

ALLAN PHILLIPSON

BRAIN DRAIN: THE PORT AS  
PLUGHOLE IN NEW ZEALAND  
LITERATURE

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If Allen Ginsberg had been a New Zealander, he would have "seen the best minds of his generation" running for Auckland harbour to catch the first ship out. In 1950s New Zealand, artists, writers and musicians (Ginsberg's "best minds") often felt so marginalised that they declared a need to escape their society – a society they defined as puritan and provincial. Thus, in a time when sea travel was the only affordable way out of the country, the main port of Auckland turned into a nexus for disaffected artists. In the terms of this essay, Auckland harbour became a plughole for the 'brain drain' that characterises New Zealand literature in the provincial period (1935-1964).<sup>1</sup>

One can illustrate this thesis by focusing on two key texts that bookend the provincial period: John Mulgan's *Man Alone* (1939) and Janet Frame's *Owls Do Cry* (1957). Both novels contain imaginative central characters who initially try to fit into New Zealand society; but that society rejects and repels them, so they try to opt out. Mulgan's Johnson makes it from Mount Ruapehu to Auckland, jumps ship for England, and – by joining a socialist group in London – discovers the solidarity that eluded him in New Zealand. Frame's Daphne proves less fortunate: her parents

commit her to an asylum and, after electric shock treatment, she undergoes a leucotomy. Frame herself was scheduled for a leucotomy in the early-1950s until a quirk of fate intervened, and then – in an uncanny echo of Mulgan's plot – a close friend (Frank Sargeson) bundled her on board a ship for Europe. This tendency to view the northern port as an escape route permeates the lives and the fictions of New Zealand's provincial writers.

## The Port as escape route

During the preceding colonial period (c.1840-1934), traffic through Auckland harbour had generally been one-way: settlers came in their thousands to what had been advertised as a south seas utopia. These utopian attractions were bolstered by gold rushes in the 1860s, during which decade the European population of New Zealand doubled. Writers of that colonial period – including Mulgan's father Alan – joined the advertisers in creating a myth of New Zealand as a pastoral paradise embracing social equality and the dream of a just city. John Mulgan sets up this myth in the first chapter of *Man Alone*, with New Zealanders boasting of their land as "God's own, this country," "a pleasant and well-to-do country": "the way they talked about it made it seem like the only country in the world" (7-8). Mulgan then undercuts this myth by hinting at the sickness – of body, land and culture – that Johnson will encounter there. Johnson's liner becomes a kind of death-ship, with people dying of pneumonic influenza, heart failure, wasting and blood-poison, "so that funeral services at intervals regulated the conduct of the ship. A stale tiredness hung over everyone... ." (7).

This atmosphere prefigures and pervades Johnson's first sight of Auckland: "he saw . . . red iron roofs straggling down to the shore on two sides of a land-locked harbour and clustered together on one side the steel-grey cranes and advertisement-plastered buildings of the port and city" (7). Mulgan's double-barrelled descriptions – land-locked, steel-grey, advertisement-plastered – carry connotations of closeness, coldness and a focus on making money. Mulgan uses the port as a paradigm for the kind of welcome Johnson can expect, and the kind of attitudes he will face. A New Zealander on deck underlines this negative setting by spitting in the water, calling the port as "cold as death," and abandoning his waiting family for an afternoon in the pub. Mulgan describes this first New Zealand character as "shrunken and pock-marked and unhealthy-looking," again shooting down his target with double-barrelled adjectives, and when mentioning – after three years away – that "the wife and kids" will be there waiting, "He spoke without enthusiasm" (8). In the pub, theoretically a centre of the community where people can relax and enjoy themselves, the narrator states that "no-one got merry with the drinking," "no-one was listening" and "There was a quietness and sickness over everything" (7-8). Only three pages into

the first chapter, therefore, "everything" is unhealthy and cold, anti-community and anti-family, metallic and focussed on capital gain.

By the end of the chapter, Johnson decides "I'll get out of this town... that's one thing I'll do" (16). This statement encapsulates the pattern of the book, and a major pattern in provincial literature: an imaginative central character feels trapped, and tries to escape that feeling of repression by attempting to move on. In New Zealand literature, this pattern usually works itself out in two ways: after making some kind of gesture against their society, the central characters either suffer defeat or leave town. The latter course often involves them heading "up north" and aiming for a major port.<sup>2</sup> For example, after a series of jobs working for people as "mean as death" (17), Johnson explodes into violence and finally resolves to "Get out of the country" (157).

Johnson's first sight of Auckland harbour on the way out contrasts markedly with his first sight of the port on the way in:

The first real sunshine of the new summer was warming the hills and sea. From where he sat he could see the islands of the gulf and the trail of smoke from shipping northwards and eastwards coming down to port. The islands near at hand were in grass and green with spring, farther off they went blue into the distance, bush-covered and misty. . . . The light westerly wind came from behind him, wrinkling the blue-green water below. (172)

First, real, new; sunshine, summer, warm: here the setting and its adjectives reflect cheerfully on the prospect of Johnson sailing away from New Zealand. Mulgan underlines this point through insistent use of the pathetic fallacy, with positive connotations of green grass, blue-green water and spring growth countering the grey metallic coldness and overwhelming sickness of Johnson's entry into Auckland harbour.

While his negative experience of New Zealand culture has been counterpointed by brief moments of company and community feeling, Johnson does not experience any sustained happiness until he links up with a group of socialists fighting an "industrial war" (201) in London and then joins them in the war against fascism in Spain. The word "happy" appears five times in the last three pages, while the narrator concludes "They were all feeling very happy" (205) and Johnson concludes that "A man spends too much time alone" (206).

This kind of happiness (reaching a degree of self-knowledge in an accepting community) eludes most characters in provincial fiction,<sup>3</sup> and all of the characters in Janet Frame's *Owls Do Cry*. This novel traces the disintegration of an entire family: the parents, conditioned by secular puritanism, train their children into an obsession with consumer goods, appearances and doing the 'right' thing. Chicks (the youngest child) accepts this model and retreats into a vacuous suburban existence of ever-newer appliances, tidy carpet and received opinions; Daphne (the eldest) rejects her parents' notions of treasure and gets committed to an asylum and leucotomised. Toby exists

somewhere on a continuum between these two extremes: he chooses what Frame calls the wrong treasure of money and materialism, but he retains some ability to dream, imagine, and protest against the machine that grinds him. Toby's dreams usually involve travel overseas, combined with a tragic realisation that he will never escape: "Some day I will get out of this and go up north . . . but it's too late" (67-8). Marginalised and bullied as an epileptic, all Toby wants is to "Marry . . . and be in with people again" (61), but his dream girl Fay marries someone else and (metaphorically) crosses "the sea with its green web of forgetting . . . inhabiting where I shall never sail" (80). Through Toby's imaginative dreams, Frame creates a lost man who knows where he wants to sail but not how to get there, leaving him trapped forever on his own lonely island.

After learning of Fay's marriage plans, Toby returns to his single bed, and runs his hand over the atlas, reciting the names of places and oceans: "And he crossed the seas . . . ; he crossed the seas with one stroke of his dirty red hand. How simple to travel. . ." (77). Apart from this atlas travelling, Toby does make one trip in actuality (on a train up north) during which he fantasises that he might – as in the movies he watches every Saturday night – "be taken away on a foreign boat":

And he remembered the boats he had seen sometimes on the wharves, the red and yellow and white boats, with flags flying; . . . and the sea nudging the sides; and men walking about with telescopes in their hands, and crying out Heave-ho, Heave-ho.

But that thought was just to tease him for he knew his mother would be waiting when he came back, and his sisters too, and they would say – Did you have any fits? (122)

This broken fantasy becomes even more poignant if readers recall that, in an earlier dream, Toby wished to be one of those men with a telescope: "I need a telescope . . . only to look that I may know the world and see my life. . ." (80). With this vision denied, Toby retreats to his parents' home to look for the wrong treasure: money. Most literary historians who consider provincial literature agree that this trope – an imaginative central character defeated by social pressures – pervades the fiction of the period. However, few have noted the persistence of the port as escape hatch lurking in the background, a reminder of what might have been. What I want to consider now is why actual, as opposed to imagined, escape becomes less common as the period goes on.

### Closing the ports: The late-provincial period.

Twenty years before Toby's defeat, Frank Sargeson (perhaps the archetypal provincial writer) published a short story that prefigures both Frame's and Mulgan's depiction of the port as an escape route from New Zealand's puritan society. In that story, "Last Adventure" (1937), the central character has to choose – in a typical Sargesonian binary – between his mother's world of croquet parties, tennis and polite conversation, and an old bachelor's world of social freedom, story-telling and adventure:

I decided that I would be like the old man and live a life of adventure. . . . And perhaps I was helped to make my decision by . . . calling in at a place where overseas boats could come in to load. . . . There was a big boat in loading at the time, and as we went past I watched the men working aboard. It made my heart beat. Lots of them, I thought, could tell of adventures as exciting as any of Fred Holmes's. And some of them looked very little older than I was. They might be cabin boys or apprentices, I didn't know what, but if they could get away on such boats so could I. And I imagined myself persuading Fred to let me have his dinghy so that some night I could pull out, climb aboard some such boat, and stow away. (80-1)

Here the central character romanticises the lives of the sailors and projects onto them his own need to "get away." Like Toby and Johnson, he cannot just buy a ticket and go – his departure must be much more clandestine and interesting than that. For Toby though, and the other characters in *Owls Do Cry*, this departure never occurs.

Why does Frame deny her characters the escape that she herself achieved? This question has a wider application, because many writers of the 1950s went out through the ports and yet left their characters behind. The answer probably lies in the way New Zealand's social pattern had changed since the provincial period began. By the end of the 1930s, the Depression had opened gaps in the pattern, momentarily loosening the grip of puritan conformity. Thus, between 1937 and 1940, Sargeson writes a number of stories, such as "Last Adventure" and "Big Ben," where characters actually escape the pattern. In coeval novels, Mulgan's *Man Alone* (1939) makes it out, as do some of the characters in Robin Hyde's *The Godwits Fly* (1938). During the Second World War, however, the pattern of conformity revives. Novels from this period contain few emigrants apart from soldiers and, as Bill Pearson points out in "Fretful Sleepers: A Sketch of New Zealand Behaviour and its Implications for the Artist" (1952), Kiwi soldiers, in literature and reality, rebelled only while overseas – away from the scrutiny of "public opinion" (8). When they returned to the watchful eye of what Pearson calls "the most puritan country in the world" (10), these temporary rebels capitulated and, by doing so, strengthened the ranks of the conformists.

By the early-1950s those ranks had closed, provoking an outpouring of social and literary criticism. This criticism called for writers to show up the society for what it

was – or at least what they saw it to be. James K. Baxter, in his 1951 address to the New Zealand Writers' Conference, places the writer outside society as a kind of "Prophet" (10) who must teach a wayward people: "he should remain as a cell of good living in a corrupt society, and in this situation by writing and example attempt to change it" (11). Like Baxter and Pearson before him, Robert Chapman (in his 1953 essay "Fiction and the Social Pattern: Some Implications of Recent New Zealand Writing") identifies what he sees as an "homogenous society" (31), dominated by "an irrelevant puritanism of misplaced demands and guilt" (58). Chapman concludes that writers must confront this puritanism with a religious fervour: "The artist must sound his trumpet of insight until the walls of Jericho – the pattern as it is – fall down" (58). With their prophets and trumpets, critics at the beginning of the 1950s became strident about the need for social change and, paradoxically, they felt that change would come about through artistic representations – and implicit criticisms – of extreme stasis ("the pattern as it is"). Chapman, therefore, praises writers who "exhibit the bent pennies," the isolated individuals who become distorted and crushed by "the social milling machine" (55). Chapman feels able to state that, by 1953: "if the pattern pinches... there is no escape" (52).

Thus by 1955, when Janet Frame was writing *Owls Do Cry*, her characters still dream of ports but, unlike their predecessors in the fiction of the 1930s, none of them actually escapes. In this constriction Frame reflects not only the social pattern, but the demands on New Zealand writers to show their characters crushed beneath that pattern. Hence her "Epilogue" – in direct contrast to the positive closure of *Man Alone* – implicitly leaves Fay committing suicide, Chicks murdered by her husband, Toby convicted for lack of funds, Daphne leucotomised and Bob alone; all of them broken by the demands of a repressive and divisive society. For Lawrence Jones, the "dark vision" (1990, 257) displayed in this epilogue exemplifies a failure in the novel as a whole: "there is so much that she does not seem to see, so much that is left out of the world of *Owls Do Cry* or hastily dismissed from it: the self-justifying experiences of intellectual understanding, of intellectual and emotional communication between equals, of non-possessive parental love, of significant work, of adult sexuality" (258). While I incline to Jones' view as an initial reader response, this approach does not take into account the historical context of the novel. Jones' judgement that "the vision of the novel seems . . . incomplete" is rather like blaming a black and white television for not having colour. The things that Frame "left out" did not appear much in New Zealand fiction until the post-provincial period (1965-). Of course these things existed in the 1950s; they simply did not fit the dominant pattern that writers felt compelled to critique.

Ironically, authors who began publishing in the 1950s – such as Janet Frame and C.K. Stead<sup>4</sup> – showed their characters trapped, while they themselves were escaping to join the brain drain overseas.<sup>5</sup> Not until they could look back on 1950s from the haven of the post-provincial period did Stead and Frame reopen the ports. The paradigm of societal rejection and escape by sea reasserts itself in their award-winning books from the 1980s: Stead's *All Visitors Ashore* (1984) and Frame's *An*

*Autobiography* (1989). Each author reflects on their formative years in the 1950s, especially their time in Frank Sargeson's circle on the North Shore, and their eventual flight to England, along with that of many of their artistic friends. Both books summarise a provincial longing for the centre of empire, and both celebrate the success of those who – literally and figuratively – make it.

## Reopening the ports: The post-provincial period

Throughout her *Autobiography*, Frame re-enacts the provincial pattern of an imaginative individual hounded by a conformist society. This conformity ranges from petty social pressures (the expectation that she will marry and settle down in the repeated question "have you met your fate yet?") to extreme measures taken to make her "fit in." Relatives, roommates and even doctors tell her to stop this writing nonsense, get a real job, go out and mix. These extreme measures culminate in her incarceration for eight years in various mental hospitals, her misdiagnosis as a schizophrenic, and over 200 electrical shock treatments that London doctors later described as barbaric. After her final release from hospital, Frank Sargeson takes her in and gives her space to recover and write. Ultimately, he encourages her to leave the country:

he and I planned my next 'move', which, according to Frank, was for me to 'travel overseas' to 'broaden my experience', a convenient way, both he and I realised, of saying that I was 'better out of New Zealand before someone decided I should be in a mental hospital'. We both knew that in a conformist society there are a surprising number of 'deciders' upon the lives and fate of others. (266)

Like Johnson in *Man Alone*, Frame reaches the conclusion that "the best move for me was to get away from New Zealand" (277).

However, in addition to Mulgan's rejection of New Zealand, Frame adds an element of colonial longing for Europe. She learned this Eurocentrism at school, where her teacher defined England "as a special treat":

Miss Farnie was a teacher of her time . . . with . . . her journey of a lifetime 'home' to England completed and the memories carefully preserved in the 'slides' that she showed the class as a special treat – the English lanes, the country cottages, the ruins, the castles, the universities, ah, the universities, Oxford and Cambridge . . . the towers in the mist . . . she passing on her dreams, which we made part of ours. . . . (120)

This colonial mindset idealises England, elevates it as "home," and then passes on the dream, effectively colonising the student's inner space. Even Frank Sargeson, who seems the archetypal New Zealand writer, cherishes the idea of Europe – not so much as 'home,' but as a place that he longs for nonetheless:

He talked of his journey through Europe, showing me the collection of postcards, and in his murmured, 'I'll never see those places again. That's all over', letting escape in his eyes and his face such a look of wild longing, almost of agony at what was gone, that I felt near to tears. (249)

Thus, in the provincial period, imaginative characters not only possess a longing to escape New Zealand due to their treatment in a restrictive society; they also possess a longing for Europe, having been inculcated with the dreams of their mentors.

The same double impetus appears in Stead's *All Visitors Ashore*. This biographical novel, set in the artistic fringes of Auckland in 1951, focuses not on a single imaginative character, but on a group of them; all of whom want to sail out through what Stead repeatedly describes as "the immense wide gateway to the world" (4, 11, 58, 95, 99, 101, 102):

Auckland is a harbour town, a town of two harbours, at the nether end of the world... There are planes in the air, even passenger planes, but still people who travel do it by sea moving with the cargoes and like God upon the face of the waters. The ships come and go, they are our carriers and links, our assurance that our spacious and beautiful confinement though solitary is not absolute. They link us with 'Home', if there is somewhere far away we can think of as Home, or with our Catalan and Andalusian dreams. (22)<sup>6</sup>

This section summarises the provincial dichotomy between Here (the nether end of the world, a prison) and There (Europe as the place of dreams, a Home); what Mark Williams, in his book about the New Zealand novel, calls "the New Zealand obsession with 'centres' and 'peripheries'" (45).<sup>7</sup> To move on the waters seems God-like to those left on shore, especially when – as Stead shortly points out – "five weeks away London lay at the very centre of the world" (24).

Stead fills his book with departures and escapes, making each one an occasion for celebration. Music plays at the emigrant's wharf; people smile, laugh, throw streamers, sing and express a desire to join the fortunate travellers. When Jim and June leave, Curl drifts into Andalusian dreams (quickly shattered by the sharp voice of Mrs Battle, the ubiquitous puritan mother figure). When Cecelia leaves, Pat says "she will go overseas one of these days, and Melior says no doubt she will, most

people who are worth anything in this place do" (112). As if fulfilling this prophecy, Nathan, Felice and Pat depart in turn, leaving the callow Curl behind. Pat tries to console him by saying "maybe in a year or two. . . . There was plenty of time and there was plenty of space. It was 1951 and there was all the time in the world. And there was the world" (147). This last sentence feels like Curl's contraction, his indirect thought, transforming Pat's cliché into his lament: there (London, the Slade School of Art) was the world, out there, past tense, where everyone he loves, everyone of talent, has gone. This lament could even belong to the older Curl, looking back from his narrative present of 1981, and mourning the world that was, the world that passed him by. In either case, Curl ends up alone on the beach, waving frantically to Pat's ship, "heading out as they all did through the gateway to the world" (150).

In *All Visitors Ashore*, therefore, New Zealand drives out – and loses out on – a bullfighter, a writer, an artist, a violinist and an opera singer. The writer, Cecelia Skyways, represents a Janet Frame figure (with her electrified head and her flying words).<sup>8</sup> Frame's own description of leaving parallels Stead's, with its sense of celebration:

I stood on deck among a crowd of passengers, all throwing streamers that were caught by the watchers on the wharf, for in those days travelling by ship was a momentous occasion. There was a brass band playing old tunes, Maori songs and a few military marches. . . . [T]here was music playing, and the sound of talking and laughter. (286-7)

This celebration of going Home, to the centre of the world, contrasts strongly with the sense of gloom and failure that artists often project onto emigrants leaving the centre of empire. For example, in Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England* (1852-5), an image of a distraught family sailing away from the white cliffs of Dover encapsulates a whole genre of paintings that depict unhappy people forced to leave England. This genre was particularly prevalent during the Victorian period, when artists tended to support the Dickensian idea that only convicts, fallen women, villains and poor people are impelled to emigrate. Nevertheless, the feelings depicted in Brown's desperate couple persist well into the twentieth century; in Frame's description of the East London Docks in 1963, she might well be looking at the same family group:

I looked about me at the sober, subdued passengers. There had been no band playing, no streamers. Some of the passengers had the air of being about to sail to their doom; many, no doubt were emigrants who had said last goodbyes and would never return; faces showed anxiety rather than anticipation, a certainty of a journey away from rather than a journey towards. (419)

This is not to say that everyone who left New Zealand in the provincial period was happy to do so; nor were all who left the centre of empire during Victorian times (and later) sad to go. However, in artists' representations of ports, the narrative of empire tends to dominate; reconfirming the importance of the centre and the fearful distance and backwardness of colonies. Hence the profusion of happy godwits, even in the work of New Zealanders who ultimately stayed or returned to New Zealand, such as Stead, Sargeson and Frame.

For those left behind in provincial New Zealand, the port seemed a melancholy place:

Always, in these islands, meeting and parting  
Shake us, making tremulous the salt-rimmed air. . . .  
Remindingly beside the quays the white  
Ships lie smoking; and from their haunted bay  
The godwits vanish towards another summer.  
Everywhere in light and calm the murmuring  
Shadow of departure. . . .

In this 1948 poem, "Islands," Charles Brasch feels abandoned in the "Shadow of departure," a shadow that lies "Everywhere" he looks. From Brasch's perspective on the quay, the white ships serve only to remind him of the darkness of loss. Similarly Allen Curnow, in a "Spring, 1942" verse letter to Denis Glover, mourns the loss of friends overseas. On one level, Curnow simply worries about Glover as a sailor going to war, but the poet also places his friend as part of another exodus, as one more writer joining a "generation of exiles" that "We needed to keep so badly":

Oh I could go down to harbours  
And mourn with a hundred years  
Of hunger what slips away there,  
If that were not fearing the future.  
Any day you may return.

That longed-for return occurs mainly in the post-provincial period, when writers who had gone to Europe – including Stead and Frame – decided to come back and (in the words of another Curnow poem, "Attitudes for a New Zealand Poet") "learn the trick of standing upright here." It is perhaps a measure of how much New Zealand society had grown away from puritan repression that Frame was welcomed back not by doctors with straight-jackets, but by photographers and reporters wanting to ask about her writing.

This growth can be summarised by an image of Janet Frame at the start of the post-provincial period, sailing back into Auckland harbour in 1963:

At last we entered the Hauraki Gulf sailing slowly past the Bays with  
their unexpectedly colourful houses like rows of boiled sweets . . . in

pink, yellow, blue, green, with some striped – set against the vivid green grass (leaf green? viridian?) and the darker green where stands of native bush remained. I'd forgotten about the confectionery housepaint and the drowning depths of the blue sky, not distant, but at hand, at head, a shared sky.

'Isn't Auckland pretty?' someone said.

'Isn't it?' (421)

Unexpected colour indeed – particularly if we contrast Mulgan's grey, sickly and critical arrival scene back in 1939. Frame's apostrophe to Auckland bounds with an almost childlike glee and a prettiness foreign, not only to Mulgan's writing, but to provincial fiction as a whole. This contrast reveals the difference between the eras, the shifts not so much in the port itself, but in the way that port is viewed and presented: first, by a provincial novelist with an axe to grind against his father's pastoral paradise; second, by a writer looking back on the beginning of the post-provincial period, with her own axe having been wielded, cut, and now – like the puritan society it attacked – left ground away to nothing. With society changing to a more affluent, pluralist culture, so the port as escape route fades from New Zealand's literature, to be replaced by a more positive representation of our harbour landscape.

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## Notes

1. The dates for this period have become established mainly through the work of Peter Simpson, Patrick Evans and Lawrence Jones; for details see Sturm (142, n.38). In New Zealand's literary history, four distinct periods emerge: early colonial (1861-89), late colonial (1890-1934), provincial (1935-64) and post-provincial (1965-).
2. Such characters do not necessarily have emigration as a conscious aim. For southern characters in particular – such as Dan Davin's Invercargillites – the port of Auckland can seem the epitome of a magical "up north," a place such characters dream of as a solution to present predicaments. Growing up in Invercargill, the nearby port of Bluff meant nothing to me but fishing and container ships; "up north" was where you went to escape. See also Frame (1990, 242) and Chapman (52).
3. Indeed, this happiness would also have eluded Johnson had *Man Alone* ended as originally planned. The close of Part I, with Johnson sailing out of Auckland, marks Mulgan's initial conclusion; Part II was added at his publisher's request. For an analysis of the genesis and construction of *Man Alone*, see Paul Day's monograph, *John Mulgan* (1977). C.K. Stead offers an opposing view in "John Mulgan: A Question of Identity" (1981, 67-98).
4. Stead is usually considered as a post-provincial writer, but he published his first poem in 1952 and his first short story in 1956. The latter, "Girl Under the Plane Trees" (in *Arena* 43), remains his only uncollected story – perhaps pointedly so – but it exhibits the provincial pattern discussed above. Even Bill Pearson, who argued in "Fretful Sleepers" that "Emigration is no solution" (31), was writing from London.
6. For a comparison between this description of Auckland harbour and that of Mulgan in *Man Alone*, along with an in-depth analysis of Stead's debt to that novel, see Williams (65-70).
7. A dichotomy Stead explored as a critic in his 1960 lecture "For the Hulk of the World's Between." Stead argued that the gap between New Zealand and Europe created "a permanent dramatic tension in which much good writing has been generated" (1981, 258), an argument that Stead's own career as a poet and novelist has tended to bear out.
8. For a list of the "obvious connections . . . between real people and events and those in the novel," see Berry (319). Berry also points out that to simply equate Cecelia with Janet Frame, or Melior with Frank Sargeson, or Pat with Louise Henderson "is ultimately to radically under-read the novel." I agree with this assertion; my focus is not on any exact correspondences between *All Visitors Ashore* and Stead's life but on the broad range of talent that left the country, both in fiction and reality.

## DENIS B. WALKER

# AT HOME IN THE WILD: THE IDEA OF PLACE AND THE TEXTUALISED VISION OF WILLIAM COLENZO

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When William Colenso first stepped ashore at Waitangi in 1834 he came not to a *place* but to a *space*. Colenso did not frame his thoughts in terms of the *terra nullius* of Ermenrich de Vattel's (1834) theoretical justification of colonisation, but it is clear from an examination of both his published narratives and his unpublished bush-journals that he saw the land he had come to as *empty*, and thus needing to be filled. For Colenso, as a member of the Church Missionary Society, the emptiness was to be filled with the Word of God. He understood this as something both spiritual and material: in a real way, he saw the land fill with the Word as he began his work as a missionary printer, and a prodigious number of New Testaments, hymnals and other pamphlets began to pour from his little print-shop at Pahia, printed on the press he had brought with him from England. For Colenso, filling the empty space of Aotearoa with the Word of God was the most important activity, but there were also other words and texts. As Colenso looked around at the new land he had come to, he was constantly reminded of Home, of the familiar places he had left behind and of the words of the