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THE DREAM CALLED OVERSEAS:

Mobility and Creative Self-Exile in
Fiction by Charlotte Grimshaw,
Paula Morris, and Anne Kennedy

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English
at Massey University, Albany,
New Zealand.

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2018

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how the cultural imaginary of New Zealand is re-examined and re-defined through a mobilities paradigm in three contemporary novels by local writers: Charlotte Grimshaw's *Foreign City* (2005), Paula Morris's *Queen of Beauty* (2002), and Anne Kennedy's *The Last Days of the National Costume* (2013). This textual archive evokes and revises mid-century settler cultural nationalist concerns, specifically New Zealand's perceived cultural and geographical remoteness from the metropolitan centre. Within cultural nationalist discourse, "here and there" were critical geographical and cultural co-ordinates, where "here" referred to a local, derivative reality, while "there" was the centre where history took place. In each of the three novels, the female protagonist moves overseas through a form of creative self-exile, pursuing truthfulness to her artistic nature. However, the characters' desire for movement takes its origins in patterns of mobility and displacement as experienced by earlier generations. A comparative reading of these novels, alongside a theoretical body of work on mobility, can reveal a unique way in which each writer deals with these concerns, reinterpreting a modernist worldview in the context of the globalised world of the new millennium. Grimshaw approaches literary geography from a semi-ironic angle: although *Foreign City* deals with a New Zealand artist's attempt to revisit the inspirational site of Bloomsbury, it is not the real Bloomsbury experience, and thus, it has a distant significance attached to it. For Morris, the remapping project involves inserting Māori cultural aspects into the mobilities paradigm, aligning mobility of stories with mobility of people. In Kennedy's novel, mobility exposes a settler culture that has failed to live up to its own ideals. Partly set in metropolitan centres, these works of fiction reflect on this country's settler and immigrant past, proposing an alternative to the modernist European longing that had forged New Zealand's literary character for several generations. Taken together, this body of contemporary New Zealand fiction indicates the continuing relevance and preoccupation with cultural remarking of distance, isolation, and periphery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For seeing me through this journey, I am indebted to many people.

First and foremost, I am thankful to my supervisor and a wonderful teacher, Dr Jennifer Lawn, whose expertise and insight have shaped my understanding of New Zealand literature and provided a model for this thesis, and who truly pushed me to explore texts beyond the boundaries I had conceived during the formative stage of this project. Her resourcefulness, patience, good humour, and generosity with her time have been invaluable and have made the process of researching and writing immensely enjoyable.

I also owe my gratitude to Dr Pansy Duncan for her perceptive comments on my proposal that helped me stay focussed during the research process, and to Dr Ingrid Horrocks for introducing me to the topic of mobility through her project on “women wanderers” and her course at Massey University, “Literary Revolutions: Romantic and Victorian Literature.”

Heartfelt thanks are due to Mark Haines, Philip Morris, and Julie Tait at ACG Pathways Campus, who were supportive of my endeavour and understood the challenges I faced. I am also thankful to all staff at ACG Pathways Campus, and the English Department in particular, for their professional support and friendships. Special thanks go to Matthew Kelly for stimulating conversations and his advice on my writing, to Maxine Iverson for lending me her books on New Zealand literature, and to Dr Charles Nannestad, who was interested in my research from the very beginning and volunteered to proofread and comment on multiple drafts of my thesis chapters, however incoherent or unfinished.

On a personal note, I am grateful to my spouse, David – my best friend and first reader of my work – whose continual encouragement and dedicated support have been indispensable throughout my studies, and whose faith in me was what enabled me to begin my postgraduate journey in the first place. His love of travel has been an inspiration in both my research and my life.

I am also indebted to my parents and my grandparents for encouraging me to pursue my dreams, and for providing loving support in everything I do.

Last but not least, I thank all my friends and our family in Russia and Australia for their interest in my research and for providing often needed distraction.

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ABBREVIATIONS

FC Grimshaw, Charlotte. *Foreign City*. Vintage, 2005.

LDNC Kennedy, Anne. *The Last Days of the National Costume*. Allen & Unwin, 2013.

QB Morris, Paula. *Queen of Beauty*. Penguin Books, 2002.

Introduction: Revisiting the Settler Plot

“Stories of departures and returns, of the distance between ‘here’ and ‘there’ ...”

Alex Calder

In his book *The Settler’s Plot*, Calder (2011) traces the evolution of the settler narrative in New Zealand literature and ponders the notion of “here and there.” He observes that stories of mobility might be more representative of Māori literature, where the dichotomy of “here and there” typically relates to urban and rural places. Traditionally, for New Zealanders of European descent “here” was New Zealand, an island nation and a country of settlers and immigrants, “a place so far you could go no further” (Stead, *The Secret History of Modernism* 96); while “there” was Britain, the “home away from home” for the majority of people who settled in New Zealand in the nineteenth century. However, the significance of Britain has diminished over time. Today, “there” is a place of global proportions and less defined boundaries – simply a place called overseas. In Part IV of his book, titled “Looming,” Calder focusses on “the gap [that] distance opens out between here and there” (189), suggesting that it might never disappear. Quoting from Stead’s winter lecture on the remoteness of New Zealand, which was given in 1961, Calder writes:

When Stead referred to our distinctive “combination of physical remoteness and *insignificance*,” he described a condition that – against all predictions – did not turn out to be a phase we would ever progress beyond. Rather, in a networked world, we have come to share our condition with more people in more places, and a sense of isolation and insignificance characterises our geo-cultural location as profoundly as ever. (189-190)

Stead himself has written about that lecture, but his outlook seems to be more positive than Calder’s. In *Book Self* (2008), he describes Auckland, the city that was once a colonial outpost, as “a modest city of the Great Nowhere of Western affluence” (83). Drawing on the ideas of Keith Sinclair, Stead observes that while New Zealand colonial consciousness has not completely vanished, “the colonial lack of confidence” (83) has disappeared from all aspects of New Zealand life, including literature. In the contemporary globalised world, New Zealanders are more mobile than ever, and their life standards are as good as elsewhere in the West. Instead of using words like “insignificance” and “isolation,” Stead now writes about technological advancements and “national confidence” (84). Though he does comment, rather poetically, on how everything in New Zealand happens on smaller

scales – “the same mix, but milder, same colours, but paler, the same sounds, but quieter” (83) – he no longer sees it as insignificant.

This imagined conversation between Calder and Stead assists in establishing the thematic coordinates for the novels in this thesis. Grimshaw’s *Foreign City* (2005), Kennedy’s *The Last Days of the National Costume* (2013), and Morris’s debut novel, *Queen of Beauty* (2002), are partly set in foreign cities and in Auckland, unmistakably foregrounding the themes of “here and there” and distance, evoked in Calder and Stead’s writing. Published in the same decade as both *The Settler’s Plot* and *Book Self*, and set in the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first few years of the new millennium, Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy’s novels can be seen as an act of recognition and exemplification of the cultural shift that took place in New Zealand towards the end of the previous century. Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy revisit the framework of ideas that prevailed in mid-twentieth century New Zealand and rework it in their novels, marking a transitional period in this country’s cultural landscape. At the end of the twentieth century, increasing global migration and mobilities, internationalism and globalisation are shown to have highlighted the state of a decline of cultural nationalism and the subdued settler narrative in New Zealand. There is a sense that major cultural and social changes of that century have happened, and nothing more is expected to emerge. In this state of cultural fatigue, the female protagonists in these three novels find themselves in a state of inertia. For these young women, who are all involved in the world of arts, the idea of a creative self-exile becomes an alluring alternative.

Foreign metropolises herald an experience of a bigger world outside of New Zealand, as well as new connections and perspectives. They also promise freedom from attitudes and relationships that have become burdensome. Crucially, the northern cities guarantee a sense of modernist dislocation, alienation, and complication so necessary for the creative subject. Crossing the borders and moving into foreign metropolitan cities does feel liberating and empowering; however, the reality of living in a foreign metropolis is unexpectedly different. At one point or another, the protagonists find movement paradoxically restricting. Instead of moving forward and finding “a beyond,” they move laterally or reach an impasse. Connecting with the foreign cities they inhabit becomes an intricate process, yet it is exactly this struggle that eventually leads these women to self-discovery, and a kind of creative and personal metamorphosis. Therefore, the most important function of these northern metropolises in the novels lies in their potential to become a complication and destabilising force that these creative women seek.

In this thesis, I am concerned to see how these female writers evoke and revise the idea of “here and there” as a literary representation of the modernist centre/periphery model through their fiction. Juxtaposed with the domestic setting, which in all three novels is Auckland, foreign

metropolises evoke the modernist dream of overseas and a sense of mobilities of the past, to which the protagonists long to relate. The characters' oscillation between New Zealand and Northern Hemisphere cities leads to a significant re-examination and re-definition of the fixed concepts of place and subjectivity as stable or unchanging entities. This, in turn, symbolises the act of revisiting the settler paradigm and cultural narrative of New Zealand through this textual archive by Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy.

In my analysis, I examine *Foreign City*, *Queen of Beauty*, and *The Last Days of the National Costume* through the prism of mobility discourse. The decision to do so was largely motivated by the fact that in the last two decades there has been an increasing interest in mobility among academics, which has culminated in what Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2006) have described as "the new mobilities paradigm" (207). Commenting on the growth of mobility as an academic field, the geographer Tim Cresswell (2006) observes that literary and cultural discourses have also "seen a turn toward a fuller grasp of mobile worlds" (44), and it is worth exploring. However, mobility is also a persistent theme in New Zealand literature, and reading the selected contemporary novels, partly set in foreign locations, alongside mobility theory is relevant.

In fact, one could argue that New Zealand writers have always had a certain preoccupation with mobility, especially with the "going abroad" narrative. As I demonstrate in the next section of this introduction, many local writers – including Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy – have spent time overseas, have set their fiction in foreign settings, and have used mobility in their writing for varied purposes and through a range of techniques. However, the question remains why this type of mobility narrative has such presence in New Zealand literature. I suggest that, on the one hand, this is because mobility is "a fundamental geographical facet of [human] existence" and "a rich terrain from which narratives – and, indeed, ideologies – can be, and have been, constructed" (Cresswell, *On the Move* 1). On the other hand, it is because New Zealanders, to quote Morris, are "the descendants of voyagers, immigrants, optimists [and] are[themselves] determined explorers" ("Editorial" 5). This leads me to the central argument in this thesis which contends that in these novels the characters' mobility is a consequence of ancestral or historical mobilities, and that it not only leads to displacement but, paradoxically, also originates from it.

I also seek to determine the significance of this sample of contemporary New Zealand writing in New Zealand literature and its contribution to mobility studies. More importantly, in applying mobility-related concepts to these novels, I attempt to establish how mobility discourse can inform and illuminate New Zealand literary studies. To do so, I focus on two questions. The first one asks whether crossing geographical boundaries allows one to diminish the sense of distance of which Calder and Stead write. The other question is designed to determine the impact of overseas

locations on the characters' sense of place, both when they are abroad and when they return to New Zealand. Narrowing the scope of this study to three novels allows for a close reading that undertakes an examination of geographical, cultural, and social mobilities, all of which are explored by the writers in their novels.

MOBILITY AS INSPIRATION FOR NEW ZEALAND WRITERS

In her essay "Departures and Returns" (1982), Janet Frame states that New Zealand "writers have a passion for journeys" (93). The implication of this fleeting observation is two-fold. On the one hand, rather obviously, it reveals the fact that many New Zealand writers have turned into travellers, immigrants, expatriates, or authors in self-exile, while seeking to further their experience, to enjoy the freedom of movement, to search their ancestral roots, or to simply lose themselves in the anonymity of a new city and a "fruitful chaos of displacement" (Kaplan, *Questions of Travel* 29). On the other hand, it subtly illuminates the fact that the imprint left by the mobility narrative on New Zealand literary heritage, especially but not exclusively Pākehā, is significant. In this section of my introduction, I present a generational perspective of New Zealand mobility literature, identifying some influential writers in each period and, where possible, comment on their contribution.

In the Late Colonial Period (1890 – 1934), many Pākehā writers travelled to Europe, more importantly to England. Owing to close historical links between the two countries, for a long time there was an assumption in New Zealand that London was a second home for its people. Yet it was not only an ancestral connection that New Zealand writers sought overseas. At one point in New Zealand history, London – the centre of arts, culture, and finance – was what Felicity Barnes describes as "New Zealand's cultural capital" (*New Zealand's London* 2), while the island nation itself was a "[y]oung crude country, hard as unbroken shell" (Hyde, "Journey from New Zealand," line 64) from which one had to escape to become an artist or writer. In an earlier biography of Katherine Mansfield, Ruth Elvish Mantz and John Middleton Murry (1933) describe small-town New Zealand of the time as follows: "Here, obviously, was neither time nor chance to cultivate the arts. Isolated at the bottom of the world, the New Zealand of Kathleen Beauchamp's childhood had no "leisure" – no "cultivated class." When talent did appear, the artist was sent to study at 'home' where – for one reason or another – she usually remained" (60).

Other Late Colonial writers made a similar move overseas. The first big city for Ngaio Marsh was Sydney. Compared to it, New Zealand seemed "a bit dull, sheepish and provincial" (Marsh 162). She later also visited Durban and Cape Town on the way to London where she would spend five

years of her life. London made her feel “an ignorant and passionate sense of historical continuity” – “[i]t was like looking down into history” (183). Another example is Jane Mander, who “had to escape New Zealand to write of it” (Jones 136). In her twenties, she intermittently lived in Sydney, and later relocated to New York, where she lived for about twelve years and published several novels, including the well-known work, *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920). London was the other city where she spent a significant part of her life.

The following three decades, known as the Provincial Period (1935 – 1964), were still a frugal time for writers as far as creativity and opportunities were concerned. As Patrick Evans (1990) puts it, “*Landfall* and the Literary Fund might have been in place, but for the artist, New Zealand was still the ‘wrong’ place, and art still better pursued elsewhere” (*The Penguin History* 144). In his analysis of the period, Evans draws on Stead’s novel *All Visitors Ashore* (1984), which captures the sense in 1951 that “the country was somehow a sinking ship being deserted by arts” (144). New Zealand was still “so young, so inchoate, so discontinuous in the experiences it offered” (148), that it was a feeble source of inspiration for the arts. The writer living here was faced with a predicament of not knowing “how to write about the local experience without turning it into something else” (185). Evans describes it as “the problem of the provincial, fed on cosmopolitan literature but surrounded by a reality that seemed hostile to art” (148). New Zealand’s colonial past and provincial present meant that the gap between “here” and “there” was as big as ever. For some writers, this tension resulted in “an urge towards Europe that made the here-and-now so much more difficult to accept” (185-6).

However, towards the end of this period, motivations for European travel among New Zealand writers began to change. Many Pākehā writers went to Europe in search of a historical connection rather than to escape from New Zealand. In an act of what has been considered by contemporary critics and cultural observers as a rite of passage (see Calder, Evans, and Stead), Frank Sargeson spent one year in Europe, only to realise that he belonged in New Zealand. He spent time wandering through ancient cities and “cultivated countryside,” marvelling at it all, but in his heart he knew that he was “only very indirectly a part of it all” (Sargeson, *Once is Enough* 112).

Frame also had a longing for movement. “Like a mythical character,” she found herself “on a long voyage” (*An Angel at My Table* 340) around the Old Continent that lasted eight years. Having lived in London, and later in Ibiza and Andorra where she found it “easier to be a foreigner” (Peter Gibbons 102), she collected her own “tales of travel” (Frame, *An Angel* 335). In her writing, she drew on the layered world of imagination, discovered during her travels, and allowed her characters to be driven by the “affliction of dream called overseas” (Frame, *The Edge of the Alphabet* 49). Perhaps the richness of the European cultural stream that attracted mid-century Provincial Pākehā writers

can be demonstrated in a passage from Frame's travel memoir, where she describes a visit to Keats's neighbourhood in Hampstead Heath.

I knew that I must have been one among thousands of visitors to London who had stood by the withered sedge, remembering Keats, experiencing the excited recognition of suddenly inhabiting a living poem, perhaps reciting it from memory, and then, as if rejecting a worn-out gift, with a sense almost of shame, banishing the feeling, then, later, going in search of it, reliving it without judging, yet always aware that too often everyone must read the thousandth, millionth, seldom the first early layer of the world of imagination. (*The Envoy* 364)

In this excerpt, Frame suspects that her intimate and subjective experience of "inhabiting a living poem" may not be unique to her – thousands of other visitors might have felt the same when they stood there "remembering Keats" – yet she feels that a return to this lived literary experience through memory and senses might not only deepen her awareness of this layered "world of imagination" created by others long before her, but may also lead to the intimate zone of creation that lies deep in the artist's core. This moment of living a poem might be what Stead describes as "the contact with the tradition" ("For the Hulk" 245) which, as he explains, is "not only as an inheritance of experiment in forms ... [but also as] a record of the life of civili[s]ation – a record which itself lives" (245). To feel it live, one has to overcome the distance and, in the case of a New Zealand artist, leave this country. Yet the sense of cultural and colonial inferiority that these writers seem to have experienced in their search for a connection with civilisation is unmistakable.

The next generation of Pākehā writers belonging to the Post-provincial Period (from 1965) would agree with Frame and Stead; however, in this period we see another shift in the motives for travel among New Zealand literary minds. In one of her interviews, Fiona Farrell Poole describes an area in France, which she discovered in 1995 while holding the Katherine Mansfield Fellowship in Menton. "The Alpes Maritime are an astonishing area. ... There's a million years of human history around Menton – the first hearth, the first evidence of humans using fire is in a rock shelter in the crags above the Mansfield room" ("Fiona Farrell" 278). It was there that *Light Readings* (2001) was born. Another discovery – the Niaux Cave in the Pyrenees, with its impressive limestone chamber that is the home to a prehistoric rock art gallery – inspired Farrell to write *Limestone* (2009), the novel about "time, human history and insignificance" ("Fiona Farrell" 279).

Another example is Bill Manhire who made a journey to the South Pole as part of Artists in Antarctica group, the project that led to several creative projects. One of them was *The Wide White*

Pages: Writers Imagine Antarctica (2004), a compilation of the works of many writers and poets about the white continent and “samples some of the ways in which Antarctica has been devised by the human imagination” (10). Manhire also wrote a sequence of poems, *Antarctic Field Notes* (2001).

What begins to emerge in the Post-provincial period is that the centre-margin model has given way to a more pluralist form of mobility where the writer still travels for discovery and self-discovery, but without a sense of cultural inferiority or derivativeness. The sense of obligation or need to travel to Europe has also disappeared.

The time between the 1970s and the late-1990s was characterised by internationalism as a prominent feature in New Zealand literature. This was largely due to the increased level of internationalised economic activity and migration, among other changes, which provided people with insights into the destinations they would not have otherwise entertained. England was no longer “home,” nor the preferred location for fictional settings. Instead, writers moved beyond it to write about Wales, Denmark, Holland, Italy, Albania, Vietnam, Japan, Hawaii, Fiji, Samoa, Australia, and America. The social and economic changes also supplied New Zealand novelists with multiple perspectives from which to write. A significant body of fiction, written in that period, deals with the European, Pacific, Asian and Australasian migrations to New Zealand, and the theme of New Zealanders going abroad. For example, in the section titled “The Novel” in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English* (1998), Jones lists twenty-three novels about New Zealanders in other cultures. Among the dominant themes in those novels are the “Big O. E.” (Overseas Experience), expatriation, post-colonial condition, and liberation from a provincial New Zealand upbringing.

This phenomenon of expanding the borders of New Zealand writing, a kind of re-territorialisation of it, brought about a certain confidence around this particular South Pacific location, yet it also excited a cultural debate about the integrity of local fiction in New Zealand. In his essay, “Spectacular Babies: The Globalisation of New Zealand Fiction” (2000), Evans observed a growing tendency among New Zealand novelists in the last decade of the twentieth century to set their novels overseas, as he claimed, in an attempt to yield to the process of global commodification (102). He explained that seeking a “connexion between an individual writing sensibility and a comprehensible, meaningfully localised world” is a prerequisite for any writer and not a sign of essentialism or regionalism, but of a “sense of place that is particular to a particular imagination” (107). The obvious conclusion to be drawn from Evans’s essay is that New Zealand writers should be encouraged to continue exploring beyond the historically determined geographical borders of New Zealand writing, as long as the sense of “here” is not forgotten or diminished in their fiction.

Evans's question of whether internationalising New Zealand literature might result in "the removal or neutralising of the New Zealand referent from fiction written by New Zealanders" (104) attracted a number of responses from the members of the New Zealand literary community. Among them was Morris. In her essay "On Coming Home" (2015), the writer acknowledges that she does not share Evans's sentiment that "a local focus is a writer's obligation" (71). Referring to Frame's comparison of fiction writing in mid-century New Zealand to the experience of a mapmaker who explores uncharted cultural and literary territories in a nation state that was then barely a century old, Morris draws attention to a generational difference between the writers of past and her own contemporaries, concluding that, today, New Zealand writers of fiction are not burdened with the task of forging the local literary and cultural narrative, as were Frame and her peers. As this thesis demonstrates, Morris's generation of writers is seen to be revising the settler paradigm and associated cultural narratives. They observe and record the changes that happen in New Zealand society and contribute to the reshaping of it through their fiction.

CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND WRITERS

One of the reasons why the work of Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy has been selected for literary analysis in this thesis is that these writers are, to borrow Malcom Bradbury's phrase, part of "a wandering, culturally inquisitive group" (qtd. in Kaplan, *Questions of Travel* 29), and their mobility has found its way into their fiction. Before discussing their novels, it is helpful to begin with an overview of the scholarly perception of Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy's fictional worlds.

A critically acclaimed New Zealand novelist, short story writer, essayist, and reviewer, Grimshaw is well travelled and for some time lived in London. Referring to her move abroad as "an excuse to get out" in her interview with Richard Lea, she admits feeling "a curious liberation in the distance from her homeland" ("The Fictional World of Charlotte Grimshaw," par. 5). Paradoxically, this geographical gap made New Zealand seem more real and vivid to her, as though dislocation provided the sort of deprivation, in artistic sense, that she needed as a beginning writer. It was in London that her first two novels, *Provocation* (1999) and *Guilt* (2000), were written.

Grimshaw's style has been credited for its subtlety, Dickensian quality of characterisation and settings, and for her extraordinary ability to capture the atmosphere of the moment (John McCrystall 2013). However, it is her continuous search for a complication and a kind of estrangement in her narratives, which I associate with mobility, that makes her work relevant to this thesis. One of its characteristics is her tendency to draw simultaneously on the conventions of several genres in her novels. For example, commenting on Grimshaw's first novel, *Provocation*, Lawn

notices how the writer mixes “shades of noir, female gothic, melodrama, satire, and legal procedural” (“Soft-boiled in Ponsonby” 112). Interestingly, in Grimshaw’s latest novel, *Mazarine* (2018), the end product is “[a]t once domestic drama, psychological thriller – underscored with a buzzing note of menace about global terrorism and the surveillance state – and a sort of sensual coming-of-age tale” (Charlotte Graham-McLay, par. 2). *Foreign City*, as this thesis demonstrates, is no exception, and it confirms that the writer’s persistent inclination towards multiplicity, uncertainty, and experimentation as her hallmark.

This transitory, if not elusive, nature of Grimshaw’s novels has confused some readers and reviewers in the past, as in the case of *Provocation* and *Guilt*, both of which have been categorised as thrillers, and the former even became a finalist for the 1999 Crime Writers’ Association John Creasey Memorial Award. Although Grimshaw has a background in criminal and commercial law, the writer insists that it has merely provided her with inspiration and “dramatic material” (Reid 222), and that she has “no relationship with crime fiction” (223).

A number of critics have also considered Grimshaw to be a political writer. Dougal McNeill (2016) has observed Grimshaw’s focalised view of the world of wealthy Aucklanders and their “Chapmanesque contribution to the social pattern” (296) in her novel, *The Night Book* (2010). McNeill describes this work as being constructed “out of business of politics - the fundraising parties, the manoeuvres - and derives her narrative’s energies from politics’ combination of power and its erotic attractions” (296). In her master’s thesis, “Neoliberalism and Social Patterns” (2007), Kristen Elizabeth Shaw also comments on Grimshaw’s preoccupation with middle- to upper-class New Zealanders of European descent in her award-winning collection of short stories, *Opportunity* (2007). Shaw remarks that, unlike the characters of Alice Tawhai, who are stuck in dysfunctional relationships and tight spaces or paralysed by poverty and their unchanging lives, many characters in Grimshaw’s anthology are Aucklanders who live in a world “where opportunities are presented frequently and it is up to the individual to make choices” (38). Taking a broader view of Grimshaw’s fictional world, Lawn sees it as noir-inflected, tainted with suspicion and deceit, built on instability and “a sense of intangible urban dread” (“Soft-boiled in Ponsonby” 112). This perception fits in with McCrystal’s assertion that Grimshaw’s “fundamental preoccupation is with the mystery of human motivation” (3). This, I suggest, is an apt summation of Grimshaw’s function as the author. Her interest is the life of ordinary people and, as the writer says, unlawful acts and illicit relationships “aren’t really out of the ordinary” (“The Fictional World of Charlotte Grimshaw,” par. 14). These commentators not only help articulate the world that Grimshaw creates in her fiction, but also underscore her interest in the socially mobile subject. In this sense, *Foreign City* is different from many of Grimshaw’s novels as it makes its focus geographical and aesthetic mobilities.

In *Foreign City*, Grimshaw establishes a strong European connection for Pākehā New Zealanders through her London setting, and the ideas of settler paradigm, European diaspora, provincialism, and displacement become prominent. Set in Bloomsbury, presumably in the 1980s, Part One of the novel evokes a modernist perception of the northern metropolis as the cultural centre for New Zealand. The protagonist, Anna Devine, longs to become a London artist. Having moved to the northern metropolis, Anna becomes seduced by the city's past narratives and myths, and succumbs to the modernist notion of an artist living in Bloomsbury. In Part Two of the novel, the main action moves to Auckland in the post-9/11 era. London is seen from a distance, and so is Anna's story which, as it transpires, is a novel within the novel. Grimshaw adopts a revising mode here, and London changes from a dominating and absorbing setting into a fragmented and multi-dimensional image, which shifts between being a memory, a fictional setting, a transmitted image on a television screen, and is dispersed through personal stories of different characters. In doing so, Grimshaw sets the pattern, variations of which can be traced in Morris and Kennedy's novels.

Unlike Grimshaw, Morris makes her preoccupation with mobility explicit in her work. In her impressively diverse repertoire, which encompasses fiction and non-fiction, long and short prose, adult and young adult novels, Morris explores an array of issues and concerns. A descendant of one of the oldest Māori lineages in New Zealand, Ngati Wai, Morris is passionate about indigenous cultures and race relations. Indeed, much scholarly attention has been given to the ways Morris explores the themes of national identity, diversity, and racial relationships. For example, in her thesis Anne Pistacchi (2009) suggests that "Morris's literary explorations have ... resulted in texts haunted by questions of how, in this increasingly diasporic world, indigenous people are able to preserve and celebrate their indigeneity" (94). Also, Erin Mercer (2009) asserts that Morris's novels "are profoundly involved in a rearticulation and remaking of notions of national identity" (141). While postcolonial discourse has been crucial to understanding Morris's work, the mobility narrative continues to live through her work, and it deserves scholarly attention.

One only has to read Morris's autobiographical essay "On Coming Home" to realise the extent of her fascination with mobility experience. Drawing on the works and lives of many émigré writers and literary travellers, as well as writers who spent years in forced or self-induced exile (Mansfield, McNeish, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Walter Benjamin, Pico Iyer, and Salman Rushdie to name a few), Morris presents a meditation on her own life on the move, as well as her fear of finally returning home. Her odyssey began in 1985, when as a twenty-year-old student she left New Zealand to study at a university in York, England. Her decision to do so may have been influenced by her English connection through her mother, but then there was also the metropolitan dream, which was partly achieved when, after three years in York, Morris moved to London and later to New York.

Although working for a record company had been lucrative, it left Morris burnt out. In America, a “place of mobility” (Morris in Somerville 182), she decided to change the direction of her career to pursue her passion for writing.

The idea for her novel *Queen of Beauty* emerged when Morris returned to New Zealand to complete her master’s degree at Victoria University. Yet Morris’s stay in New Zealand was always meant to be temporary. Upon completing her degree, she returned to America. For the next two decades or so, she would be “an occasional visitor rather than a citizen” (Morris, “On Coming Home” 16) in her home country. Thus, it is not surprising that mobility as a theme has become central in her work, and some of her characters are just like her – New Zealanders living or travelling abroad (Virginia Ngātea Seton in *Queen of Beauty*, the Ngati Wai chieftain, Paratene te Manu, in *Rangatira* [2011]; Sylvia in “The City God” [2008]; Emma Taupere in *Hibiscus Coast*). In her essay, detailing her background on both sides of the whanau – the love of sailing among her Māori forbearers on her father’s side and the story of European migration to New Zealand on her mother’s – she suggests that her tendency to move may run in the family (“On Coming Home” 13). She has lived in seven cities and in three parts of the world, each time transforming into a different figure of mobility – a traveller, an expatriate, a migrant worker, and a writer-in-residence.

In *Queen of Beauty*, the modernist metropolitan dream of London evolves into a kind of new world – New Orleans. At one stage, a cosmopolitan centre of the South, and indeed of America, this city becomes a new home for the Māori protagonist, Virginia Ngātea Seton, and the place of her artistic and personal growth. The novel tells a story of how Virginia’s routes lead her back to her roots. Overseas, she does find an attachment and falls under the spell of New Orleans, but distance incites memories of Auckland and her family, building an impossible bridge between the two worlds – the imagined and the real, home and abroad. It is through stories and recollections, as well as her work as a researcher and ghost writer that she reconnects with her ancestors’ past and, indeed, New Zealand.

Much like Grimshaw and Morris, Kennedy has spent many years on the move, living between New Zealand and Hawaii. In her own words, this oscillation between “two realities, has undoubtedly played into the collision of worlds that the imagination continues to be” (“An Interview: Anne Kennedy,” par. 29). In addition, the experience of living overseas has intensified the writer’s perception of herself as a settler. In an interview, she remarks that, in some way, her own displacement echoed her Irish great-grandparents’ immigrant past. “Hawaii sharpened my sense of how it is to be displaced and to make a new place with layers of perception and stories, old and new” (“Anne Kennedy Unravelling,” par. 14). That said, Kennedy’s tendency to cross boundaries is not limited to geography alone. As a poet and novelist, short story and screenplay writer, she moves

between genres and media with ease. Speaking of her motivation to write poetry in an interview, Kennedy reveals that, at first, she was largely driven by her conviction that her prose did not have the rhythm she wanted (“An Interview with Anne Kennedy”). Now, whenever she feels trapped in insistent poetic patterns, she returns to fiction – it saves her from the “burden of rhythm” (par. 23). And it is her novel, *The Last Days of the National Costume*, that becomes part of the textual archive discussed in this thesis, for it is an interesting example of how Kennedy’s travels have sharpened her sense of antipodean cultural location.

Of the three writers studied in this thesis, Kennedy is the only one who began publishing her work in the 1980s, the end of the Post-provincial Period and an exciting time for New Zealand literature. Not only was it “the decade of women’s fiction” (Laurel Bergmann, par. 1), but also the time when New Zealand literature became a global phenomenon. This was largely influenced by the fact that Keri Hulme became the first New Zealand writer to ever win the Booker Prize in 1985 for her debut novel, *the bone people* (1983). The “post-booker” years, as David Dowling (1988) writes, led to “[t]he rediscovery of New Zealand [that] has modulated into viewpoints which place these islands in global geography and history, and writer’s eyes and ears seem attuned more effortlessly, without polarity, to ‘here’ and ‘there’” (100). Situating Kennedy’s work in this context leads to the realisation that this was a fitting era for a writer who has a penchant for experimentation.

Kennedy’s influence on the New Zealand literary and cultural landscape has been significant. Lydia Wevers (1998) has named Kennedy as part of the group of New Zealand female writers who have set their fiction “out of the domestic post-romance frame characteristic of earlier writing” (304). However, what makes Kennedy’s writing of interest to this thesis is their commitment to international postmodernism (Jones 234). Her critically acclaimed first novel, *100 Traditional Smiles* (1989), was praised as a creation where “[t]he fictional world is simply aesthetic design, its ‘theme’ the acceptance of the post-modern condition of adaptation to an international culture of images and simulacra that no longer has a stable sense of place and tradition” (Jones 234-35). Her award-winning second postmodern novella, *Musica Ficta* (1993), was heralded as “a landmark pointing to other possibilities in New Zealand literature” (Larsen qtd. in Jones 235). A major influence on Kennedy’s writing style in this work of fiction becomes her musical background (a Bachelor of Music Degree in Composition from Victoria University in Wellington). She “plays ingeniously between music and language” (“Anne Kennedy” 284) and creates a series of seemingly disconnected movements between multiple international geographical locations, random historical settings, literary and musical genres, myriad fragments and perspectives, turning her work into a celebration of postmodernity.

In *The Last Days of the National Costume*, Kennedy also reflects on an epochal change, but provides a counterpoint to the other two novels by way of unsettling the established pattern and

problematizing it by showing the settler narrative in New Zealand to be in decline at the end of the twentieth century. The novel deals with the issue of disconnect from European heritage for Pākehā New Zealanders and questions the notion of national identity as a stable entity. The protagonist, Megan Sligo, or GoGo, seems at a loss in her life. While leading a seemingly comfortable existence, GoGo undertakes several journeys of self-discovery. However, her life is shown to be undermined by irony and all her undertakings end in disappointment, including her life in New York. In the novel, settler-colonial desires are parodied through GoGo's life and her search for her Irish roots. Accidentally, the protagonist becomes drawn into an Irish client's life and her Celtic dance of romantic encounters with the client becomes synonymous with her quest to rediscover her own Irish heritage. However, Kennedy suggests that one should not obsess with the past. The rhetoric of decline that Kennedy adopts in her novel signifies the decline of settler dominance in New Zealand cultural history at the turn of the twenty-first century, freeing up the space for a new paradigm.

This selection of novels was influenced by the fact that they are set approximately around the same period, but there are other important similarities as well. First and foremost, they all have foreign settings. Grimshaw's London and Barcelona, Morris's New Orleans, and Kennedy's New York and Belfast create a counterpoint for "the New Zealand referent" (Evans, "Spectacular Babies" 104), evoking and disturbing the default binary of "here and there," traditionally represented by New Zealand and England. On the other hand, these northern metropolises are, to borrow Grimshaw's phrase, "essentially foreign" (FC 61) and, therefore, are imperative for creating a complication and a sense of dislocation that the characters in these novels seek.

On character level, the writers also create a similar protagonist profile. She is a middle-class New Zealander, in her mid- to late-twenties, well-educated but not quite satisfied with her life. She decides to leave her home city Auckland, seeking what Charles Brasch once described as "[w]orlds that can answer our unknown desires" (qtd. in Green and Ricketts, 240). As a creative individual – which, as I suggest, amplifies their sense of restlessness, physical energy, and their need for movement, in both literal and figurative sense – she embarks on a creative self-exile. Displaced in the foreign metropolis, she settles for a lesser substitute of the life she formerly enjoyed in New Zealand, struggling to belong in the new place, and cultivating a sense of rootlessness. In the end, it is this incompatibility with the foreign city that forces the character to re-examine her identity and her sense of place and belonging.

The term "creative self-exile" is crucial to the understanding of the characters' mobility, and I wish to elaborate on its significance in this thesis. In this contemporary globalised world, the notion of self-exile has come to represent a collective category where immigrants, expatriates, and economic or political refugees, while representing their own characteristics, draw on and expand the

concept of exile, yet preserve its negative "cultural and emotional connotations" (Spariosu 29-30). In this thesis, by referring to self-exile as *creative*, I suggest that it is the protagonists' artistic nature that becomes the engine that drives them overseas: Grimshaw's painter, Anna Devine; Morris's ghost writer, Virginia Ngātea Seton; and Kennedy's literature student, Megan Sligo, who becomes a seamstress. That said, by definition, self-exile is the product of the subject's own motivation and imagination, and, therefore, is a kind of creation in itself. Thus, the self-exilic condition in these novels is both *creative* and *created*, and it is this idea of the characters being *creators* of their own lives as well as works of imagination, that leads to a consideration of gender as being another unifying category across the three novels.

Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy re-work the classic modernist trope of self-exile, a concept that sits on the intersection of aesthetics and mobility; however, gender becomes an underlying principle in this arrangement. In point of fact, all three writers in this thesis explore various gender-coded themes – invisibility, motherhood, the metropolis, and boundary-crossing – in relation to mobility and aesthetics. The idea that mobility is a gendered experience is not new, and it has been argued by scholars of various disciplines. Among recent academics is geographer Doreen Massey, who identifies gender as one of the influences on human experience of space, observing that multiple studies have shown that women's mobility is often "restricted by men" ("A Sense of Place" 259), and historian Virginia Scharff (2003), who in her study of women's westward movements in America asserts that "[m]ovement belongs to men" and "[w]hen women move, they surprise us" (3). In the New Zealand context, John Newton (2017) makes a convincing case that the gendering of post-World War One international modernism, which saw a decline in significant female writers, had a particularly trenchant influence on local literary formations. The late arrival of aesthetic modernism on these shores meant that the rise of settler cultural nationalism coincided with a male backlash against "sexual modernity," associated with the liberation of female desire. This coincidence of local and international factors furnished male writers of the 1930s and 1940s with "an entire masculine ordnance" (146).

In *Foreign City*, *Queen of Beauty*, and *The Last Days of the National Costume*, the writers turn the idea of self-exile, which historically has borne the mark of male gender, towards a feminist alternative, and they dismantle the previously established gender significance by giving their female characters the opportunity to pursue the "dream called overseas." However, in the context of the novels, the idea of the dream also works outside the limits of geography, extending into the sphere of artistic self-expression. This is particularly noticeable in Grimshaw and Morris's novels, where at the core of the idea of aesthetics lie painting and literature, the spheres of masculine associations, closely linked to the modernist exile, as opposed to Kennedy's work where the protagonist enters

the realm of crafts, the category where practical use outweighs originality, intellectual ideals, and personal expression (Korsmeyer, par. 11) – the qualities which have been aligned with the masculine.

It should be stated that during the early stage of this project, gender – along with creativity and foreign settings – was considered to be a prerequisite for the selection of novels for this study and a determining factor in the decision not to use other texts with similar themes, such as Damien Wilkins's *Little Masters* (1996) and Emily Perkins's *Novel About My Wife* (2008), where the protagonists are male and, therefore, experience mobility and creative movements, as in the case of Perkins's novel, differently.

Collectively, Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy represent a generation of writers who, through their fiction, move towards articulating a new direction in the settler paradigm. Of particular interest is their approach to the idea of "here and there." Whereas historically, the divide between the two co-ordinates has been characterised by stark polarity and empty distance, highlighting a sense of separation from the European continent for many New Zealanders, in Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy's novels it is shown to cohere around different contexts, generating new meanings. Still influenced by larger forces, such as global economy, political changes, migration, and globalisation, and still marked by major cities in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, this dyad has transformed into a less straightforward and less defined concept.

THE MOBILITIES PARADIGM

In their influential work "The New Mobilities Paradigm" (2006), Mimi Sheller and John Urry have argued that, to understand the world of today, academics need to take a hybrid approach to studying mobility. Doing so allows to trace movement "beyond disciplinary boundaries" and to avoid creating "a new 'grand narrative' of mobility" that produces "a totalising or reductive description of the contemporary world" (210). Taking this postulation as a guiding principle, I position this thesis at the crossroads of literary and geographical discourses, while also drawing on the work of some mobility scholars representing other disciplines, namely sociology and cultural studies. Such interdisciplinary transactions of ideas lead to fruitful observations on the themes, authorial techniques, and nuances of meaning in the selected novels.

The work of several geographers is used to drive literary analysis in this thesis. Particularly important is the work of Cresswell. In addition to his significant contribution to the new mobilities paradigm, his approach to the study of geography, described by him as "critical geosophy," lends itself to literary analysis. *The Oxford Dictionary of Human Geography* defines "geosophy" as the

study of geographical knowledge accumulated with the help of ordinary people – for example, farmers, poets, artists, Bedouins, and traders – as opposed to academic geographers. What makes Cresswell’s approach suitable to literary studies is an underlying sense of the personal dimension of experience, which is often overlooked by other mobility scholars.

In *On the Move* (2006), Cresswell considers mobility “through three relational moments” (3). For Cresswell mobility, first and foremost, is something that can be observed, analysed, and measured. It is “an empirical reality” (3). Secondly, he perceives mobility through the prism of representational strategies, among which he names film, philosophy, law, and, most importantly for this study, literature. “These representations of mobility capture and make sense of it through the production of meanings that are frequently ideological” (3). In this context, movement from A to B becomes “synonymous with freedom, with transgression, with creativity, [and] with life itself” (3). Finally, Cresswell considers mobility as “a way of *being* in the world” (3; my emphasis). People experience mobility differently, depending on their state of mind, mood and feelings, which shows that mobility is “an irreducibly embodied experience” (4). In defining these levels of mobility analysis, Cresswell provides an interpretative framework for a critic, presenting a possibility of tracing the characters’ movements on several levels of signification.

Cresswell builds his explanation of mobility on the distinction between mobility and movement. The latter is understood to denote a change in geographical terms (from point A to point B). He regards it as “the general fact of displacement before the type, strategies and social implications of that movement are considered” (3). In other words, movement for Cresswell is “mobility abstracted from contexts of power” (2). Mobility, on the other hand, is layered with meaning. It is a social construct that involves both physical movement and representation of that movement. “Mobile people are never simply *people*” (4). Referring to the geographer David Delaney, Cresswell writes that “human mobility implicates *both* physical bodies moving through material landscapes *and* categorical figures moving through representational spaces” (qtd. in *On the Move* 4). In my analysis of the novels, I draw on this idea and consider how the creative nature of the main characters’ lives influences their mobility, and vice versa, for mobility cannot be fully understood without a possibility of representation.

For Cresswell, place and concepts relating to it – such as location, locale, place, and sense of place – are crucial for understanding mobility and movement. In fact, on a physical level, he describes movement as “the dynamic equivalent of location,” as opposed to mobility which he views as “the dynamic equivalent of place” (3). In *Place: A Short Introduction* (2009), he essentially views “location” as the coordinates or “the ‘where’ of place,” while “locale” as a space with a strong physical presence – “buildings, streets, parks, and other visible and tangible aspects of a place” (1).

Cresswell also elaborates on his idea of “sense of place,” which he sees as underpinned by emotions and feelings elicited by a place. The notion of “place” itself he defines as “a meaningful site that combines location, locale, and sense of place” (1). It is “imbued with meaning and power” (*On the Move* 3; emphasis in original), and so is mobility by association.

Like Cresswell, Massey belongs to the generation of thinkers who consider place as a dynamic site (see Kaplan, 1996; Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, 2020; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Adey, 2010). Instead of seeing place as a space characterised by permanence, rootedness and fixity (the idea is thought to derive from Martin Heidegger’s ideas of dwelling and being), Massey speaks of “progressive sense of place” (qtd. in Cresswell 8). For her, all places are subjected to constant and expected transformation. More importantly, this change is generated by both internal and external forces, or to be more precise, “by both internal and external mobilities and processes” (Cresswell, *Place* 9).

For Massey and Cresswell, understanding the relationship between mobility and place is vital because it enables a better understanding of the globalised world of today and, largely, because it prevents mobility from being treated as a threatening, antagonistic and potentially destructive force in a place. In her essay, “Power-Geometry and Progressive Sense of Place” (1993), Massey establishes a way to interpret a place which allows to imagine it as grounded not in “some long internalized history,” but in “a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus” (66). Instead of envisaging a place from the inside, surrounded by boundaries and guarded by “introverted obsessions with ‘heritage’” (64), Massey sees it through a global consciousness, “integrat[ing] in a positive way the global and the local” (66). Interestingly, and rather fittingly for the analysis of fiction set in foreign cities, Massey invites us to reconsider the idea of the metropolitan centre. In her book, *World City* (2007), she interrogates the image of the global city, focussing on London as a cosmopolitan and influential metropolis, suggesting that, for all its power, “it could not survive for a day without the world” (7). This is a salient point when considering the significance of northern metropolises for the antipodean world, as is her idea that “the global is as much locally produced as vice versa, that an imaginary of big binaries of us and them (often aligned with local and global) is both politically disabling and exonerating of our own (and our own local place’s) implication” (10).

Peter Adey’s ideas are in line with the scholars discussed above. Similar to Cresswell, he proposes that literature can illuminate the cultural and social outcomes of mobility, “particularly within city spaces” (31). Adey has written extensively about urban, military, and aerial mobilities and spaces, and his ideas on vertical social mobility and its relationship to the subject’s geographical movement are also of interest in this thesis. He observes that often moving to a new place in search

of better opportunities equates to moving upwards on the social ladder (37). However, it is his discussions about synchronicity and relationality (also Cresswell) of mobility that are of interest to this study. “The desire for synchronicity – *proximity* – has become a signature of many of the mobile worlds we have seen” (225; emphasis in original). In his work, Adey observes an increasing disparity between people’s life commitments and time availability, but also suggests that “desire for synchronicity” can be experienced in other contexts, and one possibility to explore this desire is through the theme of immigration and life in a foreign city. Adey’s postulation that all movement through space provides a “standpoint or a way of relating” (xvii) to objects and other people allows for more detailed observations to be made on the question of the characters’ engagement with their surroundings in the novels. In addition to examining movement in relation to other movements or objects, special consideration is given to the coordinates between which it takes place. Indeed, mobility becomes “a *lived relation*” (xvii; emphasis in original).

The work of cultural and literary critics such as Kaplan and Stephen Greenblatt also adds richness to the discussion of movement and mobility in the three novels. In her book *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (2000), Kaplan engages in a discussion of the connection between modernity and postmodernity, mainly the hegemonic effects of Euro-American modernist cultural productions, their continuity and discontinuity, and their impact on postmodernity. One of the most interesting facets of Kaplan’s analysis is on the modernist figures of mobility: a traveller, writer in exile, flâneur, tourist, immigrant, and expatriate. Not only does she trace their ideological and historical links and nuances of meaning, but she also attempts to understand how these modes of travel and displacement produce cultural practices. Kaplan observes a tendency among modernist critics to overemphasise the difference between the figures of mobility, for example an expatriate and an immigrant. She makes a similar observation about “Euro-American discourses of displacement [which] tend to absorb difference [between displacement experiences] and create ahistorical amalgams” (2). Such an approach, she argues, can lead to rigid categories. In the case of the figures of mobility, this can lead to a moralising view of the motives, intentions, and behaviours of the mobile subject, while, in the case of displacement, to a universalising view of something that is clearly unique and personal. Instead, Kaplan demonstrates how the boundaries between these categories can sometimes become blurred, and dichotomies and pure categories deconstructed.

The ideas of Greenblatt provide additional avenues for interpreting mobility in fiction. Unlike Cresswell and others discussed in this introduction, he does not differentiate between mobility and movement, but uses these terms interchangeably. In *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (2010), Greenblatt provides his own framework for studying mobility. Instead of focussing on the *levels* of

analysis, as Cresswell does, Greenblatt is concerned with *objects* of analysis. Firstly, he suggests that all kinds of everyday movements should be considered by the critic and asserts that understanding literal movements is crucial for understanding metaphorical movements. For example, using a similar approach, one small study of movement and mobility in contemporary London novels suggested that the subject's movements through physical space can lead to an understanding of non-spatial relations (Berensmeyer and Ehland, 120). Thus, an analysis of centre/periphery might serve to illuminate cultural or ethnic differences, while vertical and horizontal movements can reveal class or gender-related issues.

Greenblatt's second object of investigation involves an understanding of how mobility reveals "*hidden*" and "*conspicuous movements* of people, objects, images, texts, and ideas" (250). Beginning with the literal sense, he suggests looking at the instances when cultural elements are shifted out of sight and cleverly disguised. The next step here is to investigate metaphorical movements, such as unconscious, unrecognised, misrepresented and "*deliberately distorted mobility*" (251). In this instance, Greenblatt's examples range from criminal activity on one end of the spectrum to migration, tourism and cultural events, such as festivals, on the other.

Thirdly, Greenblatt identifies "*contact zones*" where an exchange of cultural goods is facilitated by "*mobilis]ers' – agents, go-betweens, translators, or intermediaries*" (251). One observation Greenblatt makes here is that such investigations are necessary, for they can reveal the peculiarities of the place where the contact zone is located, for example a particular city or country.

The fourth object of analysis is linked to the tension between personal agency and power structures. For Greenblatt, this is an opportunity to investigate how social, cultural and ideological structures interfere with "*autonomous movement*" (252), and whether they mobilise or immobilise the subject.

Lastly, Greenblatt calls for an examination of "*the sensation of rootedness*" (252). Here he alludes to Massey's argument about mobility being treated as threatening, and he insists that the response of those who build protective yet dividing walls to preserve their culture, traditions, and beliefs from the hazardous nature of mobility needs to be understood, or at least studied.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

This thesis consists of three chapters, and the analysis of the novels follows the order of reading to accommodate for the complexities of the comparative nature of this thesis.

Chapter One, "*Geographical and Existential Displacement in Foreign City,*" is structured around the primary locations in the novel – London and Auckland – and traverses through the

predetermined conceptual coordinates in this thesis, such as the ideas of “here and there,” metropole and periphery, mobility and displacement, modernity and postmodernity. The sense of nostalgia for modernism, evoked through a New Zealand artist living in London, is strongest in Grimshaw’s *Foreign City*, hence I begin the main body of my thesis with this novel. Taking Grimshaw’s project of looking back at modernism as a starting point, I begin my analysis of Part One of the novel with Bloomsbury, the heart of modernist experimentation and creativity. Drawing on the model of centre and periphery, I explore the protagonist’s attempts to overcome the sense of alienation in the distant metropolis. From the theoretical point of view, the ideas of Adey on urban rhythms and synchronicity, and those of Kaplan on the relationship between modernity and postmodernity, forced displacement and self-exile, and her argument against pure and clean-cut categories as far as mobility is concerned, help elicit the meaning of Grimshaw’s narrative. However, the critical writing of Stead, Calder, and Evans on cultural nationalism and European preoccupations in New Zealand literature form the foundation for my discussion and help elucidate their meaning in this novel. Through close reading of selected scenes in *Foreign City*, I demonstrate how the critical concept of “here and there” transforms from geographical and cultural representations (New Zealand and England; centre and periphery) into a set of various conflicting desires (for motherhood and Bohemian freedom; for mobility and attachment; for nostalgia and novelty). The analysis of Grimshaw’s novel also applies and interrogates the idea of cultural geographers, such as Cresswell and Adey, that mobility and displacement are inextricably linked. My main argument here is that, in Grimshaw’s novel, the relationship between mobility and displacement is not one-dimensional, nor is it one-directional, that is in some circumstances mobility leads to displacement, while in others displacement is a source of mobility.

Chapter Two, “Creative Mobilisation of (Hi)Stories,” follows the same structural pattern as the chapter on *Foreign City*, where I centre my analysis around the main geographical locations, and in *Queen of Beauty* they are New Orleans and Auckland. Instead of focussing on European concerns felt by a Pākehā protagonist, as in Grimshaw’s *Foreign City*, Morris weaves her narrative around the main character of mixed heritage – Māori and Pākehā – who moves to New Orleans. In this undertaking, the mobilities paradigm is enriched through merging of Māori and settler mobility narratives. The protagonist becomes a nexus between the two ancestral stories, but also, through her role as a researcher and ghost writer, a mobiliser of cultural stories that relate both to New Zealand and wider history. Thus, mobility in this novel is not only an act of moving geographically and socially, but also culturally. Situating part of her novel in New Orleans, Morris interrogates the historical meaning of the cultural model where centre and periphery are Europe and New Zealand by introducing an American location. The idea of a metropolitan centre being a site where global

culture is produced and reproduced is still prominent in Morris's novel, but what emerges here is the idea that the myth of the metropolis is largely sustained through past narratives and the practice of storytelling. In her novel, Morris also foregrounds the notion of "here and there," but employs a different set of binaries to create and circulate new meanings around it. Thus, the centre and periphery model is turned into the metropolitan and non-metropolitan dyad. Other binaries that are applied and reworked in Morris's novel are home and abroad, the public and the private, personal and historical, and now and then. In my discussion, I draw on the work of Greenblatt and Massey.

Chapter Three, "'Post-Settler Ennui' in *The Last Days of the National Costume*," is structured differently from the first two chapters to reflect the idea of circularity that Kennedy foregrounds in her novel, as it begins and ends in Auckland. The middle sections discuss the protagonist's journeys: an overseas adventure in America, an imagined migrant journey from Ireland to New Zealand, and a local trip to Taranaki, site of one of the first planned British settlements in the North Island. In her novel, Kennedy aligns mobility of the protagonist with mobility of the national story, more so than Grimshaw and Morris. The main character's continuous downward trajectory, shown through her geographical and social mobility, mimics the decline of settler culture in New Zealand and underscores the sense of a failed settler dream. In terms of the mobility discourse, the ideas of vertical mobility and the notion of limits or impasse are applied and re-affirmed in this chapter.

Themes of displacement and "here and there" are still relevant in Kennedy's novel, but they are imbued with the meaning of failure and loss. First of all, the "here and there" signifies the geographical locations of New Zealand and America, another nation where the idea of a failed dream prevails, and the protagonist experiences it first-hand. Also, the binary meaning of "here and there" is used to draw on historical significance of migrant narratives in New Zealand culture. At one point, "here" was an ideal place, a paradise, and a land of promise. Finally, the "here and there" becomes the gap in the New Zealand collective remembering of the settler experience between Māori and Pākehā.

Chapter One: Geographical and Existential Displacement in *Foreign City*

“... longing to be precisely nowhere ...”

Charlotte Grimshaw (*Foreign City*)

In her review of this novel, Michele Hewitson (2005) praises Grimshaw's *Foreign City* for its accomplished writing but observes that, despite “a tying up of ends, of a sort, of a very peculiar sort,” the work does not quite succeed in “its interior acrobatics” (“Charlotte Grimshaw: *Foreign City*,” par. 9). Hewitson is right to suggest that the narrative structure invites not a simplistic, but vigilant reading of this novel. There are structural complexities, open-endedness, invisible narrative threads, as well as shifts in time, space and perspective, all of which create a sense of displacement. Rather than focussing on action in her novel, Grimshaw is interested in effect. She develops the novel organically, consciously experimenting with form, and eschewing linearity and simplicity in the narrative structure. As a result, the reader's cognitive experience is analogous to the spatial experience one might encounter while traversing a foreign metropolis.

Much like in Morris and Kennedy's novels, movement and mobility in *Foreign City* are geographical concepts at the beginning, but they evolve into narrative and structural devices, and morph into tropes and themes. Grimshaw's characters move abroad to pursue an attachment, seek a complication, transgress literal and metaphorical boundaries, or become “fugitive[s]” who run away from their failures, search for a place where everything is “perfectly right” and where “the hole in the centre of ... self” (389) is filled with new life. However, their freedom of movement is an assumption to be challenged, as Grimshaw's subject always operates within margins and spatial demarcations.

A key idea that emerges in the novel is that mobility and displacement are inseparable. As Cresswell simply puts it, displacement is “the act of moving between locations” (*On the Move* 2). Although Cresswell's intention here is to demonstrate the interconnectedness between mobility and displacement in this definition, it is easy to lose sight of cultural, social, political, and economic contexts that characterise, inform, and transform displacement. For Grimshaw, to be displaced can and does mean more than being out of place. Her protagonists' displacement is deeply rooted in historical and cultural traditions, yet it inadvertently affects the characters' sense of personal space, as well as informs and determines their subsequent movements. In *Foreign City*, displacement and mobility are inextricably linked, but the relationship between them is not one-dimensional, nor is it

one-directional, that is in some circumstances mobility leads to displacement, while in others displacement is a source of mobility.

MAPPING THE NOVEL

Before undertaking close analysis of Grimshaw's novel, it is necessary to comment on the primary locations in the novel. Having set Part One in London, the once-important centre for New Zealanders, Grimshaw gradually reduces its significance by distancing the main action from it in Part Two. Discussing her novel in an interview, the writer maintained a view that New Zealanders are "completely Antipodean" and that when they travel or immigrate to London, "there's no going home" ("Charlotte Grimshaw" 225). It is this idea of impossibility of belonging in London – and by extension, in any Northern Hemisphere metropolis – that creates a tension in *Foreign City*.

The title of the novel also alludes to another location, one where a journey begins and ends, and, as it happens often in her writing, it is Grimshaw's home city, Auckland. In her interview with Nicholas Reid, she explains that she "ha[s] always had a very strong sense of the physical environment," and ever since she was a child, she was "moved" by "the landscape, the light, the rain and everything about the geography of Auckland" (224). Her ability to detect subtle transformations and minute movements in the visual appearance of the physical spaces of the city, surrounded by natural landscape, is evident in her novel. The all-important elements of a quintessential Auckland setting – gentle slopes of the hills framing the urban landscape, the beach with its unstable sand, and the ever-changing sea under the distinct blue sky – feature in Grimshaw's work. However, time and again, Auckland is denatured by either surreally vibrant colours or monochromatic and alienating shades of grey, dampened by heavy rains, or portrayed as standing still in a respite from wild storms. In this southern metropolis, Grimshaw's characters never feel completely at home.

One important undertaking in *Foreign City* is Grimshaw's reworking of the modernist idea of "here and there" and re-evaluation of its significance in New Zealand culture. In a geographical sense, the "here and there" are London and Auckland. Yet while using these two cities as the primary settings in her novel, the writer disturbs their connection by including other foreign locations. A quick glance through the pages of the novel reveals references to sentimental Florence and romantic Prague, the "unreal city" (404) of Los Angeles, and "the broiling maze of Madrid" (408). This is Grimshaw's first novel where the boundaries of the setting are expanded beyond New Zealand to this extent (Grimshaw's latest novel, *Mazarine*, also has multiple foreign locations – London, Paris, and Buenos Aires). In *Foreign City*, Grimshaw creates and undoes doubleness, sets up and undermines dualities, acknowledges and unsettles dichotomies through multiplicity and

movement. On the other hand, in different sections of this novel, “here” and “there” are no longer bound by geographical or cultural connotations. Instead, this dichotomy emerges to have intimately personal meanings that relate to temporal, psychological, or moral realms. Among such examples are the characters’ musings on life and death, the past and the present (or then and now), loyalty and betrayal, freedom of self-realisation and family constraints.

The complexity of the structure of *Foreign City* creates an unsettling effect for the reader. The novel is divided into two parts, titled “The Black Window” and “The Box of Light.” Within them are contained three fictional worlds: the primary fictional-world set in Auckland and two embedded fictional worlds, set in London and written by one of Grimshaw’s characters in the primary world, the London-based writer Richard Black. These two novels within the novel are read by Black’s illegitimate daughter, Justine Devantier, and they provide clues and reveal new connections between the characters, creating a peculiar albeit somewhat distorted sense of unity. Unbeknownst to the reader, Grimshaw begins her work with Black’s novel, called *The Black Window*, thus delaying the narrative present and the main action of her novel until Part Two. This surprising reversal of the embedded and primary fictional worlds in *Foreign City* forces the reader to re-think any formed preconceptions about the characters half way through the novel.

Part One of the novel, “The Black Window,” tells the story of Anna Devine, a young New Zealand painter who lives with her family in London. Anna is instantly identified as the narrator, and her intimate first-person perspective creates a sense that London is “here and now.” However, she is also the fictional invention of the author, Richard Black. *The Black Window* is Black’s autobiographical novel, and it is based on Aniela Devantier, the New Zealand artist he once knew. In this part of the novel Anna, a married mother of two, becomes romantically involved with the suave English intellectual and writer Charles Henderson, the fictional persona of Richard Black. Henderson becomes instrumental in Anna’s artistic success in London, yet he also influences her on other levels. To be with him, she considers leaving her husband Damien and their two children, Harry and Lucy, aged five and three. The exact time when this part of the novel is set is never made explicit, and the lack of temporal coordinates contributes to the restlessness that becomes one of the traits of Grimshaw’s *Foreign City*.

In the second part of Grimshaw’s novel, titled “The Box of Light,” the action shifts to New Zealand at the time of the Second Gulf War, and the narrative concentrates around the life of Justine, the illegitimate daughter of Aniela and Richard. Here, the reader becomes aware that Anna and Henderson are the fictional versions of the artist and the writer. Justine has read all of her father’s novels and is reading another one, called *Foreign City* (the third narrative in Grimshaw’s novel). The chapters of Black’s novel appear intermittently in Part Two of Grimshaw’s work, and they

seemingly coincide with Justine's reading sessions. Numbered with Roman numerals to help differentiate them from the chapters of the main novel, they disrupt its rhythm and flow, creating a new movement in the narrative structure. In Black's *Foreign City*, the omniscient narrator tells the story of the Australian woman Catherine Costil, who immigrates to London. In some way, Catherine becomes another fictional version of Aniela, and one can detect parallels in their situation, age, and personalities. Catherine's relationship with Stephen Instone, an undercover policeman, also throws some light on how Aniela and Black's affair has ended. Many years after losing track of Catherine, Stephen travels for work to an unnamed yet Auckland-like distant metropolis, where he meets Catherine and discovers that she has a daughter. Sensing that he may be the father, Stephen decides not to become involved, and returns to London. This textual detail in Richard Black's novel does not evade Justine, and sometimes, she imagines her father knowing of her existence.

The narrative perspective is discussed in detail later in this chapter, but at this stage it is appropriate to comment on how the changes in the narrative voice contribute to the overall effect of plurality in Grimshaw's *Foreign City*. The shift of the narrative point of view from intradiegetic to extradiegetic – from the first-person narration of the doubly-created character of Anna in "The Black Window" to the first-person protagonist Justine in "The Box of Light" to the omniscient narrator in Black's *Foreign City* – creates an effect of distancing and of moving away from what is thought to be the centre. What begins as a story of the New Zealand artist searching success in London transforms into a story of the young woman, Justine, who searches for her past before turning towards her future.

LONDON: SEEKING BLOOMSBURY

Grimshaw opens the novel with the scene where Anna and her husband Damien are viewing a flat near Tottenham Court Road, a major thoroughfare stretching between Warren Street Station on Euston Road and Tottenham Court Road Station at the crossing of Oxford Street and Charing Cross Road. Tottenham Court Road is also thought to be the boundary between Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia. The proximity of this address to equally prominent places like Soho, Covent Garden, Marylebone, King's Cross, and Regent's Park, leaves no doubt that this is the heart of the metropolis.

On the one hand, the writer's choice of this location as a main setting in the novel is intriguing as it alludes to the real Bloomsbury flat that in 1989-1990 divided the New Zealand literary community and became the subject of debate or, as Lawn refers to it, "a clash of ideals of the location of culture" ("Postcolonial Bloomsbury"). The flat was purchased by the New Zealand Labour Government as a gift to New Zealand writers early in 1990. In one of his journal entries published in

Book Self, Stead describes the motivation behind the purchase as “a recognition that [New Zealand] writers like opportunities to get away, to widen their horizons, [and] to make literary friends and publishing contacts outside [New Zealand]” (325). However, the purchase was received negatively in some literary circles. A group of writers, including Lauris Edmond, Maurice Gee, Patricia Grace, Fiona Kidman and Owen Marshall, found the idea of the London flat to be an “irrelevant Euro-centric obsession with the ‘Mother Country’” (323). The debate that ensued between those who supported the London acquisition and those who saw it as a sign of extravagance gave the next government reason to sell the flat. In Grimshaw’s *Foreign City*, the protagonist’s stay in the rented Bloomsbury flat is also short-lived; at the end of Part One the flat gets sold, and Anna’s family are forced to move elsewhere.

However, in the novel, this London area serves a greater purpose than a revival of the ghost of the Bloomsbury flat. Firstly, using this locale as the main London setting allows Grimshaw to draw on its modernist cultural heritage when creating the character of Anna, a Bohemian at heart. Throughout the modernist era, Bloomsbury was a place where creative people and intellectuals lived and worked, and it is little wonder that Stead has described it as “[c]raddled in the great cup of London” (“Pictures in a Gallery under Sea,” line 25). In this area, between 1905 and the early 1940s, the influential Bloomsbury Group was based. The members of the group, including New Zealand’s own Katherine Mansfield, were united by a spirit of rebellion against conventions and standards prevailing at the time. They searched artistic innovation and personal liberation and, as Dorothy Parker once quipped, “lived in squares, painted in circles, loved in triangles” (qtd. in Haan 42). The idea that spaces influence people is not new (Henri Lefebvre and Georg Simmel have written about it), and it is underscored in *Foreign City* through the character of Anna, who gravitates to Bloomsbury’s past narrative and undergoes a personal and artistic transformation while living in this area.

What is more, by positioning the main setting of Part One of her novel on the boundary between Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia, Grimshaw suggests that, in her personal life, Anna is in a kind of liminal space – at a crossroad of change. The viewing of the flat provides the New Zealand artist with a first glimpse into the world of affluent Londoners and marks the beginning of a new cycle in her life. As she discovers, the English owner of this flat, Quintal, has moved to Hong Kong to head one of the Chinese newspapers. His appointment as a newspaper editor in this distant skyscraper city not only suggests that he is a mobile individual, but also that he is on an upward trajectory in his professional life. In the opening scene, Grimshaw pays close attention to Anna’s movements. The rising motion of the lift that takes her and the estate agent to the top floor of the building, followed by the walk up the short staircase that leads to the flat, become the literal examples of vertical

movement in the novel, and symbolic representations of Anna's rise and entrance into the world of which she unexpectedly becomes part. This is one way in which relationality of mobility – the subject's mobility prompts or results in further mobilities – plays out in the novel.

It should be said that, in this process, space plays an integral part and Quintal's flat has a transformative effect on Anna. While wandering about it, Anna admires the "great wide empty spaces with high ceilings, white walls, [and] huge windows looking down into the street" (11). This place has nothing in common with most accommodation that she has seen in London until now. Other flats she has viewed can only be compared with "chicken coops" (12). Even the flat on Hunter Street, "that dusty, vibrating canyon" where the Devines live now, is no bigger than "a shoebox" (12). Conversely, Quintal's flat is spacious and light, and, importantly, the rental price is only slightly higher than what the Devines are paying for their accommodation in Hunter Street. Having entered the flat as a client, Anna leaves it as a tenant. This transformation may seem superficial, as Anna is merely renting another London flat, but the effect of it is significant. It translates into Anna's "high hopes" (14) for her success in London. It is at this moment in the novel that she fixes her mind on her dream of becoming a recognised London painter – arguably, the ultimate destination for a New Zealand artist – and determines her own trajectory towards success.

Before discussing Anna's London life, it is important to consider her motivation to leave New Zealand, for it can reveal certain facets of Anna's character and also help interrogate the ideas of Calder, Stead, and Evans on the New Zealand artist's sense of distance from the centre of western civilisation, Europe. In the novel, there are some clues as to why Anna decides to move overseas. Firstly, the artist's talent lacks appreciation in her home country, and while her paintings do bring her financial rewards, they are mainly purchased for their "investment value" rather than artistic craft and originality. Many of her clients are, as her mother says, "philistines, the kind who ask for a painting that'll match their carpet" (111). The reception of Anna's paintings in London will be vastly different, and her works will be thought to be exciting and innovative, with "an indefinable quality, an outsider's eye" (190). This contrast in attitudes to art between London and Auckland, underscored by Grimshaw, evokes the idea of New Zealand's peripheral status and brings to the mind its past reputation for being unsophisticated and unrefined – an uninspiring environment for an artist. In *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature* (1990), Evans wrote that, in mid-twentieth century, to become a true artist one had to forsake this country (144). While Grimshaw's novel is set much later, there is a sense of residue of the cultural climate and the cultural construct of the artist that prevailed in this country a generation before.

In addition, it is implied in the novel that New Zealand life might be too simple and straightforward for Anna to draw inspiration. While visiting this country on a literary tour, the

English writer Richard Black says that “art – literature – must arise out of something. And could it be that an older, class-ridden society, with its complexity, striving, its injustice, its cruelty, is an ideal environment for the creation of art? Great art is created out of conflict. Whereas *here ...*” (Grimshaw 255; my emphasis). “Here” is a seemingly classless and homogenous society, and therefore an antithesis of complication and hardship which, for an artist, is *sine qua non*. In his essay, “For the Hulk of the World Between” (1981), Stead suggested that what the European forebears of many New Zealanders sought when they made their long journey to this land was an opportunity to build a pastoral nation of relative comfort and ease, to seek economic benefits, and to distance themselves from “the sordidness of English industrialism” (247). Gradually, these simple goals became “the ideals” that persist in New Zealand today (247). Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that in undertaking her journey to London, Anna seeks hardship in the form of dislocation and displacement.

One of the consequences of having a dream of a simple life is the diminished role of the city in New Zealand. In his essay, Stead suggested that, in New Zealand, people “tend not to think of cities as places in which [their] consciousness as social beings finds its fullest satisfactions” (247). Grimshaw expressed a similar view in one of her interviews, stating that in New Zealand “[t]here isn’t a division between city and country” (“Charlotte Grimshaw” 224). This viewpoint clearly belongs to someone who has travelled the world and lived in a European city, but also someone who has drawn on the vibrancy of a global metropolis, like London, in her own work. In a sense, as Grimshaw suggests, New Zealanders are still small-town people and cities, in their true meaning, do not exist in this country. Thus to have a truly metropolitan experience, one must venture out into the Northern Hemisphere, and this is what Grimshaw’s protagonist decides to do.

Finally, but not least importantly, it is Anna’s preoccupation with her brother Julian’s death and her fixation on the figure of a Bohemian artist, which Julian projected to an extent during his life, that initiate her creative self-exile in London. One might even suggest that her desire for Bohemianism is what connects her with her brother. Years ago, he moved to London to pursue an acting career with his best friend Robert Mark. In the novel, it is implied that in London Julian lived an unconventional life: his artistic liberation was accompanied by drugs, alcohol, women, and cheap accommodation. A mysterious accident at a party of a wealthy London producer cut Julian’s life short. Although at one point in the novel, Anna thinks that it was her younger brother’s inability to control his newly-found freedom that pushed him over the edge, the question of his death is never resolved, and Anna remains uncertain whether it was an accident or “suicide by city” (118). Further in this chapter, I explore the impact of Anna’s Bohemian longing on her work and life, but at this

stage I wish to emphasise that the sibling connection becomes a strong pull in the novel, a kind of thread that leads the characters to the centre of the labyrinth of self.

Invoking the Flâneuse

In the novel, Grimshaw constructs London spaces through Anna's urban wanderings, invoking the modernist figure of the flâneuse. Ostensibly, Anna's experience of the metropolis is very different from the original wanderers of the early twentieth century, who inhabited both urban and literary realms in the works of Walter Benjamin and Virginia Woolf; but it is her insight, her obsession with the city, and her relentless observations of its streets and people that allow us to draw this connection.

Interestingly, though, Anna's fascination with London's seasonal moodiness and the subtleties of its northern sky, seen through its "smoggy veil" (Grimshaw, *FC* 14), does not translate into a sense of belonging. Earlier in the novel, the young artist refers to the English capital as "this inhospitable city with its cold streets and strange ways" (17). She observes how the aged neighbourhood buildings cast inescapable shadows, block out the pale sun, channel the wind through the narrow gaps between them, and lift "uncleared rubbish," making the place seem unwelcoming and "alien" (23). This image of London reflects a strong sense of disconnect and incompatibility that Anna feels while living in this place. However, for Anna, to be rejected by London means to be challenged by it, and her relentless attempts to "absorb it, ... understand it by feel" (65) become a motif in the novel.

Grimshaw's London is a city in flux, always transforming and changing. Vastly different from Auckland streetscape, which in Part Two of the novel is depicted as unexciting and ordinary, London is densely populated and incredibly alive. By day, it is full of hurrying commuters, and when the rain sets in, leaving London drenched and in chaos, the footpaths turn into a "procession of bobbling umbrellas" (199). By night, the city is filled with "streaming vitality" (144), with rowdy party-goers moving with the beat of music and seeking various forms of pleasure. There is a sense that moving in this "mass of people" makes one experience a sense of solidarity with "fellow travellers" (80), and a kind of togetherness that Adey describes as "by simply moving with" (168). When the city slumbers, it never goes quite still, as its "quietness [is] interrupted at odd moments by a group noisily lurching home, or a taxi rumbling past" (Grimshaw, *FC* 148). Even during sweltering summer days, when "[t]he heat [is] trapped between the buildings" (108), and everything seems motionless, the hum of the distant traffic reveals that action is not far. This plethora of uninterrupted city movements is "synchronize[d] in rhythmic patterns" (Adey 28). Sometimes, these patterns do break down – when

affected by an occasional transport strike (Grimshaw, *FC* 93) or erratic London weather – but they never cease to exist. Often, the protagonist struggles to relate to London motions and, early in the novel, finds herself in juxtaposition with her surroundings – outside of what Massey calls the “London ‘we’” (*World City* 11). At times, pushing through the crowds and holding onto her two little charges, Harry and Lucy, Anna feels that the three of them are “up against things – together” (Grimshaw, *FC* 23).

Looking at Anna’s urban mobility through a feminist perspective, one could argue that Anna’s life in London is an example of female exclusion from the metropolis. In the novel, her experience of London’s urban rhythms is contained within the area that lies between Tottenham Road and Gray’s Inn Road, to which she refers as “my patch” (23). During the week, she moves between Harry’s school, the nanny’s flat where she leaves Lucy, the local shops, and the nearby parks where her children like to play. However, despite her movement being cyclical and repetitive, boundary-cautious and inward, there is no sense of coercion about it. If anything, the boundaries here seem to be self-imposed. Perhaps, this interiority is psychological by nature, and it is likely that Anna’s phrase “my patch” betrays her desire to belong in London, rather than her sense of being marginalised in the city. If this is true, then her daily walks can be viewed as “routine of movement” (Yi-Fu Tuan, qtd. Adey 72). Adey suggests that such movement can aid in the formation of an attachment to a place and concludes that repeated experience of a “functional pattern” (73) in one’s life is paramount for one’s fostering of sense of place.

One way in which Grimshaw intensifies Anna’s sense of non-belonging in London is through the inclusion of a homeless couple in her character cast, whom Anna frequently sees under the Brunswick flats. The homeless couple is a permanent fixture in her neighbourhood. Anna suspects that the woman was not born into the world of sleeping bags, drunkenness, and stolen wallets. Her passion for reading, “posh accent,” and her “conservative” (Grimshaw, *FC* 23) clothes betray a different past and a failed destiny. Despite that, she exudes a powerful sense of origin and rootedness in this place, unlike Anna who remains an outsider in London.

Sometimes, Anna wonders if her broad New Zealand accent is partly to blame for her inability to integrate in London. Her “twanging vowels” (13) betray her foreign identity in London, always placing her on the Antipodean map. Her children, however, speak with perfect English accents and, on occasion, she has been “mistaken for their Kiwi nanny” (23). Anna’s frustration with herself results in frequent observations of people’s speech. For example, she notices how the real estate agent speaks with a Northern accent, and her neighbour’s girlfriend Tina produces “rounded vowels,” which to Anna seem “extreme” and unachievable (130). This continued preoccupation with her accent does not help Anna overcome her foreignness in London; instead, it maintains the gap.

It should be mentioned that Anna's struggle to belong in London becomes productive in her art. Being "[f]ree from the distraction of harsh light, away from the glaring cloudbanks and ozoneless blue" (4) of New Zealand seems to sharpen the artist's senses. She responds to the "non-light of London" with "a riot of colour" (14), contrasted with the depth and density of the darker hues in her paintings. Mixing dazzling yellows and striking reds with darkness in her *Surge-black* series of paintings feels like lighting up a flame in a cave.

Anna also begins to experiment with the subject of her paintings, and although there are still some New Zealand scenes in her artwork, her focus shifts primarily to London. Among the subjects of her new paintings are her flat and the rooftops in Hunter Street; the sky over Coram Fields, her children's favourite park; and a myriad of black winter windows. Instead of carnival creatures, which used to be her signature style, she begins to concentrate on "reflections of human faces" (69). This innovation the artist attributes to London, whose influence she feels acutely. Her tireless efforts to connect with it will eventually end in triumph. In the concluding chapter of "The Black Window," Grimshaw reveals that Anna will exhibit her *Surge-black* paintings in London and will begin working on a new series, called "London I" (212). Interestingly, the use of the personal pronoun in the title of Anna's upcoming collection not only suggests that the unifying theme of these paintings is metropolis as seen through the eyes of the artist herself, but it also confirms that, in the novel, London is Anna's project of self-reinvention.

Displacement – an Artist's Reality

The modernist model of metropole and periphery is prominent in Part One of *Foreign City*, and it recalls the real-life London experience of Mansfield who, despite her literary success, struggled to make the northern metropolis her home. For all her European yearning, London remained distant for the New Zealand-born writer – "almost another planet" (Mansfield 221). Like many émigrés, Mansfield found herself in what Peter Brooker describes as "an antagonistic relation to the features of metropolitan modernity in [her] host cultur[e]" (qtd. in Kimber 336). Despite living in London for many years and using it as a setting in much of her fiction, Mansfield's colonial consciousness never disappeared, and her sense of alienation in London continued to linger for the duration of her short life. The idea that transpires through this connection between a real-life New Zealand writer and a fictional New Zealand artist in *Foreign City* is that finding a sense of place does not always translate into a sense of belonging. In fact, displacement seems necessary for an artist's creativity.

As Grimshaw shows in her novel, Anna's attempts to penetrate the city through her artistic dedication and urban wanderings do not lead to complete localisation, or erasure of her sense of displacement. In reading the novel this way, I draw on Kaplan's caution that displacement should not be treated as "an oppositional notion of placement" (*Questions of Travel* 143). She argues that displacement is a complex phenomenon, and it requires a sensitive approach by the critic. In Grimshaw's novel, textual details suggest that Anna draws on several versions of displacement to construct a new identity for herself. Living in London, the artist consistently refers to herself as an immigrant, but the persona she projects is not so straightforward. On the one hand, Anna draws on her family migrant narrative and reveals herself to be doubly displaced as a New Zealander of Czech descent living in London. On the other hand, she maintains her image of an artist in self-exile.

Considering Anna's life in London, one cannot help feeling that her struggle to belong in this city is, in part, her doing. One way in which it could be interpreted in the novel is through the artist's attachment to her frugal lifestyle. In her and Damien's flat, there is only "enough furniture to make [it] habitable" (27). Instead of books, the glassed-in shelves in her studio hold paints and brushes, while the sitting room hosts nothing more than a small table and a pot plant. Yet Anna resists changing her situation and refuses to look for work, as it would interfere with her painting. Instead of selling her first artwork in London, she gives it away. While suggesting that Anna somehow manipulates her sense of displacement in London, I am not rejecting or reducing her immigrant experience. Her material inadequacy is real, and it becomes magnified whenever Anna visits her neighbour, Henderson. To her, crossing the landing to reach his flat feels "like moving between worlds" (125). His living space is tastefully decorated, lined with book shelves, and filled with soft rugs, gilded frames and solid furniture. Each time she visits Henderson, she reflects on the "spartan emptiness" (36) of her flat. However, it is this allusion to Sparta and numerous references to her guilt throughout the novel that betray an element of self-restraint on Anna's part and purposefulness of her lifestyle in London.

Often, however, Anna feels peripheral when in Henderson's company. Thinking of his privileged upbringing and Oxford education, Anna looks back on her own childhood in the affluent Auckland suburb of Remuera as "rickety past" (150). One scene in the novel, where Henderson invites his friends for drinks to introduce Anna as a new artist in town, is particularly important, for it reveals Anna's sensitivity towards others' perceptions of herself. Some of Henderson's friends refer to her as "Charles's New Zealander" or "Charles's Australian painter" (131). However, Henderson himself praises Anna's art for its originality and unrestrained technique of the artist. "Fantastic colour and form. The most eerie landscapes. Full of blackness, reflections, mirrors. They don't have proper cities where she is from, just little wooden buildings. She paints electric light like it's some

terrifying special effect” (131-32). Henderson’s intention here is, clearly, not to diminish Anna’s sense of self, but to highlight the uniqueness of her work; yet Anna cannot help feeling inadequate. In an earlier scene in the novel, while showing Henderson a painting of Karekare beach near Auckland, Anna thinks of the rugged beauty of the west coast, with its open space: “blue-black sand, looming rock-face” and its “hot, primordial, iron landscape” (61). This wild vision of Auckland is offset by Henderson’s admission that he has never seen a black sand beach in his life. For the first time, Anna realises “how Northern Hemisphere he [is]” (61). It strikes her that the Northern Hemisphere is not just a geographical location but a way of thinking and perceiving the world, and that, unlike her, Henderson belongs to it.

It should be said, though, it is also because of their differences that Henderson comes to occupy a special place in Anna’s life. In Brooker’s terms, he becomes a patron-figure to the Bohemian artist (4), and “part of the new direction of [her] painting” (72). In his role as her mentor, he will steer her towards success – towards her “London I.” Yet with him, she will not have a sense of non-belonging, neither in London, nor in their relationship.

Echoes of Past Displacements

Despite his charisma and confidence, his wealth and social standing, Henderson is not as grounded as he appears to be. His displacement is less literal and obvious than Anna’s, and it manifests itself through his family’s dark Jewish past. In the novel, Henderson becomes another example of how displacement can echo through generations of one family, although in his case displacement is not a consequence of a voluntary search for freedom and self-realisation, but a tragic circumstance of World War Two.

Henderson finds himself in possession of some personal documents and letters that contain an unembellished account of his father’s survival in the Warsaw Ghetto as a child. Having witnessed a revolt at Treblinka death camp, Henderson’s father was fortunate to escape from his captors. Later, as a young immigrant in England, he enjoyed a life of upward social mobility. By the time he wrote his letters, he was a successful businessman and an English gentleman married into “an old and distinguished family” (125). Yet while he managed to remove himself physically from the camp site through his miraculous escape, he was unable to detach himself emotionally from the image of “the razed ghetto, [and] the dunes of scorched brick” (125) of the camp. Reading the documents and personal correspondence of his father, Henderson learns of his deep shame over his ghetto experience, something that he was unable to overcome throughout his life.

As a concentration camp prisoner, Henderson's father was subjected to the cruellest instrumentalisation of power in the war, of which mobility is part. One of the most devastating scenes, described by Henderson in the novel, features mobility in its most horrific form. It is the scene of his grandmother's killing among other people, who were "stripped, beaten and shot," while a group of "soldiers marched off singing" (Grimshaw, *FC* 71). In her essay, "Mobility and War: The Cosmic View of US 'Air Power'" (2006), Kaplan makes it her aim to "demythologise mobility by situating it in relation to war" (395). In her argument, she draws attention to the "perverse" (396) paradox of mobility in war, where on the one hand, it generates large military movements, flows of technologies, information, and goods, as well as produces displacement of inconceivable proportions. On the other hand, it "polices borders and limits freedom of movement," forces some individuals "to subsume their independence in service to nation" (396), and displaces others. It seems that the ghetto story in *Foreign City* might be just such a project for Grimshaw. In demonstrating the destructive side of mobility, the writer avoids any possibility of romanticising mobility, something that is easy to do in a novel about a New Zealand artist living in London. When Anna learns of Henderson's tragic family narrative, she realises the "thinness" of her own experience of displacement. The life of a struggling artist begins to feel self-pitying and exaggerated.

As for Henderson, disturbed by the painful accounts of cruelty and forced displacement to which his family was subjected, he keeps his family history locked in a briefcase. As a mobile and transitory object, the briefcase allows him to externalise his pain and hide it from view of the people in his life. The only person with whom Henderson shares his family story is Anna, but only because, as an immigrant, she "do[es] not exist" (59) in his circles. On a larger scale, the briefcase becomes a symbol of inherited displacement in the novel, passed on from one generation to the next.

A Bohemian in the Metropolis

In *Foreign City*, the atmosphere of restlessness and incoherence of London affects Anna, and her rebellious and subversive inclinations begin to emerge. Grimshaw provides a series of examples throughout the novel, which reveal Anna's tendencies to cross boundaries, defy the norm, and exercise her free will. As a teenager, during school holidays Anna and her friends escaped from Auckland, which felt like the epitome of liberation. Away from home and parental control, "the rules had no weight" (139), and the teens roamed freely, terrorising the locals. As a young adult, Anna rebelled against her mother, who wanted her daughter to remain unmarried so that she could pursue a career in art, by marrying Damien and falling pregnant. Now, in Bohemian Bloomsbury, her

desire for reinvention, new stimuli, and “a sense of new territory” (57) becomes overwhelming, and she allows herself to drift.

In his discussion of Bohemianism in early modernism, Brooker (2004) suggests that one of the ways to become a Bohemian woman was to undertake “a magical journey from the English provinces and regions (or from New Zealand and Australia in the case of Katherine Mansfield and Stella Bowen) to the metropolis and the playgrounds of Europe” (107-8). She also had to make a break from her mother and reject the idea of family. Brooker also observes a certain paradox about a modernist Bohemian artist who, on the one hand, seeks freedom and solitude, and on the other, still requires patronage and support (4).

Grimshaw’s protagonist fits Brooker’s profile of a Bohemian woman and, consciously or subconsciously, pursues the life of a Bloomsbury artist. In London, she has no personal connections, no anchorage, and no past, and this kind of non-existence feels “dangerously liberating” (Grimshaw, *FC* 64). Rather than staying grounded in her marriage, Anna crosses the boundaries of fidelity. Soon after moving into the new flat, she embarks on an illicit relationship with Henderson, the experience of which she compares with being in free fall. When with him, she finds herself “floating on the most dangerous, enjoyable current” (144). Anna’s second affair is with Robert Mark, the childhood friend whom she accidentally meets in London. Some time ago, after Julian’s death, Robert disappeared into the city, breaking all ties with friends and family in New Zealand. In London, Anna’s brief affair with him becomes synonymous with her search for the lost childhood and her “old free self” (161). Anna’s extramarital affairs, ironically, lock her in triangular geometry that complicates her life and put her into “guilty territory” (71). Yet, the sensation that she experiences through her romantic wanderings becomes addictive and increasingly difficult to control.

In my introduction to this chapter, I have suggested that in utilising mobility and displacement in her novel, Grimshaw is largely influenced by the historical and cultural contexts, but it is also the subject’s sense of personal that is of essence in her writing. One way in which this is shown in her novel is through Anna’s conflicting desire to be a mother and a Bohemian artist. In many ways, Anna’s motherly commitments clash with her artistic nature and her desire for freedom, and any attempts to negotiate this tension end in frustration. Although Anna loves the feeling of balance that her children give her – “Harry *here*, El *there*” (103) – sometimes she is torn between her maternal love and her need for painting. When reflecting on her city movements, she admits that no matter how far she ventures into the city, she always feels the “irresistible pull” (55) that draws her back home. Once, rather playfully, she says to Harry and Lucy that “children are the enemy of promise” (168). The truth is, Anna does believe it, even though she is afraid to admit it. Years ago,

her own mother told her that marriage and children were incompatible with the life of an artist. Back then, Anna chose to ignore it but now in London – in Bloomsbury – it all begins to make sense.

To negotiate the confinement generated by marriage and motherhood, Anna searches for other spaces in her life, where movement is possible. To feel the freedom of physical movement, she also joins the YMCA swimming pool. Her repetitive and exhausting lengths in a “chopping freestyle” (91) allow her to disconnect from reality and enter a meditative trance. Through weightlessness and lack of gravitational pull, Anna enjoys an illusion of freedom, becoming addicted to the measured sound of her breathing, the sense of exaltation and “tired satisfaction” that descends upon her after swimming (42). This example suggests that physical exertion becomes an outlet for her inner restlessness, yet it also reveals Anna’s fascination with underground spaces. She becomes attracted to the strangely alluring “subterranean gloom” (41) of the YMCA swimming pool and, later, with the dark, claustrophobic space of the London Tube. Sometimes being there leads to some irrational fancies and reflections on life and death, another version of the “here and there” in Grimshaw’s novel.

For Anna, London is simultaneously the site of desire and loss. At times, she imagines it to be “a kind of Underworld” (55) where the dead wander at night. Anna’s unexplainable longing to reunite with Julian turns into an obsession and a recurring motif in the novel. Her visions of him become frequent, sometimes reproduced in her artwork as a face of death. Once, walking on Tottenham Court Road, she imagines her dead brother “slipping through the streets, appearing, disappearing, beckoning [her] to follow” (55). To follow his movements would be the ultimate act of mobility. Once, Anna peeped into Henderson’s notepad where he was working on a draft of his new book. The phrase that struck her was “precisely nowhere” (94). I read it as Anna’s desire to transcend mortal borders – her death wish.

AUCKLAND: SUBURBAN DRIFT IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF CULTURE

In Part Two of the novel, titled “The Box of Light,” the main action shifts to Auckland, while London transforms into a distant ‘there.’ Surveying some of Grimshaw’s descriptions of Auckland reveals a collage of the vastly different images from those of intensely aural, visual, and fluid London that we see earlier in the novel. Auckland is a city of “rain, waterfront, [and] green hills” (394). Situated around the beautiful harbour – “the dazzling stretch of water between the beach and the green slopes of Rangitoto” (236) – the city is often at the mercy of the elements. In one scene, on a cloudless day, Grimshaw depicts the outlines of the city’s buildings as crisp, and colours, intensified

around the glittering harbour, creating a sense of surreal stillness about it, with only the sound of seagulls betraying movement. In another static scene, during a lull in the storm, the road surface is “carpeted with twigs, branches, leaves, sodden paper” (295), all of which are soon to be lifted again by another powerful gust of wind. In Grimshaw’s hands, nature is surreally alive. Contrasted with it is the city, where life happens behind closed doors. Unlike European metropolises, Auckland seems unremarkable, deprived of human energy and mythology.

In this part of *Foreign City*, Grimshaw continues with the idea that New Zealand cities are more like towns, and it is mainly exemplified through the lack of vibe and spirit on Auckland streets. The city itself is depicted as a haphazard assembly of mismatched elements. Office buildings in central city, “grey white and tan and crossed with complicated shadows,” are juxtaposed with suburban “odd-shaped roofs, iron fences, pockets of dense growth, vacant sections, telegraph poles, the lines of black wire swooping the line of the streets” (333). In another example, Auckland is reduced to an aeroplane window-view consisting of “little wooden houses in their green sections, [and] the lines of coloured washing blowing in the breeze” (331). The language of boundaries, small spaces, and short-distance views in these descriptions reveals Auckland as a closed-in world from which the new protagonist and narrator, Justine Devantier, wishes to escape. In one scene, while walking the streets of her neighbourhood, she makes an observation:

The flimsy, sprawling ramshackle suburbs, the iron roofs, the fences collapsing with creeper, the weatherboards that let the wind blow through. Brown chip pavements, gutters that ran with hot summer rain, the seagulls screaming on the roof ridges. I thought about going away from it all, to the other side of the world. The places I had never been: London, Paris, New York. (348)

Evoked amidst this rather stark suburban Auckland scene, the northern metropolitan trio, layered with modernist connotations of progress, power, and culture, does create a sense of insignificance around Auckland as a major city. However, the relation of Justine’s seeming indifference towards the familiar scene to the clichéd representation of the metropolitan dream is underpinned with personal sentiment. In my interpretation of it, Justine’s disconnect with Auckland is only a symptom, and at the core of her perception of her home city lies her restless desire to reconnect with her family: Richard Black, the father she has never met who lives in London, and her half-siblings, Harry and Lucy, who are based in Spain. Eventually, Justine’s longing for her family becomes the reason for her journey to Europe and a driving force behind her mobility.

In this part of the novel, Grimshaw's formal experimentation becomes noticeable. As already established, here Grimshaw creates the primary fictional world, and the reader meets Justine, Richard and Aniela's grown-up daughter, a university student of English dreaming of becoming a newsreader on television. However, the structure of the novel is complicated further by the presence of another novel by Black, called *Foreign City* (just like Grimshaw's whole novel), for which Aniela was also the muse. This embedded novel is read intermittently by Justine, so its chapters are interspersed throughout "The Box of Light." They are not out of order, but out of place, forcing the reader to connect the pieces of the narrative to make sense of it. Movement becomes a key element in this process, and it is this structural peculiarity that I wish to emphasise in my analysis of Grimshaw's work. The effect of displacement achieved by the writer becomes a textual analogy for Justine's unsettled reality, which in the novel manifests itself through the protagonist's dysfunctional personal relationship with a man called John Dice, her confusion over her parents' past, her mother's artistic longing for European Bohemianism, and her father's Jewishness. In my analysis of "The Box of Light," I demonstrate how unlike in "The Black Window," where mobility reveals the subject's displacement, here the process is reversed, and the protagonist's sense of displacement, passed on to her by her parents, becomes the source of her mobility.

In this part of the novel, Grimshaw retains the first-person narrative mode in "The Box of Light," but entrusts the task of telling the story to Justine, whose internal focalisation distances the figure of the mother-artist character the reader has become so familiar with in Part One. This allows Grimshaw to create a new perspective on Aniela's life while, at the same time, to foreground Justine's. In telling her story, the young protagonist has an audience in mind – Harry, whom she has never met. Justine addresses him directly throughout this part of the novel, although these conversations are only imagined (Harry's voice is suppressed until the penultimate chapter of the novel where the siblings meet for the first time). These intimate conversations betray Justine's powerful desire for a sibling connection, and for a chance to restore the ground that has been lost between them.

Displacement: "Here and there, between the islands"

In order to locate the source of Justine's displacement, one should examine her perception of her parents' relationship, which she constructs mainly through reading Black's novels. Watching her parents' life unfold in fictional reality is a surreal experience, but not as strange as having to map out her own identity through reading her assumed father's novels and listening to sporadic and unreliable memories of her often-inebriated mother. Aniela's striking resemblance with Black's

female characters, including Anna Devine in *The Black Window*, does suggest that the writer once intimately knew her mother. However, she is notorious for misremembering the past and twisting the truth. Once she said that Justine was a product of a one-night stand fuelled by alcohol, yet in Black's fiction the female protagonist always has a prolonged and deeply meaningful relationship with the male character. It is such inconsistencies that destabilise Justine's understanding of who she is, and dislocate her from her reality. Not only is she positioned between her parents distant, in geographical and temporal terms, relationship, but she also finds herself stuck between truth and fiction.

In the novel, Grimshaw creates an intriguing composition of Justine's alleged father. For the young protagonist, Black exists on the overlap of several dimensions: Aniela's memories, his fiction, snippets of his reality through carefully montaged TV interviews and printed blurbs on the back of his book covers. Living on the opposite side of the world, he is as distant and unreachable as London itself, with its "iron gates, rigid parades, the royals and their frumpy banality" (254). Sometimes, Justine manages to reduce that distance through imagined conversations between them. "Do you know who I am?" she hears herself ask and him reply, "Definitely" (274). Justine is unsure about the circumstances of Aniela and Richard's separation, and sometimes even doubts her genetic bond with the English writer. Having read Black's *Foreign City*, where the male protagonist discovers that the woman he once loved has a daughter, likely to be his, Justine thinks that Black knows of her existence, and yet she is unsure as to why all these years he has not tried to reach out to her.

One connection Justine feels strongly with her presumed father is their love of books. For Justine, literature forms a passage into another reality, yet Black's novels affect her differently. Reading them, sometimes she becomes lost in her own reality, for they often undermine what she thinks she knows about herself. In one of his interviews, Black shares the fact that his father was a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto. In *Foreign City*, this textual detail instantly reveals a link between Black and Henderson. Here Grimshaw makes it obvious that Henderson is important for understanding the character of Black, thus it is appropriate to read the two characters as an extension of each other. Through Henderson, Justine would have learnt of her grandfather's fortunate escape from Treblinka extermination camp, his work as an interpreter for the allied forces, as well as his subsequent marriage into a well-connected London family. On the one hand, the discovery of her father's Jewishness may undermine Justine's already fractured sense of place and belonging, for historically, the Jewish people have been associated with geographical and cultural displacement. The series of movements that led her grandfather, a Polish Jew, from forced displacement to a newly formed identity of a wealthy Englishman is fascinating, just as Justine's

familial bond with him. If Richard Black, “the product of his father’s magic act” (125), is truly her father, then Justine’s existence is also a kind of miracle.

However, the most immediate source of Justine’s displacement is her mother. Born into the family of Czech immigrants in New Zealand, Aniela graduated from Elam Art School and later moved to London with her husband David (Damien in “The Black Window”) and their children, Harry and Lucy. While living in London, she perfected her artistic craft and travelled extensively in Europe, but that came at a price. In the name of art, Aniela had left her young family. She then lived in France and Berlin, before returning to New Zealand. “Somewhere between leaving her husband and leaving London” (245), Aniela became pregnant with Black’s child and Justine was born in Auckland later that year.

Surveying “The Box of Light” for details about Justine’s mother, it becomes evident that here Grimshaw invites us to consider, yet again, the idea introduced earlier in the novel that “the real artist ... puts art before everything” (44). In Aniela’s life, movement becomes a negative force, revealing her self-destructive tendencies. A Bohemian artist, Aniela rejects the notions of stability and home. Antagonistic towards convention, Aniela leads a life through chaos and dedicates her life to artistic pursuits. Her life is full of “glamorous mayhem” and “colourful madness” (240), but it is also erratic and unpredictable. Sometimes, she confines herself to her studio for days, and “ha[s] binges of painting, followed by slumps” (234). Her long-time relationship with Bogusuav Jazzkiewicz, or Bob, is ridden with indiscretions and arguments. She smokes and drinks and inhabits “an inner world so intense that her hours on the couch see[m] less like idleness than a furious and exhausting communion with life” (232). It is these colliding internal forces that upset Justine’s equilibrium and make it impossible for her to experience a sense of family and home.

However, similar to Anna in “The Black Window,” Aniela’s turbulent life translates into fascinating art. The thematic and stylistic diversity of her work is startling. It ranges from the surrealist portraits of people to menacing Goya-style creatures; from “trees with eyes, [to] kitchen objects coming alive” (242); from the satirical depictions of praying Christians to the striking depictions of New Zealand. Such versatility is a mark of Aniela’s fecund imagination and brilliance as an artist, but also restlessness of her mind. Throughout her career, she has earned the highest accolades from her critics, and has drawn large crowds to her frequent exhibitions. Yet although she is described as “a true creature of these islands” (234), there is a powerful sense in the novel that, just like Anna who longs to be “precisely nowhere,” in her life Aniela is searching for “a beyond.”

In Search of an Attachment

One could suggest that through Aniela's death, Grimshaw transforms the idea of "here and there" one more time in her novel. If in Part One of the novel, this geographical dyad represents two conflicting desires – Anna's love for her children and her need to be an artist – in this part of the novel, the "here and there" comes to represent life and death. Justine has always lived in fear that, one day, her mother would leave her, just as she had abandoned her other two children, Harry and Lucy, in London when her marriage with David disintegrated, and her fears come true when Aniela commits suicide.

In the novel, the death scene is composed of opposing forces of stillness and movement, inviting a nuanced analysis. Seeing her mother's body, Justine poignantly observes how death, a natural end to life, makes Aniela look unnaturally stiff. "She who never stopped moving lay *still*" (298). Her hair is brushed, and her body is immaculately dressed. Chaos and disarray, so present throughout Aniela's life, have transformed into a motionless, silent reality. Her room looks uncharacteristically tidy to Justine, a sign of a planned departure – everything straightened, cleaned, and again, surprisingly still. Juxtaposed with Aniela's frozen presence there is movement in the room: Bob kneels by her bedside, repetitively whispering something and touching her head; the ambulance crew move around the room; through the open door comes the singing voice of the neighbour, Ms Lynch, oblivious of her neighbour's untimely death. In the yellow window light, the dust swirls in circles, rises and settles, ready to lift again.

One object in Aniela's bedroom that is worth considering is the painting of an English hut. The artwork used to belong to her brother of whom Justine does not know much, apart from the fact that he died a long time ago. "The Painting of Light," as her mother used to call it, depicts an English green-and-white bathing hut, viewed from a raised angle, with two people rushing across the beach in the distance. Approaching them is "a thickening, swelling and darkening of the clouds," but, on the other side of the beach, the hut is drenched in "a bright pool of stillness and light, broken only by the gate and its shadows and the shadow of the hut" (201). This painting also appears in "The Black Window," and in this sense it becomes an important mobile object in the whole novel. In Part One, Anna describes the composition as "indisputably Northern hemisphere" (200). The impression of simplicity and emptiness in this artwork is stunning, "a beautiful authority, [and] an almost sinister command" (201), as Anna observes, but it is not only that. Anna's brother Julian bought the painting just before he mysteriously died at a house of a famous producer. When seeing the artwork for the first time, for a moment Anna is certain that Julian did not kill himself, as there is

no sense of hopelessness in his choice of the artwork. Yet Grimshaw implies that this feeling is ephemeral, and that later Anna might revert to her fear that her brother did choose to leave this world for oblivion.

The presence of this artwork in Aniela's death scene infuses it with poignancy and a sense of personal tragedy, revealing an intimate bond between her and her dead brother. Thus, it is possible to suggest that the painting of the idyllic hut carries a contagion effect in the novel and plays a part in Aniela's suicide, allowing her to finally find "a silent, neutral place" (187) outside the dimension of time. On a less literal level, the painting becomes the embodiment of unfulfilled desire for refuge for Julian, and for Anna/Aniela, it is the place of reunion with her brother.

Towards the end of the novel, Justine's decision to search for her half-brother Harry marks the beginning of a mobility cycle in her life. Previously trapped in her relationships with John and her mother, Justine is finally free to move on. A turning point for Justine comes after she learns of Lucy's death in Madrid. The half-sister she never met was driving outside of Madrid during a solar eclipse when the accident happened. The news of Lucy's death has a powerful effect on Justine. She imagines the site of the accident, her sibling lying next to the burning car, surrounded by spilt fuel, with her "belongings strewn on the dusty hillside" (401). Justine's vision of the accident makes her anxious and restless and, in some sense, becomes a catalyst in Justine's search for a connection with Harry and her decision to travel to Spain. Soon, she will follow the same route as her deceased half-sister and travel on the same highway where Lucy lost her life on that fateful "darkened day, under the jinxed Spanish sun" (408), but unlike Lucy, Justine will complete her journey.

CONCLUSION

Peter Ackroyd has once described London as "a labyrinth, half of stone and half of flesh," that cannot be understood entirely and can "be experienced only as a wilderness of alleys and passages, courts and thoroughfares, in which even the most experienced citizen may lose the way" (2). The most striking in Ackroyd's description is the idea that "this labyrinth is in a continuous state of change and expansion" (2), suggesting its endlessness. Grimshaw's novel is like that, too. The possibilities for interpretation have no limit, and what has been undertaken in this thesis is only one of them. In using Ackroyd's labyrinth metaphor for London to describe Grimshaw's novel, I not only wish to highlight the complexity of its structure and the potentially unsettling experience of movement through the novel for the reader, but also to make a connection with my earlier idea on pre-existing narratives. The labyrinth, a space that paradoxically confines and calls for movement,

becomes a prominent motif in *Foreign City*. Referring to London as “the great maze” (81), Anna sometimes pictures herself holding a thread and traversing through the labyrinth. Inevitably, such use of imagery calls to mind the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Drawing on its cultural connotations, Grimshaw sends her protagonist on a symbolic odyssey, a kind of conquest, and a journey of self-discovery. At the centre of Grimshaw’s narrative is the figure of the artist seeking estrangement and “adopt[ing] the attributes of exile as an ideology of artistic production” (Kaplan, *Questions of Travel* 28). In this sense, the novel represents nostalgia for the modernist era, yet it also heralds a new way of constructing cultural narrative, and for New Zealand, it is rooted in settler paradigm.

In *Foreign City*, mobility is not only a trope, a key theme, a structuring device, and a mechanism for changing the narrative perspective, but also an extraordinary tool that allows Grimshaw to examine several cultural and social concerns that persist in New Zealand. Among them are mobility and displacement which, as I have argued, are inseparable in Grimshaw’s work, and they are just as cultural, social, political, and historical constructs as they are personal. This is achieved with great sensitivity as if not to romanticise, universalise, or generalise the experience of mobility and displacement. In some sense, the novel suggests that mobility can have an enduring effect on the subject and society, which reverberates through generations, as is the case with migration, which we see through the personal lives of the characters, and forced displacement, as shown through the horrific events of the Second World War in the novel.

Although Grimshaw’s protagonists, Anna/Aniela and Justine, might have deeply personal reasons to move abroad, it is appropriate to consider their motivations within the wider New Zealand context. One plausible reason could be that what Stead once described as “isolation from experience” (“For the Hulk” 246). For him, “isolation” is not to be understood as “remoteness” in merely geographical terms, but in combination with “insignificance” (246). A similar idea finds its way in Grimshaw’s prose. Europe is not only shown as the historical centre of civilisation, but the place where human energy continues to converge today. Justine’s life in New Zealand takes place as if in a different realm that runs parallel to post-9/11 Europe. While watching televised reports on the peaceful protests in London against the second Gulf War in Iraq from her home in Auckland, the young New Zealander craves to join the “growing and swelling” crowd and to make her contribution to the cause. Being *here*, “at the furthest point of distance from that moving mass” (276), makes her distant and powerless. It is this kind of tension between here and there that, as Stead suggests, has provided a fertile soil for the local talent, and “on the whole served [New Zealand] literature well” (“For the Hulk” 248). And while the polarity of “here and there” in its traditional sense might have diminished over time, the sense of distance that lies between them still remains today.

Chapter Two: Creative Mobilisation of (Hi)Stories in *Queen of Beauty*

“To be on their way again – that is the dream.”

Paula Morris (“On Coming Home”)

In her essay, “On Coming Home,” Morris reveals that while writing *Queen of Beauty*, she followed the example of other ‘non-metropolitan’ writers in applying a well-established formula: “the flight into exile while young and the *subsequent creation of a sense of identity through the vision of home built in fiction*” (Gurr, qtd in “On Coming Home” 45). In the novel, the protagonist, Virginia Ngātea Seton, undertakes a creative self-exile by moving to New Orleans to complete her Master of Arts degree at Tulane University. Upon finishing her studies, Virginia is reluctant to return to New Zealand, and since her student visa, “her gift from Tulane” (Morris, *QB* 20), is no longer valid, she becomes an overstayer. For several years, Virginia lives outside the legal boundary, yet she continues to associate herself with arts. Her metropolitan experiences feed her imagination, awaken her memories, and, in the end, enable her to cultivate and articulate a new vision of herself.

In the novel, several characters influence Virginia. Her transformation is partly attributable to her friendship with Jake and Bridget, her flatmates, who become equivalent of a family in Virginia’s American life. Even more important is Arthur Delaney, a second-hand book shop owner and Virginia’s trusted source of information on local history and culture. Through him, she finds work as an assistant researcher and a ghost writer with Margaret Dean O’Clare, a historical novelist based in New Orleans. The worldviews of these characters either inspire Virginia or become a point of departure, from which she creates alternative pathways in her own life.

Unlike Grimshaw and Kennedy, in *Queen of Beauty* Morris depicts a world of migration and movements through an indigenous lens. By creating a mobile female Māori protagonist, Morris contributes to the process which Ingrid Horrocks (2016) describes in *A History to New Zealand Literature* as “revisionary reimaginings” (20). Historically, the image of a mobile Māori, who not only travelled but also participated in “cross-cultural encounters with different Pacific people” (26), has been dominated by the image of a Māori warrior and protector of land. Horrocks suggests that one of the first literary sources of this representation was James Cook’s *Endeavour* journal (26). However, recent scholarship has highlighted new directions for understanding some of the aspects of Māori and European history by undertaking a more nuanced reading of the voyage and first-encounter-period literature (Horrocks 18). Quoting from Robert Sullivan’s collection of poetry, *Star*

Waka (1999), “Into the new age the waka glides / through halls of mirrors” (27), Horrocks alludes to a new era where there is a possibility for new knowledge and perspectives to be generated. Yet in this image of a moving waka, there is also a connection with the idea of Māori mobility, which comes into focus in Morris’s fiction. Of significant importance is her novel, *Rangatira* (2011), which tells the story of her ancestor, Paratene Te Manu, who travelled to England to visit Queen Victoria, but there are also other works of fiction that reveal Morris’s interest in Māori geographical and social mobility. Among them is her first novel, *Queen of Beauty*.

Arguably, the attraction of the novel rests on Morris’s choice of New Orleans as a locale. A city of many pasts and faces, it becomes an alluring juxtaposition to Virginia’s home city, Auckland, but also a divergence on the writer’s part in terms of using London as a representative of the ‘there’ in the well-established settler dyad, “here and there.” Known as the Crescent City, New Orleans is a place of constant transformation. Over time, the old streets, the keepers of secrets and mysteries, have had facelifts or “chang[ed] faces” (Morris, *QB* 36). Many buildings have been sold to new owners and, subsequently, transformed. Among them are the old movie theatres, such as The State, The Strand, the Saint Charles and The Poplar – now Baptist churches. However, Morris’s purpose here is not necessarily that of criticism, as change is inevitable. On the contrary, drawing on this transformative power of the city, she creates a locus for the protagonist’s metamorphosis. New Orleans becomes a place where people come to search for a new beginning, to lose their past, or become someone else, and this is evident through the stories of several other characters, not only Virginia. Therefore, in my reading of *Queen of Beauty*, the metropolis becomes not only a setting, but also an indirect method of characterisation by Morris.

In my analysis of this novel, I also explore Virginia’s home city, Auckland. Similar to Grimshaw’s representation of this antipodean city, Morris draws on its settler identity and reflects on its slower rhythms and smaller urbanity, compared to New Orleans. The city of Virginia’s childhood, Auckland becomes the site where, after six years of absence, the protagonist rediscovers her roots yet continues to long for mobility. The novel ends with Virginia’s return to America and her departure from Margaret’s employment. She convinces Arthur to leave his bookstore in the care of his cousin and to join her on a one-week destination-free road trip, which symbolically comes to represent a beginning of their relationship and, potentially, her journey to becoming a writer.

Mobility as Self-Expression

Much like Grimshaw in *Foreign City*, Morris uses the principle of movement in the structure of *Queen of Beauty*, and the temporal shifts between the present and past become a prominent

literary technique. Divided into five chapters, the action alternates between three points in time. The primary action is set in 1996 and is covered in Chapter I, describing Virginia's life in New Orleans. Chapter II takes the reader back to 1969, when Virginia was barely three. This chapter describes a family party weekend at Virginia's grandparents' house in Ponsonby, at the same time providing a glimpse into the family past. Chapter III swings forward again to December 1996, where Virginia returns to Auckland and becomes reacquainted with the city of her childhood, her family and past friends, from whom she has been distant for six years. In Chapter IV, Morris turns the clock back again, this time to 1922, and a dark family secret is revealed – the first marriage of her Grandfather John whose wife Alice died during an abortion. In this chapter, John also meets his second wife, Virginia's Grandmother Mary. The closing chapter brings the reader back to 1996; here Virginia ends her stay in New Zealand and returns to New Orleans.

Morris's strategy of structuring her novel in this way brings into focus the spatio-temporal connection: through oscillation between times, the writer creates a narrative of return, drawing attention to Virginia's movement between New Zealand and America. "Now and then" becomes a version of "here and there." The latter, however, is not a straightforward configuration as it changes with each trans-hemispheric leap Virginia undertakes. When in New Orleans, "here" for Virginia is America, the land of new experiences, while "there" is Auckland, the distant land of childhood memories. However, upon Virginia's return to New Zealand, "here" is the place where her family lives, while "there" in New Orleans may be her future.

An analysis of the narrative perspective in Morris's novel is also quite different from *Foreign City* and *The Last Days of the National Costume*. In her interview with Somerville, Morris admits that, as a beginning writer, she was not accomplished in using the omniscient narrator; therefore, during the writing process of *Queen of Beauty*, she relied on multiple close third-person narration perspectives ("Paula Morris" 189). However, this lack of experience seems to have served her well in this novel, particularly in the depiction of New Orleans. While in Grimshaw and Kennedy's novels the city is shown through the eyes of the protagonist, Morris's New Orleans is a composition of several characters' perspectives. The shifts in narration are subtle, yet palpable, and they create a kind of movement in the novel.

Another function that can be attributed to Morris's use of "multiple close-thirds" ("Paula Morris" 189) is that, while this narrative method brings the reader closer to the characters, it also creates some distance between the reader and the writer. In the novel, anyone who is familiar with Morris's biography will notice a parallel between the writer and Virginia. Among the examples of Morris's autobiographical layering in the novel is her Māori heritage, her life in New Orleans, her English connections through her mother's side, including the name of the ship, *Queen of Beauty*, on

which Morris's English family arrived in New Zealand ("On Coming Home" 13). There are also numerous tales of Virginia's large family, some of which are based on Morris's own life. Considering Morris's use of her autobiographical details in the novel, one could read it to be as a *künstlerroman*. Therefore, the application multiple close third-person narrative perspective does help disguise some of the autobiographical details in the novel, making them less intimate and more fictional.

Circulation of Stories

One important feature in *Queen of Beauty* is the inclusion of secondary texts. First and foremost, there are numerous accounts of Virginia's family: stories of migration and local movements, joyous occasions and disappointments, births and deaths. In her analysis of *Queen of Beauty*, Michaela Moura-Koçoğlu (2011) links the leitmotif of storytelling in the novel to "the Māori concept of *whakapapa*, of knowing and narrating one's genealogy and family history" (192; emphasis in original). Moura-Koçoğlu suggests that it is only through Virginia's understanding of her own family history that she "gains self-confidence to become Virginia Ngātea Seton" (192). However, family stories are not the only pathway to self-discovery and self-realisation. In her novel, Morris creates an intricate collage of narrative that are biographical and fictional, set in New Zealand or other places, in a historical or created version of the past that lies outside of the temporal dimension. In Māori culture, stories connect worlds and beings together, and in Morris's novel they serve to locate the protagonist within a field of cultural influences, providing the ground of identity upon which she builds her life and from which she later launches her own stories.

One example of the secondary texts in the novel is the historical accounts of nineteenth-century quadrone balls in New Orleans. There are nine italicised extracts relating to these events, which appear to be the snippets of Virginia's research. The nature of these historical sketches is incredibly diverse. There are literary references to the works of George Washington Cable, who often explored the lives of people of mixed race in his fiction, and the biographical pieces of several prominent figures in New Orleans, who were born in mixed-race families. There are also social commentaries, a description of a newspaper advertisement promoting masked balls in the French section of a paper, and a historical account of the introduction of a new law in 1786 that changed the dress code for women of colour. The most intriguing excerpt is an account of the nineteenth-century politician Alexis de Tocqueville's visit to New Orleans, which describes his hostile reaction after attending a quadrone ball. He concluded that the balls were simply "another of the harmful consequences of slavery" (Morris, *QB* 25). Historically, quadrone balls have been what Greenblatt describes as "conspicuous" (250) and "deliberately distorted mobility" (251). He argues that

investigating such examples of mobility is crucial for the understanding of the social and cultural mechanisms that underpin it. By mobilising the history of quadroons, Virginia undertakes a subtle exploration of such mechanisms, and so does Morris through her novel.

Another example of secondary sources in the novel is the myriad narratives about mobility by other writers and from other cultures (for example, Brothers Grimm's *Snow White* and *Twelve Dancing Princesses*; Tennessee Williams's *Streetcar Named Desire* [1947]; Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* [1884]; as well as Māori myths). These stories of mobility are effective in a narrative about a character on the move. Whereas some stories are mentioned fleetingly – a few are mere allusions – others interrupt the flow of the main narrative, creating a space for a connection or reflection. Morris's use of these well-known literary texts brings to the mind Greenblatt's idea of "creative mobili[s]ation of cultural materials" (78). Using Shakespeare's work as an example, Greenblatt highlights the fact that the Bard was fond of adapting and transforming stories from other places and times in his own writing, and "moving [them] into his own sphere, as if the phenomenon of mobility itself gave him pleasure" (77). Greenblatt views this practice of appropriating different narratives as a kind of mobility which enables writers "mov[e] [...] material in new and unexpected directions" (78). However, this is not how Morris uses pre-existing narratives in her novel. Instead of adapting and transforming them into another story, she carefully weaves them into the great pattern of the plot, allowing them to maintain their identity. They become an unequivocal part of Virginia's formative years and later in her life her faithful companions in her own story of travel.

NEW ORLEANS – A CITY OF TRANSFORMATIONS

The novel opens with the Prologue that establishes mobility of stories as a central theme. Here, Virginia recounts a tale about a young man who saves a drowning passenger to her employer-writer, Margaret Dean O'Clare. Morris constructs this scene mainly of dialogue, with very little description, as if the scene belongs in a play rather than a novel, bringing to the mind the image of New Orleans as a city of theatre and literary heritage. The women are engaged in a conversation, sitting in the spacious and lavishly decorated front parlour of the O'Clare mansion. Hidden behind the iron-lace gates on Coliseum Street in the prestigious Garden District, the mansion is clearly a space where Virginia does not belong, much like Anna Devine in *Foreign City* when she views the Bloomsbury flat at the start of the novel.

In this scene, all movement belongs to Margaret, and it is she who moves the scene along. Excited about a potentially usable plot, she listens to Virginia's recount, occasionally gesticulating

with her hand in the air and clicking her fingers for emphasis. The young man is Virginia's grandfather, but she does not tell the writer that. Margaret's interest is always in the skeleton of the story, not detail, so there is little point in mentioning her family connection to the brave man. Leading the conversation, Margaret maintains her distance and guards her territory, evidently preferring Virginia to remain in the background of this process, somewhat invisible. At one point, Margaret instructs Virginia, "Turn the clock back a century ... Lose the parents on the dock. He can be a young planter, sailing down river from the Delta, coming to town for the ball" (Morris, *QB* 11). This is what Margaret does best – she transforms real people's lives into fiction, just as she has transformed a carved Tibetan chest, over which the two women are leaning, into a coffee table. Thus, examining their relationship, one comes to a conclusion that while Virginia's collaboration with Margaret might be perceived as a sign of this young New Zealander's upward mobility in New Orleans, it is not the case, and their relationship is as "precariously balanced" (11) as the glass pitcher sitting on the slightly curved surface of the Tibetan chest.

In *Queen of Beauty*, Margaret is the epitome of self-reinvention. Not many people know that, originally from Mississippi Delta, a region that lies in the northwest of the Mississippi State, Margaret is a migrant in New Orleans. It is implied that, although there is an air of entitlement about Margaret, the writer comes from a humbler background. Apparently, "[e]verything Margaret knew about [New Orleans] she'd had to learn from the library" (68). Early on in her career, Margaret embarked on "a literary quest ... in the contemporary South" (301) and her novels took her to the top of the charts. Now, writing *from* and *about* the old city, Margaret is comfortably placed on the social and literary maps of New Orleans. However, behind this façade of fame and accolades is her rather self-serving approach to writing historical fiction. In her novels, she merges the Antebellum narratives of New Orleans with the genre of romance, approaching the theme of slavery with propriety and lightness. Reworking stories of slavery, she embellishes them with the glamour of dance rooms and clichéd love. By romanticising slavery, Margaret duplicates and prolongates the shocking mass appropriation of labour that existed in that historical period. Her commercial approach to history is one of the reasons why Virginia would eventually leave her employment and, as implied, begin a career as a writer.

Desire for Anonymity

The theme of invisibility is historically linked with femininity, and in *Queen of Beauty* it is partly explored through the story of a female protagonist in the metropolis, which can also be traced in Grimshaw and Kennedy's novels. In critical literature, the metropolis, a space of masculine

construction, is often seen as a site of female marginalisation and diminished urban experience. Conscious of this fact, Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy insert their female characters into cosmopolitan cities in the Northern Hemisphere and create circumstances where the extent of these characters' mobility in the metropolitan environment is largely determined by men. For example, in *Foreign City*, Anna has a strong need for Henderson's patronage, and in Kennedy's novel, GoGo's situation in New York depends entirely on the success of her husband's research.

In Morris's novel, the male character with a strong connection with the city is Arthur Delaney. For Virginia, this native New Orleanian becomes a facilitator of her social movements in the city. The biggest impact he makes is by helping Virginia secure a job as a research assistant with Margaret, thus enabling her to penetrate a different layer of New Orleans society which she would not have been able to do on her own account. In her research, Virginia continuously draws on Arthur's extensive knowledge of the city's literary history and, occasionally, she offers stories of Arthur's family, which he casually shares with her, as her material for Margaret. Thus, in his role as a friend and confidant to Virginia, Arthur enhances her presence and experience in the city, making her more visible than she would be otherwise.

An examination of the theme of female invisibility in the metropolis from the perspective of Virginia's literal mobility in the city also highlights the fact that she is not absent from the streets of New Orleans like, for example, GoGo in *The Last Days of the National Costume*. The protagonist comes to like the city's southern complexity and incoherence, its amalgam of smells and noise, its constant influx of tourists, and striking contrast. In daylight, "[New Orleans] could turn from picturesque to down-at-heel in just one short block" (58). At night, the shabby streets would disappear, and New Orleans would "glisten like a frosted cake" (58). It is such observations that reveal her intimate relationship with the city. Here she is not a flâneuse in its full modernist meaning, but she is an observer and absorber of the urban environment. Her city wanderings bring a unique sensory experience to the novel, yet they also suggest that Morris undertakes a revision of the historical relationship between the woman and the city.

This leads us to the realisation that Virginia's invisibility might be self-imposed. On the one hand, she chooses to become an overstayer and, consequently, is forced to remain below the radar of the authorities. In this zone outside the law boundary, the movements of the young protagonist become limited. Unable to leave the country, or the state, she is stuck in New Orleans for several years. On the other hand, Virginia agrees to be part of Margaret's scheme, which also dictates a certain level of anonymity. From the beginning of their professional relationship, Margaret has made it clear that Virginia would work in the background, remaining hidden from Margaret's readership

and unmentioned in any of the credits. Virginia's role is exclusively to "uncover, understand, compute, [and] communicate" (20), while Margaret's is to create fiction.

One might think that Virginia's "uncertain legal status" (20) makes her vulnerable to Margaret; however, application of Greenblatt's idea of hidden mobilities to Morris's novel reveals that being invisible in no way means being powerless. Virginia becomes engrossed in her research, "liking its nebulous shape, [and] its solitary aspect" (20). Like an apparition, she moves between times and places, "unearthing names and dates and maps and photographs" (19). Most of the time, she deals with invisible people from the past and tries to resurrect them through Margaret's fiction. Virginia also uproots her own family narratives, delocalising them by sharing them with her employer, who then transforms them into pieces of American fiction. Mobilising stories in this way, Virginia not only keeps long-lost narratives and histories alive, but also exercises her agency, and this is how Morris addresses the question of gender imbalance in her novel.

One fascinating discovery Virginia makes through her research is to do with the controversial past of New Orleans: quadroon balls, "social gatherings peculiar to New Orleans society in the first half of the nineteenth century – furnished opportunities for your free women of colour, accompanied by their mothers, to meet wealthy white gentlemen who might become their suitors" (Flora, Mackethan, and Taylor 700). Once described by the British social commentator Frances Trollope as "an unfortunate race" (Morris, *QB* 33), quadroons were only one-quarter black. Regardless of their wealth or social position, they were deprived of many privileges allowed to white women. Unable to marry white men, quadroons were compelled to have illegitimate children and remain in illicit relationships, many of which were "lasting and happy" (33), as Trollope suggests. Being more than social events, quadroon balls operated on a much deeper level than the surface of a dance floor. They became a system of motions where transfers and transactions took place. In her interview with Ann Pistacchi, Morris explains her decision to include the quadroon passages in her novel, saying that they need to be read by today's audience, even if only to understand "the strange compromises people made to get around laws – because the laws existed" (qtd. in Pistacchi 2009). Thus, Virginia's act of unearthing quadroon ball narratives becomes an act of mobilising them in the direction where they can become visible.

Mobilities in the Crescent City

Arthur is the character who influences Virginia most in her work. He helps her find new directions and rescues her when she finds herself at an impasse in her research. Virginia is often amazed at Arthur's erudition, as well as his interest in stories and facts that are obscure and little-

known. “He had stories at his fingertips, stories all around his head, falling onto him off shelves” (39). With his help, the protagonist begins to see the city as stretched across histories, layered with generational changes. On a superficial level of reading, Arthur may appear to be stuck in his store, like “a scruffy, much-loved bird behind its grey iron bars” (26). He never travels out of town and does not leave his shop often, even to visit Metairie where Virginia lives. Yet Arthur is by no means immobile or passive. Most of his days he spends reading, and literature becomes a vehicle for him to move between fictional and factual worlds, between the past and present. Through his interactions with Virginia and his customers, Arthur becomes a mobiliser of historical knowledge and cultural ideas and ideals.

Another way in which Arthur facilitates movement in the novel is through his second-hand book business. In the novel, his bookstore becomes an archive of stories, a literary hub that draws locals and visitors alike. In Greenblatt’s terms, the store becomes a kind of “‘*contact zone*’ where *cultural goods are exchanged*,” and in his role as a book seller Arthur is an “intermediar[y]” (251). In Chapter I, Morris describes Arthur’s business as follows:

He sold books that were rare and books that were old and books that were unusual and books that nobody had heard of and books that were famous and expensive and books that nobody wanted, as well as prints that came and went, depending on his sources. (39)

Through structural repetition and deliberate lengthening of the sentence, Morris emphasises cyclicity and continuity as the distinguishing traits of Arthur’s business, yet also highlights his effort to perpetuate the works of literature by moving them on to the next interested party.

Of course, in book selling business, there is also movement of capital; yet in the novel, it is suggested that Arthur is not in this business for money. Born into near-aristocracy with long history in this town, Arthur abandons his privileged roots to embark on a life that is frugal and unconventional. In the novel, it is through him that the city’s Bohemian past is resurrected. Compared to his well-connected family members, who live on the society pages of local newspapers, he lives in a small apartment above his second-hand bookstore ‘Kingfish.’ Although he sleeps upstairs, his real home is among the shelves stacked with musty old French manuscripts, colourful prints, and rare first editions.

Arthur’s “Bohemian alternative” (Brooker 3) is expressed not only through his elusive lifestyle, his “determined disorder” (Morris, *QB* 39), and his attitude of indifference toward his privileged background, but also through his spirit of rebellion against continual mass tourism invasion to which his home city is subjected. Unconcerned with tradition and heritage that New

Orleans can offer, tourists mainly come here in search of hedonistic pleasure. The city's magnetic charm and its reputation as a place where business is to be had, has always lured visitors of all sorts. In the past, it attracted "sailors and scum and whores" (27). Today, as Arthur complains, it has become "Disneyland for drunkards" (27). The threat posed by mass tourism in New Orleans is multifaceted, but it affects the city's space the most. Washing away human waste, the liquid evidence of excessive indulgence from the night before, has become an almost daily activity in Arthur's neighbourhood. The worst offenders are students who flock to New Orleans during the holidays, "MTV waiting to catch [them] on film – topless, soused and crying" (27). Carnival tourism is another time of the year to bear. During the long weeks of "street-clogging parades," the city turns into a littered wild party scene, "a heaving tide of drunks and dress-ups" (31). During this time, Arthur closes his store, as to conduct daily business is inconceivable.

What offends Arthur most is that, in addition to being credulous and unsophisticated, tourists in New Orleans are also ignorant and indifferent. They walk this town as if they own it, yet they do not wish to connect with it. Some still expect to see a streetcar named Desire, and others would not know the difference between Margaret O'Clare and Margaret Mitchell. Others come here for the town's historic landmarks, the legends of the Southern charm, and its Williams and Faulkner past without having ever read their books. In fact, their books are often purchased for their investment value, not for the place they hold in the world of literature, culture, and history. Arthur's disapproval of the current circumstances is unequivocal, but it is also suggested in the novel that the situation is somehow inevitable. Stuck between his ideals and reality, pines for the times when things were different.

Another character that participates in cultural movements of New Orleans is Bridget. Upon relocating from New York, Bridget becomes a tour guide in the French Quarter, a small historic area in the city. However, her mobility in the metropolis is limited and tinged with superficiality. Unlike, for example, Margaret who survives in in the old city through transformation, Bridget transforms to survive. As a native New Yorker, she goes to great lengths to immerse herself in the tourism-obsessed culture of New Orleans, but instead finds herself in a pool of self-deception. In the name of "Southern traditions," and just to "mak[e] everyone feel like they were getting the real thing" (19), Bridget learns to speak with a southern accent and adopts a masculine "stage name" – Buck Jackson. Her willingness to be exploited to perpetuate the vision of New Orleans as a city of desire and old charm reveals the irredeemable divide between her and this place.

In the novel, the scenes involving Bridget are suffused with humour and irony, implying that her relationship with the Crescent City is be doomed from the start. In her job, she imagines herself to be an actor rather than a tour guide, walking up and down the streets of New Orleans "in front of

an appreciative audience" (18). That is not how her friends see her, though. For example, on one occasion, commenting on Bridget's job, Jake compares the image of her walking ahead of her tour groups and holding up a brightly coloured parasol to "Joan of Arc leading the troops into battle ... [b]randishing an orange Popsicle" (23). Virginia, too, has often wondered how Bridget managed to survive in her job. "All those tourists, all that mule dung and cigar smoke, all those pats on the ass and whistles from balconies and spilled beer and questions, the same old questions, over and over" (49). More importantly, what Bridget sees as creative freedom in her job is only an illusion. Unable to deviate from her script or her route, Bridget is confined through her cyclical city movements and is forced to tell the same version of the story of New Orleans over and over, promoting a romanticised image of New Orleans through her tours and, in this sense, she is not much different from Margaret. Eventually, Bridget begins to feel suffocated in the garb of theatricality and pretence, and one day, exhausted from "acting Southern for eight hours straight" (49), she tells Virginia that she is ready to leave this town.

The question worth exploring is what has brought Bridget here in the first place. In the novel, it is implied that Bridget migrates to the Crescent City in search of new experience. For Virginia, it is difficult to understand why anyone would want to leave the Big Apple, which she imagines to be exciting and alive – all "lights, action, Hudson" (50). For Bridget, however, it is nothing of the sort. Her memory of her home city is her bedroom view of "cars rushing back and forth like river rats across the George Washington Bridge" (50). This image is the only glimpse of New York in the novel, yet it provides an interesting clue for understanding Bridget's character. Like the George Washington Bridge, which is suspended in the air, Bridget may have felt ungrounded in the city of her childhood. As a segment of a larger pattern of mobility, this interstate bridge between New York and New Jersey leads outwards from the city, as if inviting one to follow. Surprisingly, despite their friendship, Bridget never speaks with Virginia about her reasons for leaving New York or coming to New Orleans, but we begin to realise that Bridget's apparent need for novelty might be too strong to resist, and, in the end, even New Orleans cannot contain her. Thus, when Jake is offered an opportunity to do a post-doctorate at Cornell, Bridget decides to join him and leaves New Orleans, just like that.

As for Virginia, the Crescent City becomes a place of her rebirth. On the surface, she morphs into a typical American college girl; on the inside, she becomes free-thinking and independent. Back at home, she was always quiet, hidden under layers of different identities: a daughter and a step-daughter, a sister and a half-sister, a Māori and a Pākehā, and a friend of her ex-boyfriend's lover. In New Orleans, Virginia appears to limit her contact with her family and does not visit New Zealand for six years, subjecting herself to home-related starvation and withholding herself from her old self. In

New Orleans, she can just *be*, rather than *be someone*. She enjoys her uncomplicated life among strangers who know little about her past. After five years of knowing Virginia, Jake still thinks that she is from Australia, Bridget does not ask her friend about New Zealand at all, and Margaret does not know much about New Zealand, “an unknown place, not quite exotic, not entirely uninteresting” (33). Gradually, Virginia begins to see herself as a “different past-less self” (156). Yet this feeling is not one of emptiness or loss, but one of lightness. Without the baggage of her past, Virginia’s road to self-reinvention in the foreign city becomes more clear and real.

AUCKLAND REVISITED

Virginia’s return to New Zealand marks the end of her odyssey and the beginning of another journey – that of revisiting and re-examining her roots and, by implication, herself.

Morris begins the chapter about Virginia’s visit to her homeland with a description of the final hour of her flight. The opening paragraphs become not only an introduction to Auckland, but also an insight into Virginia’s state of mind. “After hours of sky” (116), the protagonist finally sees her home city – a composition of “slate-coloured sea,” “dull green land” and “pock-marked mudflats staked out with mangroves” (116) – and it seems to be sending an unwelcoming “welcome.” As the airplane approaches the southern metropolis on this overcast early morning, the view of the City of Sails becomes increasingly magnified, revealing it to be still, subdued, and lacklustre. Juxtaposed with this stillness is the atmosphere of anticipation and restlessness on the plane, echoing Virginia’s feeling of apprehension. Soon, after six years of absence, she will be reunited with her family.

In the novel, Morris depicts Auckland as a counterpoint to New Orleans, but not as a city that gives a sense of home. Coming here after spending years abroad feels disorienting and unsettling for Virginia. This is partly because during the first few days, Virginia views Auckland through the lens of New Orleans. “After the flat lines of New Orleans, Auckland [seems] lumpy, knobbed in every direction by solitary green mounds that looked like turrets in a ruin” (118). Even “[t]he air seems different here” (128), less humid and free from scent. However, there are also local aspects of New Zealand that call for readjustment, such as time difference, change in weather patterns, and a conscious effort to remember to drive on the left side of the road.

In the chapters describing the protagonist’s visit to Auckland, Morris maintains mobility as a continual thread. Here Virginia’s movements are extensive and frequent. Initially, they are to do with family visitations; later, they become errands in preparation for Julia’s wedding. For Virginia, Auckland becomes a point where time and space merge, for she connects geographical locations

with memories. Driving around the city inadvertently leads Virginia to her past, but also her implied comparison of it with the present.

Noticing how the neighbourhood where she grew up has changed does not help Virginia connect with her home city. Kowhai Crescent, the street where her family home stands, is more densely populated than ever, with gardens growing taller and more protective of properties than she remembers. Considering Morris's choice of this location in her novel, one might suggest that Virginia's move from Kowhai Crescent to the Crescent City (New Orleans) can be seen as a representation of her maturity and womanhood. The idea of the crescent as a lunar phase that leads to cyclical transformations of the moon also suggests that the change Virginia has undergone in New Orleans is only one of many. However, examining this location through the application of mobility leads to a realisation that the no-exit road, "curved as a scythe" (118), becomes a fractal in a large-scale pattern of movements that Virginia undertakes as an individual living abroad. As a child, she would have travelled this road daily; but now, the road becomes a tiny fraction of Virginia's much larger life trajectory.

Like New Orleans, Auckland is undergoing an extensive transformation. The city, that has always been sprawling, continues to stretch and spread. Some areas in Auckland, once thought to be "the back of beyond" (130), are now turning into sought-after expensive suburbs because of the views they provide. In central Auckland, some buildings have been demolished and replaced, like the Regent Theatre that her father remembers so well. Many others have been converted into luxury hotels and apartments, and among them is Virginia's favourite – the iconic Farmers building which used to have multiple escalators when she was a child. The place that has changed most is Ponsonby, the part of Auckland where her grandparents settled many decades ago, and where she spent many happy weekends as a child. Now, it is "alive, bright and buzzing" (245) compared to the peaceful suburb it used to be. Throughout her visit, Virginia experiences a pang of nostalgia for the old Auckland, not too dissimilar from Arthur's romantic longing for what New Orleans used to be. However, for Virginia, it is more to do with her lost childhood and a sense of generational change, and this is particularly noticeable when Virginia is in the company of her much-younger half-sister Alice. The youngster would never see this city as it once was and will only know about it through stories.

Childhood Escapes

Many of Virginia's memories tell of her desire for freedom of movement to be intrinsic and irrevocable. Morris never discloses her protagonist's motivation to leave New Zealand all those years

ago. The girl who had once been described by her drama teacher as “too cautious” (160), surprised everyone when she decided to relocate to America, and to understand the forces that are involved in Virginia’s move overseas, one should look for clues in the main character’s Auckland childhood. One such example is Virginia’s memory of herself, her sister Julia, and two cousins escaping from their grandparents’ Ponsonby house in the middle of the night. Her recollection of running around the quiet dark streets of Ponsonby is a visual spectacle, infused with magical qualities of a fairy-tale, like something out of Brothers Grimm’s *Twelve Dancing Princesses*.

They were four long shadows dancing in their dressing gowns, laughing with their [torch] light, slapping bare feet. Hair streaming, arms stretched out, they swooped and scampered through back gardens, past vegetable patches and swing sets, around spiky rose bushes and low shrubs and fishponds and holes dug for swimming pools, up serpentine driveways and down paths made of brick or concrete or rough wood, along the dandelion-sprouting gutter and the cracked footpath chalked with hopscotch and four square. (60)

Undetected by the adults in the household, the girls’ “little odysse[y]” (60) becomes the ultimate carefree moment. For Virginia, that night was a miracle, and the feeling of total freedom and invisibility that she had experienced *then* would never be repeated, even during the subsequent escapes, of which the adults never knew. Instead, that sweet escape turns into a longing that would persist throughout Virginia’s life.

Another enduring obsession connected with escapism and Virginia’s home city, Auckland, is her passion for motion pictures. Their potential not only to tell a story, but also to transport one into a different world has always captivated the protagonist. Ever since her childhood, she has enjoyed cinematic experience, and its mysterious effect of spatial and temporal disturbance. The old Civic Theatre on Queen Street in Auckland was the ultimate destination for her as a child. An atmospheric theatre by design, this extravagant building decorated in oriental style created an illusion of being in a distant exotic location. Mesmerised, young Virginia was convinced that the starry ceiling above the auditorium was “the genuine night sky” (52), even in the middle of the day. As an adult, she continues to seek this experience in cinemas. Motion pictures take Virginia to other places and into a new reality, offering an escape from the mundane and ordinary. It is a transformative experience where, as soon as the lights go down, “[e]verything real, everything outside [becomes] suspended and irrelevant” (42). Sitting still in her seat, Virginia crosses the imaginary border into unreality,

escaping into “*then and there*” (177; my emphasis). Leaving the cinema is never easy; as reality creeps in, it reveals an emptiness and a longing.

These examples of creative escapes in Virginia’s childhood betray her long-standing fascination with mobility, and therefore her move to New Orleans can be read as an attempt to satisfy this longing and her need to create her own story of mobility.

Placing the Self within the Map of Familial Stories

In a sense, Virginia’s return to Auckland becomes an exercise of story-gathering. Through family accounts shared by her parents and grandparents, uncles and aunties, Virginia constructs an ancestral narrative. An important discovery that she makes while visiting her relatives in Auckland is that her act of moving overseas became a unique experience among the women in her family, who have also dreamt of travel, movement, and freedom. At one time in her life, her grandmother Margery wanted to move back to Edinburgh, the city of her childhood, where rain made everything glisten. Out *there* was “the city of palaces and tearooms” unlike *here*, the “city of beaches and motorways” (284). The effect created by these descriptions not only reveals the stature and grandeur of Edinburgh compared to Auckland, but also the long history of tradition, which Auckland does not have. Unfortunately, Margery would never see her childhood city again, as her husband would not agree to move.

Another woman in the family is Margery’s sister-in-law Hattie, who loved the sound of England but would never see it during her life. Upon her wishes, her ashes were scattered in Parnell Rose Gardens as it was “like a proper English garden” (172). Virginia’s other grandmother Mary spent her life in domestic movements and motherly virtues of self-sacrifice. Having moved to the city from the farm after marrying John, Mary would never leave it again. An interesting discovery for Virginia, while in Auckland, is the story of her Grandfather John’s first wife. Alice dreamt of becoming a movie star and of finding herself in exotic places – “Hollywood, or ancient Rome, or deepest Imperial Russia” (199). Sadly, she died during an abortion. Conversely, Aunt June did manage to escape from Auckland. Many years ago, she set off on a great adventure, “whizzing across the Tasman, quick as a pebble skimming the waves” (106). But something went awry, and she returned home.

This collective female experience of confinement sets Virginia apart from most female characters in the novel. Rather than live the life allotted to her, she moves overseas and, in a way, turns her life into a mobility narrative. As an escapist adventure, or strategy, the journey to New Orleans has unequivocally changed the course of Virginia’s life.

In the narrative present, the lives of Virginia's relatives and friends continue to be firmly fixed in Auckland. Her brother Timothy is at varsity and sister Julia, a graphic designer, is much settled with her husband-to-be. Her brother Robert "is making a name for himself in the legal profession" (227), just like Cousin Errol who works for the Waitangi Tribunal. Virginia's father Jim and his new family have retreated to the hills of Oratia, from where he "could narrow his eyes and look all the way to the glimmer of the Gulf" (131). Virginia's childhood friend Kim has spent all her life in Ranui in West Auckland – "end of the road, end of the world" (160). She only reads about other places in books, sees them in movies, and hears about them from other people. The mother of two, Kim "cl[ings] to the Waitakeres like a safety rail" (156), yet envies Virginia's new friends from New York, her going to "university here and university there" (161), her life in "the world of novels" and romantic New Orleans with steamboats crossing the Mississippi. Kim's life, by comparison, is dull and ordinary in Ranui, "not quite country, not quite suburb, not quite anywhere in particular" (160). Compared to these people, Virginia becomes a moving juxtaposition in the novel.

Towards the end of the novel, Virginia begins to use the word "home" exclusively about New Orleans, which is not the case in the earlier chapters where "home" has a multiplicity of meanings: New Zealand, Auckland, her mother's house, and the place on Adams Street in New Orleans where she lives with her flatmates. In the concluding chapter called "Where Sheep Can Safely Graze," Virginia has a conversation with Uncle Tahu about her life in New Orleans. Upon learning that Virginia is a researcher, her uncle says that she might be "on the wrong side of the pond" and that it is "[t]ime to change sides" (228). 'New Zealand is a different place now and there is plenty for her to do. However, the question of "home or overseas" (228) – here or there – is not something that Virginia has considered. Unlike her uncle and cousin, she does not see it as "a political decision" (228). This way of thinking stands counter to her uncle's inward nationalist outlook. In New Orleans, her life is uncomplicated and free from the necessity for political correctness and self-conscious affiliations. "When I'm at home – I mean in America ... I'm just a foreigner with a strange accent. Nobody knows what a New Zealander is, let alone a Māori or a Pākehā. So I can be whatever I want to be ... I can be both" (229). At first, the combination of the words "home" and "foreigner" in Virginia's statement seems paradoxical and impossible. However, it is precisely out of this tension that Morris produces the idea that home is not a place of one's national or ethnical identity, but a state of mind.

CONCLUSION

Mobility is truly central to both Morris's life and work. Of the three novelists discussed in this thesis, she has the closest affiliation with the "going abroad" narrative. Similar to Grimshaw and

Kennedy, Morris utilises mobility on many levels in *Queen of Beauty*, applying it as a thematic, structural, linguistic, and figurative device. However, unlike in the other two novels, Morris creates a narrative that mimics the protagonist's oscillations between home and abroad, here and there, and reflects the Māori tradition of "looking backwards and forwards in time, and its obsession with telling and re-telling stories" ("Paula Morris" 183). Behind her novel is a reflection about identity and what makes it authentic. In the end, it is not about where Virginia is, but it is about how she carries a sense of place with her.

As settings, New Orleans and Auckland play a crucial part in this process. Situating these geographical locations against one another allows Morris not only to compose rich geographical backgrounds for her novel, but also to explore the notions of transformation, belonging, and home, which are intrinsically linked to the theme of mobility. Significantly different in their atmosphere, location, status, and histories, the two cities are strangely unified through their representative roles of the protagonist's present and past, creating a spatio-temporal connection between "here and there" and "now and then." By destabilising the historical meaning of the "here and there," Morris suggests that the perception of place is of personal nature. Also, by allowing Virginia to leave New Zealand at the end of the novel and to consider New Orleans as her new home, Morris creates a narrative of return in the opposite direction. What matters most is not the meaning of the place, but a sense of it. For Virginia, the idea of home is a construction of settler and indigenous Māori narratives that she takes with her to New Orleans.

Through Virginia's experience of mobility, Morris shows that distance between "here" and "there" is not always empty. In fact, for her, distance is charged with the connotations of potentiality and change. In this way, Morris's novel is different from Grimshaw and Kennedy's novels. While the other two writers suggest that the characters' displacement and a sense of non-belonging are irreversible, Morris shows that in the world of flux and transformation, mobility can lead people to their multiple cultural sources and, ultimately, to a better understanding of their selves within their geographical and social contexts, from whānau in Auckland to the "chosen family" in Bohemian New Orleans.

Today, Morris is settled back in New Zealand, but continues to feel as someone who "grew up on a cluster of islands deep in the Pacific, looking outwards, restless" (Morris, qtd. in Broatch, par. 12). Much of her writing is still about those who move in foreign spaces because, as she says, "the expatriate experience and point of view ... continu[e] to inform our culture" (*The Penguin Book of Contemporary New Zealand Short Stories* 2). While living in a foreign country, one collects experience and histories, but also seeds her own stories, as Virginia does in *Queen of Beauty*. Therefore, Morris's novel is not only about mobility through stories, but also mobility of stories in

this “nation of seafarers and explorers, settlers and dreamers, adventurers and misfits and optimists” (Morris, “On Coming Home” 47).

Chapter Three: “Post-Settler Ennui” in *The Last Days of the National Costume*

"As settlers here, even generations on ... we still exist ... in the dream of paradise."

(Anne Kennedy, "Anne Kennedy Unravelling")

At first glance, *The Last Days of the National Costume* does not appear to be a mobility novel. The protagonist, Megan (GoGo) Sligo, spends most of the main action in the narrative ensconced in her villa in Auckland suburb of Newton, where she lives with her spouse, Art (short for Arthur) Frome. In the narrative present, GoGo runs a home-based business, Megan Sligo Mending and Alterations. Most of her movements are localised and domesticated: she rarely leaves the villa, and when she does, it is either for quick errands or to visit her parents-in-law. She did once travel to a global metropolis – New York in the mid-1990s – but that was in a previous phase of her life and prior to the main action in the novel, thus narrated in retrospect. With that said, this outward journey to America becomes a first significant example of GoGo’s mobility as it is both a travel experience and a major change of direction for GoGo in her life. There is also another journey in the novel, although it is not GoGo who undertakes it. When the protagonist meets the Irish client, Shane McGrath, she learns of his family’s forced migration to New Zealand during the Troubles in the 1980s. The story resonates with GoGo, whose own Irish ancestors immigrated to New Zealand during the famine. Being of Irish descent, GoGo becomes obsessed with the client’s past and, latching onto the symbolism of Irish pride and struggle through his story, she embarks on a search for her own Irish roots. In some sense, the main setting in the novel – the Victorian villa – becomes a kind of locus for the stories of mobility to be brought to life, and yet it also provides a counterpoint to the dynamism and potential of real travel experience.

Caught within these two journeys is Pākehā settler identity. First of all, there is an echo of the original settler dream in GoGo’s desire to migrate to America, although unlike the early settlers who came to New Zealand in search of a better life, GoGo moves in another direction, towards another land of dreams – America. For the young couple, Art’s opportunity to complete his Doctorate at Columbia University becomes a prospect of success. In this sense, Columbia becomes a fitting destination for Art, the son of a wealthy Pākehā family. Historically, throughout its long-established educational narrative, the elitist space of Columbia was inhabited by upper and upper-middle class Anglo-Saxon Americans, who upon completing their degrees moved with ease in the upper echelons of society. Thus, GoGo’s hopes for something bigger and better upon Art’s

completion of his degree are not entirely ungrounded. Another way in which the settler dream is evoked in the novel is through GoGo's imaginary journey to Northern Ireland, the land of her ancestors, which she undertakes vicariously through a Celtic narrative of her Irish client. However, unlike her journey to America which, as I argue, becomes an act of rebellion against the imposed collective settler dream for a better life, GoGo's Irish adventure represents her longing for a richer, deeper, and more romantic identity.

The colonial past of New Zealand is also recalled through a major global event against which the novel is set – the handover of the British Colony of Hong Kong to China in 1997, which marked a further decline in the influence of the British Empire. Yet the novel betrays a sense of uncertainty surrounding the meaning of Britain, particularly for Pākehā New Zealanders. In the world of publishing, local writers are shown to be still dependent on the former northern cultural centre. For example, at dinner with Art and GoGo, Art's poet-friend, Glenda, announces with pride that her first poetry collection is to be published in England, "[n]ot just New Zealand" (120). On the other hand, the sense that the cultural bubble, called Mother Country, has burst is also palpable. Instead of following a well-trodden path, created by young New Zealanders seeking to further their education at a university in England, Art applies to do his doctorate at Columbia University in America, and Glenda heads to Paris to study feminist theory. In fact, in the age of postmodernism, intellectual movements prevail in continental Europe, and England is no longer the epicentre of global scholastic activity. At university, GoGo predominantly reads the work of French theorists, among whom are Roland Barthes, Helen Cixous, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, and Ferdinand de Saussure. One could even say that French theory lies at the foot of GoGo and Art's marriage, as the two have met at an evening with Jacques Derrida at Michael Fowler Centre in Wellington. This reduced cultural significance of England is unequivocally connected with geographical shrinking of the British Empire in the second half of the twentieth century, but when the empire comes to an end, the impact of it is felt globally, and New Zealand is not spared.

The 1997-1998 East Asian crisis becomes a second significant global event in the novel. Historically, many experts around the world attributed the economic disaster to "weaknesses in the governance, management and institutions of the financial sectors in the East Asian economies" (Jikon Lai 2), although some saw this phenomenon to be partly a consequence of the fall of the British Empire. In the novel, this fiscal crisis affects New Zealand's export markets, including the fruit growing industry in which Art's family are involved, and it becomes a catalyst for increased Asian immigration to New Zealand. Both of these consequences are discussed later in this chapter, but at this stage an observation should be made on their overall effect in the novel. Through the volatile global economic situation and the changing political landscape, Kennedy creates a system of motions

that is juxtaposed with the cultural stasis in New Zealand. Once again, it seems as though history happens elsewhere, and Pākehā settler culture is dependent and peripheral. What we also see in the novel is a kind of return to the mixture of complacency and anxiety through the lives of the characters that haunted mid-century settler cultural nationalism.

Considering the genre of *The Last Days of the National Costume*, the satirical angle in the novel is unmistakable, and in Kennedy's hands, satire turns into a comedy of stasis. GoGo's mobility creates only an illusion of progress, but beneath it all there is negative stability. The self-consciousness and comic circularity of GoGo's narration contrasts with the protagonists' enmeshment in circumstances and environment in the case of *Foreign City*, and the narrative of awakening and family integration in *Queen of Beauty*.

AUCKLAND: POST-JUST-ABOUT-EVERYTHING

Having set *The Last Days of the National Costume* in the closing decade of the twentieth century, Kennedy creates a perception that the cultural scene in New Zealand is in a state of hiatus. Upon their return from America, GoGo and Art settle in Newton Gully, the area that she describes as "post-hippy" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 4). GoGo seemingly enjoys "living close to a pulse – cafes, boutiques, used-vinyl shops" (4), yet the words "post" and "used" betray an inescapable sense that the real vibe has already dwindled, and what is left is the mere remnants of something that was once great. The same can be said about the intellectual world at that time. At university, GoGo mainly reads postmodern and post-structuralist thinkers; Art's PhD, "The Settler Literary Ephemera," is firmly grounded in post-colonial ideology; and, while in Paris, Glenda is taught by Julia Kristeva's former student – a secondary derivative of more radical age. It is as though the century of ground-breaking ideas and momentous events, such as "Second World War, Tangiwai train crash, Wahine storm, [and] the Springbok tour" (37), has come to an end, and GoGo lives through a frustrating period of inactivity.

In the global and national climate of uncertainty, GoGo's life is seemingly stable, at least for the time being. As Kennedy put it in an interview about the novel, GoGo is "like an overbred poodle – educated, middle-class, nervy, a little smug, thinks the world is her oyster. The trouble is," the writer continues, "poodles have had their day" (Kennedy, "Five Easy Questions," par. 2). Married to Art, GoGo lives in a villa in central Auckland, which, along with the rest of the villas in the same row, belongs to Art's family, the Woolthamlys. Although Art's parents, Prue Woolthamly and Bert Frome, are not quite the English landed gentry, they do not work for money. The family fortune comes from Art's mother's side, whose father established a successful fruit farm on West Coast in Taranaki many

years ago. Living the tale of inherited wealth, Prue and Bert receive their income from fruit exports to Asia, as well as a substantial portfolio of residential properties in Auckland and Wellington. Their life is culturally-enriched, too. As avid supporters of the Royal New Zealand Ballet, they never miss a performance and even watch it a second time if they are in Auckland. Back on the fruit farm, or the homestead as they proudly refer to it, the Woolthamlys have several Māori employees, including Mrs Muru who serves on the family when they are in residence. Being a full-time PhD student, Art does not work, but nor does he have to, as Grandma Woolthamly's fund pays a generous annual allowance into his account every February.

All this amounts to a comfortable life that does not demand GoGo's input, although she does contribute. From the front room of their villa, GoGo runs her small business. The enterprise is not always profitable, but that does not concern GoGo. Her confidence about their future rests on "a spectre of serious money" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 24) in the form of Art's future inheritance. "It was like a light in the passage, even when you closed your eyes at night: always on" (25). Yet it is exactly this spectral metaphor that, early in the novel, foreshadows the downfall of the Woolthamlys, who have built their lavish life on the remnants of "settler decadence" (Lawn, *Neoliberalism* 65).

The sense that GoGo and Art's future is undermined can also be deduced from ample textual evidence relating to the location of their home in Auckland. Positioned in a gully on the edge of central Auckland, the villa becomes a crucial location in the novel. In his book about New Zealand literary history and settler consciousness, *The Settler's Plot*,¹ Calder discusses Katherine Mansfield's short stories and observes that, in early New Zealand, "property values followed the sun; expensive houses were on the top ridges, facing north, often with a view and with all-day sun" (161). GoGo and Art's historical villa is not like that. From their windows, they cannot see past the ridge. Their view is "[t]he high-rise construction sites" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 19) and rows of cottage roofs, as if a "strawberry patch" (20), running all the way down to the motorway. A Victorian construction, it once was a proud symbol of the British ruling in the Pacific. In the present day, it is split into two, housing GoGo and Art in one half, and tenants in the other, and GoGo refers to it as a villa conversion, emphasising the fact that it is not what it used to be. Overlooking the Waitakere Ranges, "the western hills" (43), the villa faces in the direction of the sunset, and the image of the afternoon sun spilling over the hills, repeated throughout the novel, serves as a premonition of change for the worse in the couple's life.

Early in the novel, GoGo describes the villa as "far from being a suburban idyll" (19). The overgrown picket-fence garden is a mixture of native plants and English imports, such as roses and pansies, which are all past their prime. In the novel, the garden becomes emblematic of the diminished presence of Englishness in New Zealand and, on character level, of the increasingly

obvious stagnation of GoGo and Art's marriage. For GoGo, the move to this location becomes particularly symbolic. Having once lived in a flat on Mt Victoria in Wellington as a student, she now lives in "the quiet parabola of the gully" (67) as a seamstress. This visual representation of the main character's downward trajectory suggests that she is at a lowest point of her life; on a macro-level, it represents the settler culture in New Zealand that is in decline.

In establishing the connection between GoGo's downward mobility and a wider cultural and social context, I draw on one of the central and profound images in the novel, where GoGo recollects a family trip to Dunedin. Walking up the steepest street in this southern city (and, indeed, in the Southern Hemisphere), the family puffed and almost dragged themselves to the top. GoGo remembers feeling that "if you stood upright or stood still you would slide, or worse, topple all the way down to the bottom" (221). This image symbolises the experience of their European settler-ancestors struggling to better their lives. It also alludes to the well-quoted lines from the poem by Allen Curnow, "The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch" (1943), "Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year, / Will learn the trick of standing upright here" (lines 13-14). For Curnow, being steady on one's feet represents settler success, and it is not something that comes naturally – one must learn to balance through hard work and determination. Referring to "the marvellous year" in some distant future, Curnow also suggests that it is not his generation that will experience it. More than half a century later, Kennedy observes that at the turn of the new century the peak of settler civilisation has been reached and is in decline. This idea is extended through the disintegration of GoGo's highly educated parents' marriage, the failure of GoGo's sewing business, the collapse of the Woolthamly fruit empire, and Art's subsequent loss of inheritance.

"A Long Glide Downwards"

GoGo's downfall begins on the day when she relinquishes her stable life of a student and withdraws from university. She does it so that she could follow Art who has been granted a scholarship to complete his PhD in America. In her discussion of GoGo's decision to interrupt her academic studies and become a seamstress, Lawn describes it as a reversal of the well-established upward trajectory of the Pākehā middle class in New Zealand, which "was meant to pass through phases of pastoral, artisanal and industrial work to a blossoming of intellectual endeavour" (*Neoliberalism* 67). Before meeting Art and moving with him to America, GoGo's life does follow this trajectory. Most of her close relatives have university degrees. As GoGo puts it, the people in her family "slog it out at school so that they could work with invisible things like philosophy, literature,

[and] business *theory*" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 91; emphasis in original). They do not own or produce anything, and so they spend their lives "collect[ing] degrees" (91). Following in their footsteps, GoGo embarks on her own academic journey, enrolling into a Master of Arts programme at a university in Wellington. Orbiting the abstract world of literary theory and fiction, GoGo is set to move through life within the circuit shaped by family expectations and middle-class Pākehā traditions. However, instead of repeating family experience, GoGo longs to defy gravity and move freely in her life, and when such opportunity presents itself in the shape of Art going to study in America, she acts swiftly.

GoGo's move to America can be seen as an act of rejection of what Stephen Turner (2011) describes as "a collectively enforced dream" (116) of prosperity and belonging that persists in Pākehā settler consciousness. As Turner suggests, this occurs when the dreamer can no longer hope, "because the hoping is forced" (116) and it "bears little or no relation to [the subject's] desire, [and] much less to [their] experience" (116). For several generations, GoGo's family have subscribed to the idea of the collective settler dream and have struggled to achieve success and to turn the dream into reality. Yet GoGo longs to detach herself from her old life through "dreaming as abandonment," and to leave behind "the 'self' (the settler-I) of that dreaming" (116).

The day when it happens becomes a significant moment in the novel, marking a turning point in GoGo's life. In this part of the novel, Kennedy deliberately concentrates on GoGo's movements, rather than dialogue. GoGo's upward cable-car trip to varsity, where various professors must sign numerous forms to approve GoGo's release, culminates in a walk down Church Steps. The sensation is incredible. With a newly acquired floating lightness of a dropout, GoGo realises that she has nothing to do and nowhere to be. She dismisses a momentary thought of unemployment with the vague hope that "something would turn up" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 85). Later in the novel, GoGo would describe this moment as the beginning of a "long glide downwards" (222).

If we turn to Adey for clarification of the meaning of mobility in this scene, we are told that mobility in itself has "no pre-existent meaning," and that the latter can only be attributed by "places, cultures and societies" (37). Drawing on the work of other sociologists, Garret Soden and Anne Game, Adey reminds us that in many cultures falling is associated with failing, and that it is imbued with connotations of "passivity and the loss of self-determination over one's fate" (37). This is certainly true in *The Last Days of the National Costume*. GoGo's fall is projected through her own perception of her everyday life; and yet despite her awareness of her downward trajectory, she does not regret it, nor resist it. Remarkably, she enjoys this newly found alternative reality.

As much of the main action of the novel happens in Auckland, the significance of this antipodean city cannot be understated. This locale plays a crucial role in augmenting a sense of GoGo's changed life, for it is *itself* a changed city. Submerged in darkness during the infamous power

outage in Auckland Central Business District in 1998, it is strangely unrecognisable. On the first night of the power outage, GoGo feels as though she has never seen Auckland before. The blackout lasts five weeks and sends waves of shock and anger across the country, turning “little old New Zealand [into] big news around the world” (Kennedy, *LDNC* 37). As Art says to GoGo, this is not the way to become international. Infrastructural failure produced a crisis for some 4,000 residents, as well as 63,000 employees in 10,000 businesses (Newlove et al. 1). The event brought the largest city and the corporate centre of New Zealand to a crashing halt, revealing years of reckless skimping on maintenance and successions of mismanagement by Mercury Energy, the power company at the root of this incident, ironically named Pinnacle Power in the novel.

In her early descriptions of Auckland in her work, Kennedy creates an image of the city subjected to outward movements of colossal proportions. On the day of the disaster, “[a]n apocalyptic surge of pedestrians” (Kennedy, *LDNC* 34) is seen leaving the city boundary. During the blackout, businesses work intermittently, with some companies forced to close or relocate elsewhere. Many city dwellers seek alternative accommodation outside of the blackout zone, turning central Auckland into a ghost town, or an “abandoned post-apocalyptic [site]” (198). Kennedy defamiliarises the city by establishing a disconcerting feeling of silence and emptiness around the blacked-out city, drained of human energy. At the end of the century that has seen giant leaps forward in human imagination and radical innovation in the spheres of technology, information, communication, and transportation, Auckland stands “like a beautiful ruin” (129).

The blackout is significant in the novel in several ways. First and foremost, it underscores the fragility and contingency of GoGo’s rather comfortable life, becoming a catalyst for revealing her marriage troubles. As GoGo and Art’s villa is located on the edge of the blackout zone, the rhythm of their domestic scene is disrupted by the event. On the one hand, this semi-emergent situation limits their freedom and slows down the pace of their life, disrupting their ordinary routine of movements and making them unusually non-mobile. Yet on the other hand, it prompts a series of new movements that lead these characters in opposite directions, or as Adey might say, de-synchronises their lives. Art often leaves the villa in search of the Internet, so that he can continue with his research – Glenda’s company, Lamb Chops Productions, becomes his refuge for the duration of the blackout – and GoGo goes on frequent food shopping expeditions or in search for sewing supplies to other suburbs, not affected by the blackout.

On another level, the blackout transforms the southern metropolis into an unrecognisable site, and through GoGo’s urban wanderings, Kennedy creates a point of contact between the present and the past – “here and now,” “then and there.” Hence, the principle of movement becomes an instrument for merging time and space, much like in Morris’s *Queen of Beauty*. In this

setup, GoGo feels the full weight of historical consciousness. As if winding the clock back in time, she stops seeing Auckland as a contemporary city, instead imagining it to be a place layered with histories and invisible temporal coherences. In a collage of images from the past, the city emerges as “a one-horse town” (197) and an “outpost of the colony” (198). At one point in the novel, GoGo observes how “[a]n eerie sense of going back in time [has] made the streets sleepy ... [s]edated like fifties wives” (197). These imaginings are not only emblematic of stasis and stagnation through which GoGo feels she lives, but they are also symptomatic of her sense of being out of synch with this world. In this sense, GoGo resembles Grimshaw’s Anna Devine, who also feels historically disconnected from the world she inhabits and who lives through her modernist Bohemian ideals, although unlike the artist, GoGo has no sense of historical affiliation or belonging.

GoGo’s wanderings through the empty streets of central Auckland become a motif in the novel. Her mobility through this transformed and defamiliarised city turns into a revealing mechanism of the character’s sense of self and her generation. In one scene, in a quirky burst of imagination, she envisages how “another people” in the distant future uncover “[t]he entombed objects – traffic lights, shops, [and] neon lights” (109). On the face of it, this would not amount to much. However, Adey tells us that “the histories of people and objects ... can reveal the concealed mobilities hidden within them” (27). An examination of such movements of the past can lead to an understanding of social practices and relations. For this reason, the objects that GoGo imagines to be discovered by future generations can be interpreted as excavated symbols of our time. Noticeably, this random selection of the imagined remnants points to mobility as a characteristic of the twentieth century. Their relationship with mobility is paradoxical, for they simultaneously enable and harness mobility. For example, traffic lights control the speed and flow of cars and pedestrians, interrupting their urban movements at equal intervals. Stores and boutiques attract passers-by and, sometimes, distract them from their planned routes and destinations by transforming them into potential customers. Yet GoGo does not elaborate on how, in her mind, the sense of historical past would be made by future generations, but the fact that she attempts to anticipate the future and reconstruct the past does suggest a conscious effort on her part to understand the present.

NEW YORK (HOBOKEN), NEW YORK (NEW JERSEY): THE ART OF INVISIBILITY

In Kennedy's novel, GoGo narrates her experience of living in America retrospectively. If in Grimshaw and Morris's novels, mobility is a pre-requisite for self-transformation, to be rendered mobile in Kennedy's work the protagonist must transform first. To Follow Art to America, GoGo became a dropout and a spouse (the latter is necessary for her visa). Compared to her uncles, who emigrated to receive their degrees from overseas universities, GoGo went abroad, in her own words, just "for the ride" (83). As previously stated, her journey to America becomes a repudiation of this existing order pre-set for her by her relatives and, to some extent, a rejection of her family experience and a certain way of existence. Weary of the invisible world of ideas, which she had been inhabiting as a literature student, GoGo hoped to find something more tangible and meaningful. Yet, contrary to what she set out to achieve, the protagonist experienced what Greenblatt has described as "a powerful experience of limits" (90). In his discussion of the "interplay of freedom and constraint" in cultural mobility, Greenblatt suggests that the "license associated with mobility – the sense that nothing is nailed down, that all options are open, that the world is all before one" (90) is always short-lived. In America, GoGo became a seamstress and, despite her decision to avoid repeating family experience, she found herself following the steps of her great-aunt Sister Jude, who instead of having children, spent her days embroidering linen tablecloths and doilies.

Prior to exploring GoGo's mobility through her American life, it should be stated that Kennedy's use of the Northern Hemisphere in the novel is not surprising, as the writer has a certain preoccupation with the idea of north. In her interview on Radio New Zealand (2012), she admitted having a fascination with the equatorial division of the planet, which she developed while living in Hawaii, slightly north of the equator. The work that explores the idea of north closely is her poetry collection, titled *The Darling North* (2012). In her poem, "A Land Court," Kennedy writes, "We were going up north, the thing to do / down here in the hemisphere" lines 5-6). In *The Last Days of the National Costume*, the characters also head towards the north, and this movement becomes part of the exploration of the themes of immigration and settler culture in New Zealand, representing a kind of unreachable ideal the pursue.

An Upside-down Reality

Initially, Art and GoGo's northbound move to America gives the impression of upward social mobility. One reason for that is the universal belief that New York is a city of promises. As Adey

suggests, such correlation between geographical and vertical social mobility is not uncommon (37). Moving to a new location for a specific purpose, such as work, can lead to success on the social ladder. The fact that Art was transferring from Victoria to Columbia University, which rests under the prestigious umbrella of the Ivy League, would be another contributing factor to the expectation (particularly, GoGo's) that this opportunity heralded elevated aspirations for Art's academic prospects and social advancement (Kennedy, *LDNC* 32). However, Kennedy undermines the assumed success of her characters and obstructs their upward social movement, as two years into his PhD, Art's dissertation "morphed into something" (106) that, ironically, could only be finished at the Turnbull Library in Wellington, and the couple was forced to return to New Zealand.

While still in America, GoGo faced other disappointments. The term "spouse" came to mean more than just one's marital status mentioned on a visa application. For two people to survive on a scholarship was almost impossible. Most spouses sought employment, typically in cleaning and "under the table" (99), and GoGo had no choice but to follow the suit. What also transpires is that, despite GoGo's preference to refer to her American experience as time in New York, the couple lived in Hoboken, New Jersey. In *The Last Days of the National Costume*, this town is mentioned fleetingly, and GoGo says nothing of her life there. However, Kennedy also uses Hoboken as a setting in her novel *100 Traditional Smiles*. Populated by immigrants, it is a place where one can hear "the general hubbub of many languages (or one large foreign one)" (Kennedy, *100 Traditional Smiles* 100). Nevertheless, it is also suggested that Hoboken is a place depleted of character and marked by rootlessness, and I draw on these implied characteristics to picture the true life of GoGo and Art in America.

Despite GoGo's failed hopes, the Big Apple did provide much-needed employment for GoGo. Commuting daily from New Jersey via the PATH (Port Authority Trans Hudson), she joined the invisible network of illegally working migrants who supply "cheap labour for the hardworking taxpayers" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 99). For GoGo, being part of this invisible system was another sign of her falling fortune, but there was little she could do, as spousal help was "expected" (99). Occasionally, she inherited new cleaning gigs from other spouses, those who were returning to their home countries, and one day she was offered a sewing job at Rip Burn Snag Clothing Alterations in Manhattan. Having nothing to lose, or to gain – the pay was the same as in cleaning – GoGo decided to take it. This lateral movement provided GoGo with momentary recovery in her downward trajectory, as this job was "cleaner" (100) than cleaning, but it would not be long till the protagonist resumed her spiralling motion downwards.

Unlike Grimshaw's Anna or Morris's Virginia, GoGo is not seen on the streets of New York, and the details of the metropolis are sparse. Several landmarks – Times Square, Wall Street,

Garment District, and brownstones on the Upper East Side – provide the coordinates for the narrative, but there is no exploration of the metropolis, *per se*. Instead, New York is focalised and internalised through GoGo’s experience of sewing:

As the first winter got colder, I snipped and wove. Over the quiet Chinese New Year ... I threaded and trimmed. On into spring. I mended as the year turned into summer. I wove threads through dog days, my fingers sweating next to wool. Through opera in the park, I mended on into autumn. The frayed rents in jackets and skirts disappeared in my hands. And all the way around again, retniW, nmutuA, remmuS, gnirpS – that’s how I thought of it, the seasons topsy-turvy. (106)

In this description, GoGo weaves her own city narrative. The dichotomy of time and space is disrupted by the continuous movement of GoGo’s working hands, and New York transforms into a sewing studio. Noticeable are the seasonal changes in the city, but the lack of visual detail reinforces the fact that GoGo’s experience of New York was, indeed, through her sewing.

Similar to Virginia as a ghost writer in New Orleans and Anna as a struggling artist-mother in central London, GoGo became invisible in New York, yet it is not the only way in which the theme of invisibility is explored in Kennedy’s novel. While working alongside Rose and Nance at Rip Burn Snag, GoGo learnt the technique of invisible mending. In Manhattan, predominantly a male space, Rose was an authority on this kind of stitching. Walking next to her in this town was “like walking with Mayor Giuliani” (105) – everyone knew her by name. Most of Rose’s clients were Wall Street financiers, who needed help in hiding their affairs by fixing their clothes recklessly damaged in a moment of passion. In the novel, invisible mending becomes a provocative metaphor. On the one hand, it hides the clients’ invisible movements in the form of indiscretions. On the other hand, invisible mending involves a kind of meddling on the seamstress’s part, whose skill conceals not only the damage in the fabric, but also the follies of her clients. Rose warned GoGo that in doing invisible mending, she was going to help her clients cheat on their wives and, consequently, become their invisible accomplice. GoGo did not fully realise the meaning of Rose’s words for quite some time, and it is only when she meets the Irish client back in Auckland that they begin to make sense.

Between the Worlds

Although the change from an academic to a seamstress that GoGo makes is literal, her tendency to think of these occupations as different worlds allows for deeper interpretation. I

consider GoGo's transformation into a seamstress as an example of metaphorical movement from one dimension to another. The new world of spools, needles, and threads that GoGo comes to occupy could not be further away from the life of an academic she was meant to become. As an English student, she spent most of her time *thinking*, which never resulted in any change or exchange. Conversely, as a seamstress, GoGo transforms clothing from ordinary to extraordinary, from doomed to recovered, and helps her clients in a moment of crisis when they come to her "with their bundles" of torn clothes, "like the survivors of a train wreck" (13). This process of exchange turns her alterations shop into a "contact zone" (Greenblatt 251). It is somewhat akin to Arthur's book store in *Queen of Beauty*, but instead of trading in cultural goods, GoGo sells her skills to enable her clients to keep their love affairs invisible. There is something profound and powerful in her dealings with her clients. Unlike in Arthur's business, GoGo's relationship with her customers is much more intimate, as it allows her to transcend the boundaries and enter their secret lives.

Even more interesting is that sewing does not stop GoGo from thinking. Indeed, since becoming a seamstress, GoGo does more thinking than ever. For her, freedom of mental movement becomes synonymous with an escape. Gone are the days when *what*, *how* and *when* GoGo thought was determined by course materials, deadlines, and essay questions. Now, she is free to choose the direction of her thoughts and the only template she follows is that of the garment she is sewing. Thoughts come and go, and often, after finishing a piece of clothing, GoGo does not even remember her fingers ever touching it. As she herself puts it, she enjoys "[her] quiet snow of thinking, and underneath it, the grassy kerfuffle of thread, fabric, needles, [and] scissors" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 107).

However, this drastic change of direction – from intellectual to artisanal – does not come without regrets. In her attempt to justify her decision to become a seamstress to the reader, GoGo says that she "fell into [sewing] by accident, if [one] can *fall up* the stairs of Rip Burn Snag" (106; my emphasis). On another occasion, while pondering her fate, she suggests that the Southern Hemisphere is to blame for her decision to become a labourer rather than a thinker, because everything there is inverted. The implication here is an echo of the Fall, and while this playful imagery betrays GoGo's awareness of her diminishing fortune, it also foreshadows impending chaos.

BELFAST: IN SEARCH OF CELTIC ROOTS

Being a culturally split subjectivity, GoGo struggles to belong in New Zealand. The episode that becomes a humorous revelation of this fact is GoGo's memory of attending the birthday party of a childhood friend's a one-year-old daughter, which she shares with the client. The party is a colourful event as most of the relatives and guests are Indians, wearing bright saris and shirts.

Noticeably, GoGo is the only one – bar the Pākehā children dressed in jeans and T-shirts – who is dressed in her Western everyday clothes. Even the only other Pākehā woman, Fiona Campbell, wears a Scottish national costume. In her conversation with GoGo, she says that her Scottish ancestors migrated to New Zealand four generations ago. Fiona herself cannot imagine living in Scotland. “New Zealand is a great little place, apart from the Māoris” (143). In this scene, Fiona is not the only one who clings to her European heritage during this overwhelmingly Indian event. In the spirit of the moment, GoGo tells Fiona that “if [she] had a national costume ... it’d be Irish” (142). Not only does GoGo indirectly acknowledge the fact that, unlike most countries, New Zealand does not have a national costume, but she also betrays her longing for the lost connection with her Irish heritage.

In an earlier scene in the novel, while working on the knotwork of the costume, GoGo recalls reading that, according to one theory, the Celts were first to settle in New Zealand, before the Māori, and “left some stone circles scattered about the place before relocating to Ireland” (42). GoGo is sceptical about it, and even jokes saying, “Hey, I’d be indigenous” (43). Yet her light-hearted tone disguises her sense of rootlessness in the country of her birth. Her fixation on her Irish heritage manifests itself in other ways in the novel, most notably her affair with the Irish-born client – her “Celtic romance” (Lawn, *Neoliberalism* 69). In a figurative sense, she becomes culturally mobile without even leaving New Zealand. In her interaction with the client, she creates her own Irish realm, just as she does by engaging with the costume project. However, a more important observation is that, in this relationship, GoGo blends the personal and the historical, losing part of herself while absorbing the other, and becoming part of him and part of his story.

In the novel, this part of GoGo’s story begins with the appearance of the black Irish costume in GoGo’s life, the event that coincides with the start of the blackout. An ornate dancing dress is delivered to GoGo’s alterations shop for repairs by a young Irish woman who claims that the dress belongs to her grandmother. Experienced in detecting spun tales of her clients, many of which involve illicit affairs, GoGo suspects that behind the torn dress there is a different story, yet she does not reject the job. Several days later, a man comes to the door, looking to collect the mended costume. As it transpires, the woman is his lover, Trisha, and the costume was torn in a moment of passion. Since it is an heirloom, it needs urgent repair. The conversation between GoGo and the client, whose name is Shane McGrath, is interrupted by the arrival of the client’s wife Milly. In this crucial moment, GoGo acts against all common sense and clear judgement – she hides the man and helps him deceive his wife. Just as predicted by Rose from Rip Burn Snag in New York, GoGo becomes the man’s secret partner in crime. Eventually, the wife leaves with nothing, and so does the distressed client, who accidentally forgets to take his costume. GoGo becomes intrigued by the

client's life and decides to hold on to the costume. Under the pretence that she can only work during certain hours due to the Blackout, GoGo turns the costume into a bargaining tool and coerces the client to return every afternoon, only to be told that the job is almost finished, but not quite. Each time, GoGo invites the client into the villa, promising to return the mended costume to him that very night, and so she sews in front of him while he waits.

Such is the setup for another journey in the novel – to Ireland – but unlike GoGo's trip to America, this one does not require GoGo to move physically. Her adventure evolves through the client's recollection of his boyhood in Belfast of the late-1970s and early-1980s. In his intermittent story-telling, which stretches over the course of several days and several chapters in the novel, one might notice a similarity between the client and Grimshaw's character, Charles Henderson, who also shares his family's tragic past with the female New Zealand protagonist. In *The Last Days of the National Costume*, the client relates his tumultuous life during the long-lasting conflict in Ireland, and his family's fortunate escape from Belfast, and from death. GoGo becomes transfixed by his narrative of the Irish childhood she never had and is drawn into his story of forced migration to remote New Zealand. For the client, his memories become an anxious, if not reluctant, return to his past in troubled Ireland shaped by division, violence and hatred, while for GoGo they turn into an imaginary journey to the land of her ancestors.

A Journey Through Storytelling

In his book, *The Politics of Storytelling* (2002), Michael Jackson underscores the closeness between storytelling and journeying, acknowledging the fact that, grounded in temporality and spatiality, stories are often about journeys. Yet the connection between the two does not end here. Like the latter, storytelling "moves us, transports us, carries us away, or helps us escape the oppressiveness of our real lives" (30). Jackson also suggests that the micro-macro connection between the subject and a larger entity, such as "cosmos, culture, society, world, and genealogy in human thought," helps not only understand the function of such categories, but also "to know one's origins and one's fate" (108). Drawing on these ideas, we can imagine GoGo's interaction with the client and her interest in his past as a kind of voyage, the purpose of which is for GoGo to repossess her Irish identity.

One way in which GoGo achieves it is by attempting to control the client's story. She does it by arranging the client's movements – when he comes and goes – by skilfully shaping his story with questions, leading him from one topic to another, from one confession to the next. As Jackson puts it, by partaking in storytelling, "one reclaims some sense of agency, recovers some sense of purpose,

and comes to feel that the events that overwhelmed one from without may be brought within one's grasp" (36). In the novel, textual evidence suggests that this is precisely GoGo's objective. At times, she even takes over the client's narrative. When due to his "misremembering" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 214) his story becomes less tense and descriptions less graphic, or frugal in places, GoGo fills in the gaps with the colours of her own imagination. For example, she conjures up an image of the client's father secretly arranging for the new travel documents to be issued, so that the family could travel to New Zealand, and imagines what it would be like for the family to shop for new clothes in Liverpool. Later in the client's story, when the family lands in Christchurch, GoGo imagines the five of them travel on a bus to Nelson, embraced by the New Zealand landscape, "grinding over a mountainous pass, sleeping, and shading their eyes from the blue snow on the alps" (215). The exhausting air journey to New Zealand lasted a week, with multiple stopovers, among which are Dubai, Los Angeles and Hawaii, and although it is implied that the client has told GoGo about that part of their adventure, GoGo keeps it to herself. In fact, by this stage, she assumes complete control over his story, saying "I might as well just tell you myself" (222), reminding us that the client's tale is embedded in her own narrative.

In his book, Jackson elaborates on the need to search for one's roots, saying that this process is "less a search for determinate moments when the ego emerges from nothingness or disappears into the void ... than for extensions or beginnings in a time and place *before one's own*, and for continuity in a time and place that *outlives and outlasts one's own singular existence*" (108; emphasis in original). The art of storytelling plays a crucial role in this process, for it is stories that "provide these crossings between the singular and the trans-subjective" (108). The idea of the subject's need for a micro-macro connection with the historical, cultural, and familial is also seen in Morris's novel, where Virginia gathers past family accounts to have a better understanding of herself. However, unlike Morris's protagonist, GoGo fails to establish genuine unity with her people through her Celtic adventure.

Living Through the Fall of Ireland

As mobility in this thesis is partly examined through the concept of the foreign city, I briefly discuss Belfast and its implications in the novel here. The Northern Irish capital is a dynamic yet unstable place, a disparate world from Grimshaw's London and Morris's New Orleans. Nor is it like New York, which in the novel acts as a metropolitan backdrop for GoGo's art of invisible sewing and conspiracy of a kind. Conversely, Belfast is presented as a city where power asymmetry leads to

continuous collusions, violent disruptions, and social explosions. Through his story of forced displacement, the client transports GoGo to Belfast, a city immersed in violence and bloodshed.

Split into areas defined by religious beliefs and political views, Belfast stood on the eight-hundred-year history of conflict between Catholics and Protestants, nationalists and loyalists. The era of the infamous Troubles was the time when riots were commonplace, and death was never far. Kennedy creates an intense sense of hopelessness and desperation, inescapability and inexorable fate surrounding the client's family, suggesting that in Belfast the McGraths lived through the worst days of their lives. For example, the family lived in a working-class area, called Clonard, which was a wretched place, particularly if one was a Catholic and an Irish nationalist, as was the client's father Kevin. Like every other Catholic, he was on the unemployment benefit and the family lived in treacherous conditions in council housing, "not fit for human habitation" (150). Interestingly, Clonard is in the western part of Belfast – a striking connection with the western locations that prevail in GoGo's life – and it borders with the Falls Road, the epicentre of the Troubles, where tensions always escalated during "the marching season," which celebrated "the fall of Ireland" (162). The repeated references to a fall here resonate with GoGo's perception of her own destiny, yet it simultaneously highlights its overstated, hyperbolic nature.

The character of Kevin McGrath is interesting to examine as, on the one hand, he becomes the catalyst in the family's decision to leave Ireland, but on the other, he is another example of someone who is born out of time with the world he inhabits, but on a much more significant scale than GoGo. Applying Greenblatt's classification of mobility, it is evident that Kevin is restricted and controlled by "historical circumstances [and existing] structures of power" (251). His passion for free Ireland prevents him from having the right to move freely and to express himself openly; yet he is not passive, nor immobilised. Hidden from view, he participates in inconspicuous movements to advance his beliefs and hope for better Ireland. Although his connection with the IRA (the Irish Republican Army) is never directly stated in the novel, it is implied. Kevin takes part in protests, and one year, during the July twelfth parade, he murdered a man, "an Orangie" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 293). This fact becomes known to his family by accident after the discovery of a hidden 'Wanted card' in a kitchen drawer by the client's mother. The card is a death penalty, and it sends the family into a chaos of packing and leaving Belfast as fugitives, although when considering the fortunate outcome of the situation in which the McGraths found themselves, one realises that the card becomes their lucky ticket to freedom.

Unlike the characters of Grimshaw and Morris, the McGraths do not leave their homeland in search of deprivation or complication to make their lives more exciting and meaningful. Instead, they escape from death and come to look for a stable life at the other end of the world, in New

Zealand. In undertaking a one-way journey, they repeat the Transatlantic journey made by GoGo's ancestors several generations before. For GoGo, the McGraths' story becomes the closest experience to what her forbears may have encountered when they escaped the famine.

TARANAKI: UPROOTING THE ORCHARD

GoGo and Art's weekend escape to the family orchard in Taranaki becomes an important sequence in the novel, for it brings together the intersecting spheres of local and global economic forces that are at work. As GoGo returns to her roots vicariously, through the client, Art returns to his settler homeland, represented in the novel by the family farm, or the "homestead" as everyone calls it. The chapters describing the family weekend generate much of the satirical energy in Kennedy's work, yet there is an underlying sense that this local, south-bound trip to Taranaki is going to bring disappointment for all parties involved.

It should be stated early on in this discussion that although the farm belongs to the family, it is not a home for GoGo. On weekends, family members – and "hangers-on" (251), as GoGo refers to herself – are welcome to visit. GoGo is not being facetious here, nor is her assessment of her position in the family unsubstantiated. In fact, if previously there was any doubt about Art's family rejecting GoGo, during the weekend in Taranaki their position is confirmed. GoGo is not a Woolthamly, therefore, she is excluded from the family and, as she thinks, "there is no point in trying" (255). During the said weekend, there are several moments when she is undermined or ignored by various members of the family. One striking example is when, after lunch on the first day, the family discuss business-related affairs behind closed doors, excluding GoGo from the conversation. Thus, the conclusion is that the gap between GoGo and Art's family is irreparable, and the "homestead" is merely a place to stay for GoGo.

Despite this fact, GoGo is excited about the trip – if not about the comfort of a home, then about a chance to escape. After being trapped in the blacked-out city for almost two weeks, frustrated GoGo and Art make an impulsive decision to travel to Taranaki. In the state of emergency that Aucklanders find themselves during the power outage, the promise of "a warm bath" (252) is too tempting to forego. However, GoGo's desire to escape from the city stems from a much more complex set of motives than a mere prospect of a bath. For her, leaving Auckland means "no Blackout, no dissertation, [and] no longing" (252). I read this set of constraints as a three-dimensional composition that is beyond GoGo's control, with the latter being most intimate, yet most ambiguous. Though GoGo is unable to articulate this yearning, her admission of it reveals her vulnerability. These three unrelated reasons are revealed to be the anchors embedded in GoGo's life

and having a holding power over it. The trip to Taranaki promises a space where she can free herself from these moorings, even temporarily. Thus, the further away from Auckland they are, the more uplifted she feels. As they pass “transitty little towns” (252) and hills covered in native bush *en route* to Taranaki, GoGo’s sense of freedom, or escape, intensifies to the point that she wishes that the trip would never end. Yet end it does, and as the couple arrives at the imposing farm gates, “incongruous in the landscape of the rolling hills and bush” (252). At this stage of her journey, and her life, GoGo finds herself at another impasse.

The Collapse of the Empire

In this part of the novel, the direction of the west continues to pursue GoGo. The farm itself faces west, just like the villas that the Woolthamlys own in Auckland, and it is situated on the west coast of New Zealand. Approaching the farm, GoGo also notices her sister-in-law, Issy, riding her horse “in the west field” (252). The significance of the west in GoGo’s story is finally confirmed in this part of the novel. During the weekend, GoGo and Art learn that the family business has been in financial turmoil for some time, that the long-established fruit dynasty is about to collapse. Straight after the family meeting, Art tells GoGo that, soon, the business “might” be sold – “the assets and the debt” (258). Having made their fortune selling dried apples and prunes to Hong Kong and mainland China, the family find that their once-desired product is wanted no more.

This situation puts GoGo’s search for settler roots in an ironic juxtaposition with her parents-in-law’s squandering of the settler legacy. This decline is partly due to the Asian fiscal crisis, although Kennedy hints that the downfall of the Woolthamlys is not the result of this event alone, and that there are wider forces at play here –of historical and cultural nature rather than political or economic. Kennedy’s choice of dried fruit as the main export product of Taranaki Fruit Company and their main source of revenue is also telling. It does not evoke the connotations of the words mentioned by Calder in his discussion of the early settler rhetoric – “salubrious, abundant, opportunity, advantage and profitable” (108). Conversely, it elicits the idea of the business drying up, suggesting the end of the golden era of the middle-class Pākehā New Zealanders, the reversal of their good fortune, and the end of “settler evolution” (Lawn, *Neoliberalism* 67). In some ways, the novel becomes a reprise of Denis Glover’s poem “The Magpies” (1964), where the protagonists, Tom and Elizabeth, buy a farm. “Year in year out they worked / while the pines grew overhead” (lines 9-10). Eventually, however, “all the beautiful crops ... went / to the mortgage man instead” (lines 13-14).

Struggling to maintain their fruit operation, the Woolthamlys are forced to improvise to stay afloat. They lease out a section of their farm. The new tenants are, as Prue refers to them, ‘Chinese immigrants with their Hong Kong dollars’ (Kennedy, *LDNC* 253). The irony is not lost on the reader as the long-established Woolthamly fruit empire falls apart at the same time as the British Empire faces its own end. The long history of British imperialism ends when Britain returns Hong Kong to China after the ninety-nine-year lease had expired. As Ronald Skeldon (2015) observes, the hand-over results in the inundation of “reluctant exiles” (7) from Hong Kong to Western countries during the pre- and post-handover.

Leasing some paddocks from the Woolthamlys, the Chinese tenants see this land as their own. This is the case of history being reversed, and the previously-colonised becoming the colonisers. The tenants refuse to give an even “occasional access” (Kennedy, *LDNC* 257) to the leased land to their Pākehā landlords and shoot at them with a BB gun if there is evidence of trespass. This detail in the text implies that on the farm the Woolthamlys find themselves in a precarious position: in the place they consider to be a home and part of their legacy, they have become unwelcomed ‘guests,’ and soon will be part of its history.

Emerging here is the idea of land boundaries being redefined. In his analysis of Frederick Maning’s *Old New Zealand* (1863), Calder makes an important observation of how the early Irish settlers saw boundary setting as “one marker of the settler population’s increasing power to define the boundaries that matter, whether spatially, through the conversion of land into property, or interpersonally, through legal and cultural constraints on behaviour” (110). Maning also perceived boundary setting as a process where “hard boundaries [were drawn] out of once-fluid arrangements” (110). In Kennedy’s novel, this is one way in which history repeats itself: the land boundaries are firmly determined by the new tenants despite the lease agreement being in place – the evidence of Bert’s “fluid arrangements.”

However, this is not the only way in which history is shown to repeat itself in *The Last Days of the National Costume*. The conflict between the Woolthamlys and the tenants alludes to the nineteenth-century wars in the region. Kennedy establishes a space-time connection one more time in her novel by selecting Taranaki as a key location and revealing another facet of settler mobility. One of the first regions in the North Island to be populated by British settlers, following South Island settlements, Taranaki was subjected to a series of military conflicts, known as the Taranaki War (1860-1861). In his book, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*, James Belich (2015) reminds us that the prolonged tendency to see the land issue as the sole cause of the military action in Taranaki has led to a frequent reference to it as “‘The Land Wars’” (77), and although many historians have explored other theories and have argued against “mono-causal

models" (78) of the origins of this war, the land dispute theory remains valid. For Art's father, this leased patch of land is important as it is a site representing European mobility and significance. Notably, however, at the end of the novel, when the Woolthamlys are forbidden by their Chinese tenants to approach this land, the site becomes an unreachable memorial to the once powerful empire in the novel.

AUCKLAND: POST-SETTLER BLUES

Like many of Kennedy's literary creations, *The Last Days of the National Costume* is characterised by wordplay, yet behind the mask of humour lies a serious and sensitive reflection on settler identity. The themes of displacement and "here and there" become an essential part in this project. Focussing on geographical displacement of her characters, Kennedy reconfigures the referents of "here and there." On a literal level, the "there" is still a northern metropolis, although it is no longer London, and it no longer brings artistic success to the protagonist, unlike in the other two novels. On a metaphorical level, the "there" is a temporal construct, and it is two-directional in its representation of the past and implied future.

In her novel, Kennedy projects a late-capitalist, postmodern world that is contingent, incoherent, and unpredictable. The two intersecting forces, on which she draws in her novel, are the rise of globalisation and a decline of settler civilisation. The latter is foregrounded in Kennedy's novel. The end of the twentieth century sees a slowing-down in the settler project of progress, revision of settler identity, and regeneration of culture in New Zealand. The idea of the fall becomes the crux of the novel, and it manifests itself through an array of images and motifs relating to the deterioration of settler consciousness, fading of cultural nationalism, and the collapse of colonial power.

On the level of character, downward mobility and personal chaos become dominating themes. Within the prevailing sense of decline in settler consciousness and unrelenting rhythm of globalisation and internationalism is the protagonist whose "lifestyle is on trial" (Kennedy, "Five Easy Questions," par. 4). Having dramatically changed the course of her life, GoGo embarks on a journey of self-discovery, an escapade that turns her life upside-down and leads her to marriage, an overseas adventure, an illicit romance, and the crushing loss of family fortune. The imagery of reversed movement, used to depict GoGo's life, accumulates throughout the novel, leading to a series of reflections on mobility, displacement, and identity.

A common thread between the three novels is the idea that mobility is a consequence of the subject's permanent displacement. Like the protagonists of Grimshaw and Morris's works, GoGo is

displaced through her ancestry and her family's immigrant past. Throughout her personal misfortunes, the protagonist longs for her settler roots, trying to make an emotional and conscious connection with the settler narrative. Her search for her Irish heritage and preoccupation with her displacement result in energy and restlessness, but lead to an irrevocable sense of emptiness and disappointment.

The client's story plays a crucial role in this outcome. Just like the Irish costume that during the industrial revolution mutated from a dress that belonged to the wealthy to "something fancy" (Kennedy, *LDNC* 289) in the wardrobe of the poor woman, so does the actual world that transforms into the narrated one through the client's story. The criticism that Kennedy makes here is that in this process of transformation, some elements lose their authenticity. The central symbol of disputable authenticity in the novel is the Irish national costume itself. GoGo knows that the dress was made by an amateur, for the embroidered cuffs on the sleeves look different. More important is the fact that when towards the end of the novel GoGo tries the costume on, it does not make her feel any more Irish than she is at the beginning of the novel.

Whether we are to assume that Kennedy points us in the direction of the settler narrative, suggesting that it, too, is prone to subjectivity, gaps in memory, and potential fictionality, is difficult to assert. However, what is evident is Kennedy's position that in order to move forward, one should put the past behind. This is chiefly demonstrated in the structural arrangement of each novel. Whereas the plot in *Foreign City* is labyrinthine and open-ended and Morris's *Queen of Beauty* mimics the protagonist's movements back and forth, Kennedy employs a circular structure in *The Last Days of the National Costume*. Unlike Grimshaw and Morris, who re-work and re-define the elements of New Zealand cultural narrative, proposing alternative directions for it in their novels, Kennedy's work leaves us with less sense of promise for the settler project. The writer portrays GoGo as unable to envisage and articulate her future, and as someone who will not be able to do so unless she reconciles with the past. The term "the narrative of return" acquires a new meaning in Kennedy's novel, for at the end of her journey, GoGo finds herself exactly where she started.

Conclusion

I began this thesis with the discussion of the ideas of Calder, Stead, and Evans about the impact of geo-cultural distance that separates New Zealand from the rest of the world. Distance has been part of New Zealand identity for centuries, first through Pacific migration and later through European settlement. The idea of distance is also prominent in Grimshaw's *Foreign City*, Morris's *Queen of Beauty*, and Kennedy's *The Last Days of the National Costume*. However, in the hands of these writers, the concept of distance is no longer limited to geo-cultural connotations. Under the influence of globalisation and internationalism, the sense of geo-cultural distance between "here and there" has become less palpable and less clearly defined. Intrinsicly linked with the notion of "here and there," distance is problematised by the characters' desire to overcome it, and it becomes a prerequisite for a personal project of self-realisation for each protagonist – a creative self-exile.

In the cultural nationalist settler paradigm, the "here and there" is tinged with negative connotations. Historically, the "here" meant an exotic location separated from civilisation, where apart from indigenous Māori and "scenes of romantic wilderness" (Nicholas, qtd. in Horrocks 21), nothing considered of technological or cultural value in the eyes of Eurocentric colonisation had existed before European settlement. Later, by the time of the mid-twentieth-century settler cultural nationalist paradigm, there was nothing original "here," for settler culture was thought to be derivative, forged out of European traditions and vernacular. The implication of this coding was felt for quite some time in New Zealand. In the twentieth century, distance became part of the same conceptual pool as insignificance, isolation, metropole, and periphery, whose melancholic undertones made it impossible to progress past a sense of irrelevance and inadequacy. However, as Horrocks suggests, recent scholarship has adopted a revisionist mode to reading early European texts (18). For example, there is a renewed academic interest in Pacific mobilities. As Horrocks states, European narratives of Pacific voyages often "include only passing allusions to cross-cultural encounters between different Pacific people" (26), yet important they were. On the one hand, they demonstrate that Pacific travel encounters were frequent and very much part of the native culture; on the other, they suggest that the once-thought story of two peoples is, actually, a more complicated narrative. Drawing on Tony Ballantyne's work, *Entanglements of Empire* (2014), Horrocks describes it as "a complex web of engagement and range of interdependences that more deeply unsettles the metropole-periphery relationship" (26). This new way of reading the imperial history opens up a possibility to reconsider the meaning of distance and to re-imagine "here and there" not as a dual conception, but as a mosaic of multiple locations and perspectives.

In *Foreign City*, *Queen of Beauty*, and *The Last Days of the National Costume*, the writers take a creative approach to the “here and there,” deconstructing and re-constructing its genealogy and presenting wide-ranging perspectives and contexts – geographical, cultural, generational, and personal – in which it plays out. This multitude of influences is one way of thinking of the globalisation of culture and the shifting local resonance of the centres of international modernism, particularly London and New York. In his book, *Hard Frost: Structure of Feeling in New Zealand Literature 1908-1945*, Newton (2017) has suggested that the value of internationalism on settler cultural nationalism has not been adequately revised. While it has been long accepted that “New Zealand’s literary nationalism adopts certain features of Anglophone modernism” (26), certain aspects of this relationship have been underexplored. As Newton observes, “[t]o forge a literary nationalism at the height of international modernism” is “if not literally impossible, is at the very least paradoxical” (26).

In Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy’s novels, the dual legacies of modernism and settler cultural nationalism are evident, and they are unsettled in a number of ways. First of all, the writers set their narratives in multiple geographical locations – not only London and New York, but also New Orleans, Belfast, and Hoboken (NJ). In addition, the “here and there” becomes a multidimensional model, where travelling in space also means grappling with embedded histories. For example, in Grimshaw’s *Foreign City*, there is a retrospective glance at modernism and the ideals it embodies through the eyes of a female artist. London is a place where the Bloomsbury vibe and echoes of World War II Jewish migration reverberate through the present time. In Morris’s *Queen of Beauty*, the ghosts of the Antebellum south and the modernist past still live through old books, the local architecture of New Orleans, and Virginia’s passion for story-telling as a writer-to-be. Kennedy’s *The Last Days of the National Costume* revisits New Zealand’s colonial past, tracing its settler roots and migrant narratives. Occasionally, the “here and there” and “now and then” turn towards a distant future, evoke a fantasy, or become a meditation on life and death.

In this undertaking, the mobilities paradigm becomes an invaluable tool. For Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy, mobility is not only a mechanism for exploring some key cultural ideas relating to distanced New Zealand geography, but also a premise in their novels. Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated how these writers place the key mobility concepts – such as movement, displacement, the metropolis, and periphery – alongside the settler narrative, yet also rework them in their novels. Commenting on thematic concerns in contemporary New Zealand literature, Wevers observes that “[t]ravel, afloat in another culture, as if on a metaphorical journey away from home, is perhaps the most commonly represented condition of recent fiction by women” (305). This is something we see in *Foreign City*, *Queen of Beauty*, and *The Last Days*, where the protagonists find

themselves on the move. They never become entirely free from constraints – motherhood, family ties, prejudice, and personal relationships – yet that does not stop them from embarking on a journey of self-discovery. If mobility is to be understood as an ideology – “a set of meanings about mobility that replicate the assumptions of established power about how, why, and where men and women move” (Cresswell, *On the Move* 65) – then to be able to move in search of inspiration and creativity is certainly one way in which traditional views on gender mobility can be re-written. Instead of recreating and repeating social ideals and ideologies, where the female subject is passive and grounded, the main characters in these novels face outward and move in the direction of the north. In each case, it is a self-imposed departure, and underpinning it is a rebellious response to particular cultural and personal beliefs. A self-exilic experience brings with it a sense of alienation and non-belonging, but it also provides anonymity which, in turn, gives the protagonists licence to be creative and explorative in new ways.

On one level, there are physical movements through travel and city explorations that the protagonists undertake. As females and foreigners in the metropolitan centre, projected through London in *Foreign City*, New Orleans in *Queen of Beauty*, and New York in *The Last Days of the National Costume*, the characters in these novels become dislocated and invisible. In global cities, their movements become coded differently, but through their persistence and artistic self-expression, they construct new pathways in search of a sense of belonging there. Significant, too, are the characters’ urban mobilities. The masculine figure of Walter Benjamin’s flâneur, a figure of detachment and anonymity, is never replicated in these novels. In a gendered feminine world, the historical resonance of metropolitan wandering is lost. In *Foreign City*, Grimshaw draws the contours of the modernist flâneuse, created by Virginia Woolf in *Street Haunting: A London Adventure* (1930), who transforms the London scene into art and makes it her muse. In Morris’s *Queen of Beauty*, always-transforming New Orleans enthral the protagonist with its fullness, vibrancy, and endless movements, becoming both the subject of and motivation for her personal and artistic discoveries. Kennedy’s protagonist does not experience the metropolis in quite the same way as the female characters in Grimshaw and Morris’s novels, and nor does New York become a visual spectacle. On the contrary, New York becomes a construction of invisible worlds of illegal employment and immoral behaviour beneath the layer of perceptible street movements and interactions, and GoGo’s engagement with the metropolis is mainly through learning the art of invisible stitching.

On another level, in varying degrees, the novels show that while the “dream called overseas” persists, mobility inevitably leads to disappointment. As Grimshaw elegantly exemplifies it in her novel, the object of desire can be “near but unreachable” (178), and the gap between what is dreamt and what can be achieved remains. In *Foreign City*, London becomes instrumental in the

protagonist's realisation that without sacrificing her family, she would never become a Bohemian artist. At the same time, being in the heart of the city where her brother lost his life does not bring Anna any closer to the truth about his mysterious death in London, which becomes another disappointment. Morris's *Queen of Beauty* is quite different from the other two novels in this sense, as despite not being able to fulfil her hopes in New Orleans initially, the protagonist returns to the metropolis at the end of the novel to continue pursuing her dreams and a promise of belonging. Kennedy presents us with a different scenario. In *The Last Days of the National Costume*, the "dream called overseas" is still a strong motive for the protagonist to leave her world behind, but the invisible patterns of cultural, historical, political, and economic processes create a power that limits her progress.

This thesis contributes to the field of New Zealand literature in several respects. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only attempt to read Grimshaw's *Foreign City*, Morris's *Queen of Beauty*, and Kennedy's *The Last Days of the National Costume* through a comparative framework and through the prism of the mobilities paradigm. The insights that have been gained through this approach are multiple. The novels enhance mobility studies' conceptual co-ordinates, which in turn help reframe some of the tenets and ideas relating to settler cultural nationalism, and re-affirm the terms "movement" and "mobility" as part of both the previously established settler paradigm and the newly emerging post-settler way of thinking. In essence, they confirm that the mobility narrative is an undercurrent that runs deep in New Zealand literature, and it is important that it is given scholarly attention.

Considering the concept of the mobile subjectivity in the context of these novels leads to a conclusion that for the Pākehā subject, mobility stems from displacement which, in the New Zealand context, originates from the process of large scale migration from Britain. Thus, defined by the movements of their forebearers, the Pākehā subject, at least in this body of literary work, is permanently displaced and deprived of the sense of rootedness. However, this is not the case for the subject of Māori heritage. As Morris demonstrates in her novel, home is not a notion that is defined by physical or geographical coordinates alone, but a construction of cultural and personal stories and histories – a *whakapapa* – that one carries with them wherever they go. In the light of the findings in this thesis, further research could illuminate other aspects of Pākehā and Māori mobilities and their mutual influences.

Finally, in the world that increasingly consists of interconnected mobility systems, that rely on technology, transport, communication, and information, and where individuals, ideas, services and goods move faster than ever before – both in physical and cyber spaces – it is easy to lose sight of the topic of gender. Tanu Priya Uteng and Cresswell (2008) identify the potential of mobility to be used

"both as an *archive* and *present indicator* of discourses, practices, identities, questions, conflicts and contestations to understand its gendered nuances" (1-2; emphasis in original). If this is true, then the mobilities paradigm can help understand the intricacies of gendered mobility experience and explore its representation in literature and culture. The novels analysed in this thesis have a gendered orientation through both the female protagonists and writers. While the issue of gender balance is not necessarily politicised in this selection of texts, it is foregrounded and relevant. Considering that the cultural nationalist paradigm in New Zealand has been forged by predominantly male authors, the novels by Grimshaw, Morris, and Kennedy become a reminder that in the new chapter of New Zealand cultural narrative female writers emerge more readily than previously, finding their place alongside their male peers and updating New Zealand's cultural story and literature.

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