

“she who connects”:  
Unity of Self & World  
in the Novels of Robin Hyde

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis identifies connection and unity as the core tenets of Robin Hyde's work. Focusing primarily on three novels that came out of Hyde's voluntary convalescence at Avondale Mental Hospital (*Wednesday's Children*, *Nor the Years Condemn* and *The Godwits Fly*), I propose that these novels encapsulate the vision of peace and harmony which pervades Hyde's body of work as a whole. These three novels, resulting from her own transformative sojourn at the Lodge, reflect with particular clarity Hyde's central preoccupation: regaining, via a transformation of the psyche, a sense of unity and equipoise which she believed to be absent from the fragmentary modern life she saw around her. As Hyde scholars have recognised, precisely such an *internal* transformation was central to the works of Carl Gustav Jung and Friedrich Nietzsche, both of whom Hyde had encountered during her time at the Lodge. Building on this scholarship, I propose that these novels bear rich testimony to Hyde's engagement with and unique variations on just such contemporary ideas of psychic unity as are found in Jung and Nietzsche: the conception of a collective unconscious, the value of art in allowing access to that realm of primordial connection, and the notion of transformation as a "union of the opposites" which balances and integrates Apollonian ego-consciousness with an awareness of deeper, Dionysian unity. I link the transformations sought or attained by Hyde's central characters to their inherent affinity with the Dionysian: the untamed, generative forces of nature and art, which offer both diversity and unity through their source: the collective unconscious. Moving from Hyde's depiction of the self fragmented by a divisive society in *Wednesday's Children*, via her evocation of a coming societal transformation in *Nor the Years Condemn* to, finally, her depiction of a successfully transformed individual at the end of *The Godwits Fly*, I draw lines of connection to illustrate the coherence of Hyde's vision for the integration of individual and society. Ultimately, I seek to demonstrate that Hyde's impulse to connect what modernity had fragmented (in society and in self) was a direct response to urgent issues of conflict and disconnection.

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## Introduction

“Here and now,” wrote Robin Hyde, in a small New Zealand bach in 1937, “however little use I may be, and however little I may see of it in the future, I declare myself a member of the human race” (Hyde 1984, 58). This declaration, though made in Hyde’s ‘here and now’, was in fact a promise for the future. In claiming membership to a single and unified ‘human race’, she was asserting the reality of such a thing, in a time of international and societal turmoil, partisanism and conflict – a time in which any such human unity appeared very much in doubt. Hyde’s diverse body of work demonstrates again and again her preoccupation with “the business of community” (Leggott 1995, 276), with socialisation and its attendant difficulties. Ultimately, she is concerned with how a sense of unity and commonality might be reconciled with (and in fact fostered by) diversity and individuality. Such a reconciliation requires – as Hyde wrote in *Dragon Rampant*, dealing explicitly with international conflict – a conscious “effort towards understanding” one’s fellow creatures (Hyde 1984, 13). Indeed “the dominant theme of compassion” runs throughout Hyde’s body of work as a whole, linking some otherwise disparate works (Rawlinson 1952, 15). The goal of cohesion, peace and stability – “a state of mind and a way of living” that would be the foundation for a brighter future (Hunt 2005, online) – was the “home in this world” Hyde would be “thinking of, groping after, a life long” (Jeffreys 2008, 81).

Hyde’s idealistic preoccupations, and her methods of conveying them on the page, were not well-received during her lifetime, however – least of all in New Zealand itself. Hyde’s emergence on the nation’s literary scene coincided with the rise of a “new definition of high culture” championed by the young Allen Curnow and his peers (Sandbrook 2001, xiv). She found herself forging a career in the midst of “literary gang warfare” (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 357), all the while battling financial and emotional difficulties in her private life. In this adversarial environment, Hyde was working at a considerable disadvantage. She was an

unmarried woman in a profession (and a society) dominated by men. She was a journalist in a literary scene dominated by intellectuals who insisted that anyone who wrote for the newspapers could not also give the public “what they need for literature” (Challis 2002, 478). She was also considered quaintly anachronistic in her poetic style (Paul 1999, 130), and was aligned with the ‘old guard’ represented by the likes of C. A. Marris (Murray 1998, 165) – precisely the kind of work derided by Curnow and his clique. Still more significantly, in an era of emergent and intense cultural nationalism in New Zealand literature, Hyde’s diverse works displayed a “sense of New Zealandness” that was felt to be “too prone to fuse and interlock with the supra-national, the mythical and the archaic” (Sandbrook 2001, xiv). Apparently ill-fitted to the emerging new age of New Zealand literature, Hyde was relegated to such a marginal position in the canon that “for many years it looked as though her work would follow her into an early grave” (Hardy 1984, xiv). What would have been a great loss was prevented, thankfully, by a resurgence of scholarly interest in her work from the early 1980s onwards. Many of her texts saw republication, with new introductions and commentaries viewing the works through feminist and post-colonial lenses – and as previously unpublished material came to light, the charges levelled against Hyde (that her work was “sentimental and self-pitying” (Ash 1991, 46), and bore signs of a childish “passionate crush” on foreign and archaic literature [Curnow 1987, 168]) appeared more and more patently unjust. The treatment Hyde received from the male-dominated literary establishment (which included distinctly misogynistic personal attacks [Murray 1998, 168]) inspired in those later scholars intent on ‘reviving’ Hyde no small amount of righteous indignation. Well-justified though this indignation may have been, the limitations of such an adversarial critical approach, which became “locked [...] in a dialectic with the masculinism of the cultural nationalists” (Clayton 2001, 84), have been recognised in more recent decades. Hyde scholar Mary Edmond-Paul has long suggested that Hyde’s complex body of work can

be more fully appreciated if we do “not focus exclusively on gender but acknowledge the radical democratic spirit in her writing” (Paul 1999, 150). In Patrick Sandbrook’s phrase, Hyde’s work needs “careful reading, not special pleading” for its true value to be recognised (Sandbrook 2001, xv).

But how, then, to frame the clash between Hyde and the literary establishment of her day – which can hardly be ignored, and nor should it be. To think of Hyde in isolation, and as disconnected from the major literary movement of her day, perpetuates the very image of the unstable, out-of-touch woman first put about by her detractors. Worse, it robs her work of its context and obscures the considerable degree to which she was “a writer whose choice of material, preoccupations and genre tendencies were shaped by her context” (Paul 1999, 150). I would suggest that considering the discord between Hyde’s work and that of the dominant clique is, in fact, fundamental to an understanding of her literature – because the point upon which they diverge is an issue at the centre of Hyde’s philosophy. Michele Leggott has observed that, while Hyde’s literature pursued community and connection, the Modernist poetics so influential to Curnow and his fellow literary nationalists “were about schism, separation and fragmentation” (Leggott 1995, 276). *This* – the opposition between impulses to connect and to demarcate – seems to me the most significant factor in the clash between their work and Hyde’s. Indeed, it encompasses Hyde’s attitudes to politics (gender- and otherwise) and her penchant for literary anachronism. For her, humanity in all its forms (and from all times and places) could not but be relevant to the contemporary reader, and therefore excluding the foreign and the antiquated from New Zealand literature would be to render that literature sadly near-sighted. Indeed, part of her insistence on human commonality was encouraging readers to think of “you and I, much the same people, in the civilisations of Egypt, of ancient Greece and Rome” (Hyde 1936, 3). In poetry, prose, or journalism, with regard to relations interpersonal or international, Hyde returned again and

again to the idea of unity, of discovering commonality beneath outward difference – and what she took issue with in Curnow and his peers were the same divisive propensities she used her authorial voice to critique.

While in recent decades Hyde's novels have been admired for their own "visionary Modernism" (Murray 1998, 170), she herself was wary of those Modernist writers that Curnow's group held in such high esteem. Her reason for this aversion was the divisive exclusivity of their intellectualised literature; she criticised the "erstwhile Spender-Auden-Lewis combination" (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 357) and the New Zealanders they inspired for being "poetic snobs [...] clever to the point of inspiration in securing their divorce from the people" with "thorny hedges of obscurity and difficulty" (Challis 2002, 377-8). Likewise, she resisted Curnow's "strategic, essentialized concept of national culture" (Murray 1998, 238), and had no time for "aggressively insular New Zealanders" [reference fixed] (Hyde 1934, 12). The pain that stems from insularity and disconnection is evoked throughout Hyde's work at large, often in striking images of containment or division: walls of brick and mortar, the thorny hedge, the cage, and, as in *Dragon Rampant*, the "huge blue globe, cut in halves [...] by barbed wire" (Hyde 1984, 190). Indeed, while in one article Hyde credited the "student movement" with helping "to develop in New Zealand a keen political consciousness", she added in the same sentence that such an awareness "in the best minds becomes world consciousness, sympathy for the world" (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 357). And Hyde's conception of 'sympathy for the *world*' was just that: a recognition of the shared humanity running beneath apparent distinctions of nationality, race, class, or gender. In her celebrated poem 'What is it makes the stranger?' she takes pains to remind the reader that "[u]nder the seas, all lands knit fibre, interlock" (Leggott 2003, 337). What truly made the stranger, in Hyde's view, was fear and self-defensiveness – when fear was removed the binary of 'stranger' and 'self' would be revealed as "rather arbitrary [...]. We are all so much



the same person” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 276). The very purpose of literature, Hyde asserted, was “to make all men of all generations and places truly intimate with one another” (Rawlinson 1970, xvii), and she employed her own literary voice to advocate for just such an intimacy. Leggott has noted how peculiarly appropriate it is that connection was such a fundamental tenet for a woman whose given name – Iris Wilkinson – evokes the Greek goddess represented by the bridging device of a rainbow. Iris, Leggott observes, is “she who connects” what would otherwise be insular (Leggott 1995, 271).

In the literary and political climate in which Hyde was writing, however, such divine unity seemed only a distant dream. “Normal life in the twentieth century,” Hyde declared, was “a blasphemous and obscene travesty of what was meant for humans – and the worse because it [was] such a well-meaning ape” (Challis 2002, 229). This feeling that modern life lacked “a kind of unity, coherence, and meaningfulness that life in previous societies possessed” (Geuss 2012, 49) was pervasive almost to the point of unanimity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Hyde sought to address the scale and impact of societal fragmentation in works that made “a picture of the structure of society” as well as detailing the experiences of its individual constituents (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 191). The travesty of modern life, for Hyde, was its divisive quality, which erected divisions not only between nations but between individuals, and within their own psyches. Citizens were born into “a malignant social code” which fostered rigid and punitive moral strictures, which were themselves based on arrogant dogmatic assertions (Sandbrook 1985, 52). She was keenly aware of the pressures of modern life and lamented to see human beings struggling in vain to understand each other (and their own selves) amid a swathe of “gramophones and automobiles and tall buildings” (Hyde 1993, 187). Hyde’s reaction was to advocate “for the underdog and for the cause of humanity” in its broadest sense (Sandbrook 2001, coverpage); she saw a need to voice the experiences of those marginalised people “so continually hectorated by the police and the Nine Hundred and

Ninety Nine amendments to the Ten Commandments” (Docherty 2001, online). This was not to say, however, that she vilified those more conventional people who, as she put it, “like Jehovah and his thunderbolts” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 153). While wryly observing that she was not sure she “would sacrifice the rest of the population” for the pious “without considerable thought” (Hyde 1984, 30), Hyde clearly understood that “the arguments marshalled by men and women against each other” (such as religious condemnation) were reached for in self-defensive fear, “as a response to social pressures and injustices” (Paul 1999, 168). So many of her fellow beings seemed to be stumbling about in the gloom of a world which demanded they “achieve a wretched competitive success” (Hyde 1984, 82) – and Hyde maintained that “one should never hate anybody in the dark” (Hyde 1984, 46). Criticise them one *could*, however – and it is crucial to note that Hyde’s acknowledgement of self-defense as “natural instinct” under stressful circumstances was far from being a mitigation of the status quo (Hyde 1993, 50). It was in fact an urgent insistence that those circumstances must be altered. Indeed, despite her deep empathy with the impulse to build protective walls or make oneself “a little island of safety” (Hyde 1984, 4), Hyde nonetheless argued the importance of fighting this inclination to turn inward. An impulse towards self-serving defensiveness (and concomitant disconnection) was at once the understandable result and the destructive perpetuation of the very insularity that is so damaging to both individual and society – a vicious cycle that must be broken, somehow. The extent of Hyde’s idealism saw her gently mocked with the nickname “Mrs. God (on account of [her] desire to re-arrange the universe)” (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 3), and she herself wondered whether her work might contain “too much Utopian politics” (Murray 1998, 194), but from her own experiences and those she observed as a journalist, Hyde knew all too well the seriousness of suffering in an isolating world.

But what could the alternative be – and how could it possibly be achieved? Hyde’s longing for unity and the healing of breaches was the result of an empathetic disposition, a lived experience of human suffering, and the influence of other writers with similar ideals. It has been observed that the works Hyde engaged with and referenced in her fiction, letters and journals (for example, Rolfe’s *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* [Sandbrook 1985, 90]) each in some way reflect “the urge towards integration and unity which has been identified as a major theme in [her] work”. She was inspired by “those great ones who have tried to handle the stuff of the world” (Hyde 1984, 95), and in autobiographical writings particular influences emerge as formative: particularly prominent among these are both Friedrich Nietzsche and Carl Gustav Jung. That she was drawn to the works of both these men is perhaps unsurprising; for, though she does not appear to have mentioned them specifically in conjunction with each other, Jung and Nietzsche treated many of the same concepts (Bishop 1995, 17), concepts which lie at the heart of Hyde’s work and her vision of an ideal future. Nietzsche and Jung, like Hyde, acknowledged an urgent need for harmony and wholeness; and offered their respective responses to a widespread concern that modern individuals’ “lives and personalities [were] fragmented, not integrated” (Geuss 2012, 49). Between her autobiographical work *A Home in This World* and the journals published by Mary Edmond-Paul as *Your Unselfish Kindness*, Hyde outlines her vision for an improved future – a vision expressed in some sense across her whole body of work – with reference to the minds from which she drew influence. Acknowledging her own position “caught in the hinge of a slowly-opening door, between [...] the tradition of respectability [...] and the new age, foretold by Nietzsche and some others” (Hyde 1984, 28), Hyde goes on to outline her conception of what that new age might be:

I know now what I am looking for. It is a home in this world. I don’t mean four walls and a roof on top [...] As often as not [...] four walls and a roof

get in the way, are the very point where one is fatally side-tracked from ever having a home in this world. I want a sort of natural order and containment, a centre of equipoise, an idea – not a cell into which one can retreat, but a place from which one can advance (Hyde 1984, 10).

Nietzsche's 'new age' was one of free-thinkers who would rise above inherited dogma, and make their own meaning and morality – and Hyde, who was familiar with Nietzsche's work as well as with G.B. Shaw's *Man and Superman*, expressed intentions "to have a shot at the supernormal" herself (Sandbrook 2001, 251). Nietzsche's casting off of religious dogma and his affirmation of the earthly world are a natural fit with Hyde, whose "beliefs were essentially humanistic" rather than conventionally religious (Challis 2002, 239).

Across Hyde's work, the natural world – and humankind, as a part of that world – is elevated to a position of divinity. It was been widely observed that "Hyde often used the common poetic conceit of the healing power of nature" (Hunt 2008, 190) – what she called "the ready healing of a leaf" (Leggott 2003, 192). Lydia Wevers has stated that "the love of the physical world [...] constitutes perhaps the strongest and most consistent imagery used by Robin Hyde" (Wevers 1984, xiii), and has emphasised that alongside "natural imagery, houses, gardens, flowers, [...] her human subjects, especially the frequent choice of Christ, suggest the importance of humanity and human existence to her view of the world" (Wevers 1984, xv). Despite frequent Biblical allusions throughout her body of work, Hyde declares in autobiographical writings that she is "not a Christian", but that it is "the four seasons that wax and wane in me" (Hyde 1984, 37). Her frequent implications that "the divine is immanent" in the most quotidian sources of life (Hunt 2005, online) sits well with the Nietzschean determination to live as though there is "no life beyond" the apparent one (Shand 2002, 186). She is clear that the "home and hospitality" she longs for "has nothing to do with Heaven" but "is all of earth and man" (Hyde 1984, 11). Alison Hunt observes that in *The Book of*

*Nadath* the ‘House of Woman’ (one of Hyde’s many home-images) with its “wooden walls [...] is as close to nature as a human construction can be” (Hunt 2005, online). For Hyde, Hunt observes, “the key to [...] utopian space is not the political imposition of complex social systems, but an abandonment of such artifice and a celebration of that which is ‘natural’”.

Hyde herself makes quite explicit the link between the natural world and the ‘home’ her humanity seeks, in an entreaty from *A Home in this World*: “may the very need of earth [...] strengthen all the homeless on their dark journey tonight” (Hyde 1984, 11). “Somewhere in man,” she maintains, “there is a fertility and a richness untapped” (Hyde 1984, 11) – and in her work this richness is perhaps most clearly and affectingly illustrated in organic and zoomorphic imagery. Hyde’s confounded men and women are aligned with warm, companionable “cats [...] scabby-backed and mangy” (Hyde 1993, 88), caged birds “saying in little houses all over the world, ‘I can’t get out, I can’t get out’” (Hyde 1993, 199), dogs “sitting up and begging” for some small mercy from the master that is the “unknown God” (Hyde 1984, 47). Yet, despite the pitiable neglect (and deliberate rejection, due to oppressive social mores) of what Hyde considers “the lost part of man’s being” (Sandbrook 1985, 40), this earthy vitality is also what endures and continues to promise hope. Whatever is as “strong, so fierce with life and with full intent to grow” as weeds and wildflowers, whatever takes “from the earth what the earth [has] to give, without resentment of grudging strictures” is upheld, throughout Hyde’s work, as being “the resurrection and the life” (Hyde 1993, 175; 201). “If ever the Star of Bethlehem shall arise,” realises her character Eliza Hannay, “its unearthly clear jewel will mellow” over some such “spawning ground of life and its unwanted children” as those poverty-stricken areas where tenacious weeds and warm animals have been left to scrape by (Hyde 2001, 234). The will to live and the will to let live constitute divinity, for Hyde: she once wrote that “only the earth and its things and people when they are trying to be friendly seem at all sacred – I think my God is a potato trying to

put out shoots” (Challis 2002, 474). This divine nature is also explicitly linked with the love, companionship, and “real tie[s] of feeling” (Hyde 1934, 113) that have been stifled by modern society; an implication most visible in Hyde’s frequent employment of the image of the dove of peace. Hyde’s conviction in humanity’s potential was balanced by a pragmatic sense of the obstacles before it: she described her world-view as an “honest, slow-moving but not mawkish idealism” (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 10).

However, the path from a present consisting so largely of “broken and disconnected lives” to an unfettered and unified future was unclear (Edmond-Paul 2011, 233). It was in this regard that Jung provided inspiration to Hyde, in their shared belief in the dormant potentiality of the underdog, the “social failures”, the damaged and neurotic – those people, as Hyde expressed it in *A Home in This World*, “whose love and power runs out between their two hands, the people who are a broken cup” (Hyde 1984, 10). In Patrick Sandbrook’s summation, “Hyde’s argument is that the individual who is sensitive enough to perceive disturbing anomalies in social behaviour [...] and to withdraw from them, acts more sanely than the person who continues to uphold the social pattern which gives rise to such behaviour” (Sandbrook 1985, 52). Hyde herself suffered most of her life from depression and suicidality, and was not merely being flippant or self-deprecating when she wrote that “if this world is sane, I am unquestionably mad – and vice versa” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 225) – she was suggesting. In Jung’s writings (which made an impact on Hyde during her voluntary convalescence at The Lodge in the Auckland Mental Hospital [Hunt 2008, 272]) she found support for her belief that “somewhere in man there is a fertility and a richness untapped” (Hyde 1984, 11) – and as a result “questions of peace, internationalism and social justice [were] treated more directly” in her subsequent works (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 275). Key to the release and the enactment of human potential, for Hyde and for Jung, was love and connection. Hyde wrote in her journal, in February 1935:

Love (it doesn't matter dam-all if Freud prefers to call it libido,) is the whole motive power of being – Only the psychiatrist who isn't afraid of love is the remotest use [...]. That's why I like Jung better than any other psychologist. He understands not only the roots of human nature, as Freud does beyond rivalry, but the leaves and the branches. He understands the Heaven of the neurotic – that passionate desire to make the world over and over again which is perceived in so many alienated from normal life – And isn't this a good desire? Is society really so sweet smelling that we can see no noticeable dunghills? Jung, if I have read him rightly, would use this wasted force of broken, aimless, thwarted love, instead of merely observing it in his notebook (Edmond-Paul 2011, 204).

As Alison Hunt has examined in detail, this 'use' of discontent and 'wasted love' required its diversion or transference towards humankind at large; Jung advocated that the neurotic should cultivate a “‘religious-philosophical attitude’, [...] a timeless sense of unity and totality, of belonging to a species” (Hunt 2008, 272). A “network of social bonds” would “steer the suicide from despair to new life” (Hunt 2008, 307). This sense of belonging would then inspire the individual “to do creative work for the benefit of a future age” (Hunt 2008, 272), which in turn would provide them with a healing sense of purpose and achievement. Creativity is in fact a crucial element of personal and societal advancement, for Jung and for Hyde. Of course an element of creative thinking is implicit in the very conceiving of an improved society; but even more significantly, Jung argued for the existence of the Collective Unconscious, “that sphere of unconscious mythology whose primordial images are the common heritage of Mankind” (Bishop 1995, 164). Though she did not use the exact term, Hyde expressed a similar conception of a collective psyche (Sandbrook 1985, 90), and noticed, as did Jung, “the queer interwoven threads of likeness” visible in the similar myths

of diverse cultures (Leggott 1999, xxxi). She saw in such underlying commonalities a “potential for reaching beyond racial and nationalist divides” (Leggott 1999, xxxi). The relationship between the breadth of Hyde’s reading and the expansive quality of her imagined utopian ‘home’ “from which no sources or influences would be barred” (Murray 1998, 186), is clear – as Stuart Murray has observed, “her politics were coloured by the very nature of her literariness” (Murray 1998, 169). The value of creativity, as an exercise in empathy and as crucial to imagining and “advocating kinder worlds” (Jeffreys 2008, 73), is emphasised throughout Hyde’s fiction; those characters who quote, consider, and compose poetry or fiction are also those most willing and able to imagine themselves into someone else’s perspective. Artistic and literary works – creativity in action – are also linked explicitly to the natural world and its rejuvenating fecundity: both defy containment and categorisation, and as such, both have been removed from modern life. But however much nature and art have been marginalised by modernity, they remain present on the fringes of society: and through the efforts of characters like Wednesday Gilfillian, Bede Collins and Eliza Hannay, art can be used to mobilise nature’s fundamental unity, bringing it back to society in verse and song. These imaginative, empathetic characters fit into Jung’s conception that the reintegration of unifying forces into society will be “effected by the Collective Unconscious when a poet or seer lends expression to the unspoken desire of his times and shows the way, by word or deed, to its fulfilment” (Bishop 1995, 168).

At the centre of Hyde’s vision lies the possibility of healing, integration and transformation; and in her handling of these concepts there are clear signs of a Jungian and Nietzschean influence. As Hunt has observed, “Hyde recognised that society was composed of discrete beings and that the idea of social utopia can only be achieved if the internal space, the mind of the individual, is revolutionised” (Hunt 2005, online). Jung believed that just such a transformative shift in perception was “the central psychic adventure of mature human



life” (Sugg 1992, 18). The aim was a process of “detachment from the world of objective reality as the centre of existence”, at the culmination of which the ‘centre of the personality’ would have shifted “from the ego to a hypothetical point of equilibrium between the individual consciousness and the collective psyche” (Sugg 1992, 18). Jung referred to this process variously as ‘the archetype of transformation’, the Process of Individuation, or the Integration of the Personality. Just as in Hyde’s work, individuation (the realisation of “our undiscovered selves” [Hyde 2001, 137]) is not a matter of demarcating and protecting the Ego, but rather of recognising that the human race is “one and yet partial” (Hyde 2001, 236), and that our individuality is balanced by collectivity. According to Jung, and to Nietzsche before him, ideal unity was to be attained on a psychic level via a dialectic between individualistic Ego-consciousness and the Collective Unconscious – also referred to as “the opposites” and commonly symbolised by the disparate Hellenic deities Dionysus and Apollo (Bishop 1995, 17). In symbolic terms, Apollo is said to embody “the drive towards distinction, discreteness and individuality, toward the drawing and respecting of boundaries and limits,” while what is Dionysian obeys a “drive towards the transgression of limits, the dissolution of boundaries, the destruction of individuality, and excess” (Geuss 2012, 48). The Apollonian then stands for Ego-consciousness and rationality, the Dionysian for the Collective Unconscious and the instinctual; and both Nietzsche and Jung expressed a concern that “civilisation has led Western Man to overprivilege the conscious mind and neglect the Unconscious, with disastrous results” (quoted in Bishop 1995, 118). Hyde herself seems to gesture towards the delicate synthesis of opposites (ordered and chaotic, constructed and natural, animal and ethereal) in a passage from *A Home in this World*: “Oh, I was wise when in my youth. I said that man is the child of a star mated to an ape, and it is folly to forget the shadow of either when looking backwards over one’s shoulder” (Hyde 1984, 94). Certainly the tension between, and potential union of, such opposites is a detectable undercurrent

throughout Hyde's work: relating to her preoccupation with the tensions between collectivity and individuality, nature and socialisation, and an ideal point of equilibrium somewhere in the centre. In Mary Edmond-Paul's phrase, what Hyde seeks is "a new way of showing the individual living in the world, and [at the same time] of questioning the boundaries of self and world" (Paul 1999, 157). Indeed, the change Hyde looks to is a "revolution of the human spirit" (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287), a revolution of the psyche, in order to reinstate a lost sense of human unity.

The process of transformation and individuation, imagined by Jung as a "dialectic of consciousness and the Unconscious, [permitting] the Ego to die and be reborn anew" (quoted in Bishop 1995, 17), is signified across Hyde's work in a network of imagery pertaining to death and rebirth. Patrick Sandbrook has identified across Hyde's fiction a recurring pattern in the primary characters' development: her characters commonly undergo "a movement to a nadir of despair, accompanied by a sense of destruction of identity, then a rise to some more positive sense of value and reintegration of identity" (Sandbrook 1985, 306). The central characters of both *Nor the Years Condemn* and *The Godwits Fly* speak of having been "broken and put together again" (Hyde 1995, 266; Hyde 2001, 189), and it is noted that in much of Hyde's work "characters on the threshold of death may arrive at some kind of epiphany or realisation" (Jeffreys 2008, 79). Jung conveyed his notion of a cyclic return to the Unconscious with reference to astral myths of descent and rising, and of subterranean journeys (Bishop 1995, 98); and Hyde too saw parallels in myth. Reflecting on the process of healing from mental illness, she wrote of learning "how one mind could come back from the darkness, and, like Persephone out of Hades, come laden with flowers" (Edmond 2012, online). The spring goddess Persephone was a favourite allusion of Hyde's (Hunt 2008, 181), considered by scholars to symbolise "the life force in psychic depths, the potential generativity and creativity of the unconscious" (Jeffreys 2008, 79). Eurydice too appears

frequently in Hyde's work; both Classical figures make journeys between darkness and light. The transformative process of psychic rebirth was thought to apply to society as much as to the individual; Jung wrote that "an epoch is like the soul of an individual, it has its own particular, specifically limited conscious outlook and therefore requires compensation [...]. This compensation is effected by the Collective Unconscious" (quoted in Bishop 1995, 168). Hyde perceived the same cycle of descent and rising, fragmentation and repair in the tumultuous society around her – the "people who were caught up in a mounting wave, sank down into its pit, and are now struggling up again" (Murray 1998, 193). Just as the world's divisiveness had fragmented the psyches of its constituents, the transformation of those individuals could serve to repair the world – to tear down walls and barbed-wire, and build bridges in their place. In the depths of her own despair, Hyde wrote of "the cause of peace" as being the "only one thing that seems real at all", the one thing in which she could always believe (Edmond-Paul 2011, 218).

The end result of transformation would be the peaceful, healthful psychic 'home' Hyde always longed for, benefitting both individual and society: "a centre of equipoise" (Hyde 1984, 10) that would allow the individual to live a "paradoxical blend of self-possession and self-dispersal" (Sandbrook 1985, 121), acknowledging and acting on both their uniqueness and their generic humanity. The result would be "a creative and restorative state of mind freed from partisan feeling and divisiveness, and in touch with the most fundamental level of human nature" (Sandbrook 2001, xxviii). Hyde longed for a world and a human community that was "one and yet partial"; one "in which unity and harmony of purpose [could] co-exist with diversity and individuality" (Sandbrook 1985, 50). In Leggott's phrase, Hyde sought in her writing to mark "similarity within difference, without erasing either" (Leggott 2003, 26). Living from this "centre of equipoise", human beings would be less on the defensive, would gain "the beautiful strength to decree / 'Leave your doors open, morning and evening: / Leave

your doors wide to the stranger” (Leggott 2003, 333). For Hyde, this psychic balance, openness and willingness to connect was the necessary foundation for any kinder, more peaceable future.

This thesis sets out to examine quite how Hyde’s vision of unity is presented in her novels – specifically three novels which were composed and reworked during her own Persephone-like sojourn at The Lodge, from which she arose with a renewed sense of purpose. While each contributing to Hyde’s broader vision, *Wednesday’s Children*, *Nor the Years Condemn* and *The Godwits Fly* serve to emphasise different stages of the transformative process: the first novel presents (in *Wednesday*) a fertile but irreparably fragmented individual psyche, the second novel a society at large reaching towards that same “centre of equipoise” (Hyde 1984, 10), and the third presents, in Eliza Hannay’s maturation, a successful transformation which offers hope amid a still-divided world. My first chapter, “‘shut in boxes’: Self and Society Fragmented in *Wednesday’s Children*”, considers this first of the novels as a social critique, evoking both Hyde’s characteristic awareness of the difficulty and futility of assigning blame for suffering, and her insistence that creative and empathetic thinking is vital to avoid further tragedy. In *Wednesday Gilfillian*, we meet the first of three female figures who stand parallel across these novels, cast from much the same mould – imaginative, empathetic and socially-engaged women attempting to heal and transform both themselves and their surroundings – and *Wednesday’s* failure to attain any lasting equipoise or ‘home’ only intensifies the urgency of Hyde’s plea for change. My second chapter, “‘tattered faces in the lamplight’: Advancing Towards Unity in *Nor the Years Condemn*”, follows Hyde as she broadens her scope from specific broken individuals to a broken society; examining Hyde’s panorama of a New Zealand struggling in the wake of international and interpersonal conflict, and her evocation of hope in “the people” and their dormant but tenacious will to life and to all that is represented by the Dionysian. My third chapter, “‘one and yet partial’: Integration of Self

and Society in *The Godwits Fly*,” emphasises that in this last novel (a bildungsroman narrative of the first 21 years of another empathetic young woman’s life), Eliza Hannay’s eventual success in attaining a “centre of equipoise” between self-possession and self-dispersal is the result of a psychic death-and-rebirth signposted by distinctly Dionysian imagery. Each of these three novels is populated by flawed yet worthy members of the human race, “farers and wayfarers, stumbling the while they go / because the world has called them stranger” (Leggott 2003, 337) – and each novel closes with a sense that the longed-for transformation and harmony is imminent, waiting somewhere just beyond the final page.

## ***“shut in boxes”*: Self and Society Fragmented in *Wednesday’s Children***

“*Wednesday’s Children*, my old dream-novel which sold so very badly” – this was how Robin Hyde referred to her novel two years after its publication in 1937, writing to a friend from hospital in London. The novel certainly had not proved a commercial success, nor a critical one, upon its publication. It had sold only “about 1000” copies, by Hyde’s reckoning (Challis 2002, 667), and was met with a critical reception of “bemused silence, if not hostility” (Murray 1998, 187). However, despite its apparent failure, and her subsequent resolution to write something “simpler and more direct” (Challis 2002, 667), there was obviously something of deep importance to Hyde at the heart of *Wednesday’s Children* – if we are to judge by her devotion to the material, in one form or another, over a period of years. An embryonic version of the story is clearly visible in the unpublished manuscript ‘The Unbelievers’: a work composed in 1935 and summarised by Hyde as “a comedy and fantasy with a magic island and communists & psychiatrists” (Murray 1998, 184). Four years later – during which time she had published various works, discharged herself from the Lodge, travelled through China and moved to England – Hyde was engaged in negotiations regarding a proposed stage version of *Wednesday’s Children*. Undeterred by the novel’s poor sales, she continued to hold out hope for a “wider public acceptance” of material in which she clearly saw real and lasting value (Challis 2002, 693). Her devotion to this material is in fact hardly surprising, given her dedication to the pacifistic, humanistic, egalitarian ideas at its core: ideas which, in an era tainted by international tensions and oppressive social codes, were often met with worse than poor reviews. The novel is the story of Wednesday Gilfillian, a free-spirited unmarried woman in her thirties who escapes languishing in the severity of her brother’s household when a lottery win allows her to purchase a small island in the Hauraki Gulf. From the island, Wednesday returns to the mainland to work as a

fortune-teller in Auckland's slums, and to advertise the births of her numerous illegitimate children to fathers of diverse racial backgrounds. However, Wednesday can never quite escape the disapproving gaze of the strict society that her relatives belong to, and is driven to suicide, after which her island family is revealed to exist in the realms of the imagination rather than in the psychical world.

*Wednesday's Children* was composed at a pivotal point in Hyde's life, as her intuitive and long-held belief in social justice was vindicated and rekindled by the suffering she observed among fellow patients at Avondale. Alison Hunt has observed that the novel is an articulation of the renewed desire for positive social change with which Hyde left the Lodge, and has emphasised the degree to which Hyde's discovery of Jung vindicated her pre-existing belief in the potentiality of the outcast or "stranger", and in the possibility of personal and societal transformation (Hunt 2008, 288). Hyde's idealism is evident in the novel's emphatic articulation of "internationalist and pacifist themes" (Hunt 2008, 288), and its plea for identification and empathy with "the underdog, the poverty-stricken, the one who has no expectations of life" (Paul 1999, 150). While some critics have complained that the novel's "whimsical, baby-talking habits" weaken its element of social commentary and protest (Adcock 1990, 123), Hyde herself insisted that "a book which painted life as humourless would be [...] untrue" (Docherty 2001, online), and untruth is in fact precisely what *Wednesday's Children* works to dispel. The novel may well present a confounding and protean world in which "What is Truth" is always at question (Hyde 1993, 198) – for the reader as much as for the characters, as Hyde "confuses and interrogates reality and fantasy" (Murray 1998, 186) – however, one thing not at question is that a blinkered attachment to one's own 'Truth' leads to self-absorption and the neglect of fellow beings. Those who would deny their own fallible position within "the common mortal state, namely Error" (Hyde 1993, 76) – as does Wednesday's brother-in-law the Reverend Crispin Westamacott –

wear “their dogmas like dog-collars” (Challis 2002, 476) and curse “[themselves] and everyone else with [their] disapproval” (Hyde 1993, 204). Whatever Truth may be, *Wednesday’s Children* implies, claiming to possess it, and thereby claiming the right to condemn others, is much more “a pack of lies” than any act of imagination (Hyde 1993, 204). Indeed, despite criticisms of the novel’s fantastical elements, Hyde’s belief that work of a whimsical nature could be used to deliver a serious message is explicitly articulated within the text itself; in a poem composed by Wednesday for her animal-loving son Naples, “jests” are precisely what “Heaven / (after this Flood), / Shall use for leaven, / Kneading us free from guile” (Hyde 1993, 89). There is no shortage of guile, meanness and superficiality in the fictionalised Auckland that Hyde transposed from her experience of the real one – and, as Susan Ash acknowledges in her Introduction to the novel, Hyde wanted not simply to record the world around her, but to transform it into something better (Ash 1993, 7), and so in *Wednesday’s Children* she makes a strong appeal to the reader’s empathetic and ethical sensibilities.

This chapter identifies the novel as a plea for behaviour dictated not by the superficial social code and punitive religious beliefs represented by its “bourgeois dinner-party set” (Murray 1998, 185), but rather by Wednesday’s free-thinking empathy: in other words, an affirmation of the earthly world and all of its striving, flawed inhabitants. The first section focuses on this opposition between Wednesday’s empathetic mode of perception and the other, which is determined by “the tradition of respectability” and (Hyde 1984, 28), as the novel demonstrates, amounts to a “life-denial in prudery and gentility” (Paul 1999, 144). My second section identifies Hyde’s link between the life-affirming natural world and the creative arts – both are less than ‘respectable’ in their wild, generative, complicating natures, and both offer a source of healing for a fragmented world in their evocation of Dionysian unity. My third section examines the tragic consequence of respectable society’s rejection of



all things fundamentally Dionysian – lives half-lived, or, as in Wednesday’s own case, cut short as a result of crushing isolation. *Wednesday’s Children* depicts and laments what Hyde described in her diary as “that state neither life nor death, the limbo inhabited by the materialists” and the free-thinkers they rejected (Edmond-Paul 2011, 211). The final section of this chapter considers the note of hope on which the novel ends: an ending which affirms the power of imagination and empathy, and gestures towards a future in which their influence will affect the connection that Hyde and her characters long for.

### **“the tradition of respectability”: surfaces, sentiment & Reality’s ‘blind eye’**

The opposition between the superficial and the empathetic modes of perception is set up in the novel’s opening paragraphs, as the narrator considers the sorely limited perception of those people who “have not yet been trained [...] to use their imagination” (and who are therefore disinclined to acknowledge the limits of their individual perspective) alongside “the ideal type of listener [...] who knows a bit, and can believe or imagine much more” (Hyde 1993, 13). Ash notes that this dichotomy between “the limited (negative) way of seeing and the ideal, metaphorical vision” applies not just to the narrator’s imagined audience, but to the characters themselves. The majority of the well-to-do Gilfillian family fall under the first category, while Wednesday and her islanders represent the ideal (Ash 1991, 144). Ash illustrates the paucity of respectability’s “limited way of seeing” with an observation that the closest Brenda Gilfillian (Wednesday’s sister-in-law) comes to creativity is to ‘make’ people, “whittling” at her husband’s “little eccentricities” (Hyde 1993, 23). Hyde’s choice of this particular metaphor, I suggest, speaks to a larger pattern; Brenda and those like her are engaged in whittling things down to a neat, respectable over-simplicity by cutting off or walling out whatever (and whomever) does not conform to their own tidy “Reality”. Wednesday, conversely, acts on the opposite impulse. She does not whittle down, but ‘make

up' – adding and inventing people (her imaginary children and her islanders) rather than repressing or reducing people already in existence. It is a not insignificant detail that she and Mr Bellister fall into conversation about “Saint Peter [...] who lets people in at gates” (Hyde 1993, 169). Having escaped from a conservative middle-class world built on “rejecting and casting out” (Hyde 1993, 170), Wednesday Gilfillian stands for compassion, inclusivity, and a self-abnegating empathy.

The middle-class world of *Wednesday's Children* – in which “the poverty of the back streets [is] ignored by the conservatism of the bourgeois dinner-party set, itself functioning on superficialities and deceit” (Murray 1998, 185) – operates under the very “tradition of respectability” that Hyde felt to be so divisive and exclusionary (Hyde 1984, 28). The isolating and imprisoning power of this tradition is emphasised in *Wednesday's Children* – as it is in so much of Hyde's work – by the employment of cage-like images of containment. Indeed, at the novel's climax Wednesday laments a world that forces diverse human beings to “live shut in boxes” (Hyde 1993, 200), that is, to live mere half-lives dictated by conservatism and conformity. Brenda is perhaps the epitome of those people Hyde describes in *A Home in This World*, and characterises in this novel, as people whose “function in life [is] to tear one another to pieces: to achieve a wretched competitive success” (Hyde 1984, 82). She thinks of her home life, her social position as Mrs Ronald Gilfillian, as “a business”; she spends her days pouring over “long, aimless accounts of love and matrimony and life, accounts that won't add up right” (Hyde 1993, 168). Although some small part of her wonders whether “perhaps one should only love and be loved” rather than look to make a profit, out of pride and self-defence she remains “running like a spider from side to side of the threatened fortress” (Hyde 1993, 168). Brenda's carefully-constructed, whittled-away self is a fortress besieged – a cage or a trap by any other name. Such fortress walls are the symbolic antithesis of Hyde's ideal unity; Stuart Murray observes that the novel “reflects

Hyde's desire for a home [...] from which no sources or influences would be barred" (Murray 1998, 186). The blindness and futility of privileging the polished and 'respectable' over the flawed and diverse, in order to maintain a conveniently simple 'Reality', is vividly rendered in the image of the cold and fatal "blind eye":

This time of year, the migratory birds, shining cuckoo, godwit, golden plover, came back to New Zealand from the North. Sometimes the poor brave sillies flew straight into the Polyphemus-glare of the lighthouse windows. A thud of soft breasts, a crackle of tiny hollow bones, and down they plumped, journey's end a quieter thing for them than the urgent racial memories had whispered [...] one could easily imagine the thud that so small a migrant as Beppo would have made, breaking against the great blind eye of Reality (Hyde 1993, 104).

Hyde and her Wednesday are all too aware that this rigid 'Reality' is inhuman, unyielding, unresponsive to the varied forms of humanity that appear before it: it is "a glass eye" and "quite, quite blind" (Hyde 1993, 188). What it is blind to, unable to acknowledge or bend for, is the idiosyncrasy of individual human experience; and this unwillingness to acknowledge "similarity within difference, without erasing either" (Leggott 2003, 26) does a disservice to everyone, even to Brendas and Crispins who manage to outwardly conform to the strict codes of respectable Reality. The neglect of humanity inherent in the unimaginative, unempathetic "tradition of respectability" is evoked with particular force near the novel's end, when the narrator gives a pointed description of the Gilfillian household's elegant dining table, which society dictates is "more important [...], certainly, than either a stray cat or a serving girl" (Hyde 1993, 203). Sitting around this table with her family after Wednesday's death, young Pamela – who, apart from Wednesday herself, is the novel's most

empathetic and perceptive character – discerns with anger and dismay that ‘respectable’ “life, solid life, was like the glossy table, a sleek beast, demanding too many sacrifices to provide the polish for its surface. Somehow cruel and wrong” (Hyde 1993, 205). Pamela has identified, via the metaphor of the dining table (which in the lower-class dialect of the Gilfillians’ staff becomes, rather tellingly, “the dying-room table” [Hyde 1993, 205]), the essential nature of her society and its “tradition of respectability” (Hyde 1984, 28). It refuses to look beyond surface-appearance, insisting on the Apollonian tenets of distinction and discreteness, and “the drawing and respecting of boundaries and limits” (Geuss 2012, 48) – and, in doing so without moderation, it sacrifices the Dionysian elements of humanity: creativity, diversity, and the fundamental unity that runs beneath vibrant outward differences.

Respectability’s worst casualty, as far as Hyde is concerned, is human diversity and authenticity. This is articulated at one point through the rambunctious Great-Uncle Elihu, whose musing on the generation that followed his own leads him to lament “a sameness about them [...] What the devil was it? Mass production, mass education?” (Hyde 1993, 35). This same “awful sinister sameness” was observed by the narrator in Auckland’s very architecture at the novel’s beginning (Hyde 1993, 14). The narrator proposes that this orchestrated lack of diversity and vitality “might suggest” to the imaginative “ideal listener” that the buildings’ “architect was Cain, and that the corpse of Abel would probably be found in an advanced state of decomposition beneath them” (Hyde 1993, 14). In other words, the apparent security of respectability’s walled-in world is built on the exclusion and suffering of the innocent. Hyde alluded to the Biblical story of Cain and Abel, as she does here, with some notable frequency – in her poem “The Pacifist”, to give another example, the speaker rejects nationalistic war-mongering because “the nearer blood of Abel cries [him] kin” (Leggott 2003, 199), and he will not participate in the murder of an innocent brother. However, Hyde always took the allusion beyond any simplistic dualism of guilt and

innocence, just as she did not write characters who fall into simple dichotomies of perfection and irredeemableness. The motives of her self-defensive Brendas and Crispins are, after all, no more mysterious than the all-too-human motives of the jealous, wounded Cain: both attack their own family out of a desperate desire to secure their own prosperity. Much of *Wednesday's Children* is in fact dedicated to reminding the reader that, “hard though it is to be fond of unpleasant people, it is harder still, once you stand away and see their features fall into softer perspective, to dislike them” (Hyde 1993, 66) – and this forgiving perspective is afforded and emphasised by the novel’s whimsy and “comic brio” (Neale 1999, 155). A gentle tone pervades the novel at large, demonstrated by the narrator and by Wednesday herself, whose response to arrest and prosecution for her fortune-telling practises is only to accept that the police “have to do something for a living” (Hyde 1993, 103). The narrator even halts the narrative to offer a detailed and pointedly forgiving description of a hypothetical character never mentioned afterward:

Horace is, what? A horrid, conceited little man, who wears purplish woollen socks and expects you to darn them, [...] is quarrelsome, but has no real courage when it comes to a crisis? Not a bit of it. That is only the truth about Horace. Horace is also a rather dear voice, fused and mingled with a darkness [...] Horace is that shocking case of the mumps, bravely borne, and such a relief to everyone when they started to deflate. [...] Horace, in short, take him at his worst, is laughter and a tearing sort of compassion mixed up (Hyde 1993, 65).

‘Laughter and a tearing sort of compassion mixed up’ might be a summary of the novel’s tone – and the one in no way weakens the other. That both humour and tenderness is so evidently possible makes the profusion of anger and grief in the fictional Auckland Hyde

presents all the more painful; likewise, “the fragility of [Wednesday’s] children focalises and lends urgency” to the novel’s plea for a society that might foster their idealism rather than crushing it (Attewell 2008, 55).

In accordance with Hyde’s call for an “effort towards understanding” (Hyde 1984, 13), even the defensive instinct to crush the unfamiliar is presented as understandable in *Wednesday’s Children*. Wednesday acknowledges that it is “natural instinct with anything strange of which one is not quite sure” (Hyde 1993, 50), particularly when one is already agitated and on the defensive (and in modern life, Hyde asserts, that is just about everyone). Often this self-defence comes in the form of “a sharp attack of morals” (Hyde 1993, 85) – a rigid puritan morality being the closest weapon at hand. This is of course most significantly demonstrated in the scandalised Gilfillians’ treatment of Wednesday, but also in the members of the justice system who prosecute Wednesday for her work as fortune-teller Madame Mystera. In both cases, it is emphasised that these attacks are made “purely in self-defence” (Hyde 1993, 205). Empathetic as she is, Wednesday perceives immediately that the middle-aged policewomen who speak “without yielding inflexions [...] did not appear ever to have been loved” (Hyde 1993, 125-126). Even pious Rev. Crispin (who has “one [devil] himself, only one [...] unkindness” [Hyde 1993, 192]) is revealed at last to be “childish, and rather pitiful”, some inner part of him cutting down others like “a vicious dwarf” (Hyde 1993, 205). But however much Hyde emphasises that such self-preservation is understandable, she is quite clear that it also perpetuates the very attacks it seeks to protect itself from – all the while wounding those who cannot or will not strike a blow themselves. Thus, when Crispin mutters a sort of apology (“I didn’t mean...”), Mr Bellister replies “patiently, ‘we never do. But the gentle are driven into exile’” (Hyde 1993, 205). This moment of empathy for the attacker, tempered by clear-eyed honesty, is characteristic of Hyde’s work at large – and apparently of her own personality. In *Wednesday’s Children* she asserts what “the tradition

of respectability” refuses to accept: that the only real “sin [...] is cruelty” (Hyde 1993, 133), and even the blame for that cannot be laid at squarely any one party’s feet. As Hyde wrote elsewhere, it is part of a “whole code [which] needs revision and enlarging” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 305-306), a social code based on superficial judgements, the arbitrary privileging of a certain “respectable” lifestyle – all enabled by sentimental simplification of and attachment to one’s own perspective. The youngest (and perhaps wisest) Gilfillian, Pamela, asserts: “Sentiment is responsible for nearly all the real cruelty in the world, darling. Mummy is frightfully sentimental about marriage and duty and home and your position. She thinks that’s the same thing as being sentimental about you, and she’d be boiled alive for it. [...] In the end, that kills. I hate sentiment. It causes wars and beastly social factions and the worst sort of pride” (Hyde 1993, 172). Sentiment and sympathy are not related, here – the latter requires the imaginative effort to understand another being, while the former is dependent on the calculated exclusion of anything that it might ruin the respectable picture.

Hyde’s critique of ‘respectable’ modern life includes a lament for the sacrificed Dionysian – one which is encapsulated in Ronald Gilfillian’s recognition that, under strict societal codes, “Cloth has a sort of moral right over nakedness. It’s damned unfair” (Hyde 1993, 74). He is considering Crispin’s social privilege as a ‘man of the cloth’; and Crispin is central to Hyde’s portrayal of the stunted nature of modern life. His particular brand of meanness is the enactment (and the result, according to Nietzschean and Jungian thinking [Bishop 1995, 118]) of a rejection of the natural world and the collective Unconscious, of all that is symbolised by Dionysus (who Nietzsche writes of as “covered with flowers and wreaths”, accompanied by “panthers and tigers” [Nietzsche 2000, 22]). Crispin – whose job, as Hyde rather charmingly puts it, is to drop “white beads of water on the skulls of newborn babies [...] taking away their fleshly sins, which in after life they might want very much indeed” (Hyde 1993, 33) – brings into sharp focus the punitive sexual morality that Hyde

knew from experience to have a profoundly isolating effect. Brenda, with her frantic attempts to keep up appearances and her emphasis on ‘making’ a sculpted surface image, completes the picture of middle-class conservatism and its rejection of the natural in favour of the ‘respectable’, a rejection that ultimately works to the detriment of all. Hyde emphasises the imbalance and suffering this causes by the employment of zoomorphic imagery throughout the novel.

Thus Wednesday’s vulnerable humanity, and that of those struggling around her, is aligned with the soft, natural creatures so often struck down by “the cold Judas kiss / Of spear and dart” (Hyde 1993, 90). As she mentions in one striking scene, she envisions her fellow sufferers, trapped in a soul-stifling society, as caged birds “saying [...] ‘I can’t get out, I can’t get out’” (Hyde 1993, 199). Wednesday herself dresses in sealskins and kid gloves, shakes off rain like “a wet spaniel” (Hyde 1993, 15), and appears at other times similar to a vole or a fawn. She also cares for and respects the cats belonging to Madame Mystera’s cottage in the slums, exactly as she respects “the inhabitants of the district [...] workmen, out-of-work men, and their wives, short of almost everything in the world except beer, and the milk of human kindness” (Hyde 1993, 78). A parallel between the human and the animal (particularly the feline) is woven across chapters, suggesting a shared worth, warmth, and vulnerability – and a resilience in spite of shared suffering:

Sometimes a woman screamed in childbirth, sometimes a drunken man thrashed his wife because he could not see why she failed to remain young and beautiful; why desire should mean children; why his children were both nothing and everything to him, a wanton extravagance, a set of mean little critics who swallowed his substance and would deprive him of his very beer; and yet, when one of them was sick, the only roots deeply twisted in his heart. Some few who lived here escaped the extreme confinements of



poverty. The cats, for example, scabby-backed and mangy though they were [...] got fish-heads and a friendly pat here as anywhere else (Hyde 1993 88).

After passages such as this, the reader shares Wednesday's sense of loss when she learns that her cat-sitter Mrs Fisch has drowned a litter of kittens, rationalising that "cats is all the same. Narsty. [...] Torm cats eats kittings. First creates 'em, then eats 'em. Narsty" (Hyde 1993, 118). To define cats solely as 'narsty' is clearly as inadequate a summation as Crispin's insistence that Wednesday is nothing but a 'harlot' on account of her (apparent) promiscuity. When the unyielding policewomen are undercover in Madame Myстера's den they can only observe, "acidly", that "cats [...] 'as fleas" (Hyde 1993, 121) – and, hardened as they have become, they are no more capable of seeing or "imagining so much more" in Wednesday or her (quite possibly flea-ridden) clients. The zoomorphic equation of all living creatures is a recurrent motif throughout much of Hyde's work: one passage in *A Home in this World* describes the feeling of holding "death in my hands [...] all death" in the form of "an olive-green little bird, a wax-eye, who had probably struck the wires" (Hyde 1984, 38). Attica, the sculptor of the island family and perhaps the most symbolically important among Wednesday's children, attempts to model "cats and birds" (as well as humans). She admits frustration that "they won't keep still", and almost wishes she could "turn 'em all into stone"; but Wednesday reminds her that "they wouldn't be worth doing if they didn't move about [...] it's the suggestion of movement that's everything" (Hyde 1993, 61). The novel implies it is just the same with the sometimes-vicious citizens of Auckland.; they are frightened creatures, but are worth more than the "stuffed birds [at] the museum" (which would not be worth Attica's modelling), because they are at least warm and alive, and thereby carry potential for future transformation.

In one comic but remarkable scene, Hyde demonstrates the suffering caused by lack of connection and understanding, while simultaneously reiterating the link between the human and the animal – a link that transcends the boundary between the human and the feline (let alone one human and another) via a shared experience of hurt and, significantly, an apparently-shared appreciation for poetry. Animal-loving Naples' visit to the circus becomes an encounter with "Numa the Untameable", the lion whose perspective we enter as he laments the unjust neglect of his performing talent:

'Not understood,' thought the lion, unconsciously plagiarising the New Zealand poet, Thomas Bracken, 'how trifles often change us. The fancied insult or the unmeant slight, Destroy long years of friendship, and estrange us, And on our souls there falls a freezing blight. Not understood.' He could not even say this, he could only think it [...] He sank his imposing jaws on great woolly toes and brooded, a mute, inglorious Milton of the lion world (Hyde 1993, 113).

Numa literalises a condition Hyde's other characters suffer metaphorically: he is a creature confined in a cage, and significantly, a cage which is in fact "unlocked". The bars are not a complete barrier – no more complete than any 'surface' barrier between two individuals who are members of the same species and are therefore joint inheritors of a collective unconscious – but still they thwart Numa, until Naples slips inside, "repeating the soothing" and sympathetic "formula, 'nice lion'" (Hyde 1993, 115). Raised by Wednesday to "know a bit, and [...] believe or imagine much more", Naples does not perceive Numa as "a steel-hooked paw" – in other words, he does not have the grown-up lion trainer's "lack of faith in both human and leonine nature". Naples instead looks at the animal with the peaceful and loving "eyes of a dove", and the result is a "miracle" that contributes as much to Hyde's argument

for peace as it does provide whimsical comic effect. Although it is unclear whether Hyde ever read Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, the scene resonates with a passage from his work which discusses the Dionysian – under the magic of which “not only does the bond between man and man lock itself in place once more, but also nature itself [...] rejoices again in her festival of reconciliation with her prodigal son, man. The earth freely offers up her gifts, and the beasts of prey [...] approach in peace” (Nietzsche 2000, 22). The ‘gifts of the earth’ - “the ready healing of a leaf” (Leggott 2003, 192) – have been barred by modernity, but there is strength in them (and in humanity) yet. In this one whimsical scene, Hyde expresses both the exclusion of the natural and animal from modern life, and the power of poetry and creative arts to capture and express experience – and it is no coincidence that the characters who revel in poetry are the ones who represent and yearn for human unity. Numa's casual poeticising is by no means the only literary quotation in *Wednesday's Children* – poetry is in fact a notable presence, and is explicitly connected with acts of imaginative empathy and peace-making. In the world of Hyde's novels– as in the Jungian theory of the collective unconscious – art and literature can serve the function both of acknowledging the complications of human connection, and transcending them via the flexible, empathetic consciousness that creativity requires.

### **“just one stanza, darling”: the transformative power of creativity**

“*Wednesday's Children* [...] is a novel about perception,” Susan Ash asserts, “about the metaphorical mode of processing the ‘wild jumble’ of images” that is the experience of modern life (Ash 1991, 143); and, as I have suggested in the Introduction, those characters who are open to acts of imagination and empathy most likely to bring into being a transformation of society and of self. *Wednesday* of course epitomises this creative spirit, living on an island “full of her creations, an international brood of children who represent aspects of *Wednesday's* own character and who are strongly associated with the processes of

art and nature” (Murray 1998, 186). The creative arts are an inescapable presence throughout *Wednesday’s Children*; and, like the natural world, they are neglected by modern life, thus depriving modern life of the very restorative, generative, Dionysian qualities society is so clearly in need of. Wednesday laments, “once there was a princess, with hair black as the raven, lips red as blood, skin white as snow. Once there was Bill Shakespeare, and once Jesus Christ, but who would ever think it, to see our flat, listless faces?” (Hyde 1993, 134). The novel’s most empathetic characters immerse themselves in poetry, music, and sculpture, and go on to create their own: and it is those characters who foster imaginative flexibility (mostly the islanders, with a few notable exceptions) who can best empathise with their fellow creatures. For Hyde, the arts not only capture human experience, but they have the capacity to transform it into something gentler and more just. Nadine Attewell emphasises that Wednesday’s island is a refuge for “utopian currents of thought [...]. It is a place where alternatives remain imaginable, however improbable their translation into reality” (Attewell 2008, 56).

Wednesday, a generous giver of sympathy (though too seldom a recipient), seems the epitome of the inclusive creative mind – immersed since childhood in literature as wide-ranging as “Shakespeare, the Book of Numbers, Deuteronomy, bits out of *Don Juan*, and the *Pink ‘Un*, and the *Stud Book*” (Hyde 1993, 197). As a result, Hyde implies, she is capable of imagining a brood of promising children, and composes poetry for and with them (poetry not merely whimsical, but thematically significant). At the beginning of the novel, in her fortune-telling work, Wednesday continues on the mainland as a different kind of “artist, an adopted persona through which she connects to the wider social world in her own terms as a shaper of subjective truths, and not restrained by protocol or convention” (Murray 1998, 186). Michelle Elleray has noted that “as Madame Mystera, Wednesday creates pockets of hope in the fissures of these lower-class [...] lives, and thus she becomes socially productive

through the fabrication of fantasies that mediate the drudgery of the everyday” (Elleray 2008, 32). Wednesday chooses to take up fortune-telling out of a specific desire for such social productivity: that is, because a means of assisting others predicated on empathy and on imagined possibility does “more real good and created more fun than anything else [she] could do” (Hyde 1993, 199). What is outwardly fantastic may also be pragmatic, as is made obvious in Madame Mystera’s manner of working:

The sorceress [...] was naturally accepted [...] respected and consulted both by the families rooted in the slums, and by the leaf-like creatures who drifted past. Her status dated back to earliest traditions and the first hiving of communities. Not much was expected of her that could not be furnished by common sense, perspicacity, a medical dictionary, general knowledge, and above all, sympathy (Hyde 1993, 84).

Wednesday’s “duty” as a fortune-teller is a meeting of the pragmatic and the fantastical – the former being best served by the latter’s flexibility. The image of the fortune-teller/artist/sorceress is equated both with the ancient and timeless, and with the sympathetic healer. This element of Wednesday’s nature is emphasised in the novel’s first pages, in the drunken man’s vision of her “girt about with symbols, corn-sheaves, stout doves and olive branches” (Hyde 1993, 16) – symbols bearing pacifistic resonance. Her unbounded empathy could enable her, we are told, to “carry wheat-sheaves and poppies without looking incongruous” among the modern Aucklanders who are so quick to write off anything archaic or foreign as “bunk” (Hyde 1993, 121). As Renata Casertano observes, Hyde emphasises “art’s inclusiveness or, in other words, its intertextuality, its ability to comprise different discourses, different genres and languages” (Casertano 2008, 50) – in short, artistry is a

capacity to build a path to the very human connection Hyde envisioned and evoked across her work at large.

Attica is the inheritor of her mother's creative gift – and as has been widely observed, at the novel's end, it is she who promises hope for a transformed future. “Attica is independent and free-spirited, searching for utopia and fulfilment” (Hunt 2005, online), Alison Hunt notes, and, like her mother, looks beneath the surface of things to find the potential within what might seem outwardly lacklustre. This is most evident in descriptions of her sculpting as “tearing after the spirit hidden in lumps of clay...agonising after the hidden shapeliness” (Hyde 1993, 17-19). She has “learned [...] that we trust one sense far too much, the proud sense of sight”, and makes conscious attempts to take on the perspectives of her fellow creatures – for instance, imagining what it is like to be a gull, which “you can only know [...] with your eyes shut” (Hyde 1993, 95). Her flexibility of thought also leads Attica to conceive of a utopian future, little suggested by the conflicted world into which she was born; and this longing is voiced, significantly, through poetry:

*'Ah love, could thou and I with Fate conspire  
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire  
Would we not shatter it to bits – and then  
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire'* (Hyde 1993, 143).

This excerpt from Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat* echoes the desire Hyde found in Jung, “that passionate desire to make the world over and over again” which is, he suggested, especially strong in those ‘neurotics’ who have suffered under the world's imperfections (Edmond-Paul 2011, 204). Attica is the eldest of the children, a detail I would suggest is far from insignificant, given that each child embodies an aspect of Wednesday's self. Attica – creativity – came first: before Dorset and his fierce sense of justice, before Naples and his

love for every living creature, before the twins whose personalities are yet to develop. Also, in keeping with Hyde's belief in the restorative powers of art and of nature, Attica, despite being born to a Greek father (Tino), harbours "a queer passion for her stepfather" Beppo (Hyde 1993, 60), the Italian father of animal-loving Naples, and himself a devoted pacifist who fled to the island to avoid conscription. Beppo's apparently comedic reason for conscientious objection – that he does not want to kill Africans, because his organ-grinder's monkey is an African – has received criticism for its apparent flippancy; Lawrence Jones concedes that "at least Attica and Dorset among Wednesday's imaginary children as well as her real niece Pamela all have strong political reasons for opposing Mussolini, and there can be no doubt of the implied author's awareness of the war and opposition to Italian imperialism" (Jones 2003, 336). However, I propose that this reading does a disservice to the nuance in Hyde's work. For one thing, Beppo qualifies his statement upon further questioning: "I don't wanta keel nobody," trailed the exhausted voice of the man of peace" (Hyde 1993, 99). And if the rest of the scene provides necessary context, the rest of the novel provides even more – in the complete picture, Hyde aligns art and nature with pacifism very deliberately. Beppo's reason for choosing peace is not such a weak one, nor is the children's so complex: it all comes down to a recognition of underlying commonality, and the realisation of the ideal expressed in Naples' Noah's ark poem – to make "all that breathes friends" (Hyde 1993, 91).

Hyde's vision of peace in *Wednesday's Children* draws noticeably from Jungian concepts, as Ash has noted, in its emphasis on the power of the neurotic or the outcast – in this case, Wednesday – to "influence and change the community through her work" (Ash 1993, 7). Wednesday's method for achieving this, as Hyde's, is via the creative arts – those arts which Jung believed to hold evidence of a shared humanity, a Collective Unconscious. Hyde seems to gesture quite specifically to this concept, and to its manifestation in literature,

during a scene in which Wednesday and Dorset discuss England in terms of reality and fantasy, present and potential future:

‘Is England really like that – all sort of cool and peaceful and whispery, with squirrels, and nobody wanting to grab?’

‘Not exactly. But it could be, and it ought to be. And the things that aren’t right exist only for a moment, but the things could be and ought to be right exist for eternity. And if a thing exists in eternity, but hasn’t yet quite got down to existing *here*, every now and again, something flashes, like the light shutter on your camera, and anyone who happens to be standing by at the moment can see it perfectly clear, without its veils. That’s how most of the good books and good poems succeed in getting written. Somebody is there at the proper time and just *catches* them’ (Hyde 1993, 107).

Wednesday herself epitomises the idea of ‘catching’ something fundamental and timeless – she thinks of herself in terms of “a pot, a brown pot. Just there to contain things, a receptacle for simmering personalities. [...] I could hold any idea and withstand any fire” (Hyde 1993, 84). Wednesday is in no denial of her status, in Jungian terms, as “a body [...] individually ephemeral” while “the human species” is “collectively of immeasurable duration” (Sugg 1992, 15). However, it is vital for Hyde, as for Jung, that the ‘brown pot’ of the individual continues to pour out work for the wider community – it is vital for the good of that community, and for the individual themselves who might be healed, while they work to heal others, by the “feeling of good work well done” (Hunt 2008, 272). This, in Wednesday’s case, is her fortune-telling career as Madame Mystera – which ceases when she is legally barred from continuing such disreputable and apparently deceit-based practises. Cut off from her second-home “the cottage with the candles”, Wednesday’s life is confined still further to



the island, making her quite literally insular – the very quality Hyde believed to be so detrimental for nation as for individual. Once Wednesday is denied the last vestige of her capacity to connect meaningfully with others, her island can no longer be “a place from which one can advance” to do good for self and world, instead it has become nothing more than a “cell into which one can retreat” permanently (Hyde 1984, 10) – which, in Hyde’s view, is not only of little use, but actually fatal.

### **“edged off the earth”: Wednesday’s fatal isolation**

Wednesday is such an empathetic and generous character that she has, quite rightly, been framed as a heroic figure. This desire to read Wednesday as unblemished hero and victor has often led critics to read even her suicide as an act of triumph. Ash asserts that “Wednesday is a hero because she insists upon being the ‘maker’ of her own mythologies, instead of passively acquiescing to her culture’s imposed myths for women,” adding that “marriage to Bellister would thwart the possibilities of free creation” (Ash 1993, 215) – the implication being that Wednesday’s suicide at the end of the novel is a triumph over patriarchal constraints. Casertano offers a still brighter view, suggesting that because Wednesday is such a protean figure, her “suicide ought not to be interpreted literally but as the evanescent passage of a shadow” (Casertano 2008, 45). I would posit, however, that Wednesday’s heroism is already quite thoroughly established before the fourteenth chapter, and that it is not necessary (nor consistent with the life-affirming tone of the novel) to view her suicide as an act of strength in order to admire her character. In addition to Wednesday’s tearful, distressed farewell letter to Bellister, there are numerous passages in the novel which stand counter to such a reading. The end of the novel is not, after all, the first time Wednesday has considered suicide; before her lottery win secured her ownership of the island, she had been miserably isolated in the Gilfillian household, and yet “she did not want to die, she just didn’t want to live as she had been living, as it had seemed inevitable that she must live. [...]”

Wednesday, like anyone else, would much rather have survived and had a good time than have disappeared from mortal ken under any breaker or mountain-top” (Hyde 1993, 82). Though Hyde herself often veered between longing for the peace of death and a renewed sense of longing for life, this novel is about the rich potentiality of life, about all there is to gain from resisting the death-wish. Again, humour is used to express this even in the most offhand of lines: “Brenda [...] wondered drearily if to be with God would be much better. Crispin said so in the pulpit on Sundays, but put up a wonderful fight when they took out his appendix” (Hyde 1993, 30). Here, the relinquishment of life is tied to the religious mentality of “the tradition of respectability” – and the willingness to relinquish life is the result of a soul-crushing modern society. And this problem is widespread; the narrator acknowledges that “thousands of Wednesdays, of older women, of disillusioned and disconnected males, of frightened young girls, wander unhappily about the world, wondering whether to die on a mountain-top or in the middle of the ocean would cause their relatives the lesser inconvenience” (Hyde 1993, 84). Even the novel’s epigraph – a few lines from Rupert Brooke’s poem ‘Tiare Tahiti’ – speaks to the need to fight that “will to lie down and whine [...] [and] do anything on God’s earth but face the essential loneliness of being one’s unaided self” (Sandbrook 1985, 20). Seductive as it may be to think of an afterlife where the sometimes-painful sense of separate, isolated self would be lost, the poem reminds us that connection itself can only occur between separate individuals: “there’s an end, I think, of kissing, / When our mouths are one with Mouth [...] With lips that fade, and human laughter, / And faces individual, / Well this side of Paradise!” (Brooke 1995, online). Hyde was fond of Brooke, quoting him quite frequently across her work – and it is easy to understand why, when this poem articulates just the balance between diversity and unity that she longs for – a sense of “all time-entangled human love”. Furthermore, in light of Hyde’s emphasis on the importance of active involvement with the human community, and the painful images of

disconnection recurrent throughout her work, it is surely significant that Wednesday loses the will to live only when she loses her meaningful, productive role in Auckland's working-class community.

The abrupt end of Wednesday's fortune-telling career in fact seals a fate looming from the beginning: the method of her suicide is foreshadowed in repeated references to drowning, and from just as early on Wednesday exhibits a self-defensive inclination towards insularity. "Wednesday [...] vacillates between retreat into fantasy or engagement with the active world" (Hunt 2008, 288), fighting an instinct "to turn her back on the world and flee again to her island" (Hyde 1993, 117). She articulates a fear that "Crispin might say something, or look something, and then the walls of Jericho would be down, right down, don't you see?" (Hyde 1993, 71). Jericho's walls are another of Hyde's recurrent symbols for societal division, appearing with frequency in her fiction and poetry; for example, one poem asserts that the bickering and meanness of isolated people "is only cage-chatter; / You can be the trumpet at Jericho" (Leggott 2003, 275). However, Wednesday employs the image in an antithetical manner to Hyde, and what is notable, and ominous, here is that she should desire to keep the walls up. What is worse is that, once she can no longer advance to "the cottage with the candles", those walls are up indefinitely. Although Wednesday professes to "know [...] that people don't wander off the face of the earth and live on an island forever" (Hyde 1993, 199), and explains that only that suffering humanity that "hasn't got a Country [...] in the meantime [...] becomes naturalised on my island" (Hyde 1993, 187), there is no 'meantime' for Wednesday herself. Michelle Elleray asserts that "*Wednesday's Children* exemplifies Rosemary Marangoly George's statement that 'imagining a home is as political an act as is imagining a nation'" (Elleray 2008, 31) – but this is only true insofar as that home's influence is projected out into the world. Wednesday's house (*L'Entente Cordiale*) may be a beautiful imagining, but the kindness it stands for only briefly comforted the clients

of Madame Myстера, and was able to spread no further. “As often as not,” Hyde wrote in *A Home in this World*, “four walls and a roof get in the way, are the very point where one is fatally side-tracked from ever having a home in this world” (Hyde 1984, 10) – and Wednesday’s side-tracking does prove fatal indeed. Perhaps most tragic of all is that Wednesday knows that she is in need of transformation, of individuation; she tells Bellister that he is truly “grown up”, explaining that what makes him so is:

Self-possession [...] The ownership of one’s self. Never giving oneself away, in love, in shame, in quarrels, in defeat. I don’t mean that you are ungenerous. In fact, that sort of self-possession is a little like the loaves and fishes. You can feed the multitudes and remain intact (Hyde 1993, 189).

What Wednesday considers to be the fundamental quality of an individuated adult is an internal stability which then allows the individual to enact a “paradoxical blend of self-possession and self-dispersal” (Sandbrook 1985, 121). But her own psyche has apparently been too utterly fragmented for Wednesday herself to undergo the kind of internal transformation that would deliver her to such a “centre of equipoise” (Hyde 1984, 10) – at least while she is isolated from the strengthening, life-affirming connection and purpose she once received from her work in the slums. Though Hyde’s novel insists that there is hope for a gentler future, Wednesday Gilfillian has already been ‘sacrificed’ to the unforgiving “tradition of respectability” – and that can be nothing other than a tragedy.

The narrator’s early assertion that “Wednesday Gilfillian was not unconventional at all, she merely seemed so” (Hyde 1993, 40) is painfully confirmed in Wednesday’s assertion that her struggle and isolation is shared by many, by “all the gauche women with loud voices and hard mouths that you see in drawing rooms” (Hyde 1993, 198). Wednesday’s death is the loss of another warm struggling creature – like Mrs Fisch’s innocent drowned “kittings”, and

not at all dissimilar to Naples' beloved "leopard which some years ago escaped from the Auckland Zoo [...] [and] was found, floating belly upwards in the sea" (Hyde 1993, 109). Although the sea – like an unlocked cage, like superficial difference between fellow beings – is not a complete barrier, it only makes insular what is in fact 'interlocked' beneath the waves; but it is nonetheless an abyss deep enough to drown in.

### **“Poetry is catching”: the suggestion of future transformation**

Given the warmth and potential she exuded, Wednesday's fate must be seen as tragic – but, of course, hope does not die with her, though her children are revealed not to exist in any tangible sense. As Nadine Attewell observes, “to re-render the children as fictions, scraps of the imagination, is only, perhaps, to literalise what has always been most true and promising about them” (Attewell 2008, 59) – and, of course, there is great significance in the fact that Attica, representative of the arts, is the child of whom we still catch a glimpse after her mother's disappearance. Wednesday longed for a more inclusive, unbound way of thinking – “a way into the old, shining, laughing look of the grasses on the hillside, that haven't the faintest idea whether they exist now or in ancient Greece” (Hyde 1993, 200) – and it is in the creative consciousness represented by Attica – who is Grecian but might be of any race, is both nine years old and ageless – that such a way may be discovered. Attica is one of those “things that could be and ought to be” and thereby “exist for eternity” (Hyde 1993, 107) – and the reader is left with a sense that the utopianism she represents “might suddenly come alive again, in a timeless flash, if only one is willing to succumb to the joyful relativity and playfulness that writing (and of course reading) invites” (Casertano 2008, 52). Indeed, something of Attica's tenacity is evoked in Wednesday's description of her as “a flowering cactus” (Hyde 1993, 139) – like a flowering cactus, Attica is beautiful, but not weak, and able to survive the most arid conditions. Though Wednesday herself will not live to see it, in the

continuation of art and empathy there is still “hope for whatever future comes next” (Leggott quoted in Hunt 2005, online).

And that future is on its way: Wednesday’s flexible and inclusive mode of viewing the world, articulated so often through poetry, has apparently spread to the more enlightened of her mainland acquaintances. Bellister, her would-be love-interest, is a problematic figure, well-meaning though rather self-entitled, and (at the beginning of the narrative) heavily identified with “solid reality” (Ash 1993, 213). However, he undergoes a significant change near the end of the book – a change which has not always been acknowledged by those critics more inclined to tarr the British gentleman with a patriarchal or imperialist brush. Though Brenda believes there to be a “completeness about him” at the beginning (Hyde 1993, 23), and thinks of him in terms of a granite pillar or tombstone – an image Wednesday, too, will apply to him later on – Bellister is far from complete. As the narrator specifies quite clearly, the tombstone image signifies that an inner part of him as died – not that he is a threat to Wednesday’s life; “his grey, watchful eyes were set down firmly and forever over the grave of Something. It might have been his own dead youth. [...] Granite he sat, where once the grass of folly might have sprouted green and lively” (Hyde 1993, 23). However, there is still something of life in Bellister, and his view of reality broadens and brightens the longer he spends in Wednesday’s company. This broadening is evidenced by the increasing frequency with which he thinks and speaks in metaphors. By the end of the novel he is speaking so poetically (of Wednesday as a bird that has flown) that Ronald Gilfillian is provoked to threaten, “if you use another simile for the next twenty minutes, Bellister, I shall attack you” (Hyde 1993, 201). Ronald finds himself thinking in metaphors a moment later (imagining Bellister as a Quixote figure): ““Poetry is catching,” he said aloud, in a hushed voice” (Hyde 1993, 202), and we can only hope that he is right. As Emma Neale has observed, “by the close, he sees the landscape in Wednesday’s terms,” believing “that he sees Attica (that most

artistic of Wednesday's children) and the novel ends" (Neale 1999, 164). Bellister has certainly gained Wednesday's ability to look through lacklustre surfaces, and to see the strength and potential in the most outwardly broken and thwarted of things:

Summer had been hard on [the curt grass of the lawn], it was stretched thin, tawny as a lion's pelt, over the bare ribs of the earth. [...] Yet, where the coarse roots were knotted in the marrow of the earth, and two stones, mysterious and lizard-like in their lethargy, made way for the passage of a dandelion's sucking roots, there was a sense of very old, very secure habitation. Yes, by God. These things that simply took from the earth what the earth had to give, without resentment of grudging strictures, weren't easily ousted. They were immortal in the only worthwhile sense of the word... (Hyde 1993, 201).

And Bellister has joined them, recognising the 'blind eye of Reality' and conservatism for what it is. Where once the "slim granite pillar of his self-possession [had] slid into place again, [...] stood firm" (Hyde 1993, 30), in discussing Wednesday's death with the Gilfillians he "heaved himself softly out of his chair, like a pillar out of the ground" (Hyde 1993, 204) and stood up to Crispin's bitter attacks. This imagery seems employed with such deliberation that, whatever the flaws of his character, there can be little doubt that Bellister stands as an example for the possibility of positive change – even in those whom one would expect to be the very embodiment of "the tradition of respectability".

If Bellister indicates a redeemable past, then the youngest members of the Gilfillian household are surely figures for a brighter, gentler future. Pamela, and her fiance Derwent, seem to embody the belief Hyde expressed to an audience at New Zealand Writer's Week: that "the children of today are a better, more imaginative breed than my own disrupted

generation” (Hyde 1936, 9). Wednesday certainly sees potential in Pamela, advising her (while reading her fortune in disguise as Madame Mystera) to “follow your own star. It is a lovely, wandering star [...] perhaps the brightest [...] I have ever seen in this crystal” (Hyde 1993, 124). However, Pamela’s goodness is not the typical brand – not the mawkish, sentimental sweetness expected of pretty blonde girls from respectable middle-class families. Instead, she has rejected conservatism and, like Hyde, expresses a preference for letting nature be the moral arbiter. “I was a goody-good, you know,” she confesses to Derwent, adding “I don’t believe that but for liking dogs, and gradually getting reconciled to their morals, I’d have ever grown out of it” (Hyde 1993, 39). This opposition between a sterile ‘morality’ and canine warmth is also expressed in a poem of Hyde’s, titled ‘The Transgressor’, which was composed around the same time. The speaker of the poem leaves the respectable town to visit a litter of puppies conceived in flat transgression of “all these laws / On which we women pin our whitest hopes - / Laws a la Marie Stopes” (Leggott 2003, 92) – the author Marie Stopes being synonymous with her most famous work, *Married Love* (Stopes 1940). Though at first (out of habit and materialism) lamenting “what muddy paws / Do to silk stockings”, the speaker concludes that “this world would be a poorer place / If it lost just one serious puppy face. / [...] perhaps these muddy spaniel paws / Just romp right over laws”. This appreciation for natural life, in all its muddy-pawed un-respectability, is just what Pamela exhibits – and it has led her to forgo conservatism, based as it is on the “rejecting and casting out” of diverse and alternate perspectives. She shares with Derwent the same aptitude for imagining that likewise marks other admirable characters in *Wednesday’s Children*; and this sets them in good stead for a more equitable, loving relationship than that between Brenda and Ronald Gilfillian. Their unpretentious earthy sensuality, their mutual respect, and their empathy-affording imaginations are revealed (and linked) in the scenes in which the fiancés steal moments alone in a hayloft. The narrator



coily assures us that “as they spent their energies in daydreaming and making fairy tales, nothing untoward had happened between them” (Hyde 1993, 38) – despite fond and ‘improper’ flirtation – and the daydreams they make together emphasise how much clearer their own eyes are than the myopic glass eye of Reality. Details of the narrator’s description also add to the picture of a modern, equitable relationship ruled by affection rather than tradition; in the moonlit loft, Derwent caresses Pamela’s face “as if it were a fruit on the moon-tree, which he might handle but not pluck” (Hyde 1993, 40) – a phrase which seems to echo a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay, another favourite of Hyde’s who is quoted directly later in the novel (Hyde 1993, 137). In ‘Never May the Fruit Be Plucked’, love is the fruit of the tree, and “he that would eat of love must eat it where it hangs. [...] Never, never may the fruit be gathered from the bough / And harvested in barrels” (St Vincent Millay 1956, 185). Whether or not Hyde meant to echo Millay, Derwent’s respectful affection for his partner in life suggests that they will not have the bleak, business-like marriage of the generation before them – that “winter of love” Millay envisioned as “a cellar of empty bins, / In an orchard soft with rot”. Certainly the two of them are a source of hope. Pamela is described as looking “like Faith in the chansonette, the one where Fate is a dragon, Faith the slim shape that braves it” (Hyde 1993, 170) – and Pamela is a tangible reason (in addition to the ethereal figure of Attica) to have faith that the future will be brighter.

*Wednesday’s Children* situates hope for future improvement between an imperfect present and an idealism that might belong to any age – being fundamentally, timelessly human. The potential and tenacity of the most damaged individuals is continually reiterated throughout the novel, perhaps epitomised in the description of the flowers Wednesday brings to Great-Uncle Elihu’s death-bed. These flowers symbolise not death, but transformation:

She had never seen anything else so strong, so fierce with life and with full intent to grow as those tufts of dandelion and dogrose, coltsfoot and

pimpernel. Out of [the baby's] mouth came a crying as strong, as lusty, as urgent with staunch determination to live as any dandelion [...] To Wednesday there seemed to be nothing in the room but the cry and the dandelion. You couldn't bow your head and sniffle over those. They were the resurrection and the life (Hyde 1993, 175).

The children Wednesday brought to Elihu's bedside – including the baby who gives the remarkable cry – were not, of course, her 'real' children. They were orphans "borrowed" from a Children's Home, children in whose rough parlance dandelions are "pee-the-beds" (Hyde 1993, 174) – and it is from the mouths of such lowly babes that Wednesday hears a promise of resurrection, and transformation.

In its panoramic view of a painfully divided society (all the more so for the arbitrariness of those divisions), *Wednesday's Children* offers an earnest plea for the necessity of change. Even in staunch criticism of the status quo, Hyde's work is pervaded by a sense of latent potentiality – what she described in *A Home in this World* as "a fertility and richness untapped" (Hyde 1984, 11), and which is clearly present in the natural world and which might be mobilised by poetry and other imaginative acts. Certainly the novel ends with a deep sense of "hope for whatever future comes next" (Leggott quoted in Hunt, online). Movement towards this future – real and tangible, and on a mass scale – is taken up in *Nor the Years Condemn*, a novel which follows *Wednesday's Children* in affirming both the possibility and considerable challenge of transforming a society. But, if such a transformation is to be achieved, it must evidently elide those social 'surfaces' through which *Wednesday's Children* shines a light. As such, *Nor the Years Condemn* seeks to work "from the ground up" (Hyde 1995, 87) – the ground which, as in Hyde's poem, 'interlocks' beneath nation-dividing seas – to create a kinder world for the great many who suffer in isolation.

## ***“tattered faces in the lamplight”*: Advancing Towards Unity in *Nor the Years Condemn***

*Wednesday’s Children* had highlighted the ills of a divisive modernity primarily through the lens of the Gilfillian family: depicting the emotional distance between the supporting characters, and the irreparable fragmentation of its heroine’s psyche. In her next published novel, Hyde expanded her focus to encompass society at large – the vast body of “working men and out-of-work men” (Hyde 1993, 78), and the “gauche women with loud voices and hard mouths” (Hyde 1993, 198) who were peripheral to the Gilfillians’ story. *Nor the Years Condemn* answered not only the publishers’ call for more realistic work than her previous fantasy, but also Hyde’s own longing to “stretch out giant shadowy hands” (Hyde 1984, 11) and address the enormity of a problem that, to her, was so much larger than one middle-class family’s damaging obsession with “respectability”. *Nor the Years Condemn* provides a panoramic picture of conflicts large and small, interpersonal and international. It makes clear that the “huge blue globe, cut in halves [...] by [the] barbed wire” of World War will only fragment itself further (Hyde 1984, 190), unless a sense of human “unity and totality, of belonging to a species” is restored (Hunt 2008, 272). The novel itself was almost a casualty of international conflict; Gloria Rawlinson noted, in a 1952 Introduction to another of Hyde’s works, that “only a few copies survive, the Hurst & Blackett premises having been bombed early in the war and all stock destroyed” (Rawlinson 1952, 19). Such a fraught beginning seems only fitting for a novel centring around an (earlier) “decade’s fundamental instability” (Murray 1998, 196). In the Author’s Note to *Nor the Years Condemn*, Hyde proclaims her intent “to tell as exactly as possible what happened, and the types of people who were caught up in a mounting wave, sank down into its pit, and are now struggling up again” (Hyde 1995, 8). In this she succeeds admirably, conveying not only the tumult of “the ‘boom and bust’ period in New Zealand” (Hyde 1995, 8), but the fundamental human striving towards a

“home in this world” that lies at the core of so much of her work. The home striven for in this novel is a stable sense of societal identity, and her people ‘rising and falling on a wave’ fits Patrick Sandbrook’s summation of the transformative process that can be recognised in much of Hyde’s work: “a movement to a nadir of despair, accompanied by a sense of destruction of identity, then a rise to some more positive sense of value and reintegration of identity” (Sandbrook 1985, 306). Patrick Evans has praised the novel’s success in offering “a real sense of people living, interacting en masse, men with women, employed with unemployed and race with race [...] a sense of both social and economic environment and of the physical, and of the way these shape people; and [...] a real sense of pity” (Evans 1990, 138). This pity (which might better be called empathy) is well-founded; the inner “centre of equipoise” that was denied the individual Wednesday Gilfillian is in this novel the aim of post-war society itself, as “the real protagonist of the book is New Zealand society, blundering about, trying to make some sort of sense of itself” (Hyde 1995, cover-page). Susan Ash has remarked on the novel’s ability to portray a broad “society in transition after the War”, while “at the same time [succeeding] in constructing internal consciousnesses” (Ash 1991, 95). Hyde’s depiction of a fragmented modern “culture that struggled to find an appropriate collective articulation” is delivered through the disordered impressions and reflections of three main characters (Murray 1998, 196), though she also “focalizes freely through several minor characters” (Ash 1991, 96). In the aftermath of the First World War, the returned soldier Douglas Stark (Starkie) struggles to reintegrate into the civilian life in which he is racially and socially other; nurse Bede Collins longs to heal a sick society, all the while suffering her own illnesses of body and spirit; and the enigmatic Macnamara travels the country, offering small kindnesses and speaking of change to come. The focus of the narrative shifts between these three figures, taking Bede from hospitals full of war veterans (where she meets Starkie) to the 1932 Queen Street riots in Auckland (where she first meets

Macnamara), and leaving her amongst the hopeful election crowd. Starkie traverses the country more freely, moving from hospitals to relatives' houses to relief work, ending up as a widower raising a young family in the slums of Auckland. Macnamara's story is the most elusive of all; he tramps the country freely, appearing at crucial moments to make observations on the state of particular characters, and society at large.

Although in its breadth of scope and its social realism *Nor the Years Condemn* is a very different novel to *Wednesday's Children*, it too speaks to the vision of human unity so often reiterated throughout Hyde's body of work. The metaphorical barbed wire dividing soldier from civilian, Maori from Pakeha, man from woman, one frightened person from the other, can only be torn down by active empathy: by a "revolution of the human spirit" (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287) that must precede any actual change in redistributions of power or wealth. Writing to a friend, Hyde confessed that perhaps her new novel contained "too much Utopian politics" (Leggott 1999, xii); yet, given the strength of its call for transformation, one feels that *Nor the Years Condemn* is no more and no less idealistic than Hyde intended it to be. In a letter to fellow poet Eileen Duggan, she wrote of the book, "I want to make a success of it because it touches the three things about which I can be in earnest — health, peace, enlightenment. The three seem to me dependent on one another, and, linked together, the whole structure of citizenship as it ought to be. If such a trinity of ideals can be the core of a writer's work, they are what I want for mine" (Docherty 2001, online). The ideals of *Nor the Years Condemn* are the ideals that are recurrent across each of these three novels; the aim is human unity, and the peace that follows from it.

In this chapter, I will examine Hyde's presentation of the fraught "business of community" in a world divided by partisanism and dogma (Leggott 1995, 276). While individual suffering is the primary focus of *Wednesday's Children* and *The Godwits Fly*, in this novel Hyde broadens her focus to show that the isolation experienced by individuals is

replicated on a terrifying scale. My first section considers the sense of disconnection experienced by Starkie, Bede and their fellow citizens. As throughout so much of Hyde's work, this fragmentation is the result of dogmatic "presumptions of human difference" which fail to balance Apollonian categorisation with Dionysian unity (Bridge 2008, 105), so that people of different classes, races, and beliefs can perceive no basic human commonality. Hyde's attack on the dehumanising effect of excessive "discipline and organisation" (Hyde 1995, 183) is as strong here as it is in the other two novels, as is her call to embrace the unifying forces of nature and art. My second section focuses on the characters of Bede and Macnamara. They fit into what Michele Leggott has called Hyde's "healing saviour template" (Leggott 1999, xxiv), which draws from her humanist conception of the self-abnegating Christ and resonates with the Jungian ideal of working "for the benefit of a future age and, if necessary, to sacrifice themselves for the welfare of the species" (Hunt 2008, 272). The imperfect but striving figures at the novel's forefront are crucial in suggesting the possibility that a damaged psyche and a damaged society may yet be healed, even if every healer is themselves also a patient. The last section of this chapter considers the unresolved, defiantly hopeful ending of *Nor the Years Condemn*, which gestures (as does so much of Hyde's work) to a transformed future of unity and justice. The exact path to this future may be unclear, and the obstacles numerous, but Hyde's invocation of hope in this novel is just as fervent as her evocation of pain; and, as such, *Nor the Years Condemn* offers the possibility that a violent world may be "broken, and put together again" (Hyde 1995, 266).

### **"the keystone was gone": a conflicted society crumbling**

The world of *Nor the Years Condemn* is a world defined by disunity and fragmentation. Though soldiers and nurses no longer have to navigate the trenches of the Great War, there remains a "gulf between" isolated human beings, each individual having shored up their defences against a world of conflict (Hyde 1995, 90). This sense of isolation is the result of

that same state of being “shut in boxes” that Wednesday Gilfillian deplored (Hyde 1993, 200). In direct opposition to the ideal of “marking similarity within difference, without erasing either” (Leggott 2003, 26), a militaristic society depends on a deliberately reductive view of humanity: simultaneously requiring the suppression of individuality (so that men will march in uniform), and a denial of human commonality (beyond a homogenised nationalism). “The blind eye of Reality” is the eye of divisive wartime rhetoric (Hyde 1993, 104), and, for Hyde, this self-serving insistence on seeing only what one wants to see is at the root of human suffering. As emphasised in the 1995 edition’s Commentary, “Hyde is determined to expose the war myths of patriotism, glory and victory by drawing attention to the waste and suffering that has been obscured by distance and rhetoric” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 285). In a letter to Eileen Duggan about *Nor the Years Condemn*, Hyde quoted a phrase of Walt Whitman’s which struck her as relevant to her work: “There is to me something profoundly affecting in large masses of men following the lead of those who do not believe in man” (Docherty 2001, online). To believe in man, for Hyde, is to believe in humanity’s worth as a part of the natural world – to believe that, without the imposition of strict regulatory “institutions” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 288), richness rather than chaos could arise out of mankind’s diversity. The other way of thinking, for Hyde, is utterly dehumanising, and *Nor the Years Condemn* allows her to present that kind of crushing categorisation as it affects a wide range of people. It all flows from institutions and figures of authority: the people who wall ‘undesirables’ into prisons and out of homes with “brick and mortar” (Hyde 1995, 86), who divide politics into reductive “Ists and Isms” (Hyde 1995, 233), who assume the right to damn an unmarried girl who “goes off the rails” of their conservatism (Hyde 1995, 86). Characteristically, Hyde acknowledges that many such figures of authority are not consciously malevolent, only trying to navigate a confounding world and preserve themselves within it. In one scene, Bede Collins considers a minister of

the church: “He’s good, but he can’t understand how Christ would ever have managed without the Apostle Paul to follow on and organise. Discipline and organisation” (Hyde 1995, 183). She goes on to realise, and lament, that “the one who really loved the world [Christ] has been obscured by the one who both hated and loved himself so well, the organiser, Saul”. Hyde’s Christ is “the Son of Man, not the Son of God” (Bertram 1953, 190), and is associated in her poetry with boundless, gulf-bridging “rainbow love” that extends to all manner of life, without ranking or categorisation (Leggott 2003, 218). Indeed, in Hyde’s humanist philosophy, “God’s nobler name is love” (Leggott 2003, 113), and the figure of Christ embodies this love. But austere post-war New Zealand is the age of Saul the organiser, and Hyde emphasises its dehumanising force. When Starkie joins a team of workers at the Arapuni dam, the men live under the surveillance of searchlights that are looking not for full, complex humanity but obedient conformity:

They worked in slender shifting pencils of searchlights...They were seen, but could not see the watchers behind the Eye [...]. They didn’t care a thing about a man’s face, those searchlights: what they wanted were his hands...even if the bosses liked it, it was still a good feeling (Hyde 1995, 141-149).

As the last phrase of this passage reveals, perhaps the greatest shame of institutions centred on categorisation and conformity is that their claustrophobia becomes falsely reassuring, and almost addictive. There is a seductive simplicity to denying the wild, the strange, the Dionysian in oneself, and being able to reject others for it; there is a relief in letting one’s identity be dictated by convention, rather than struggling to individuate oneself. This was the experience of Starkie and his fellow war veterans, but, now that the war has ended, the incompleteness of their ‘soldier’ identity becomes clear; now thrown back into civilian life “it was the simplicity of their lost war life that they wanted; the days when they took orders, and



[...] asked and were asked few questions, no niggling ones” (Hyde 1995, 91). The Eye of the searchlights has replaced the gaze of a superior officer – and it is a comfort, because having grown into the conformity that society requires of him, a man would otherwise have to search for the inner self he has repressed. Hyde sums up this tragedy (which is the tragedy not only of returned soldiers but of any inhabitant of an overly Apollonian society) thus: “The most disintegrating thing you can do to a human being is to give him a formula to live by: to enforce respect of that formula: and then to take it away” (Hyde 1995, 25).

Of course, the real world is much too complex and protean to be contained in any simple formula, and so these comforting structures all too frequently fail to protect even the most compliant citizens: the returned soldier is no longer a hero, the sexually experienced girl is no longer respectable, the man who has lost his job is no longer admired. This is to say nothing of those people who were never offered protection by formulas or institutions to begin with – those who were born social outcasts due to the colour of their skin, or their parents’ low status. Starkie is representative of these people: a “racial mixture so particular as Red Indian-Spanish enables him to typify every racial minority, every outsider [...]. He is also all returned soldiers, heroic, miscreant or disabled” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 283). He encounters others like him on his travels throughout the country: Maori struggling on the edges of society, “Chinks and pakapoo, [...] tarts, dogs, cats” and all other inhabitants of the Auckland slums that he makes his home (Hyde 1995, 248). These ‘strangers’ to society receive little sympathy from their fellow citizens, who have (they hope) secured their own safety by clinging to the very simplistic formulas which exclude whomever will not or cannot conform. This head-in-the-sand approach is typified by Elsie, the zealous wife of Starkie’s cousin Pat; she has become convinced that anyone’s illness or suffering is only the result of their private “error”, and that “there’s nothing in the world the matter” with society except people’s “want of faith” in God and his laws (Hyde 1995, 157). Starkie’s own

struggle to adopt acceptable behaviours demonstrates just how much this rigid, formulaic approach to humanity fails those people who are themselves victims of the formulas they have come to depend on. Starkie's violence and drunkenness are not his own "error", but the result of his having been trapped in the dehumanising 'boxes' of "coloured" (Hyde 1995, 155), and "soldier". He represents all misplaced ex-servicemen who "have no war and [...] can't come to any peace" (Hyde 1995, 133).

Hyde's concern with a divided human race is manifested in this novel, as in *Wednesday's Children* and *The Godwits Fly*, in repeated reference to fences, walls, and other divisions of "brick and mortar" (Hyde 1995, 86). When Starkie hits (and mortally wounds) Jack Pym – acting on a moment's anger and the very aggression for which he was lauded during wartime – he finds himself hated by the township, and thinks, "I'm on the other side of the fence. This bit is over, and Starkie's right out" (Hyde 1995, 57). Earlier, on a train through the high country, he had observed "wire fences" laden with "stiffened bodies of rabbits, trapped, shot, fed arsenic barley" some "red raw [...] and the veteran corpses [...] bleached to silvery hoops of bone" (Hyde 1995, 40). If Starkie does not see his own humanity strung out on cold metal, the reader certainly does not miss the parallel. Starkie himself, though he empathises in some way with all those figures his society marginalises, has been too hurt and hindered by its institutions to articulate an argument against it. As he is dismissed from hospital (for stealing beer to share with his fellow patients), he struggles with what to think of himself and his society:

They were quite right, thought Starkie, as he left [...]. Always they were quite right, but somehow that didn't make any difference. There might be some such thing as being born right, born wrong – like left-handed, right-handed. And there was an obscure injustice in it somewhere, but not worth howling about. All the talk was on their side (Hyde 1995, 33).

“All the talk” is on the Apollonian side of things: “discipline and organisation” (Hyde 1995, 183), “the drawing and respecting of boundaries and limits” (Geuss 2012, 48). But Starkie is quite right; it doesn’t “make any difference”, because without an underlying sense of unity and commonality, the organised and disciplined “body of a people” has no strength to be deployed (Hyde 1995, 183). Certainly the society around Starkie is a weak and crumbling one – in Bede Collins’ words, “the keystone was gone” (Hyde 1995, 26) and for Hyde, that keystone is a Dionysian sense of “unity and totality” (Hunt 2008, 272). Its absence has resulted in the spread of “wire fences” and “brick and mortar”; in a modernity whose pulse is an inconstant “jerking staccato” (Hyde 1995, 15); in a sense of incompleteness that Bede expresses by observing that “nobody, soldiers or politicians or relatives, seemed able to put a full-stop to the sentence” (Hyde 1995, 9-10).

However, the fact that the “keystone” has fallen away – and that society has fallen into violent acts of oppression and segregation – does not, for Hyde, mean that humanity is doomed for eternity. It only indicates that, as she put it in *A Home in This World*, “a fertility and a richness” in mankind remains as yet “untapped” (Hyde 1984, 11). Bede Collins – who, in her humanist philosophy and empathetic disposition is “a continuation of the female characterisation developed through Wednesday Gilfillian and Eliza Hannay” (Murray 1998, 195) – expresses with more articulacy than Starkie her distrust of over-simple formulas of guilt and innocence, respectability and misdemeanour. In one of the novel’s most striking scenes, Bede attends an Anzac Day service, and tries to understand the cause of violence: war primarily, but also the day-to-day sense of embattlement that meant citizens “were kind to one another, so long as they knew it was respectable to be kind” (Hyde 1995, 180). As I have pointed out in reference to *Wednesday’s Children*, Hyde presents the impulse to self-defence as something understandable, though regrettable – after all, to damn it without considering its causes would be just the kind of black-and-white judgement she so deplures. She makes

reference again to the story of Cain and Abel, as Bede considers a marble statue of the brothers in the Auckland Domain. It was presumably erected in the park to function as a moral lesson – in which case the hypocrisy of a militaristic nation preaching the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” is blatant – but Bede does not judge Cain any more than she judges the war-veterans. She sees vulnerability in both brothers: “Abel, fallen with his head limp, looked such a little boy; Cain, enormous and despairing, towered over him, one wild hand imploring the skies to open and undo the results of a moment’s temper” (Hyde 1995, 188). The fault is in the system, in the God of “the skies”, for having created a world in which food is scarce and then punishing Cain for keeping the best of his crop for himself. This is a formula in which Cain must always be the scapegoat, must be read as a black-hearted villain so that Abel can be read as victim (rather than the privileged owner of many a fatted calf). Bede understands this – just as she understands that, to go to war with another country, or imprison a man, or shun the ‘unrespectable’, society must mark off a group of “bogies, of frightful people outside the human order, against whom they must protect themselves” (Hyde 1995, 181). Can the respectable, nationalistic citizens really align themselves with Abel, attacked by the Germans and the unsavoury inhabitants of the slums? Or are they Cain, striking out for their own interests against “strangers” and “bogies” with whom they actually share a fraternal bond? They are both. The brothers are interchangeable, both simply “what [their] times had made [them]” (Hyde 1995, 264) – but to recognise this fact would be to undo the work of generations, the work of setting up ‘wire fences’ and composing elegantly simple ‘formulas’.

As much as she laments this situation, Bede believes that this kind of violence is not inevitable. She looks forgivingly on those who act out of desperation, saying “you are only something that wants its freedom” (Hyde 1995, 133). Bede recognises that acts of self-defence are driven by the desire for security – for what Hyde calls “a home in this world” –

and that people are simply striving for that security in a counterproductive way. The drive to “discipline and organisation” – to neatly categorise – is the drive to set boundaries to an unknowable world by erecting “four walls and a roof” (Hyde 1984, 10); and it is not the longing for stability but rather the flawed method of attaining it that Hyde considers problematic. If human commonality were properly recognised, then the urge to protect oneself and one’s family would direct people to work for the security of the entire ‘brotherhood of man’ – as Bede puts it, “the thing carried also the germ of its own salvation” (Hyde 1995, 181). She is watching the Anzac Day crowd, and struggling to decide whether uniform, ceremony, and marching songs seduce humanity into partisanism, or whether the Last Post (“that lovely wreathing thing”) is “subsidiary, the reply of the human spirit speaking out of its unearned Hell, saying ‘I live on. Listen to me, do not despair, for I live on’” (Hyde 1995, 181). The latter is the conclusion Bede comes to, acknowledging that “War in its beginnings had no beauty, [...] a simple business of eradicating fear of a rival”, but that the men caught up in it “replied with systems of chivalry (a Tommy marching song was a system of chivalry) with carving a vine or a dog’s head on the hilt of a dagger” (Hyde 1995, 181). These things, “the vine on the hilt, the Last Post, the comradeship”, are what people are really drawn to, and they are symbols of unity, not division – and, as is usual with Hyde, they are natural symbols of organic, animal, Dionysian life. Bede’s hope is Hyde’s hope – that the people’s longing for oneness will eventually expand to include “all that breathes” (Hyde 1993, 91), and that the technological advancements of modernity can be redirected and “the scientists of peace could work upon [humanity], work like slaves and isolate the instinct for beautiful excitement from the instinct of fear and destruction” (Hyde 1995, 181). In light of this passage alone, to say nothing of *Nor the Years Condemn* as whole, it is difficult to understand Frank Birbalsingh’s criticism that Hyde’s novel indulged in a “frantic insistence on human cruelty”, and displayed a “morbid preoccupation with the more painful or

unpleasant realities of everyday life” (quoted in Ash 1991, 46). Hyde’s “preoccupation with violence” is in fact her preoccupation with unnecessary suffering, and how it might be removed from among ‘the realities of everyday life’. But “the dying body of a people” Hyde portrays in *Nor the Years Condemn* has already sustained life-threatening wounds (Hyde 1995, 183), and must be healed and transformed before it can advance to a more peaceful future. Bede Collins and Macnamara are the novel’s figureheads for this restorative “revolution of the human spirit” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287), although the change must spread far beyond the two of them, both in distance and in time.

### **“healing saviour”: Bede Collins, Macnamara, ‘the people’**

*Nor the Years Condemn* presents a population wracked with illness and injury; Starkie has lost fingers to war and work, the songs of the Maori population are the quieter for their “chest trouble” (Hyde 1995, 92), and traumatised soldiers and ‘ruined’ girls suffer mentally until they end their own lives (Hyde 1995, 204). The maladies of minor characters add up so that “New Zealand society is imaged as a body which has been wounded and infected – an organism which can heal itself only through the unfolding of its own will to live” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287). This will to live must be evoked, however, and argued for – and this is done most consciously and articulately by Bede and Macnamara, although they are far from being the only lights in the darkness. They are, however, well-suited figures to represent the possibility of healing: “Bede and Macnamara are themselves healers: he has ‘practised for a little while’; she is a nurse” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287). Indeed, Michele Leggott has suggested that they arise from Hyde’s “healing saviour template” (Leggott 1999, xxiv), along with *The Book of Nadath*’s utterly-human prophet and her humanist conception of the compassionate Christ. Bede’s and Macnamara’s roles are certainly prophetic, looking as they are to “the big change” that will eventually see the end of violence and poverty (Hyde 1995, 243). Travelling the country separately, these two

characters meet twice throughout the course of the novel; both times they come together amidst a raucous crowd who are agitating for change (though not yet the “big”, psychic change that is the healers’ ultimate goal). Their encounters are exchanges of kindness and of ideas; Macnamara ushers Bede to shelter away from the pressing crowd, and they debate the future (in terms almost as open and abstract as the unknown future itself). Having only just met, these two healers do not quite see eye to eye, but they both feel the “need to make sense of things” in a deeper way than formulas of nationalism and respectability allow (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 291). Bede worries about the seductive lure of “sentiment” (Hyde 1995, 265), the appeal of simplifying one’s worldview until answers seem obvious. She knows that “the pretty side of one’s nature is apt to be rather a neat trap” (Hyde 1995, 233) – in other words, the disciplined, Apollonian side. Bede has seen how war becomes a simple “narrative” of heroism (Hyde 1995, 13) – a similar awareness to Eliza Hannay’s recognition in *The Godwits Fly*, that “war is little pictures” (Hyde 2001, 68) – and with this consciousness she “cannot respond to ideas of national heroism or capability when she is continually confronted with [...] the effects of such historically defining moments on the individual agents of the public” (Murray 1998, 195). Macnamara is more interested in strengthening what is useful in humanity than in removing what is not; he intends to serve the same function as ambergris, to stabilise and fix “the scent of the people...the stench, if you like to call it so. Tears, sweat, blood, silliness, accidental aspiration, the beginnings of honesty, the promises before they become piecrust” (Hyde 1995, 234). In slightly clearer terms, Macnamara wants to “stabilize the change when it comes”, to not “let the people forget what they wanted in the first place” (Hyde 1995, 234). ‘What the people want’ is never reduced to one sentence, but it can be inferred that what they need is a way of living that balances order and atomistic individuality with naturalness and unity.

In *Nor the Years Condemn*, this missing sense of oneness can be cultivated by the same methods as in Hyde's other works: by reintegrating the Dionysian influence of the Collective Unconscious through acts of imaginative empathy, particularly through art and literature, which help to support Jung's "religious-philosophical attitude" of human totality (Hunt 2008, 272). By comparison to *Wednesday's Children* or *The Godwits Fly*, this novel only makes brief reference to art and story-telling; however, the fact that they remain present in a work of this kind in fact seems to emphasise their significance. Though she meant to move away from the fantasy of *Wednesday's Children* towards social realism, Hyde was still writing about the possibility of a unifying transformation, and in doing so she could not neglect to mention an integral element of her vision: imaginative empathy. Between them, Bede and Macnamara offer all of Hyde's characteristic methods of cultivating unity: poetry and music, identification with the natural world, and identification with the passing stranger.

Macnamara is confident in the ability of the creative arts to heal; having rescued Bede from the rioting crowd upon recognising the illnesses she struggles with (all the while trying to heal others), he revitalises her with tea, a fairy-tale, and the music of his harmonium. The fairy-tale is a political allegory in which a Mouse defers to a Lion who has "a revolution and war saved up" for the Mouse to die in (Hyde 1995, 233). Although, being exhausted, Bede is sceptical at that moment as to whether "fairy-tales and harmoniums" can really effect the needed change (Hyde 1995, 233), earlier at the Anzac Day service she had realised why the population were drawn to marching songs: "Poetry and music are two things we haven't given them since the war. We have taken away from them even the little they had" (Hyde 1995, 184). After her encounter with Macnamara, she acknowledges the relationship between art and identity:

We've still got to find our own song. It isn't God Save the King. It isn't the Internationale, it isn't the Marseillaise [...]. I don't think it's May God



defend New Zealand, though somebody will have to soon. It's back  
somewhere in the hills, waiting; or one of these men has it in his throat  
(Hyde 1995, 262).

The song will not be sentimental, and the story will not be as morally simplistic as the traditional reading of Cain and Abel – but, as Hyde wrote elsewhere, the creative arts can be of real political importance when they encourage “world consciousness, sympathy for the world” (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 357). It is precisely this kind of unifying imaginative exercise Macnamara and Bede stand for. Bede certainly knows the humanising power of a story: she has repressed the grief she feels for the relatives she lost to the war, only letting out her emotion “at the pictures, crying two snail-tracks while Nazimova died beautifully among the camellias” (Hyde 1995, 13). Just as she empathises with characters who do not really exist, Bede can identify with passing strangers she has never met. Passing a girl on the street, she thinks, “I know you: I know you. Instead of passing, the others will turn in at your gate, sit down in your parlour, measure your proportions of mind and body [...]. But will anyone know you as I know you?” (Hyde 1995, 189). Earlier, she felt the same sense of common humanity while stationed abroad:

In the early mornings, Bede [...] heard the hollow monotonous tramp of  
hundreds of feet marching past. [...] At times, warm and sleepy, she  
pretended to single out an individual tread, and follow it for a while [...]  
She had no desire to lean out, or to speak to them; it seemed right to accept  
them, tramping past unseen [...] Often, sinking back into second sleep, she  
followed them in her dreams (Hyde 1995, 19).

These moments of unspoken fellowship link Bede with Hyde's other perceptive, empathetic female characters, particularly Eliza Hannay, who has her own experience of hearing

footsteps continue past her house, and feeling that the stranger is “dearer to [her] than her heart” (Hyde 2001, 235). Bede is also linked to Hyde’s other female protagonists by her identification with Classical heroines who journey into the dark Underworld. Thinking of furnishing her room, Bede wishes she had “a small statue of Persephone (only no one had made it yet)” (Hyde 1995, 189). This passing reference is a continuation of Hyde’s broader symbolic scheme, in which Persephone and Eurydice symbolise the ability to traverse between the subterranean Unconscious and the Apollonian surface-world of light and order. As a healer, and a patient herself in need of healing, Bede shares Hyde’s interest in how “one mind could come back from the darkness, and, like Persephone out of Hades, come laden with flowers” (Edmond 2012, online). The fact that there exists no statue of Persephone for Bede to purchase perhaps indicates how little attention modernity pays to the Dionysian Unconscious that could otherwise make it whole again. Certainly Bede’s keen sense of fundamental “unity and totality” is what enables her to perceive just how the human race has been so painfully divided (Hunt 2008, 272). She reacts against “institutions responsible for the codification of people”, as “the criminal, the sick, the orphaned and the mentally ill are all, for Bede, erroneously labelled and inappropriately confined” (Murray 1998, 195). This state of affairs, and an alternative to it, is outlined in Bede’s passionate assertion that she would “like to tear down all the bricks and mortar in the world, all the prisons, hospitals, orphanages and asylums, and give them instead the great meadow’. She was not quite sure what the great meadow might be, except that it was spangled and wild with light...” (Hyde 1995, 86). ‘The great meadow’ is a space as yet undefined, except by its openness and its natural state. As Alison Hunt has observed, the change Hyde’s characters seek will be attained not by the “political imposition of complex social systems, but an abandonment of such artifice and a celebration of that which is ‘natural’” (Hunt 2005, online). Macnamara represents this natural freedom just as much as Bede does; “[his] tramping holds the

possibility that people freed from social constraints can expand to realise their own freedom. Macnamara is man least held down by institutions” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 277).

However, Bede and Macnamara are only representatives of a “revolution of the human spirit” that will be much too great a change, and much too long a process, for the two of them to experience fully (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287). Just as Hyde wrote of being “caught in the hinge of a slowly-opening door, between one age and another” (Hyde 1984, 28), Bede thinks of the change to come and realises she may not live to see it: “Too late, said a tolling bell in her mind, too late, too late...Another bell...Too late for you perhaps, but who are you? I do not know one face from another” (Hyde 1995, 181). Bede’s peaceful acceptance of the fact that a societal transformation will not benefit her personally is the same philosophy of self-abnegation that Hyde found advocated in the works of Jung; the idea of working “for the benefit of a future age and, if necessary, to sacrifice [oneself] for the welfare of the species” (Hunt 2008, 272). When Bede acknowledges that “the individual was not proving so important” (Hyde 1995, 190), she means that she is but one individual of many in the “crowd-body” (Hyde 1995, 262), and that its future health is the matter of greatest importance. Of course, because society is “composed of discrete beings” (Hunt 2005, online), the health and freedom of the individuals within society is paramount – but if Bede herself is not one of the particular individuals benefitted, she can still take comfort in the thought that human beings “are all so much the same person” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 276), and others like her will be saved. Macnamara also evokes this sense of human totality; he is an articulate and educated healer, but it is frequently mentioned that “looked at sideways on” he looks “rather like Starkie” (Hyde 1995, 265), who himself represents the struggling “body of a people” (Hyde 1995, 183). The ability to heal the wounds humanity has sustained belongs therefore not to a wise few, but to any and all whose will to live is (or can be made) strong enough – all

who, as Hyde phrased it in the Author's Note, have sunk down into the "pit, and are now struggling up again" (Hyde 1995, 8).

### **"broken, and put together again": a society on the brink of transformation**

The "big change" the characters of the *Nor the Years Condemn* look to may be the maturation, the individuation of a society rather than of one person, but it still recognisably that same process of transformation Hyde gestures to throughout each of these three novels (Hyde 1995, 243). Jung himself wrote that "an epoch is like the soul of an individual, it has its own particular, specifically limited conscious outlook and therefore requires compensation" (quoted in Bishop 1995, 168). The modernity Hyde writes of has been limited by its separation from unifying Dionysian forces, and for balance to be restored a "big", transformative change is necessary. As ever, Hyde "only gestures toward" the precise nature of this transformation (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, xxvi) – its promise lies in its very potentiality – but the reader is left in no doubt that it will be truly revolutionary. Given the extent and the depth of suffering across *Nor the Years Condemn*, it will clearly not be enough simply to pay lip-service to ideas of unity and equality – as does the "tourist lady" Starkie meets on a bus through the high country (Hyde 1995, 106). She is well-meaning, and utterly earnest in her belief that "[it's] so important, you know, that we should get to understand one another, we people from different countries. After all, we're all *one*, aren't we?" (Hyde 1995, 106). Starkie's reaction to the "tourist lady" is a reaction we are invited to share: such people are gentle and amiable, and able to see tenacious, living gorse not as a weed but as "wonderful flowers" (Hyde 1995, 105); and yet, if their beliefs are reduced into platitudes, they will not have any great positive impact. Bede reminds herself of this same need for action, wondering "what the devil were they going to do with people like herself, riddled with good intentions and emotions [...]?" (Hyde 1995, 190). She has already worked out the answer, musing on the need to make active use of empathy and "Pity ... that leaky

vessel. [...] [It] is all one has, to gather up the immortal seas” (Hyde 1995, 87). The answer is to mobilise the damaged body of “strangers” and “bogies”, “all the people whose love and power runs out between their two hands, the people who are a broken cup, never full” and yet still able to hold something of use (Hyde 1984, 10) – the “rebellious human spirit” which must fight back against oppressive categorisation (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 288). Starkie – himself very much a “broken cup”, a “leaky vessel” – accepts that a secure “home in this world” cannot be found by avoidance: “he felt half disposed to wander off into the bush, looking for nothing, doing nothing. But that was how men went screwy, living alone” (Hyde 1995, 149). The ‘revolution’ to come is a revolution of the psyche – thus, when Macnamara speaks of “the people” he does not refer only to the proletariat (Hyde 1995, 234); Hyde’s “humanist conception of the people as the collective embodiment of essential human values” defines “the people” as all inheritors of a shared Collective Unconscious (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 288).

When humanity is conceptualised in such boundless terms, extending across geography and temporality, its transformation can have “no precise location” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287), nor any predictable time of arrival. Bede is the character most struck by this sense of continuity. Watching a restless crowd gather to hear the election results, she gets the impression that:

the crowd-body was isolated in blue eternity, its patient shuffling took on the dignity of the eternal. [...] Nothing mattered, except that the crowd-body, a long time cold and scared in its softest spots, courage, pride, and respectability, should suddenly be awake and singing again. [...] Bede thought: ‘They’ll do,’ as a General might (Hyde 1995, 263).

She herself is too exhausted to keep up the shuffling march of human progress towards “a home in the world”, but she has faith that her fellow men will march onward: “I’ll never be

able to walk home [...] I shall just have to sit on and on for ever. But, listen. They do sound all right, don't they?" (Hyde 1995, 266) This same sense of eternal progress and imminent transformation is evoked by Macnamara, whose face "sideways on" looks both like Starkie and like "the face stamped on an old coin. [...] For a moment [Bede] heard that coin rung clear on all the counters of the earth. [...] It had been broken, and put together again. She didn't know what it signified: the end of the world, as she had known it" (Hyde 1995, 266). This element of healing, of resurrection, is the central to the Nietzschean and Jungian conception of transformation – it being a "dialectic of consciousness and the Unconscious, [permitting] the Ego to die and be reborn anew" (Bishop 1995, 17) – and *Nor the Years Condemn* reflects precisely this emphasis on rebirth. At Jack Pym's funeral, Starkie reverses the meaning of the celebrant's prayer: "'In the midst of life we are in death,' boomed the sorrowful voice. They ought to get it somehow [...] the other way round; [...] In the midst of death, we are in life" (Hyde 1995, 95). It is this "animal will to life" that will allow healing and transformation (Hunt 2008, 132), and Starkie, the exiled everyman, remains in close contact with natural life. He and his fellow creatures, though they retain scars from past trauma, will find a home together, not apart. Hyde closes the novel with a confirmation of this:

Ginger [the cat], who had travelled in a basket from Barker Street and been de-loused in the back yard, held screeching over a bucket of disinfectant, came and rubbed scarred ears against his ankles. [...] Warm things, children and the fruit lady and the cat, stirred or slept about the house (Hyde 1995, 267).

In an earlier scene, too, Hyde suggests the Dionysian connection between "all that breathes" (Hyde 1993, 91), as Bede turns from observing an ill mother and child to look at a "heavy-bodied, wistful eyed dog":

He was, in fact, a being, as men and women are beings, and he seemed to have been taken care of, so much more satisfactorily than men and women, that she couldn't help believing there might be some point at which human stupidity reached its check. And there was something fine in the struggle, the abortive and wasted efforts. She saw tattered faces in the lamplight. 'We're coming, coming,' she said to herself, defiantly, 'We're on our way' (Hyde 1995, 87).

Against all odds, and with only the leaky vessel of human empathy to carry its energies (Hyde 1995, 87), Hyde's mass of people march towards an unknown future, determined to progress continually, no matter how slowly. Though the path is unclear, the reader must share Bede's conviction that her society is at least on its way towards a unifying transformation – and that a society's individuation is not accomplished by violent acts of oppression and exclusion, but by balancing productive “discipline and organisation” with a sense of natural, irrepressible humanity (Hyde 1995, 183).

Considering the open-ended nature of *Nor the Years Condemn*, Stuart Murray observes that the fact that “it does not ultimately cohere is perhaps to be expected, for her story would be too perfect should it do so” (Murray 1998, 196). Indeed, the unresolved yet optimistic tone of the novel's final chapters reflects exactly the “honest, slow-moving but not mawkish idealism” Hyde subscribed to when it came to the human condition (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 10). This idealism is present in *Wednesday's Children*, as the protagonist succumbs to long-held wounds but the ideals she stood for live on; it is there in *Nor the Years Condemn*, as a society at large battles its own maladies and moves slowly towards health and stability. It is there, too, in *The Godwits Fly*, as Eliza Hannay matures from an imaginative child to a creative, empathetic woman. Where Wednesday Gilfillian and “the body of a people” strove valiantly to transform themselves, to attain a “home in this world”, Eliza actually succeeds in

doing so before the novel ends. She safely navigates her own individuation – finding herself “broken and put together again” (Hyde 2001, 189) in a new and promising way.



## **“one and yet partial”: Integration of Self and Society in *The Godwits Fly***

*Wednesday's Children* had depicted the fragmented self, and *Nor the Years Condemn* the divided society. In *The Godwits Fly*, published last of these three novels, Hyde could present self and society reconciled, integrated – but only after its heroine (and, for that matter, the novel itself) had been “broken and put together again” in a transformative way (Hyde 2001, 189). Published in 1938 and now perhaps the most widely-recognised of Hyde’s novels, *The Godwits Fly* came into being without the approval of critics very much in mind. It was a work with a long gestation period (at least by Hyde’s prolific standards), and underwent various transformations between its conception in 1934 and the final, titled manuscript sent off to Hurst & Blackett. Before she noted in her journal “Settled: I’m going to write [...] a fairly autobiographical novel called ‘The Godwits Fly’” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 217), she had already completed an autobiographical manuscript in much the same vein. This had been composed for therapeutic purposes upon the recommendation of Hyde’s doctor G. M. Tothill (Challis 2002, 233), and was not originally intended for an audience beyond the doctor himself. However, even this early draft leant towards the novelistic more than the documentary; “Iris Wilkinson” being the only name unchanged from her personal life (Sandbrook 1985, 12). Hyde had expressed in letters how much she valued “the leisure and peace and loneliness” of her convalescence; it allowed her to work on projects in which she saw great value but could not immediately “cry in the markets” (Sandbrook 1985, 9). The drafts that became *The Godwits Fly* indeed seem to have benefitted from this emphasis on the integrity of the content rather than commerciality (as did so much of her Lodge and post-Lodge output). Hyde was certainly treating a subject of crucial importance to her; she was looking now through the lens of her own life-story at “the business of community” (Leggott, 1995, 276) and what that business might mean for “the individual living in the world” (Paul

1999, 157). She described the work to a friend as “a history in a way, but more the story of everyone & of most things under the sun than of any one individual” and declared that she would “never again write anything more sincere or better” (Sandbrook 1985, 9). Patrick Sandbrook notes that in this summation of her novel, Hyde’s “emphasis seems to fall on the social and ‘historical’ context of the ‘individual’s’ experience – the *typicality* of her experience rather than its uniqueness” (Sandbrook 1985, 10). I would add that this is in fact typical of Hyde’s approach; always appreciative of “similarity within difference” (Leggott 2003, 26), she illustrates in this novel (as in her others) that the individual’s impressionistically-rendered “imperfect part of truth” (Sandbrook 2001, ix) can, in its very imperfection, speak to a broader picture of human experience in the fragmented and fragmenting modern world. The individual in question in this novel is Eliza Hannay, the free-spirited daughter of lower-middle-class parents, who as she matures “tests herself against the mores of her family, her friends and a social order which values conformity and respectability above investigation of what it means to live” (Sandbrook 2001, cover-page). In *The Godwits Fly*, Hyde’s critique of a divisive over-Apollonian modernity is perhaps clearer than ever. So is her urging that a reconnection with the connective Dionysian forces of nature and art is urgently required in order for transformation and individuation – the individuated self being that very “centre of equipoise” which allows the individual a “paradoxical blend of self-possession and self-dispersal” (Sandbrook 1985, 121), and provides “a place from which to advance” (Hyde 1984, 10). In her Introduction to the 1970 edition, Gloria Rawlinson observed that this novel presents a societal “transition from one era to another as it affected the lives of the Hannays”, while at the same time Hyde’s “vision of life as a complex of beauty, pain and humour brings to *The Godwits Fly* a timeless sense of humanity not greatly affected by changes in fashion or custom” (Rawlinson 1970, xvii). What Rawlinson sees here is the same balance between the individual and the universal, the

similar and the different which lies at the centre of Hyde's ideal unity. The novel follows Eliza Hannay and her family and friends through "21 years of a life" (Sandbrook 2001, xxiii): from Eliza's earliest years as a child in Wellington, to the development of her poetic vocation and her first experiences of love and friendship, to her transgression of punitive social mores in having fallen illegitimately pregnant. By the novel's end, Eliza has lost her baby but gained a newfound sense of self in relation to her society as humanity as a whole.

In this chapter, I shall argue that Hyde's vision of unity is presented in this novel in ways both similar and different to her other works. I begin by examining her critique of modernity as a sterile "wilderness of brick and mortar, rules and regulations" (Hyde 2001, 174), which traps and isolates human beings into competitive and self-defensive tactics. My next section focuses on Hyde's presentation of the alternative – the reintegration of a Dionysian divinity which remains promising (though dormant) within everything living, and the need for which is most urgently recognised by modernity's "unwanted children" (Hyde 2001, 234). The bildungsroman trajectory of *The Godwits Fly* provides Hyde with a particularly effective vehicle for this message, following Eliza from an early yearning for and identification with the lush natural world, through a transformative process, and ending with her shouldering of a poetic vocation through which she channels the healing, connective forces her age is sorely in need of. My third section deals with Eliza's imaginative perception, her ability to make "little pictures in the dark" of a childhood bedroom or the fertile outdoors (Hyde 2001 25), and how clearly Hyde aligns creative inclinations with the ability to identify and empathise unconditionally with "all that breathes" (Hyde 1993, 91), be it animal or human, respectable or un-. My final section considers the end result of Eliza's trajectory. Her individuation is reached after a transformative process of being "broken and put together again" (Hyde 2001, 189), signposted by near-death experiences and epiphanic rebirths, and allusion to Eurydice's subterranean journey. The novel leaves Eliza at an open-

ended yet undeniably hopeful “place from which to advance” – embodying in a single character that state of awareness, internal order and “equipoise”: that very “home” Hyde wanted for each confounded “individual living in the world”.

### **“brick and mortar, rules and regulations”: a sterile, divisive modernity**

In *The Godwits Fly*, Hyde’s career-spanning social criticism reached a new concentration and potency. As I have argued in my previous chapters, the highlighting of social ills and the gesturing towards resolution was fundamental to Hyde’s body of work as a whole; but while in *Wednesday’s Children* and *Nor the Years Condemn* she had filtered the sufferings of the modern citizen through whimsy or through a plethora of characters and voices, this “camouflaged autobiographical novel” presented a different and perhaps more direct approach (Sandbrook 1985, 13). The bildungsroman style of the novel gives us “21 years of a life” (Sandbrook 2001, xxiv), in which each moment of isolation and disillusionment builds on the last and a detailed picture of modernity’s “life-trap” emerges (Hyde 2001, 81). This would have made for a potent effect even if Hyde had created a less sensitive and observant protagonist than the remarkable Eliza Hannay. The choice to express Eliza’s consciousness in “bursts of impressionistic prose” captures the uniqueness of her perception and the vividness of her experience (Murray 1998, 190) – all the while gesturing, in the ‘imperfectness’ of Eliza’s ‘part of truth’, to the fact that her experience is but one of many. Thus, Hyde presents the experience of suffering as at once utterly individual and terribly widespread. Given the strength and daring of this novel’s social criticism, Hyde was unsurprised when it met with a frosty response from conservative critics. “They are quite right to attack,” she wrote to a friend, “because though they are mostly too dumb to know it clearly, I’m attacking—and have, and shall, with luck” (Edmond-Paul, online).

Hyde’s attack was, as ever, directed at an excessively Apollonian modernity and its “whole code” which was in need of “revision and enlarging” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 305). *The*

*Godwits Fly* illustrates, through Eliza's struggles to meet the ill-founded expectations of her family and her peers, that the social code as-is leaves little space for anything beyond the stifling "tradition of respectability". Indeed, Eliza's assertion that "the way we live, everything, punishment, reward, system, all dwarf the stature – contraction, not expansion" (Hyde 2001, 91) is another iteration of Wednesday Gilfillian's lament of "the very acidity with which we quarrel over trifles, the enormous stress we put upon morals and gains and impossible, childish rules of conduct" (Hyde 1993, 200). Eliza's discontent with the world of her parents is manifested very early on in the book and in her life, when she is prevented from entering the dark space on a neighbour's property known as "the Glory Hole" (Hyde 2001, 4); she will recall that childhood experience later in the novel, as the Glory Hole comes to symbolise all the dark, unknowable realms of possibility that a young woman cannot explore while keeping clean the symbolic "pinny that your mother's ironed" into respectability (Hyde 2001, 7). The Glory Hole represents an alternative to the arid, respectable, quotidian world, and one with distinctly Dionysian connotations; it is a subterranean space (as the Unconscious was symbolised in Jung's and Nietzsche's writings), and in those depths Eliza senses a realness and vibrancy lacking in the world above. Bob Malley fetches her a china shoe full of "wet new violets" out of the darkness, and Eliza soon learns that the Glory Hole does not really offer a magical fairy court, but that the fecundity suggested by the violets is itself a magic, and one that is missing in the adult world above. Soon afterwards she observes a butterfly with a torn wing – "all the colour and passion, the ecstasy with which it had first tossed itself against the spring wind, were fled away" (Hyde 2001, 9) – and perceives this injustice, this infirmity as part of a larger imbalance. Grown-ups "fooled and fooled" (Hyde 2001, 9), wanting children to believe in fairies who were "only big girls dressed up in muslin" (Hyde 2001, 8), all the while neglecting the existing beauty of the real tiny winged creature, the butterfly. In her frustration, little Eliza wants

someone to pay “for Bob Malley, and Mrs Malley’s laughter, and Augusta, and the tired butterfly” (Hyde 2001, 9) – she perceives that it is all connected. She later experiences a notably similar sense of disillusionment when expected to believe in the Christian mysteries, once again finding that the adult world has misdirected its gaze: away from true (earthly) sources of consolation and restoration, and towards a “meaningless, sad, constipated goodness” (Hyde 2001, 91). Eliza had been told that “when the Bishop lays his hands on your head, Something Wonderful would happen to you”; however, “when the Bishop laid his hands on Eliza’s head, nothing happened at all, though other people, with other touches, had made her tremble” (Hyde 2001, 90). Just as the Glory Hole had proved to contain violets rather than fairies (and was no less for it), Eliza finds glory in the earth and its creatures, not in a heavenly escape from it.

Eliza’s understanding of the reasons for her discontent deepens as she ages, and these reasons all come down to disconnection; people are disconnected from and competitive with each other as a result of the very disconnection from knowledge and nature which has forced them into survival-mode. Eliza soon comes to resent her formal education within a “system [...] bent on division and dismemberment” (Sandbrook 2001, xxv). In classrooms where the reality of flora and fauna is obscured by “wire-netting over [the] windows, so that you can’t look out” (Hyde 2001, 93), the girls are offered only “dismembered pieces of buttercup [...] this is the calyx ... this is the corona” but they “never do anything by wholes [...] and nobody has the energy to put it together again” (Hyde 2001, 93-95). Eliza feels sure there is an alternative, a way of putting “bits of the picture-puzzle together” (Hyde 2001, 95), and she longs for it, later feeling “her dead mind come alive, receiving whole the fierce little pink trumpet of a flower, every face of the dozen listless deadbeats slumped together on a seat outside Parliament Buildings” (Hyde 2001, 108). Here, as so often throughout her work, Hyde links the natural world with the kind of honest, flawed, inartificial humanity that is

represented by the outcast; both fall outside the orderly grid of a respectable modern life, and the act of their exclusion or coercion has tipped the Apollonian-Dionysian balance so that Eliza inhabits a society as clinically dissected as the classroom's buttercup. This method of understanding and ordering the world, Hyde suggests, is not a humane way of making meaning, nor a complete one.

Even those who obediently refrain from looking beyond the window's wire-netting, who diligently learn their segmented societal lessons by rote, will not necessarily pass the exam of adult life; for as so many of Eliza's family and friends discover, attempted obedience to a stifling social code does not guarantee success within it. Hyde illustrates this most clearly and affectingly in her portrayals of the central female characters; particularly Augusta Hannay (Eliza's mother), and Carly (her sister). Augusta and her eldest daughter represent complete obedience to the "tradition of respectability", accepting without question what Hyde herself called "the deadletter virtues of the fathers" (Edmond-Paul 2011, 305). Eliza struggles to live with the simplistic coping-mechanism of divisive thinking that comes so easily to her mother and elder sister – as she imagines it, "a kind of little curtain dropped down hard in the mind" whenever life presented "one of the things Augusta said you must never talk about" (Hyde 2001, 49). This is primarily (though not exclusively) a matter of adhering to a strict sexual propriety, which bewilders Eliza as a child as much as it will frustrate her as an adult; "babies being born" is an area of knowledge Augusta has forbidden, and yet Eliza feels that "not knowing as much as Mary and Isabel was silly, when she was top of the class" (Hyde 2001, 49). Carly, unlike her younger sister, has been thoroughly socialised into obedience and propriety (with such little resistance, it seems, because she lacks self-confidence and is, according to her rather harsh teachers, a "nervous little idiot" [Hyde 2001, 37]). But despite playing by the rules of female respectability, Carly finds herself abandoned by her would-be fiancé, her glory-box of domestic treasures becoming a

tragic symbol of unmet potential: “she never wore any of the soft folded things which she had embroidered with such patience that they seemed like part of herself” (Hyde 2001, 218).

Furthermore, the sheltered nature of her life has rendered Carly unsuitable for any occupation but the domestic role she has been denied; when she attempts midwifery it becomes clear how ill-equipped she is even to observe “the many queer, potentially dangerous things that happened to the body and mind of a woman, even if she stayed always respectable” (Hyde 2001, 220). The novel leaves Carly at twenty-four in a state of arrested development; with neither marriage nor a nursing career to fulfil her, she determines that “all the love she had could be buried away in her mother, just as it was in Calver Street”, her childhood home (Hyde 2001, 225).

To remain devoted to Augusta is, of course, essentially to remain devoted to the conservative ideology she espouses – centred on “God and the British Empire” (Hyde 2001, 63), and on building impenetrable walls of respectability to protect from the troubles beyond. Eliza’s father, John, is at ideological loggerheads with his wife; he is a passionate Socialist and longs to understand “the insides and contents of things settled for Augusta by Providence and the British Constitution” (Hyde 2001, 41). But although John’s worldview is more in line with Eliza’s sensibilities than her mother’s conservatism, there remains an emotional void between them. This, too, is the result of rigid traditional conceptions of what is and is not respectable behaviour for a woman. At times John wishes that Eliza would “stay home and behave, like any other girl” (Hyde 2001, 196), while at others he regrets that “Eliza was a girl, not a boy” (Hyde 2001, 229), because she shows the qualities he would have been proud of in a son. For all his interest in social justice, John is as confounded as every other character in this novel; in his life and in the world, “something had gone wrong ages ago, and he was too befogged to set it right” (Hyde 2001, 229). It is important to note, as Mary Edmond-Paul has reminded us, that Hyde presents a vivid and broad picture of human isolation not to uphold “the dignity and significance of suffering” but “to suggest other possibilities” and argue for their urgency (Paul 1999, 173-4). Any such ‘other possibility’ is, for Hyde, dependent on finding an internal balance, a “centre of equipoise” – a transformation which cannot be attained while the Dionysian forces of the Collective Unconscious and the natural world are walled out by modernity’s “brick and mortar” (Hyde



2001, 174). But, as ever, Hyde presents not only the absence of this vibrancy but the possibility of its return; the “lost part of man’s being” remains caged (Sandbrook 1985, 40), but alive and hopeful, within the modern life she envisions as “a trap, a life-trap” (Hyde 2001, 81).

### **“Heaven is so worthless beside its earth”: Dionysian divinity dormant in the earthly world**

Any kinder possible-world, for Hyde, is dependent on the influence of those very forces the modern world has excluded, and *The Godwits Fly* evokes a widespread longing for “the ready healing of a leaf” (Leggott 2003, 192), even in those characters who endorse the very modernity which leaves them desolate. This is achieved by projecting the novel through Eliza’s perceptive and poetic consciousness; she perceives the connection between “all that breathes” (Hyde 1993, 91), seeing the adolescent Carly as a hunted fox (Hyde 2001, 115), and a stray cat as a fellow being (Hyde 2001, 204). Alison Hunt has noted that in this novel, as in Hyde’s others, “the animal” and the natural – Dionysian as they are – “[symbolise] the will to live, the erotic instinct, and the drive towards unity and hence civilization” (Hunt 2008, 137). It may only be a ‘drive toward’ (rather than a fulfilment), under the stifling status quo, but the sense gained is that if these forces could be reintegrated into the people and their societies, both young girl and stray cat would live more happily. It is characteristic of Hyde’s work as a whole that those aspects of life which she believes “drive towards unity” are implicitly linked with the earthly world, and are directly opposed by the strictures of heaven-oriented religion. Eliza’s empathy and identification with the natural world – beginning with her sadness for the “tired butterfly” and continuing into a sense that nature “loved Eliza, wanted her” (Hyde 2001, 89) – is linked with her openness to ‘other possibilities’: such as the possibility that human sexuality might not be deserving of condemnation, and the possibility of broadening one’s individual perspective by imaginative (poetic) acts of empathy. Where stumbling upon a pair of lovers provokes Augusta to hurry on quoting from a hymn “And

only man is vile”, Eliza herself “hadn’t seen anything vile, only a man lying over a girl and a green-and-bronze mist of leaves about their heads” (Hyde 2001, 119). Hyde had made reference to this same hymn before, in *Wednesday’s Children*, having Wednesday insist that “man isn’t vile [...] only rather hard to deal with”, and lament the “jaundiced minds the writers of hymns seem to acquire” (Hyde 1993, 60). In both cases, Hyde’s free-thinking female protagonists protest at the earthly and natural being branded as unclean.

While Eliza is the only character who fully recognises, embraces and reintegrates the Dionysian forces into her life (and consequently ends the novel at a point of newfound equipoise), the characters closest to her display similar yearnings and similar potential, even if they do not quite reach her level of awareness. In the non-familial relationships she chooses for herself – friendships and romances – Eliza is drawn to “lovely free ones” who are, she perceives, just as ill-suited to the world of brick and mortar as she is herself (Hyde 2001, 175). In Simone Purcell, Eliza’s closest (yet rather guarded) friend, and in her indecisive lover Timothy Cardew, we are presented with what Eliza might have been, if her convictions had been any less fierce. Timothy and Simone both show a reluctance to conform to respectability’s “rules and regulations” (Hyde 2001, 174) – Hyde emphasises this by associating them with the animal and organic – and yet they struggle to reach the balanced state of individuation Eliza attains. Simone is quite an enigmatic figure, being both a kindred spirit for Eliza and a foil for her character. Neither girl fits the grid of respectable modernity, but they take different approaches to surviving it; Eliza would completely dismantle respectability’s “life-trap” (Hyde 2001, 81), while Simone is intent only on slipping through its jaws. Nonetheless, as Susan Ash has noted, Eliza “associates Simone with the freedom implicit in the natural world” (Ash 1991, 194), and envisions her in animal, wild, even pagan images. She is “like a snake or a leopardess, admirable beasts” (Hyde 2001, 103), a “little grey goddess” (Hyde 2001, 107), and “in the manuka she burned with a restless, silvery fire”

(Hyde 2001, 127). But Eliza also sees that Simone's "leopard eyes looked about her in a hunted way" (Hyde 2001, 97), and recognises that much of her unconventionality is merely bravado. Despite shocking Augusta with her red lipstick and her romantic dalliances, Simone cannot see the point in "love without marriage" (Hyde 2001, 139), and thinks that any woman who does not press for marriage (any "fool" like Eliza) will "only get cheap". Eliza rejects this calculating, security-seeking mind-set, insisting that "a thing can't be given cheap" – that love cannot be viewed as a transaction. However, because she understands the self-defensive impulse behind Simone's sniping comments and sexual competitiveness, she is able to turn the other cheek: "Why should I be manoeuvred into hating you because you're beautiful – when all the time, at the back of my mind, I don't?" she wonders. "I could become disembodied, stand apart, only wish you to continue ever as you are, in this gentle evening light" (Hyde 2001, 137-8). This unguarded 'standing apart' is what Eliza ultimately achieves at the novel's end – and Simone, too, seems to end the novel closer to her "undiscovered self" in the discovery of an equable, loving marriage with Toby (Hyde 2001, 137). However, Eliza's other "lovely free one" is not so lucky.

Timothy is perhaps an even more revealing foil for Eliza's character. He and Eliza share many qualities – they are both free-thinkers, sensualists, artists, readers of poetry – and the qualities in Timothy which trouble Eliza are symptomatic of the modernity Hyde so lamented. Timothy's self-defensive disconnection from his fellow beings is his defining feature, in that it mars his obvious potential. This is suggested by his self-identification with the hedgehog, which, he informs Eliza, are both of their "mascots, [...] special beasts" (Hyde 2001, 122). It is certainly a fitting image for Timothy (less so for Eliza) – soft and warm underneath, but rather pathetic in its clumsy self-defence, "freezing every few inches into a most noticeable ball of prickles, which it thought exactly like a stone or a thorn-bush" (Hyde 2001, 166). Despite his affinity with and yearning for the natural world, and his longing to

create something of worth, Timothy, too, has come to accept “little curtains in the mind” (Hyde 2001, 49), or false divisions between physicality and respectability, between the mind and the body, and between the essential natures of men and women. But although he is ultimately a casualty of his fragmented world, Timothy’s characterisation still points to the potential in those people who appreciate the fecundity of the earthly world, and seek to mirror its generativity in creative works. From his first appearance, Timothy is associated with the affably-unkept animal world: “he looked up and laughed, backing ungracefully into the empty section whence the Hannay cats came marching home, their fur a mass of bidi-bidi” (Hyde 2001, 121). This unpretentious naturalness is, in turn, implied to allow him to stand back and appreciate unrespectable, decent humanity: “Timothy listened, then walked swiftly on, [...] smiling, loving the inextricable intimacies of a city at night, just as he loved bidi-bidis on his only good pair of trousers” (Hyde 2001, 123). However, this inherent warmth has not been unmarred by Timothy’s experience of socialisation; “he was part of the nature world which gave no quarter, but he was twenty-one” (Hyde 2001, 166), and so his disposition has become entangled with the values of his society, which “never does anything by wholes” (Hyde 2001, 95). Despite his earthy sensuality and his casual liaisons with other women, Timothy resolves to “keep [Eliza] white, for an ideal” – and this in the same breath as he plans on “introducing her to Nietzsche” (Hyde 2001, 123), whose “new age” Hyde looked to as an end to the reign of exactly such “deadletter virtues” as female sexual ‘purity’ (Edmond-Paul 2011, 305). Eliza eventually recognises the extent of Timothy’s internal contradictions; for all his willingness (with other women) to defy “the tradition of respectability”, it has made enough of a mark on him that he, like Simone, would “make love seem servile, [...] accept all the price-tickets – you’re cheap, you haven’t any pride, no self-respecting woman would do as you’re doing, so on and so forth” (Hyde 2001, 166). The tragedy of Timothy is the reticence that has resulted from his unresolved contradictions in

belief – an unwillingness to really defy convention that is inconsistent with his otherwise energetic, adventurous nature. A sense of this loss is most keenly conveyed in a scene in which he takes Eliza into the green world of an overgrown abandoned garden, but refuses at the last minute to make love to her, quite literally running away. Ash has noted the extent to which Hyde's lush descriptions of the natural space "suggest [...] the sensuous potential of sexual fulfilment" – until Timothy retreats, so that suddenly the "scene which had teemed with procreativity, is now tinged with death: the wood seems full of 'skeleton leaves,' and flowers in her hand are 'fleshless things'" (Ash 1991, 43). This inability to bring his desires to fruition is mirrored in Timothy's artistic impotence – in fact, Hyde makes this link quite overtly clear by having him struggle to sculpt a woman out of clay (Hyde 2001, 146). Timothy's failure to create meaningful art also speaks to the concerns Hyde held about Modernist sensibilities; Timothy thinks of "creation in the artistic sense" as "powerfully diverted from the body", and fears others will laugh at his "body that had tangled itself up with a mind" (Hyde 2001, 124-5). This rejection of the corporeal and sensuous was exactly what Hyde criticised in Modern poets: she wrote "I'll not be fool enough to renounce my body, as they do, to shove it aside and say 'Out of the way, you, and let me contemplate that cow!' Why, how can I contemplate a cow, to its satisfaction or to mine or the world's, without the use of the senses which are rooted in my body?" (Challis 2002, 235). Timothy's absorption of modernity's more isolating values prevents his reaching the balanced, individuated self that Eliza attains by the novel's end – despite his undergoing a near-death experience that might have seen him "broken and put back together again" the same way that Eliza was (Hyde 2001, 189). Hunt has observed that, although Timothy's deliberate near-drowning could have been a transformational moment, his "experience is neither epiphanic nor a rebirth, but one of many prefigurations of his untimely death in England" (Hunt 2008, 131). This death is likewise prefigured by Hyde's use of an image recycled almost word-for-

word from *Wednesday's Children*: “the moon made two little silver pennies and placed them on his eyelids, so that his face had a deathly look” (Hyde 2001, 166). For Timothy as for Wednesday, this funereal image foreshadows the death of a would-be artist, unable to heal the internal divisions resulting from a fragmented modern life. The final image of Timothy is, like that of Wednesday, the image of a frightened bird: “The last Eliza heard of him wasn’t any word at all, but a whistle, like a blackbird startled untimely beneath the hedge” (Hyde 2001, 167).

*The Godwits Fly* continues previously-outlined patterns in Hyde’s treatment of the Dionysian; she frequently uses minor characters to suggest that the dormant potential of natural humanity is cause for hope, even in those individuals less forthright than Eliza Hannay. This sense of future change and improvement is evoked with particular effectiveness by younger, relatively-untarnished characters – and I would suggest that Hyde’s figure of youthful possibility is as recognisable a character-mold as the free-spirit-born-too-soon that is Wednesday, Bede, and Eliza. In *The Godwits Fly*, Eliza’s ever-questioning mind and earthy sensuality is also demonstrated (albeit somewhat differently) by her younger sister Sandra – very much as Wednesday Gilfillian found a familial ally in young Pamela (who, like Sandra, is an empathetic, imaginative girl with golden hair). Both, as little girls, are confused by the marital sections of the Catechism (Hyde 1993, 39 ; Hyde 2001, 61) and just as Pamela was cured of being a “goody-good” by “liking dogs and gradually growing reconciled to their morals” (Hyde 1993, 39), Sandra loves and identifies with animals regardless of their apparent dirtiness: “‘Pigs are horrid,’ said Carly, to whom the sows looked massively naked and unclean [...] The pig was sad and good, and Sandra knew it, and nothing could alter her knowledge” (Hyde 2001, 57-58). This empathy with all fellow creatures is, as we have seen throughout Hyde’s work, linked with a capacity to imagine; and, just as Pamela was inclined to daydream, Sandra is “nearly imaginative” by child-poetess Eliza’s high standards (Hyde

2001, 107), and is certainly more so than Carly. Indeed, it is Sandra who, when the demands of respectable adulthood have drained so much from herself and sisters, recognises that “all the trouble began when we left off playing games after dark” (Hyde 2001, 174) – in other words, when imagining alternatives became no longer a matter of course. It is her comment that spurs Eliza’s lyrical reflection on being “lost, in a wilderness of brick and mortar, rules and regulations, love and hate; instead of the thicket where the supplejack bows, and streams with eels and wild mint” (Hyde 2001, 174). As Sandra points out, what will save Eliza (and what may save Sandra herself, if she grows into the same kind of woman) is her active creativity – her stretching out of imagination and empathy to the supposed ‘stranger’ who is really “so much the same person” as herself (Edmond-Paul 2011, 276).

### **“little pictures in the dark”: imaginative empathy & the Dionysian**

In following Eliza’s trajectory from playing make-believe to composing poetry, *The Godwits Fly* allows Hyde to deal in some depth with a central aspect of her vision; she presents empathy as being crucial to any gentler future, and empathy as being an imaginative act. Here too she pits creativity against over-Apollonian modernity and its “blind eye of Reality” (Hyde 1993, 104). Just as Wednesday’s Attica could identify with any creature and “understand everyone” when she closed her eyes (or when she had been delving into poetry [Hyde 1993, 144]), Eliza’s imaginings “always developed after dark” (Hyde 2001, 40), and therefore are not restricted by surface appearances, instead seeking a deeper “similarity within difference” (Leggott 2003, 26). In *The Godwits Fly*, as elsewhere in Hyde’s work, an otherwise divided population can regain a sense of fellowship when joined in poetry or song, and in the all-enveloping darkness:

When the *Cobar* slid out, everybody sang, boys and girls lying in one another’s arms, and the middle-aged, and the squawking brats [...]. They touched Rona Bay in the dark, bumping a wharf lit with lanterns, and the

passengers they took on, and the gruff unseens shouting good-bye, were people they had known never and yet always [...]. ‘Hine, e Hine.’ ‘Maiden, O maiden...’ Wipe that out, she thought, wipe that song off the face of the waters, if you can (Hyde 2001, 120).

As we have seen across these novels, Hyde links the “processes of art and nature” (Murray 1998, 186), in that characters who have an affinity with the latter will commonly express that through the former. Both nature and art are generative processes, both add to the world’s complexity rather than cutting it down to something tidy – and both have been neglected in a modernity which prizes order and conformity over human connection. In the development of Eliza’s imaginative capacities, we see her other qualities emerge: what she imagines reveals her love of the earth and its creatures, her rejection of “the tradition of respectability”, and her determination to converse and engage with the world. The genuine importance of imagination, and the purpose of it, is clear to Eliza from her very earliest years. Upon discovering that Bob Malley had not been in earnest about the fairy queen in the Glory Hole, Eliza distinguishes easily between Bob’s “lies” and her own story-building: “he was pretending, like a grown up” (Hyde 2001, 9). What Eliza imagines, she believes to be either present or possible (and desirable) in the future – bonding with animals, adventuring with her sisters in the wild – whereas adult “pretending” has no intention of bringing imagined happiness to real fruition. The grown-up version of “telling stories” is divorced from the real world, in a way that Eliza’s conjuring of a hypothetical pet fowl or a stream with wild mint is not. Hyde emphasises this by describing it as “a daydream power, which slips through the eyes of all children, and sometimes through the brooding eyes of meadow-beasts as well, but which is rarely held and formulated” except in such people as Eliza (Hyde 2001, 72). Certainly Carly – who as the eldest daughter is the closest to being an adult – does not understand Eliza’s inclination to story-telling (or, later, to poetry, which sounds to her like



“angry, incomprehensible rubbish” [Hyde 2001, 42]). She accuses Eliza of “telling stories” (Hyde 2001, 9), as though the physical absence of imagined creatures made Eliza’s feelings toward them false and useless – much as, in *Wednesday’s Children*, Crispin accused Wednesday of embarrassing her family for nothing but “a myth [...] a pack of lies” (Hyde 1993, 204). Both Carly and Crispin, devoted as they are to the “tradition of respectability” with its over-Apollonian emphasis on externals, do not understand the capacity of the creative imagination to see what is not apparent and go beyond “the proud sense of sight, whose explanations are all to reason” (Hyde 1993, 95). It is Carly’s devotion to reason and rules that prevent her from developing imaginative empathy, as Hyde makes clear by juxtaposing the two in Eliza’s narration. “Carly liked doing the things she was told; Carly didn’t see little pictures in the dark” (Hyde 2001, 25). Eliza, by contrast, bothers her mother by finding “old men behind bushes in the Park, and [asking] them home to tea” (Hyde 2001, 25), and crying loudly out of sympathy for the ‘death’ of a purely-imaginary pet (“inexplicably, Eliza’s heart felt torn in two” [Hyde 2001, 50]). Hyde also implies through Carly that formalised religion is a significant part of modernity’s drain on personal imagination and empathy; part of Carly’s inability to make stories in the dark is that she “was getting very religious since she went to St Monica’s, and said such long prayers that she was sleepy when she got into bed” (Hyde 2001, 40). Carly is not devoid of empathy, but hers is dormant and diverted exclusively towards her mother (and thereby her mother’s morality). The one time “pictures came” for Carly, it was a nightmare image of “her mother lying beside the stove” dead of a heart-attack (Hyde 2001, 43). Carly is gentle and loving, but the nature of her socialisation has meant that her sympathy is reserved for Augusta and withheld from anyone wild or uncouth. She is, in fact, a perfect example of Hyde’s observation that “four walls and a roof [...] are the very point where one is fatally side-tracked from ever having a home in this world (Hyde 1984, 10). Carly has sought identity and security by making her tidy house

insular from the wild world that should be her home, and the result is that she cannot engage rewardingly with the world, nor feel properly contented in the little fortress of safety she has tried to build. In other words, walling out whatever and whomever society has come to see as “the stranger” is to wall out a part of oneself, and the result is a fragmented society of fragmented individuals.

Eliza, by contrast, embraces life in all its wildness and diversity – and she gives voice to the neglected Dionysian forces through the very mode of creativity that enabled her first to perceive their worth. At a young age, Eliza “became a poet” in “a white dinghy down at Island Bay” (Hyde 2001, 70), and it is to other such natural spaces that she returns whenever she writes; most frequently she retreats to an abandoned section to write “sitting among high dockplants” (Hyde 2001, 72). Hyde emphasises that Eliza’s choice of space, and her very inclination to write about the world, is due to her love of “the feel of *things*, even hard, common things, like lumps of yellow clay and broken brick in the section, and the two halves of a white china cup somebody had thrown out” (Hyde 2001, 72). This resonates with Hyde’s image for the neurotic or suffering individual – “the people who are a broken cup” (Hyde 1984, 10) – linking Eliza’s love of the earth with her faith in an imperfect humanity, and both of those with her inclination to write. Looking around her at the outwardly “hard” and “common”, Eliza possesses the “ideal” ability (mentioned in *Wednesday’s Children*) to “believe or imagine much more” to them than what “the tradition of respectability” has tried to teach her (Hyde 1993, 13). The primary lesson of respectability (for women, at least) is sexual propriety, and Eliza’s rejection of these “deadletter virtues” begins with words and verses (Edmond-Paul 2011, 305). As a child, she finds an instinctive aural beauty in words whose sensual connotations she will later understand (and not shy from): “‘Though thy sins be red as scarlet, they shall be washed whiter than wool.’ (Scarlet...lovely word)” (Hyde 2001, 13). Later again, Eliza finds beauty in the sound of words and the rich colour of the

earthly reality they are used to describe: “the wine-coloured berries, in huge clusters. The boys said you could make crimson dye of them. Crimson...lovely word” (Hyde 2001, 89). Hyde had already used an appreciation for sensual words to suggest a character’s freedom from conventions of an ascetic propriety; young Pamela Gilfillian, like Eliza, questions ideas of respectability and enjoys the sounds of words as much as the feel of the earth, asserting that “nymphomaniac” is a “lovely word. [...] When I say it, I can see a white woman sitting up to her neck in an aquarelle blue river [...] and frogs hopping violently about, like semi-colons” (Hyde 1993, 39). The consistency with which Hyde’s admirable characters express their love of the earth through deliberately colourful, creative language speaks to her broader vision of the role imagination plays in righting the balance of an oppressive modernity.

Sandbrook has emphasised the importance of Eliza’s creativity to her attainment of what he fittingly describes as a “paradoxical blend of self-possession and self-dispersal” (Sandbrook 1985, 121). He notes that the title of her first collection, “Stranger Face”, is a reference to Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight”, throughout which “the stranger [...] is in some sense the poet himself; just as Eliza’s ‘Stranger Face’ in the novel expresses a new sense of herself” (Sandbrook 2001, 255). Eliza’s new sense of how to be “an individual living in the world” (Paul 1999, 157) – how to find a balance between individuality and collectivity, recognising that humankind is “one and yet partial” (Hyde 2001, 236) – is in fact dependent on her poetic powers. In earlier drafts of what became *The Godwits Fly*, Eliza had not developed her skills much beyond childhood, and the novel had “a more pessimistic ending, denying Eliza her successful writing career” and her life itself, sending her to an early death in a semi-conscious act of suicide (Hunt 2008, 135). As Alison Hunt has observed, without her ability to express herself and her Dionysian connection with “all that breathes” – her ability to engage in “conversation with the world” (Hunt 2008, 132) – Eliza’s internal transformation would not be possible. The power to imagine verses is linked with “that

beautiful strength to [...] Leave your doors wide to the stranger” by the title of Eliza’s poetry collection (Leggott 2003, 333), and, before that, by her description of having “the old power back; [...] with a stronger face, an estranged face” (Hyde 2001, 210). The gaining of this strength, this internal “home in the world”, follows Eliza’s experience of being “broken and put together again” (Hyde 2001, 189) – an experience expressed in images which resonate with Jungian and Nietzschean conceptions of transformation.

### **“to be given far and wide”: Eliza’s Transformed Self**

Eliza’s experience of being “broken and put together again” is very much that same resurrection of the psyche Hyde writes of in an essay on mental health; in her phrasing, such a transformation is “how one mind could come back from the darkness, and, like Persephone out of Hades, come laden with flowers” (Edmond 2012, online). As Jung and Nietzsche had done, Hyde found in such mythic allusions a metaphor for the transformative process from which “our undiscovered selves” emerge with a new sense of balance between individuality and collectivity (Hyde 2001, 137). Eliza’s transformation is framed in just such a way, and it is achieved by her adherence to a principle central to Hyde, and validated in Jung’s work on healing the psyche – that of continually advancing into and engaging with the world, “to do creative work for the benefit of a future age” (Hunt 2008, 272). It is Eliza’s will to life, her desire to carry on conversing with her fellow beings, that brings her back transformed from a darkness that might have engulfed her. Requiring as it does that “the Ego [...] die and be reborn anew” (Bishop 1995, 17), such transformation frequently occurs at “the threshold of death” (Jeffreys 2008, 79); and although Eliza experiences the same impulse to suicidality that drove Timothy into the waves, her sense of fellow-feeling with other beings (which was always stronger than too-socialised Timothy’s) is what prevents her from ending her own difficult life. Hunt has observed this parallel, and emphasised that, in Eliza’s case, “against her will to death stands her animal will to life and conversation” (Hunt 2008, 132). Hyde

indeed emphasises in her imagery that the will to life is sustained by the wild, the earthly, the Dionysian. Eliza is comforted in hospital by an unwed mother with a “tawny lion’s mane” of hair who “sat on the side of Eliza’s bed and talked”, despite glares from respectable ladies (Hyde 2001, 172); and later, a mangy stray cat draws Eliza away from suicidal thoughts by its being “so pleased to be alive, alive and in conversation. [...] The cat purred and arched, flinging himself, in a crescendo of little growling noises, against her knees” (Hyde 2001, 204). Soon after this, as she mourns the death of her baby without, however, giving in to suicide, Eliza regains the poetic abilities which had earlier waned: “poetry, her conversation with the world, has returned to her” (Hunt 2008, 132), and with it she can mobilise the Dionysian unity her society has shucked off along with earthy sensuality and imagination. In the final chapters, Eliza’s father John reflects on his daughter’s maturation into a “fully-fledged poet”, and gives a beautiful summation of the vital role Hyde sees for the creative consciousness in modern society:

There was a language, then, which all could speak. Poetry had something to do with it and the far lines of music, [...] and even machines, when people extracted themselves from thinking whorishly of machines as machines, and thought of them as the consummation of many tall woods, the stroking of the gentle breasts of many harvests. So the poet and the iron-age of today crept together – one to make the clamouring iron hands, one to teach the iron hands that, even yet, they were the thought and means of flesh (Hyde 2001, 229).

As Alison Hunt has observed, “in Hyde’s writing, iron signifies materialism and economics as a basis for war, violence, and the antisocial qualities of the individual” (Hunt, online), while nature and poetry are part of the antidote. The poet’s fundamentally human way of thinking and communicating is what Eliza will strive for, and from her new psychic “centre

of equipoise” she is “poised to face a future that is unknown but no longer feared” because she is secure in the “common heritage and purpose of humanity which transcends the boundaries of birth or circumstance and gives meaning to individual existence” (Sandbrook 2001, xxviii; Sandbrook 1985, 147). This sense of an innate, fundamental humanity is something Eliza has always possessed, but the full development of this sense has transformed her; and now, through her own work, it may transform the people around her (John, for instance). Eliza now possesses what Wednesday Gilfillian called “self-possession”, and thereby she is able to give love and effort for others “a little like the loaves and fishes. [She] can feed the multitudes and remain intact” (Hyde 1993, 189). Eliza ends the novel feeling secure enough in herself to take the risk of emotional openness, resolving to “cling again to things and to people, quite insanely, hurt myself desperately for love of them [...] I’ll go on, vaguely interested in all of them” (Hyde 2001, 235). In her successful maturation into a secure but giving creative woman, Eliza Hannay is, as Emma Neale asserts, “Wednesday resurgent” (Neale 1999, 185). Susan Ash concurs, suggesting that “[to] a certain extent *The Godwits Fly* is a compromise with the ideas presented in *Wednesday’s Children*. Eliza manages to successfully bridge the imaginative (bearable) inner world with the outer world of ‘reality’ by creating another world which does not exist: a literary text” (Ash 1991, 153). The crucial sense of common humanity is evoked most beautifully in the final chapter, as Eliza walks along Oriental Bay in the evening rain, absorbing and responding to the diverse, imperfect life around her, of which she is a part: “A passer-by whistles La Paloma. Dearer to me than my heart, you unknown, who pass and do not stop...” (Hyde 2001, 235). That sense of potential in the unknown so crucial to Hyde’s social vision is further suggested by Eliza’s own envisioning of her new psychic state. She has been reading Rilke, and sees herself in the poet’s description of Eurydice on the path between the worlds of darkness and light: “She was already loosened like long hair / And given far and wide like falling rain, / And dealt out,

like a stock of various goods. / She was already rooted...” (Hyde 2001, 235). Eliza is now rooted in what Jung conceived of as “a hypothetical point of equilibrium between the individual consciousness and the collective psyche” (Sugg 1992, 18) – and, while occupying a “Reality” of brick and mortar, she can reach into the unknowable darkness of the creative Unconscious and bring back something as fecund and enlivening as the violets she once saw appear from the depths of the Glory Hole.

To argue that the final chapter of *The Godwits Fly* presents a moment of transformation, a culmination of that which all her protagonists have reached towards, is no very great stretch – despite critics such as Frank Birbalsingh and even Gloria Rawlinson having called the ending “aimless”, “anti-climactic and patchwork” (Ash 1991, 45-46). Others, such as Patrick Evans, have argued that the novel’s “lack of a sense of completeness makes it in a sense a faithfully realistic work, a reflection of the society that it came from” (Evans 1990, 138). I would add that, in closing on an open-ended yet resolutely hopeful note, *The Godwits Fly* joins Hyde’s other novels in looking towards a presently-unknowable future, firm in the conviction of its great potential. Certainly Hyde herself did not think it “anti-climactic” to leave her protagonist ‘only’ internally transformed in an unchanged present; writing to a friend she confessed that she was “not a bit sure of [the novel], except the ending, which is rather lovely” (Rawlinson 1970, xiv), and expressed again elsewhere that “the ending is really good, I think” (Challis 2002, 287). Hyde’s confidence in her novel’s ending is not very surprising, in light of the long-term scope of her vision for human unity. While keenly interested in and sympathetic with the past and the present, her hopes for transformation and unity were necessarily invested in the future – to the extent that she did not mind how long it might take to find a willing publisher for such critical, potentially transformative material as *The Godwits Fly*. “It’s for the Future,” she declared, “and a few months or years or a lifetime

mean nothing to it” (Sandbrook 1985, 12). The integrated, unified future Hyde so longed for is almost palpably imminent on the last pages of each of the three open-ended novels this thesis has dealt with – and never more so than in *The Godwits Fly*, where Eliza Hannay has, having been “broken and put together again”, attained that “paradoxical blend of self-possession and self-dispersal” which constitutes Hyde’s ideal “home in this world”. Hyde saw little use in a neatly-resolved denouement – which is little more than “a cell into which one can retreat” (Hyde 1984, 10) – but rather considered the point of transformation to be “a place from which to advance” into a future as yet unwritten (Hyde 1984, 10). We leave Eliza (and her fellow “farers and wayfarers” [Leggott 2003, 337]) not at an unsatisfying end, but at the beginning of a journey only just embarked on – and, however much further the road may wind beyond this starting point, the ever-tramping feet Eliza hears “keeping pace with her own” assure us that nothing on earth will “capture them or set them back” from their purpose (Hyde 2001, 236).



## Conclusion

It has long been argued that the value of Robin Hyde's work is best established by a "careful reading" of the material, rather than a "special pleading" for the trying circumstances in which it was written (Sandbrook 2001, xv), and in this thesis I have sought to confirm this argument by offering just such a "careful reading" of her novels. *Wednesday's Children*, *Nor the Years Condemn*, and *The Godwits Fly*, distinct and at times disparate works though they are, all speak to a vision of peace and unity – of a true "home in this world" – that is evoked with remarkable consistency across Hyde's body of work. In fantasy, social realism, and autobiography alike, Hyde gestures towards the possibility of a more just and peaceful world than the frantic, disconnected modernity in which she lived – and which she saw perpetuate conflict by endorsing self-defensive insularity and competitiveness. In each of the three novels this thesis has analysed, imaginative and empathetic figures emerge from a homogenised, disconnected, over-Apollonian modernity: Wednesdays, Bedes, and Elizas who cannot and will not acquiesce to a social system that requires so much "rejecting and casting out" in order to maintain what is only at any rate a semblance of security (Hyde 1993, 170). Themselves victims of "a blasphemous and obscene travesty of what was meant for humans" (Challis 2002, 229), they respond to their own wounds by working to heal others – to heal the world which, despite outward divisions, is in fact a single open system. In choosing protagonists who have themselves been shunted to the margins of a society built on "the tradition of respectability" (Hyde 1984, 28), Hyde continually suggests the great potential of those internally-wounded "people who are a broken cup" (Hyde 1984, 10) – she leaves no doubt that the need for a more just future "is most urgently understood and communicated by those who [...] have 'been called stranger' in their own land" (Edmond-Paul 2008, online). In their own transformative experiences Hyde's perceptive protagonists reach towards or successfully undergo – experiences of being fundamentally "broken and put

together again” (Hyde 1995, 266; Hyde 2001, 189) – these characters demonstrate the point of psychic “equipoise” that is Hyde’s ideal “place from which to advance” (Hyde 1984, 10).

The expansive, all-encompassing nature of Hyde’s “vision of beauty” is best understood when her affinity for the works of Jung and Nietzsche is remembered (Hyde 1984, 7) – and, once details of character and imagery are examined for their resonances with Apollonian demarcation or Dionysian unity, Hyde’s engagement with such conceptions of psychic transformation becomes quite clear. What is more, as we have seen across these novels, even while she details the painful division of the human race and makes a sincere “effort towards understanding” the causes of that division (Hyde 1984, 13), there remains in Hyde’s work “an essential optimism, even a conviction of providence” (Wevers 1984, xv) – an insistence that even in characters less self-aware, less naturally empathetic than her protagonists, “there is a fertility and a richness untapped” (Hyde 1984, 11). If Brenda Gilfillian is too self-defensive to be kindly, if Timothy Cardew is too repressed to offer unguarded affection, if Starkie has been ill-served by the society he fought for, this is not to say the future must be equally as grim. Hyde’s characters – all of them, all of the differently-struggling “farers and wayfarers” (Leggott 2003, 337) – are possessed of “the dignity of the eternal” (Hyde 1995, 263), and it is to a future stretching on eternally that Hyde reaches for the healing transformation of humankind.

Given the ambitious scope of her concerns, it is little wonder that Hyde was teasingly dubbed “Mrs God [...] on account of [her] desire to re-arrange the universe” (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 3). What must be recognised in this desire, however, is that her idealism was both pragmatic and self-abnegating; with conviction in the promise of the future, Hyde’s hope was not so much that political systems would be hurriedly rearranged in her own lifetime, but rather that a rearrangement would occur at a much deeper level, within the human psyche itself. This shift in perception is, for Hyde, the foundation for any external

change – as Bede Collins observes in *Nor the Years Condemn*, societal ills must be addressed “from the ground up” (Hyde 1995 86), and in these novels that ‘ground’ is the psyche. The attainment of a more humane world is, for Hyde, an unknowably long-term project, one that will outlive her characters (and herself), and one that is dependent on a revolution “of the human spirit” (Bunkle, Hardy, Matthews 1995, 287), that is, of the psyche. The goal of this transformation, as Hyde explained in *A Home in This World*, is the arrival at “a centre of equipoise” (Hyde 1984, 10) which would allow the individual to enact a “paradoxical blend of self-possession and self-dispersal” (Sandbrook 1985, 121) – to be secure in their own self, while also being acutely aware of their connection to all their fellow beings. Only when all that Jung and Nietzsche would have called Apollonian – ego-centric individuality, surface-appearance and discreteness, “discipline and organisation” (Hyde 1995, 183) – is properly balanced by the boundless, unifying Dionysian forces, will anyone working for peace have a secure “place from which to advance” (Hyde 1984, 10). For Hyde, “the recognition of shared humanity, and shared pain, is the only antidote to conflict” (Hunt 2008, 300), and such recognition is not fully possible until the divisions erected by an age of “brick and mortar” are offset by a life-affirming Dionysian openness (Hyde 2001, 174). Only then will individuals, and society as a whole, recognise that only fear and blinkered ignorance “make the stranger” out of a fellow human being (Leggott 2003, 337), and thereby they will find “the beautiful strength to [...] [I]eave [their] doors wide to the stranger” (Leggott 2003, 333).

Woven as it is across her novels and echoed in her poetry, Hyde’s unifying vision is far from “aimless” (Birbalsingh quoted in Ash 1991, 45). Indeed, her work is actually characterised by its ‘aim’, its determination to reach the distant but necessary target of transformation – and then to continue onwards, to more tangible social transformations. Nor can these open-ended novels of Hyde’s rightfully be called “anticlimactic” (Rawlinson quoted in Ash 1991, 46); what she does leave unresolved she does so with purpose, with

conviction in the boundless potential of the future. *Wednesday's Children, Nor the Years Condemn* and *The Godwits Fly* (separately and together) act as what Hyde describes elsewhere as an “arrow, / Pointing a way where men will come in peace” (Leggott 2003, 338) – and *pointing* towards a gentler future is surely the first step to reaching it. Conceptions of a stabilising psychic transformation (such as those Hyde drew on in Jung and Nietzsche) were well-fitted to her self-described “honest, slow-moving but not mawkish idealism” (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 10) – and in her own variation on such ideas of fragmentation and unity Hyde created works that speak both to the age in which it was written and to the human condition in more general, timeless terms.

The unifying function played by art and imagination within Hyde’s novels of course mirrored the effect she believed the arts to have in her own extratextual world. As intent as Hyde was on engaging with the present and evoking its struggles with the difficult “business of community” (Leggott 1995, 276), her work also looked to the future – and argued that the security of that future could only be established by encouraging *connection*, rather than by erecting divisions. It is on this point, as Michele Leggott has noted (1995, 276), that Hyde’s work diverges most significantly from the work of Allen Curnow and other such contemporaries. What links and speaks across *Wednesday's Children, Nor the Years Condemn* and *The Godwits Fly* is the drive towards connection – of nations, of social factions, of “all that breathes” (Hyde 1993, 91). This all-encompassing “sympathy for the world” (Boddy and Matthews 1991, 357) of course stands in direct contrast to any narrow and insular nationalism – to any partisanism at all. In Wednesday Gilfillian’s imaginative empathy with slum-dwellers, sisters-in-law, and starlings, in Bede Collins’ faith in the potential of humanity’s great “crowd-body” (Hyde 1995, 262), and in Eliza Hannay’s identification with all fellow inhabitants of her earthly world, we find an expression of what Hyde believed to be the purpose of literature: that “all men of all generations and places”

might one day be “truly intimate with one another” (Rawlinson 1970, xvii), and mark “similarity within difference, without erasing either” (Leggott 2003, 26). Whether they are ancient goddesses “girt about with symbols, corn-sheaves, stout doves and olive branches” (Hyde 1993, 16), Christian figures such as Cain and Abel (Hyde 1995, 188), or poets of previous decades (Hyde 2001, 165), Hyde’s images “reach back into antiquity [...] to evoke a sense of the infinite past”, and to evoke these same “human possibilities” as they stretch into the future (Ash 1991, 145). Hyde is Janus-like in this regard, looking both forward and back for evidence of humanity’s advancement – and, as such, her attention to ancient and foreign literary canons is no schoolgirlish “passionate crush”, as Curnow contends (Curnow 1987, 168), but rather an integral part of a unifying world-view in which twentieth century human experience can hardly help but “fuse and interlock with the supra-national, the mythical and the archaic” (Sandbrook 2001, xiv). For Hyde, “we are all so much the same person” (Edmond-Paul 2011, 276) – fellow beings, “farers and wayfarers” (Leggott 2003, 337), joint inheritors of the “urgent racial memories” springing from what Jung conceptualised as the Collective Unconscious (Hyde 1993, 104). From this intangible source arise confirmations of a primordial unity, manifested and mobilised in creative works, such as in the “good books and good poems” Wednesday Gilfillian describes, which come into being because “somebody is there at the proper time and just *catches* them’ (Hyde 1993, 107). This, of course, does not account for the considerable element of craftsmanship that goes into artistic creation – balanced by pure inspiration as Apollo is balanced by Dionysus – but it surely cannot be doubted that Robin Hyde herself was certainly ‘there at the proper time’. Her position in a modern world wracked by conflict – positioned on the margins of society, due to her own ‘transgressions’ against punitive mores – allowed Hyde to write with both “a shrewdness that has kept its pertinacity” (Rawlinson 1970, xvii) and a supremely empathetic tenderness, “a great love for men” (Hyde 1984, 13). And, as Michele Leggott has observed,

this intent to build “strong / Bridges and stairs” of “rainbow love” across dividing abysses is perfectly apt for a woman whose Christian name was Iris Wilkinson (Leggott 2003, 65; 218), Iris being the name of an ancient goddess commonly represented by the ocean-bridging rainbow. In other words, in a world divided, it is “she who connects” (Leggott 1995, 271).

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