self-control. She had heard of people who smeared their own shit on the walls of the bin, who talked to themselves, and attacked other patients with no provocation. And the nursing staff were brutes, she'd heard, who made the patients work to keep the

place clean, hours and hours spent in the laundry hot washing sheets. She knew she wouldn't survive it, knew that she wasn't mad, that it was the drink, but she couldn't stop the drinking. The numb void was too inviting, the escape route mapped and easy to follow, though she has started to notice that she had to walk further and further along the route as her tolerance to alcohol increased, but she kept walking and walking, determine to escape.

Twenty Seven

She reads the previous day's writing while she finishes her breakfast. She's still in her dressing gown, and the coffee is too strong and bitter for her liking but she keeps drinking it anyway. She will shower soon, but wants to read what she's written in the hope it'll give her some idea of what to write today.

She doesn't know how the baby died, only that on the family tree which her mum, sent to her is a Mark who was born and died in the same year. There were seven children all up – Ennis was a middle child, with an older brother and sister – Virginia – and two younger brothers and a sister, Mary.

The only clue to Ennis's mother's drinking is the comment Mary makes on Ennis's file, and a court notice which details her cursing incident. There is no way to know how or when her alcoholism started. Perhaps having so many children drove her to it, and who could blame her. Seven children – she thinks of the amount of food preparation, washing and feels exhausted, let alone the emotional demands of the children and any of their individual needs. Who could blame her for needing a little something to get through the day? Though she wishes Ennis's mother wasn't such a stereotype of an Irish woman.



Francie lifts up the sash window and pokes her head out. She looks towards the asylum and wonders what ward Matthew is on, before looking east to the gardens to see whether the parson birds or pigeons are enjoying the last of the day's sun. She's not exactly sure why she loves birds. Their freedom, she supposes, their ability to just flit off, that they are their own mode of transport. It seems a little trite to be

attracted to their freedom, but she is, though not just their physical freedom. The literature she was bought up on placed meaning on birds, albatrosses and nightingales, poetry is full of them. Francie can remember mis-reading Keats. In his “Ode to a Nightingale”, he says ‘Thou wast not born for death’. Francie read it as being, ‘Thou wast born for death’- that the bird didn’t produce anything, like herself. It wasn’t until she read it again, out aloud, that she realised that the bird was “not born for death” that it was immortal, rather than mortal. The poet didn’t leave mortality up to the reader. But the idea that the bird was born for death, that it didn’t produce, stuck in Francie’s head. Her mis-reading had more resonance than the original text. Francie liked Emily Dickinson’s “Hope is the thing with feathers” best, it seemed to redeem everything she mis-read in Keats. The bird doesn’t ask a thing of those who hear it, see it. The birds that Francie watches don’t ask a thing of her. Not a crumb, not a baby.

She likes the parson bird best. Their brashness, they are bolshie. They tell any other bird that comes into their territory to get away. Francie likes watching them when they get all fluffed out and poke their beaks into their feathers, and pull at their fat. They seem so charming and unapologetic; social and direct. When she looks at the parson bird she thinks about the women around London who dressed like men, who wore black trousers and suit jackets with white shirts that poked out like the bib of the parson bird. The women rode bicycles by swinging their legs over the seats rather than gingerly stepping through the frame, and cut their hair short. *New Women*, the newspapers called them. They were a danger, an anomaly these women who dressed like men, who wanted to be men, so the papers said. Francie wasn’t so sure that they wanted to be men, but instead wanted the freedom of men. So, regardless of the sex of the parson bird, Francie calls them New Women birds, but only to herself.



She puts her notebook aside, and pulls her laptop towards her. She has been checking her work emails to keep up with what's happening. It makes her feel less excluded. She has always thought that time off is a strange punishment but feeling out of the loop makes her feel isolated, and has made her think about how important her work is, about the role of archiving more than the day-to-day routine. If anything had happened to the folder she took home – whether it was stolen or got water damaged or simply thrown away – a wealth of information that could be useful to someone who could help people understand mental illness would have gone. And their experiences would have been wiped from the story of our national identity which is the role of archiving, preserving stories that explain ourselves to ourselves. Wiping them away is just as bad as sending them to an asylum on the outer reaches of society and forgetting about them. In her attempt to discover more about Ennis she could have lost him.

An email has been circulated with a few photos from the Christmas party. She finds it hard to believe that it's late March already. The party was held at the local bowling club. After a few roll-ups, as the bowling instructor called their practice, they played a few ends, before retiring to the hall for cheap jugs of beer and cask wine. A few of the library staff, mainly the Library Assistants, got into it and wore whites, and John McEnroe sweat bands on their foreheads, whereas the others, Charlie included, wore jeans and t-shirts.

As far as work functions went it wasn't too awkward. Having an activity helped. It stopped people from getting too drunk too quickly. But after the game, and asking her colleagues what they were up to for Christmas and New Year's, the conversations faded and rather than feeling like she had connected with the people she worked with each day, she felt disconnected. Perhaps it was just the drink, wine

can make her feel maudlin, or perhaps it was the general end of year tiredness. But she realised that she didn't have much in common with her colleagues, aside from the fact that they worked in the same place.

A lot of her colleagues are parents who had spent the previous weeks attending end-of-year prize givings. They sweltered in the collective heat of school halls (when the previous day a December southerly had swept through so they'd worn merino rather than cotton). They checked the newspaper for the printed prize lists so they can tell their Facebook friends how well their child is doing, how well their parenting is doing. The parents' joy came across as relief combined with pride. She is happy for them, for the reassurance it gives the parents, but she has nothing to compare it to, she has no direct experience of feeling such pride towards a person she has helped to create and grow. So, she says things like, that's great, that keeps her options for the future open. She is sincere in her congratulations, but the words also feel a little hollow, like coming across a tree in a forest that looks strong only to discover it has been eaten from the inside out by some parasite.

It's these interactions that make Charlie feel like less of a person. On her own she feels okay, but when she's with others and they enter into conversations about kids she feels automatically excluded. Is this what Ennis felt, excluded from the community because he didn't have his own family. He was alone. He had siblings, sure, but no wife, no girlfriend, no children. He wanted those things, but was fixated with having the house first, the money to have a family. He was obsessed with being the provider but had no one to provide for. At that time, the 1920s, it must have been hard to be a single man when single men were in short supply, due to the war. For there to be so few men, and yet still not be chosen by a woman, to still be left on the shelf, and to be frantically working to make yourself more attractive to the opposite sex, and yet to have nothing come of it.

It makes her think of the man drought now, the supposed man drought. She's not sure who does the equations of available men and women, and who supposes they are all heterosexual, but apparently women of her age are plentiful whereas men are not. She tries not to take any notice of the reports, but it does worry her on some level, because what she would like for the future is dependent on another person. What if she never finds anyone? It creates a gap, a great whopping gap that Francie has filled with her career. Could Charlie do that, now that she realises how important it is? Yet she also feels the need for companionship, to belong to someone, to be depended on and to depend on someone else, to love and be loved. This continual loop of expanding her potential beyond childrearing, and seeking a family rebounds in her head.



The sun is out but the easterly stings. The people assembled mutter that they cannot believe it is nearly Christmas. The women are dressed up. They have long necks and wear boater hats. The necks and hats are the same shape as the air funnels on top of the factory roof. Whenever Ennis walks up to the factory, he looks at the women's heads on the roof that looks over South Dunedin, and up to the hills. They are women turned away from him as if he is still covered in the stench of whale oil from cleaning out the tanks. He has to strip down to his underpants to get into the tanks so the stink doesn't stick to his clothes. He waits until all of the women have gone home before he strips down. Ennis takes in his bucket and shovel, and collects the sludge of blubber and fibre that has gone rancid. It is like hairy piles of slippery cat sick. His mother tells him that the smell will outlast the troubles in Ireland.

His sister Mary comes to the Christmas picnic with Ennis. He is allowed to bring family, and Mary has her eye on one of the fellas at work so invites herself before Ennis gets a chance. Mary's hair has a fierce curl that defies standing still. The wayward strands look like a fairy flower on her head that is about to be blown off her straight, thin body. She more or less disowns Ennis as soon as they get to the factory in search of her fella. She is a storm of energy and determination. Some would call it cheek.

The dray is loaded up with baskets of food and people. They set off for Brighton. Ennis sits beside Frank but they don't talk. Yesterday, Frank talked about enlisting for the war. Some men from work signed up and they had a presentation. The office workers had set up a screen that was lit with an oil lamp. It smoked and made Ennis anxious about fire. Ennis recognised the picture of the Queen but had to be told it was Buckingham Palace, and the Tower of London. These places are real but don't seem so to Ennis. They are like pictures in the mind's eye that are never realised, never seen for real. Ennis doesn't believe he will ever touch them. Frank thinks that he can. And he wants a trooper horse and a uniform. He fancies these things would make him handsome. Frank sang Rule Britannia at the presentation like he was already a soldier, and Ennis swears that Frank almost cried when a man sang "Goodbye Dolly I must leave you", though Frank has no Dolly to leave behind, just his ma and pa and sister, which is not quite the same.

The boundary of the town is sliding out. Ennis overhears a woman talk about the scones they had at the picnic last year. "So incredibly light," she says, "they do spoil their workers. There was clotted cream as well." She is one of the supervisor's wives. She's all dolled up. Ennis wonders whether the sand will stick to the creams on her face.

"So they should look after their workers, if they call themselves socialists," says Joseph, one of the workers.

The woman turns away from Joseph. With her face in the sun Ennis can see wisps of hair on her face.

"What's a socialist?" Ennis regrets asking the question as soon as it is spoken because Joseph draws himself up ready to spout.

"A socialist is a man who looks after other men and their rights."

Ennis nods while thinking he is only just a man, and not sure of his rights.

"Jesus was a socialist, and that's a fact an Irishman should know."

So now Ennis is not just a man, but an Irishman. He doesn't tell Joseph that his father speaks German, and that his Irish mother only brought God, curses, and the bottle with her from Ireland. Joseph turns away from Ennis, taking his silence as confirmation that his conversion to socialism is complete, but Ennis still does not understand what it means.

For the dray to get up over the hills some of the men have to jump off and walk beside it. Even though some of the women on board are larger than Ennis, he jumps off and walks to get away from talk. Talk that he sees Mary so easily exchanging. He thinks that it would be good to have some cheek.

The sea comes into sight. The company's party come closer and closer until they are right beside it, traveling towards the marquee that makes the beach look like somewhere else. Somewhere Ennis is never likely to see, like the place of war. Ennis can hear the wind flap the canvas. The sand is bright. Both the beach and water reflect the sun. It is a day out of the box, except for the breeze, but there is always a breeze.

Shoes and socks are got rid of. There is heat in the sand which rubs away hard dry skin. The starter's pistol shoots, and the men run until their thighs burn

from treading through the sand. Ennis comes in second and receives slaps on his back. There are no flies on him. Faces are stuffed with pies and cakes. The women drink tea and the men drink beer. It is strong and thick with yeast.

Gold is where the money is. More has been found and dredged up Central. There is talk of ounces and pounds, and making a fortune in one morning. All a man would need is one good find to last him a lifetime.

"The town is built on gold money, but none of it makes its way to the Flat. A man should be in control of his own production, and having your own gold section is a way to be in charge of your own destiny." Joseph nods his head in agreement with his own argument.

"Mother Nature the only one in charge of production up there," the old gold miner says.

"Bloody woman," Joseph replies, sniggering.

Sleep is found in tussock beds.

Ennis runs his hand through the sand as if he will be able to find sleep a few inches beneath the surface. The sand beneath is a darker shade of beige like tanned white skin. Ennis finds it hard to believe that the grains were once stones that have ground down, that such perseverance can wear away to near invisibility. His hand happens upon something sharp and hard. A stone with chipped sides like a piece of granite, though it is not black but a sandy colour, gold. Gold? Ennis digs around the rock and brings it out, blowing off the sand with his breath and dusting it with his fingers. It is the colour of dull brass. It shines in the sun. The rock has so many indentations that Ennis feels like he is a giant holding a cliff face. If he turns it around he can almost see a nose and recesses where eyes could be. It settles nicely in his palm.

Ennis stands and turns back to where he lay. He sees his body's shape in the sand. It's like he's looking down on himself as he tries to sleep. Sleeping on top of gold. Ennis takes the stone to the old miner so he can tell him if it's the real. Ennis wonders if he should tell him, for he will be in on it then and could start digging and take away his claim, though Ennis is unsure how to stake it. All he knows is where his body lay.

How much gold does it take to buy a house?

How much gold to lay out your life without worry? Ennis smiles in spite of himself. A smile at all the hope laid out.

"It looks like gold ore to me boy." The miner is old, or perhaps hard work has made him look so. His face has more creases than freshly-washed linen. His fingers are thick and tar stained, yet he handles the rock with care as if suspicious of substances formed in the earth. He hands it back to Ennis with a wry look on his face.

"I'd just keep quiet boy, wait until you get back into town and get it properly looked at. Then you'll be able to come back and do some more digging. Maybe you can help out an old man if you find it in you."

Ennis nods, suddenly feeling substantial like he can afford to hand out a few ounces here and there. He slides the rock into his pocket hoping its bulge will not be noticed by anyone.

On the ride back into town Ennis's hand keeps sliding into his pocket to reassure himself that the gold hasn't slipped out.

"What have you got there?"

"Just a rock I found on the beach." Ennis looks away from Frank. Mary is sitting with her fancy who is dozing, the effect of the beer. She is watching him sleep as if she can read his heart's desire in the sunburn on his cheek bones. Ennis

turns back to Frank who is still watching him. Ennis turns away pretending to admire the view. He doesn't want to tell him or his sister. They won't be able to keep their gobs shut.

It is quiet on the dray now. People have spent their excitement and they doze, not being able to hold back the sleep that the motion of the cart brings. But instead of being lulled into a dream, Ennis feels as if he is shifting into a new reality. He remembers Joseph saying earlier today about how a man should be in charge of his own destiny, and realises with the gold he is.

His ship has come in. It's something his father waits for, his ship. Whenever the family needs something financially out of reach, he says, "You'll have to wait for my ship to come in." He's generally not a man for dreaming but he allows himself this one fancy. At first, Ennis thought his father's coming to New Zealand was literally his ship coming in, and felt a sense of betrayal that his father's idea of this country, the aspirations he had in mind to achieve here have been disappointed because there was no obvious financial gain. But his father doesn't talk about Prussia. In losing his country and language it seems he has lost the ability to express his feelings about coming halfway around the world and the hopes he had about the journey. Whatever they were, they weren't enough for him to stop wishing there was more luck on his side to be able to fulfil the needs of his family.

Mary said once that she thought his ship had sunk seeing they had been waiting on it for years. She got a clip around the ear for her trouble. The shock of his father standing and smacking Mary still brings a tightness to Ennis's chest. His father is seldom violent, and the shock of it made Ennis leave the room and stand in the hallway processing what had just occurred. While their father had always said the phrase in a mocking tone, having Mary ridicule it showed up his father's hope of

a rescue, of an escape from hard work which Ennis rationalised wasn't a very manly thing, and embarrassed his father.

Ennis clasps his hand around the gold taking pleasure in the pain of the rock's indentations in his skin. This is what luck feels like – the sun, a Christmas party, a full belly, and a pocket of gold. He'll set the whole family up, and then start one of his own. He can feel his shoulders broaden and his posture correct just thinking about the possibilities opening up, of how suddenly his dreams could be reality. How he'll be more confident now that he's got some money behind him.

He could buy a solid house, maybe out St Kilda way, get out of the Flat. He can see himself walking along the beach with his wife's arm hooked through his. A kid or two running ahead; a pigeon pair. That's all he really needs. He'll keep working, to keep things ticking over but maybe he could look for something else, something less physical, be a clerk maybe.

When the dray arrives back at the factory Ennis doesn't wait for Mary or Frank. While everyone's bodies are slow to move from their seat, let alone the dray after the journey, Ennis jumps down. He feels the shock of the jump onto the footpath in his knees and feet but this only momentarily stalls him before he springs up and starts running.

"Ennis, where are you going, the races are over," he hears Mary shout.

He ignores her and keeps running home, impatient to tell his father that his ship has come in.



It's not true about Ennis and the gold. She had found the article about a party finding what they thought was gold at Brighton Beach on a database. The person had loaded

up the dray with it, and taken it into Dunedin, before they realised it was fool's gold. Her imagination, and the real life incident, came together in her writing. It gives her some hope, gives Ennis some hope, that given different circumstances his life could have been better, that his illness wasn't pre-programmed in his body but a circumstance of a hard life and an introverted nature. Perhaps all Ennis needed was a little bit of luck and confidence to be set down a different path.

Twenty Eight

The rattle of knuckles on glass makes Charlie jump. It's late, too late for charities or religious door-to-door sales to come knocking. She usually feels hidden away and safe in the flat. The steep driveway and path that winds around the house is usually a deterrent, and you'd have to see the small metallic plaque – the kind used on letterboxes – that says 'C' on the wooden post to even know there was a flat around the corner from the veranda.

She turns around from the sink, grabs a hand towel off the oven door and dries her hands. As soon as she turns to the front door she recognises the outline of Hunter's body behind the dimpled glass. How he leans his shoulders forward slightly as if wanting his head to encounter the world at least two seconds ahead of the rest of his body. The glass makes his head look like an impressionist image; the lounge light picks up the pigmentation of his cheeks, the blue of his eyes, his white fleshy face. He seems fleeting and indistinct. His being dressed in black gives her a sense of him already departing. If she turned away, and then back again, would he be gone? His figure a trick of light and mind.

"I can see you. Open up." Hunter's voice is a sing-song of cheerfulness.

She doesn't want to open up. She has shut all thought of him, for him, down and doesn't want to test her strength in keeping him out. She feels her throat constrict, and wonders whether she is strong enough to make good decisions. Perhaps she should just stand here and wait for him to leave. Or she could put the chain across the door so she can open it but he can't come in.

"Come on." The song from his voice has turned somewhat flat in his impatience.

What if he needs help, she thinks. She crosses the lounge and lets him in.

He smiles wide and looks at her directly. She stands aside, avoids his eyes, and he passes in a waft of beer and whiskey. Aside from the stench of alcohol there's nothing wrong with him.

"I've just been at the pub down the road with some mates, thought I'd call in."

She moves back to the kitchen and fills the jug while Hunter collapses onto the sofa. He falls so heavily that she thinks it'll take some effort to shift him.

"Do you want something to eat?" She turns the kettle on.

"Only you." Hunter's eyes slant sideways in his flirtatious mood.

She opens the fridge door, and pretends she hasn't heard him over the sound of her bustling.

"How about a toasted sandwich? Ham and cheese."

She picks up the ingredients and places them on the bench. When she reaches down into the cupboard for a fry pan she feels his hand on her arse. She turns around quickly and pushes him back. She hadn't even heard him get up off the couch. He stumbles back, surprised, and rubs his chest where her palm smacked into his chest.

"Go and sit down, and stop being an idiot." She feels the displeasure of confrontation shake in her chest, in her voice, and all he can say is, "Oohhh," laugh, and return stumbling to his seat.

She feels tears well, frustrated that he's doing this to her, that he's making her feel uncomfortable and frightened in her own home when it was him that broke it off, that needed space, who couldn't get away from her quickly enough when they last met. It's not her that he wants to come home to.

Charlie says, "I'm going to make you this, and then you're going to leave."

"Come on, don't be like this."

“You’re not staying here.”

“Jesus, you’re such a fuckin’ prude. I thought we were still friends, I thought you still cared for me.”

She places a slice of cheese on the bread as she watches the butter melt, and sees how the clarified white bubbles form in the pan.

“I care enough to feed you and make sure you get home,” she says. “That’s what *friends* do, they don’t get drunk and come around for a fuck when they feel like it.” She wishes she was the kind of woman who can say things without an obvious display of emotion, to be cool and calm, but her voice shakes and her chest jack hammers. She wants her voice to be commanding but all she can hear is a squeak. She can’t even face him.

“You make it sound so dirty. It’s just helping each other out.”

“It won’t help me, and I really don’t think it will help you either.”

“You’re just mad at me cos I broke it off. You’re bitter, that’s what’s wrong.”

She shakes her head, and exhales deeply. His presence is sapping her breath. She presses the fish slice down onto the sandwich. It sizzles and absorbs all the butter, sucking the pan dry.

“Yes Hunter,” she says. “I’m the one with the problem. It’s not because you’re being an arsehole.”

She doesn’t shout it, or even turn around to face him when she says it – she keeps looking at the sandwich. The wind blows in under the window sill and the curtain above the kitchen sink billows.

It reminds her of the train’s doors opening at the stations on the way to Kenepuru and how the wind blew in freshening the air in the carriage. She can feel the motion of the train in her body, the sway that lulls babies and tired workers to

sleep. Such a gentle movement considering the speed of the train, it's straightforward trajectory. She remembers her disbelief as to why she was on the train, how her body was moving forward while her mind was still comprehending what had happened, why it had happened; propelled forward while wanting to pull back.

She slides the sandwich from the pan onto a plate. She turns and hands it to him. He lifts his eyes up from the floor and takes the plate. He looks guilty, and Charlie realises that her words had some impact.

She goes back to the kitchen and comes back with some sweet milky tea and places the cup beside him. She doesn't have anything. She sits opposite him on the sofa. She remembers the time, years ago, when she sat on his sofa – a position chosen so he could join her – and wonders if she knew then what she knows now whether she would be so upset that he didn't make any advances. That she didn't either. It's a useless question, of course. They got involved, and now here they are, on the edge of irreparable damage. The cheese strings from his sandwich, and snaps.

He had looked so small and skinny on the hospital bed. Pale and depleted. Looking at him now there is the same vulnerability and dejection, and an inside turn of perception. Would it be so bad, she wonders, to hold him, not sex, but to just hold him while he sobers up? But that's not why he came. He didn't come here because he needs her, it's because he wants sex. It's not that she feels righteous about it, given what happened with Darren, but she is disappointed that Hunter feels fit to take parts of her for his own needs when he feels like it. At least with Darren there was no prior relationship, there was a sense of equality in intention. To have sex with Hunter now would cheapen her efforts to help him gain some mental and emotionally security, and not only that, it wouldn't help his recovery because she knows she

would try to pull back into an emotional connection. A connection that simply isn't there and perhaps never was. Not on his part anyway.

Hunter puts the plate on the coffee table and picks up the tea.

"Are you okay, you know, you're continuing your treatment plan?" she asks, thinking that his exhibition tonight is part of a relapse.

"I've been fine, better than fine," Hunter says. "It was a mate's fortieth so I thought I'd cut loose, I haven't had a drink in ages. I thought you'd be up for some fun," he places his cup on the coaster, "I obviously didn't think things through."

"I wanted a relationship with you, to help you, and you decided you didn't want either of those things, which is fair enough, but I don't want this kind of behaviour from you", Charlie says. "I don't deserve it."

She turns from him and looks at her laptop and writing book. She thinks of Ennis and his gold, and how she'd given him a chance at an alternative future, and feels the need to do the same for herself. Her gold will not be false, but will glisten as soon as she can get Hunter out the door.

"Shall I ring you a cab to the station?"

Hunter nods.

As she dials, she looks at him. His complexion doesn't forgive the alcohol quickly. His eyes are circled with black and his jowls droop. His whole body seems heavy. His demin jacket has half a pint down its right side, and his t-shirt looks like it was grabbed straight from the laundry pile. He looks up at her with red eyes.

She says, "They'll be here in five minutes. You'd better wait at the bottom of the drive."

He stands unsteadily. He walks towards the door, and like a school boy who suddenly remembers the obligation of manners when staying at a friend's house, says, "Thanks for the sandwich."

She opens the door, and Hunter walks through. She soon loses sight of him as he walks down the path and into the night.

The sound of the snib clicking into the lock captures silence in the room. She inhales, lets it flow through her lungs and to the tips of her being, and feels her heart slow, her throat unclench, and shoulders drop.

She can hear the fridge hum, and a car driving up to the basement carpark of the council flat next door. Tyres squeak on concrete. She turns and faces the longue – the yellow walls, the red throws, her pile of writing papers on the floor, and Hunter's crumb-littered plate on the sea chest. She takes the plate to the sink.

She looks up and sees her reflection in the kitchen window, and pushes aside the thin white net curtain. The black circles around her eyes have diminished. It's the first time she's really looked at herself for a long time, aside for quick once-overs when she gets ready in the morning. She brushes her fringe away from her face, and notices that her nose is an average size and not too big as she's previously thought. There is only one chin, and her décolletage doesn't jut out quite so sharply. A pink tinge has returned to her face, and her freckles seem a playful feature of her complexion rather than skin damage.

She looks at the sink and turns on the tap, rinsing the crumbs off the plate. The pipes creak, and the timber cracks and settles around her as if stretching it's arms to wrap around her and then settles back onto its piles. She lets herself be held by her home. She looks up to the window, and smiles.

Twenty-Nine

It was Heather's idea to go to Seacliff and to visit Ennis's grave. She had rung Charlie for a catch-up, and when Heather had asked how work was she told her what had happened.

"You're very lucky you still have a job," she said, not without sympathy.

"I know I was stupid, but I felt compelled, I needed the information about Ennis. I wanted to know if I am like him."

"Are you?"

"In some ways."

When she clammed up Heather suggested the trip though Charlie suspected it was an excuse to check up on her rather than a need to visit the site where Ennis lived and died.

She's not sure whether the airport's distance from Dunedin city is an optimist's view of Dunedin's potential expansion, but if so the vision has about thirty kilometres to go. Heather drove down and has already arrived at the hotel. Charlie sits in the back of the taxi and switches on her phone. The driver has the window half down and she can feel the absence of humidity in the air. She feels relaxed, and glad of a change of scene, even though it's only grass and cows she has passed so far. Although the reason for her journey is somewhat morbid, she feels relaxed, almost optimistic. It's a feeling she hasn't had for a while, so long in fact, that she forgot how lightly it settles on her skin.

The taxi makes its way into the city, and onto George Street. She watches students in their cut-off jean shorts, t-shirts and jandals walking with bags slung over

their shoulders. The semester has barely begun and she can still see the summer holidays in the students' languid body movements.

The hotel is a double-storeyed cottage. The hallway and bedrooms looks like a centrefold from a House and Garden magazine. The walls are green but not so green as to suggest moss or mould, but meadows. Rimu timber frames are polished, and open fires are left with newspaper and pine cones in their grate which she assumes are never lit. There is a large vase of birds of paradise on the reception desk which lifts the room from colonial cute to modernity. This is a place for the parents of students rather than the students themselves.

Heather hugs her and then stands back from her to get a full assessment of her daughter's well-being.

"Well," Charlie says, used to these obvious appraisals, "do I pass?"

"Yes, I believe you do. You're looking well. I'm allowed to be concerned, you know."

They go out for lunch at the all-day breakfast place popular with students opposite Knox Church. They sit in the window seat and watch people come and go. Heather fills Charlie in on her volunteering at the Salvation Army store, "Some items should just be taken to the dump," she says, and her badminton, "God, I don't know why I'm on the committee, those women drive me around the bend. They talk for hours about sandwich fillings."

It always amazes her at how more talkative Heather is in person as opposed to on the phone. A phone call is functional whereas talking in person is more relaxed and informative, which becomes problematic when you live so far apart. Because of their physical distance, she wonders whether it would be better the other way around.

They set off from the hotel mid-morning the next day. It is already warm, and predicted to swelter later on. Heather drives on the main road north. They glide down the Kilmog and turn at the sign for Karitane. The skinny road winds beside the sea and around the hillside. Several times they cross over railway lines which makes Charlie think of patients travelling by train to Seacliff, and the family of patients going up the line to see their loved ones.

“The Southerner doesn’t run anymore,” Heather states as they curl around to Seacliff and pass the train station.

“We turn up here on the left.” She has the map in her lap, one finger fixed on where they’re going, and a finger on her other hand travelling along the map marking their progress. They turn, and drive up a slight incline for about 200 metres.

“What a beautiful part of the world,” Heather says as she gets out of the car.

It’s true, Charlie thinks, the sea is calm, the air is warm and still. The hills huddle around the bay, enclose it, hold it tight, and yet this protection - knowing why so many people came here - could also feel like entrapment. But today it doesn’t.

As they walk onto the grounds of Seacliff it feels welcoming. They are not more than a metre up the driveway when they hear a tui sing, and its mate reply. Their song makes both women smile, and she thinks that the new women birds, as Francie called them, are a good omen, that there’s nothing to fear, only potential.

“Was that tennis court part of the asylum?” Heather asks.

The court’s surface is uneven, she can see where the concrete has cracked and formed indentations where leaves gather.

“Yes, I remember it from the photos.”

The lawn has been recently mown around the court and clumps of dry and browning grass lie on the ground alongside the court. As they walk the tui sing. To their right, trees and shrubs have grown and block out any sight of the sea. Pines

stand tall and straight, and through the overhang of willow trees she can see a tyre suspended on a branch to make a swing. Branches of some trees wrap around the trunks of others. There is a sense of lushness and life, and while the grounds feel welcoming, she senses that it's still repairing, still regenerating rather than completely at peace.

"Ennis would have come up this drive once," Heather says, "It's strange to think of it, and of how many years separate us from his experience. If only these grounds could talk."

"He would have come here under guard. I've been trying to imagine what he would have been feeling, but I'm not sure he was conscious of what was happening, not straight after the murder."

As they near the end of the driveway they can see the outline of the Seacliff building. There is a concrete wall, about head height, down the south side. The concrete is cracked in parts and reveals red bricks, while in other recesses weeds grow.

"It seems so small." She walks across the main building to the north side. There are two brick columns indicating a gate. She wonders how many people passed through that gate – staff and patients. Did they go through this back gate to visit the gardens, or was it the tradesman's entrance?

There is barbed wire along the north boundary.

"I'm sure the property extended to that bluestone building, and the white one there." She points out the building to her mother, "That one was the blacksmith's, and the other one might've been the laundry."

The white building – cream and grey coloured really – is run down. The iron sheeted roof is red with rust, and the large window has timber latticed through it which makes the building seem closed in on itself. Up the side is a tall rectangle

structure like three shipping containers stacked one on top of the other with no windows. Behind it, a concrete terrace has been constructed to stop the hillside from collapsing. There is also a round concrete structure up beside the window with grass growing out the top which she takes to be a water cylinder. While this structure seems to promise all the grimness of asylum life, to the left of it is a set of children's swings in bright yellow. And beyond that, a villa painted duck blue with white sills, and a roof clean of debris and rust. Someone must live there. She wonders whether it was the Doctor's house, whether Francie leant out of the front sash window.

"Look over here," Heather says, "it looks like bathroom stalls." The concrete frame marks out two toilets – the pipe that the porcelain bowl would've affixed to is still visible. Opposite is a slightly higher concrete frame filled with overgrown grass.

"Maybe that was the baths?" Heather says.

There is a piece of thick wire used to reinforce concrete sticking up from the ground bent into a curve by the southerly.

"That wall there, past the cabbage trees, would've been reinforcing to stop subsidence," she tells her mother. The hills roll back from the concrete. Her eyes follow the hills undulations and she sees a charcoal-coloured Vauxhall parked in a paddock. It still looks road worthy from this distance. The sight of the car momentarily makes her wonder what era she has stepped into because the present and the past seem to slide together, their boundaries indistinct.

"I thought I would get a sense of him," Heather says, "do you?"

"I feel like the land is holding onto memories of the asylum, but I don't sense Ennis."

"I guess his soul wouldn't want to come back here." Heather continues, "It's beautiful though, isn't it? The gardens and being so close to the sea."

"I guess that was the idea, a peaceful place for recuperation, with the benefit of removing patients from the rest of the world."

Heather turns away from Charlie, and then back to her.

The tui are still chirping to each other, and in the distance Charlie can hear a child's voice.

"Whenever I feel blame for putting Sheryl in there," Heather continues, "I tell myself that it was the best thing I could do at the time."

Charlie leans into her mother and puts her arm around her.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you."

"It's alright, I'm not upset," Heather touches Charlie's hand with her own, "it just pays to remember that those doctors were doing what they could with the knowledge they had at the time. It's different now, I suppose."

"A bit," Charlie says. "I should tell you about Hunter."

Heather looks at her. She pulls away from her and sits down on the edge of the concrete foundations. Heather joins her and Charlie tells her about how she started a relationship with Hunter, about his suicide attempt, and his stay in the psych ward. How she had imagined, although briefly, the idea of a family with him, and how not having it, letting him go, coupled with her polycystic ovaries, had floored her.

"I started seeing myself in Ennis. His lack of a family, being shy, and combined with Sheyl's genes I wondered if I'd go mad too. That's why I was so interested in Ennis's file, why I took it from work, I was looking for clues."

Heather hugs her tightly.

"I managed to wind myself up into a right state."

Heather rubs her hand up and down Charlie's arm.

"You wee duffer," Heather says, "you have gone through the mill."

Charlie starts to cry not because of opening her wounds but because she under estimated her mother's empathy and is overwhelmed by it.

"I'll tell you what I'd tell Sheryl, that you can't help your own body. It's what you've arrived in this world with and we just have to learn how to treat it kindly. We all have something wrong with us, in body or mind, or both, we just have to learn to deal with it, and we will. I'm here to help, and I'm sure you've got other people who can help too."

She nods, thinking of Fe.

"But you can't live in fear of what might not happen, that's the death of us all. Depression isn't the worst thing in the world, and neither is polycystic ovaries, they aren't flash, but we can talk about it, and deal with it. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

They sit in silence for a while. Charlie watches a woman cross the reserve leading a black Labrador, and can feel the stones in the concrete framing jab into her bottom.

"Shall we look at the plaque?" she asks.

Both women get up and walk towards a small plaque at the bottom of a pine tree surrounded by a fence. The fence posts are connected with wire, and there is a gate at the front. She leans on the gate and reads out the inscription to Heather.

This tree planted December 5th 1998 in memory of residents and staff of Seacliff Hospital 1888-1972.

Charlie notes how patients have been named residents, and the asylum is now termed a hospital. The change of language reflecting a change in attitudes, and yet, she thinks, they're still fenced in.

"Do you think the fence is symbolic? Is it meant to represent the asylum, and the tree, life?"

“Maybe the fence is just to keep the tree safe?”

Such a fine line between safety and entrapment.

They walk out the same way they walked in, the tui sending them off with a song. The car has held the heat of the midday sun in its interior. She winds the window down while Heather turns the key in the ignition and cranks up the air conditioning. They drive past contractors on the side of the road in orange high-vis vests.

“Must be something with the drains,” Heather says.

The earth is still moving, thinks Charlie.

They drive back to Dunedin and then south to Andy Bay Cemetery.

She looks at the map of the cemetery. The grey road looks like a river flowing around a city suburb. If she didn’t know it was a graveyard she would think the numbers related to houses rather than plots. They drive in the main entrance and park by the office. After the heat of the car she welcomes the easterly wind coming in off the sea.

“It’s not far. He’s in block 37, plot 17.”

She feels small amongst the expanse of graves. While the Bolton Street Cemetery she visited with Fe had seemed almost picturesque with the tree roots pushing tombstones off kilter, here the expanse and visibility of the headstones is overwhelming, and seems as big as the ocean that rolls up against the far boundary.

They walk off the path and down a grass bank. She straightens the map in her hand and tries to get her bearings. The soldiers graves are on her left and the Chinese graves up ahead.

“He was along here, somewhere.” She moves her arm back and forth along the grass to indicate the slim and long rectangle of space named block 37. “He was a

pauper,” She adds, “so there’s no headstone.” She looks back at the site map. “It looks like he was put in here with victims of the flu epidemic in 1918.”

“I guess they used any spare space for paupers,” Heather says.

To the right are a line of tall pine trees.

“Maybe the trees were saplings when Ennis was buried,” she offers. There seems to be a complete lack of anything useful to say or do. Both look at the grass as if trying to see some indication of where Ennis lies, and then away to the sea, the trees.

“He was sixty, he died on the 28 June 1944.”

“I don’t know what I expected really. To get a sense of him I suppose, but how can I really, from his grave?” Heather gives a half-hearted smile and turns to Charlie, “Do you feel anything?”

“Not from the grave, no.” She considers her feelings and wonders if she really expected to feel his presence here. “I got more of a sense of him from the archive, from trying to write about his life from the fragments there.”

“Have you come to any conclusions about him?”

“I feel sad that the help he needed wasn’t available, that perhaps he didn’t feel like much of a man. I’m not ashamed of his illness, I just wish he wasn’t propelled to such violence against Frank. Maybe,” she continues, “if you read what I wrote you’d get a sense of him, what his troubles were, and what he was like, before the illness.”

“I’d like that.”

It seemed like the right thing to do, to share what she has managed to gather from the archive, and to bring him back into the family. The first step in letting go of her fear. She looks west and catches the sunshine bouncing off the metallic rim of a passing car’s window on her face. She shuts her eyes, but still the light flickers

under her eyelids, and in the flash she see's Ennis, his arm outstretched, holding his piece of gold, smiling.

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