This copy has been supplied by the Library of the University of Otago on the understanding that the following conditions will be observed:

1. To comply with s56 of the Copyright Act 1994 [NZ], this thesis copy must only be used for the purposes of research or private study.

2. The author's permission must be obtained before any material in the thesis is reproduced, unless such reproduction falls within the fair dealing guidelines of the Copyright Act 1994. Due acknowledgement must be made to the author in any citation.

3. No further copies may be made without the permission of the Librarian of the University of Otago.
A STUDY
OF THE FAMILY
IN NEW ZEALAND
YOUNG-ADULT FICTION
1914 - 1996

A thesis
submitted to the University of Otago
in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in English

University of Otago
1999
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was supervised by Professor Lawrence Jones, to whom I am tremendously grateful, for his knowledge, insight, patience, and helpfulness.

I greatly appreciate the wealth of helpful suggestions offered by Dr John Watson and Dr Kathryn Walls. Many thanks also to Professor Jocelyn Harris, the receptionists and secretaries of the Otago University English department, and fellow postgraduate students, for academic, technical and moral support.

Thanks to the staff of the Dunedin Public Library (especially the children’s section), the Central Library of the University of Otago, and the Hocken Library, for invaluable help with research.

Personal thanks to my family and friends for being so tolerant and supportive.
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores 82 years of fiction written in New Zealand for adolescents. It has a particular emphasis on the portrayal of the immediate family and relationships within the extended or adopted family.

The sample consists of 22 novels written by 11 authors, the earliest published in 1914, and the most recent in 1996. The selection was made on the basis of popularity, influence and appropriateness to the theme of family relationships. It excluded novels which lacked a New Zealand, or were set in a distant past or future.

The sample of novels is grouped into two main categories which are divided chronologically. The earlier category includes a work by William Satchell, plus nine ‘classic’ New Zealand books from the Kotare series, chosen by Betty Gilderdale. The later consists of four novels selected from the work of Maurice Gee, four from Margaret Mahy, and five from Jack Lasenby.

A significant difference in the representation of family relationships exists between the two groups. The thesis examines six propositions, and finds them substantially supported by this sample. The propositions are that:

(1) Early authors tend to support the current values and myths of their society
(2) Early authors use inherited literary conventions as the vehicle
(3) Early authors do not intentionally write for ‘young-adults’
(4) Later authors question the values of their contemporary and past New Zealand society
(5) Later authors use critical realism or fantasy to explore serious issues
(6) Later authors consciously write for the ‘young-adult’ generic framework
Several points need to be made concerning style in this thesis:

- In order to distinguish speech within quotations, I have used a system of double-speech marks around quoted text, and single-speech marks within. The exception to this is in the case of indented paragraphs, where double-speech marks are used to indicate speech within a quotation.

- I have used a version of the Harvard system of references in the endnotes and bibliography. Though this system is normally applied to the body of the text, in this case the volume of quoted material made the conventional Harvard system inappropriate. It must be stressed that the endnotes are purely page-references to quotations, and do not contain comments.

- The bibliography lists the authors' first names, except where their first name is unknown, or if they prefer their writing-name to include initials.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: The Historical Adventure Story</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: The Family Story</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: The Survival Story</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Transition</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Maurice Gee</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six: Margaret Mahy</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven: Jack Lasenby</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>203</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 1970 Neil Begg, a Dunedin paediatrician, who was the Director of Medical Services for the New Zealand Plunket Society, wrote a book called *The New Zealand Child and His Family*, which was meant to provide wide-ranging advice to parents on how to maintain a good family. Begg admits in the Foreword that he has chosen to approach contentious issues not as an academic, thus “avoiding value judgements”, but as a “clinician” with personal opinions. The value judgements which he eagerly and liberally loads into this text were probably very representative of the attitudes of the 1970s, but also show a tradition of optimism in New Zealand about the state of the family which dates back to the beginning of the century. Begg writes at the beginning of his book:

The New Zealand family has great advantages. One can imagine a young family under the blue skies of the north, playing on a crescent sweep of sand reddened by pohutukawa flowers and bathing in the warm and friendly sea. One can visualise a young family in a comfortable farm home, with all the advantages of country life, yet never being too far from school, doctor or shopping centre. In all our cities one can see the pleasant suburban homes with sunshine and flowers and lawns, which so often demonstrate the interest and pride of their owners.

The overwhelming impression is that of security, within a civilised yet unspoilt country, which prides itself on closeness to nature. The other local trait which Begg describes as an advantage to the New Zealand family is the pioneering attitude of parents:

Most fathers are adaptable and are willing to take the head off the car, to pour concrete, to hang a door, or to wash the dishes. New Zealand mothers grow the flowers before arranging them. They bring in the sheep, or paint the cottage, play hostess to a dinner party, or cook scones on a primus stove.

His conclusion to this credo is that “Families here may not be wealthy, by some overseas standards, but they lack for little. Family life should be varied, busy and happy in this lovely country.” Begg was fifty-five when he wrote *The New Zealand Child and His*
Family, and his ideals of family life inevitably reflected his own childhood, which was privileged but not unusual, and his happy life as a husband and father.\textsuperscript{5} His book is partially an attempt to share the secrets of his success with other New Zealand families. However, what is most interesting about this work is what Begg omits to discuss. Notable absences in the index include any reference to sexual abuse, parental alcoholism, violence, neglect, poverty, adultery, divorce, death, desertion, or any of the other more dramatic problems which affect families. Adolescent anxieties are of little interest to Begg. He avoids any mention of social problems such as drug-taking, violence, or sexually transmitted diseases. Masturbation is described as a relatively harmless activity indulged in by pre-schoolers, rather like "head-banging or nail-biting".\textsuperscript{6} Begg half-heartedly disapproves of contraception, is thoroughly opposed to abortion, and thinks that problems to do with unwanted pregnancy can be easily resolved by forcing the putative fathers to pay maintenance.

Such a simplistic approach to families, and reluctance to address real issues of concern, can be said to represent the common attitude of New Zealand society, right back to the turn of the century. But in many respects, Begg represents the end of this period of optimism. His belief in the great New Zealand myth of pioneering spirit within the family, combined with the moral values of a civilised British background, was soon to be replaced nation-wide by an obsession with the dysfunctional family, rather than the functional one. This transition is encapsulated within New Zealand literature, especially young-adult fiction, in which the family is a prominent concern. Lawrence Jones points out that social traits particular to New Zealand are not merely reflected by literature, rather that: "literature is an institution within society, both influencing and being influenced by other institutions and expressing the changing nature of that society not only in what it depicts and its attitudes towards what it depicts, but also in its conventions, its structures." Therefore young adult fiction "is both an expression of and an influence on the changing attitudes towards adolescence, authority, gender roles, etc."\textsuperscript{7}

Children's literature is an interesting subgroup of literature because it has both more freedom and more bias than its adult counterpart. Consequently, it benefits from close analysis. Children's writers are free to be more experimental in plot, though they are severely limited in other ways. The vocabulary used, the length of the work, and style of writing have to be carefully controlled, hence have become almost formulaic for different age groups. Most importantly, the content is restricted. Sex, violence, death, religion, and politics are all troublesome topics, and if not refused by the child reader, are often vetoed
by the parent, teacher or librarian. Thus, children’s literature reflects strongly the values, obsessions and prejudices of the moral leaders of its time.

Children’s literature is often written with an intention to educate the child, not just factually but spiritually and emotionally. Adult fiction on the other hand caters to a mature reader with supposedly less tendency to be corrupted by dangerous ideas. It is not as carefully monitored by the various authorities who stand between the writer and audience, so is free to be more provocative. Some forms of control affect not the content of books, but the slant on content. For example, earlier this century it was acceptable to include Maori characters in children’s fiction, but not to sympathise with the Maori cause. There were some significant exceptions, like William Satchell, who managed to get published despite the fact that he fundamentally opposed the fashion of his era.

Children’s fiction can be divided into several categories, based on age. The term ‘Young-Adult’ is a relatively new one, used interchangeably with ‘Teenage novel’ and ‘adolescent fiction’. Carpenter claims that the teenage novel “has its origins in America before the two World Wars,” but did not reach full development as a separate genre until the 1950s. Previously, “children who grew out of juvenile books were expected to read popular classics, such as the works of Dickens and Scott, before graduating to more demanding adult novels.” Carpenter believes that the American teenage novel is “something of an isolated phenomenon. Though in Britain since the mid-1950s many books have been written with older children or teenagers in mind, there has not been the same concentration on adolescence itself as subject-matter, nor the same shrill tone of voice in writing about it.”

Teenage fiction which emerged in America during the 1960s had a “different approach to adolescence” as a theme in itself, and he suggests that J.D. Salinger’s novel The Catcher in the Rye (1951) was at least partially responsible for the change: “Many writers who had read Salinger in their own adolescence began to create Holden Caulfields of their own, with comic self-regarding attitudes and complicated feelings about the adult world.”

An interesting question to consider is whether the changes that have occurred in young-adult literature are partly inspired by the redefinition of the genre. Previously, writers may have aimed their work at teenagers, but still considered themselves children’s writers, rather than ‘young-adult’ writers. This psychological difference could explain many of the trends that are associated with the new definition, such as a focus on realism, in plot and character, and the absence of an explicit ‘moral to the story’.
The British critic, Frank Eyre explains how realism has emerged within children’s writing over the century:

The age at which children read particular kinds of books has continued to contract during the past twenty years and in the last decade publishers and writers have been taking a good hard look at teenage reading. One approach to this problem has been a deliberate seeking after realism, and the effects of the permissive society are beginning to find their way into this sort of book for children.¹²

By contraction, Eyre means that the reading-age of adolescents has moved backwards over time. Arthur Ransome wrote for teenagers, but is now read by under ten-year olds. Older children now read ‘adult’ adventure stories, like Hammond Innes, Alastair MacLean, and Ian Fleming. Eyre also suggests that the trend towards realism is concurrent with the redefinition of the genre, the move towards ‘young-adult’ as a separate category:

A more interesting... development has been the introduction of what appears to be the beginning of an altogether new kind of writing for children. One publisher has described these books as ‘novels for new adults’, others call them ‘novels for older children’ and there are several variations on these themes. Some of these books are little more than a normal children’s book with a love interest added, but the best of them have enlarged the range of children’s literature by creating a kind of book which although no longer in any sense a ‘children’s book’ by any earlier definition of that phrase is nevertheless not written for adults and is in some indefinable way recognisably different from a book written for adults.”¹³

The development of realism in work for children partly inspires the new category, and is used by it, but other trends are apparent. Fantasy and the historical adventure story have also come back into fashion, and are now commonly aimed at the young-adult:

No one looking for the first time at the books of the last twenty years [1950s-1970s] could fail to notice the curious contradiction between two parallel trends. On the one hand we find critics, librarians, teachers, writers, preaching the need for an ever-increasing social realism - and authors doing their best to meet this need. On the other, an extraordinary revival and re-creation of folk-tales, fairy stories, fantasies,
allegories, myths and legends which combine to produce an escape from reality, or a
turning to a simpler kind of truth, so massive that it must surely indicate a profound
need by present-day children.... Parallel with these two developments has been a
dramatic improvement in the quality of historical fiction for children - in itself
another form of escape, though the better books are far more than that, having a
reality of their own kind.14

While America may have lead the way in creating the young-adult genre, the predecessors
of it include writers of all nationalities. Originally, the gap between literature for children
and adults was narrowed by the emergence of adventure stories (mainly aimed at teenage
boys), by writers such as Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Mark Twain, and Robert Louis
Stevenson. These matured into combination adventure and fantasy stories, such as Peter
Pan, and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, then emerged as a form which Gilderdale calls
the family story, which may contain fantasy and adventure, but remains firmly rooted at
home. L.M. Montgomery is perhaps the best example of a ‘family’ writer.

The success of writers such as Judy Blume and Robert Gormier, shows that by the
eighties the public was eager to purchase books which did not show life rose-tinted.
Because of better education in the last few decades, and relaxation of strict family
hierarchies, teenagers have developed a dislike of being preached to or patronised. Writers
have responded to this trend by focussing on the problematic issues of youth. Today, what
is most appealing about young-adult fiction is its willingness to explore teenage obsessions
and concerns, such as puberty, sexuality, homosexuality; problems at school such as
bullying and academic failure; and problems at home such as incest, violence, and drug
abuse. Underlying all of these topics are relationships, and those of the home where the
young-adult has up till now spent his/her years are clearly extremely important.

Family relationships are one of the numerous themes discussed by Betty Gilderdale,
though not in great depth, in her pioneering study of 145 years of New Zealand Junior
Fiction, A Sea Change. In the introduction, she makes reference to the “marked decline in
the characters of both teachers and fathers” in children’s literature post 1949, and lists
several books in which fathers are shown as “absent and irresponsible”, “drunken”, “bad-
tempered”, with little “leaning towards the arts”, and a general lack of redeeming features.15
Mothers do not fare well either: “Over the years the picture given of mothers has moved
from that of the kindly counsellor in the early books to being almost totally preoccupied
with domestic duties in the later ones.”16 This decline over time of the character of parents
and authority figures is not limited to New Zealand literature, but has also caused debate overseas. American critic, Ann Scott McLeod describes the emergence (in the 1970s) of a new theme of parental inadequacy:

Alcoholic mothers are legion, as are fathers who abandon their families literally or figuratively.... the divorce rate in children’s books for the seventies may have even surpassed the national statistics.¹⁷

New Zealand trends may not be so extreme, but a reoccurring concern with parents or parental figures is certainly apparent, dating back to the beginning of the century. Early fictional parents are significant in that they appear as large forces in the novels, influencing the behaviour and morals of their children. This stereotype is slowly replaced by absent or misguided parents, who either neglect their children or push them too hard. Later authors use parents as ‘the bad guys’ whom the protagonists have to conquer. These characters are corrupted by selfishness, often bad-tempered and intolerant. Many abuse their children mentally and physically, and sometimes sexually. This hostile view is softened to a more compassionate portrayal by recent authors, whose fictional parents are merely weak people with their own problems, who need to be forgiven rather than conquered. Many of Margaret Mahy’s books, for example, show a reversal of caregiving, where the child takes over the role of nurturer to an older person.

This dissertation will develop the discussion of family relationships which Gilderdale has introduced, concentrating on young-adult fiction which uses the theme more strongly. Although the study is basically chronological, divisions will be made based on genre, so as to allow easier comparison. Ideally, all New Zealand young-adult fiction should be assessed. Since the first works which retrospectively belong to this category appeared early this century, there has been a steady increase in volume, not proportional to the growth of population, but actually accelerating. Whereas earlier authors wrote either for children or adults, the teenage market has become a discrete option, gaining in popularity. Because it is beyond the scope of this project to deal with the entire range, the selected sample is representative, covering most of the early texts, some middle-period ones, and significant recent works. It might be claimed that no sample of fiction could ever be truly representative. In this instance the word stands for ‘most widely known and popular’.

Many problems beset the study of children’s fiction, a major example being that critics and commentators are separate consumers from the intended audience. Claudia
Marquis raises this point, explaining that children’s literature is not “defined by its authorship”. For example, Margaret Mahy, an adult, does not write for other adults. “Rather, even more than black or women’s literature, it must be defined by its singular, primary audience,”18 which is children. But this leads to another problem: how do critics deal “with a literature where the primary audience, essential to its definition, cannot focus or organise criticism, but where the adult’s interest, while it seems to provide the legitimating perspective, yet somehow in itself seems suspect?”19 There is no satisfactory answer to this question.

Therefore, in the absence of surveys of the readers themselves, popularity has to be judged by indices such as print-runs, reprints, and the commentaries of adult reviewers. The books’ acceptability to educationalists for use in classrooms and school-libraries is another indication of good reputation.

The sample consists of three sub-groups:

1) William Satchell’s *The Greenstone Door*
2) the Kotare Series of reprinted books,
3) selected books written by three of the best known contemporary young-adult authors: Margaret Mahy, Jack Lasenby and Maurice Gee

Satchell was chosen because his book, while not intended for teenagers, nevertheless has been recommended for teenage reading by teachers, ever since the mid 1930s when it was rediscovered and the first of many reprints appeared. In *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, Gilderdale acknowledges *The Greenstone Door* in her chapter on ‘Children’s Literature’ as “the first book which, for its examination of complex issues and emotions and the depth of its characterisation, warrants acceptance as both a children’s book and as a work for adult readers”.20 Accordingly, Lawrence Jones also discusses it in *The Oxford History*... in his chapter on ‘The Novel’.21

The Kotare Series was originally intended to consist of ten books, selected by Betty Gilderdale. The publishers, Hodder and Stoughton, explain the significance of the series name as follows:

‘Kotare’ is the Maori word for the native kingfisher. Its scientific name is halcyon sanctus, [sic] which means ‘sacred kingfisher’. We chose this name for two reasons: first, because our rich heritage of children’s literature should be precious, if not
sacred, to all New Zealanders; and secondly, because the kotare seems to symbolise the qualities to be found in these books, which are bright and lively and colourful as the bird itself.22

Gilderdale insists on the importance of preservation of New Zealand children’s literature. She comments: “I feel it to be vitally important for New Zealand children to have a literature that is kept in print - if they never know how ideas change yet people remain recognizably the same, how are they ever to get any feeling of historical perspective?”23

The number of books in the Kotare series is officially nine, and they cover a span from 1917 to 1973. Esther Glen’s Six Little New Zealanders (1917) was considered by Gilderdale to be the first family story. Other ‘firsts’ were Edith Howes’ Silver Island (1928), the first ‘adventure and survival story’, Mona Tracy’s Rifle and Tomahawk (1927), the first ‘historical adventure story’, Isabel Maud Peacocke’s The Cruise of the Crazy Jane (1932), the ‘first New Zealand boating story’, and Phillis Garrard’s ‘earliest’ in the school story genre, Tales Out of School (1929).24 Esther Glen’s sequel to Six Little New Zealanders, Uncles Three at Kamahi (1926) was reprinted in this series, not only on its own merits, but also because of the fame of Glen herself, now recognised as a pioneer of children’s fiction. The most prestigious New Zealand children’s fiction award is named in her honour.

The last four books in the Kotare Series are separated from those mentioned above by a gap of 27 years. Significantly, the time-jump is not particularly noticeable to the reader, for the reason that these last stories are not representative of their own era, but have a historical setting. The intention of the Kotare Series is to preserve the heritage of our children’s literature, and this includes modern stories with an authentic historical flavour.

Joyce West “made a very special contribution to New Zealand children’s literature at a time when there was little indigenous publishing for young people”.25 The Year of the Shining Cuckoo (1961) is set during the 1920s in the Far North dairy country of her own youth. Ron Bacon, a schoolteacher in Auckland, is the author of the most recent book in the series, When the Bugles Blow (1973). This has the dual setting of Auckland, 1963 and 1863.

A discrepancy in the Kotare Series is Ronald Syme’s novel The Spaniards Came at Dawn (1959), which was originally intended as a Kotare reprint, but was never finally republished. This sample does not include Syme because his book is set in 1670, making it outside the range of social interest, and also because it is fundamentally uninterested in
issues of family. The other novel which is excluded from discussion for this reason is Phyl Wardell’s *The Secret of the Lost Tribe* (1961), the last of the Kotare books to be republished.

In my selection of three recent authors, Gilderdale was also an influence. Although *A Sea Change*, being seventeen years old, does not include books published in the last couple of decades, Gilderdale has since expressed in other publications a high opinion of authors Margaret Mahy, Jack Lasenby and Maurice Gee. Each has written many young-adult novels relevant to the theme of family portrayal. Certain categories of their fiction have been excluded, namely any which do not have a New Zealand past or present setting. For example, Maurice Gee’s *The Halfmen of O*, set in an alternate world, will not be discussed as a primary text, while his supernatural thriller, *Under the Mountain*, set in Auckland, about 1970, is acceptable. Jack Lasenby’s fictional settings (of small towns such as Waharoa) are familiar, but *The Conjuror* and *Because We Were the Travellers*, set in futuristic post-holocaust New Zealand, are incompatible with a topic based on the interplay between reality and realist writing, so have been excluded.

Gee writes for adults as well as adolescents, but never for younger children. Mahy writes for all age-groups of children, but in significantly age-conscious ways. Lasenby is essentially a young-adult writer, though he has produced works for children, like his picture books, the Uncle Trev stories, and perhaps *Harry Wakatipu*.

Gee’s novels are prominently about ‘growing up’, but also about the misuse of power, by teachers, police, members of the community, politicians, parents and officials. Mahy’s are about learning empathy or forgiveness towards others, especially towards old, and even corrupt characters. Flawed parents abound. Her children do grow up, in that they learn how to take responsibility for others, as well as themselves. Triumphs are always psychological, rather than physical. Lasenby is more ambivalent. He approves of children having survival skills, but doesn’t try to force them before their time to mimic the patterns of the adult world. He has an obvious delight in childishness, the joys of youth - a frequent adult complaint in the Seddon Street trilogy is that the kids have more fun than anyone else in Waharoa. Lasenby allows children to enjoy such petty pursuits as war, theft, vandalism and revenge. *The Mangrove Summer* combines a ‘survival story’ concept with an *Animal Farm/Lord of the Flies* obsession with the abuse of power between children. *The Lake* is about more serious forms of abuse, and the need for mental and physical self-sufficiency.

The selected recent texts are as follows: Maurice Gee’s *Under the Mountain* (1979), *The Fire Raiser* (1986), *The Champion* (1989), and *The Fat Man* (1994); Margeret Mahy’s

The table below shows the full list of primary texts, in chronological order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Published</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Satchell</td>
<td>The Greenstone Door</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>1845-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther Glen</td>
<td>Six Little New Zealanders</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1890s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther Glen</td>
<td>Uncles Three at Kamahi</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1890s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mona Tracy</td>
<td>Rifle and Tomahawk</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>1868s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Annie Howes</td>
<td>Silver Island</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillis Garrard</td>
<td>Tales Out of School</td>
<td>1932/1938</td>
<td>early 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel Maud Peacocke</td>
<td>The Cruise of the Crazy Jane</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce West</td>
<td>The Year of the Shining Cuckoo</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Bacon</td>
<td>Again the Bugles Blow</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1863/1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Gee</td>
<td>Under the Mountain</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>late 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Mahy</td>
<td>The Changeover</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Mahy</td>
<td>The Catalogue of the Universe</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Mahy</td>
<td>The Tricksters</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Gee</td>
<td>The Fire-Raiser</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Mahy</td>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Lasenby</td>
<td>The Lake</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1952-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Lasenby</td>
<td>The Mangrove Summer</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Gee</td>
<td>The Champion</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Gee</td>
<td>The Fat Man</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>mid 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Lasenby</td>
<td>Dead Man’s Head</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Lasenby</td>
<td>The Waterfall</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Lasenby</td>
<td>The Battle of Pook Island</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1930s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To see the relationship between date of publication and date of setting in the form of a graph, see Chapter Four.

Because this topic is fairly new, there is not enough body of critical debate to warrant a specific literature review. Instead, commentary from individual critics will be discussed where relevant within each chapter and section. Types of reference work will include critical reviews on literature, biographical studies on authors, historical texts
relative to New Zealand's cultural history, studies on the family by social analysts, and psychoanalytical texts. Several other works of literature will be considered as comparisons to the primary texts, such as novels by other authors writing about the same period or location, adult fiction written by authors in the sample, and overseas juvenile and adult fiction which has clearly influenced authors here.

The thesis will be divided into seven chapters. The first three chapters will begin with a discussion on genre. For each primary text used there will be a summary of the author's biographical details, a brief plot outline, followed by critical responses. Chapter Four will discuss the transition between the Kotare books and the contemporary sample. The final three chapters will follow the same form as the first three, except instead of an introduction concerning the genre, the discussion will be biographical, relating to the author.

The main body of the thesis will consist of a detailed examination of the theme of family, making comparisons to the other works and between primary texts where necessary, and relating the text to social attitudes of the era in which it was written and set. Writers who have set their novels at a different time from their own present, will be considered relative to two time-frames: story-setting and time of writing.

There are several themes relative to a study of the family. The primary aspects which warrant discussion are the relations between parent and child, parent and parent, and between siblings (often replaced by a focus on lines of authority among children in gangs or school). The extended or adopted family is a common preoccupation of New Zealand writers, and includes parental surrogates (guardians), uncles/aunts, grandparents (often replaced by the hermit/mentor figure), teachers (and schools, standing in loco parentis for their pupils), authority figures such as ministers, policemen, politicians and social workers, as well as neighbours, and the sense of community as a larger family. Growth or maturity of the child is a feature of all the texts: in the earlier ones it is connected to the concept of the pioneer, while in the recent novels maturity is more often challenged, and sometimes seen as a cause for regret rather than pride. The earlier texts in general concentrate on the functional family, while the recent selection shows far more interest in the dysfunctional family, exploring problems such as adultery, death, desertion, divorce, rejection, abuse (sexual and violent), poverty, and the failure of even the nuclear family to be content.

Each young-adult book will be evaluated according to whichever of these themes it used. In summary the themes are:
Family Relations
- parent to child
- parent to parent
- sibling relations (including sibling rivalry)

Extended or Adopted Family
- parental surrogates / guardians (such as uncles, aunts, grandparents)
- hermit characters
- teachers (or schools, in loco parentis)
- authority figures (e.g. policemen, ministers, politicians and social workers)
- neighbours / sense of community
- interracial ‘brotherhood’
- alienation from community or family

Growth/Maturity of Child
- mimicry of parents
- pioneering children, capable of instant maturity
- juvenility
- ability to forgive, as an aspect of true maturity

Problems Which Face the Dysfunctional Family
- disintegration of ‘home’
- parental inadequacy, adultery, desertion, divorce, rejection
- favouritism / envy
- death
- remarriage (or marriage) of parent
- abuse (sexual and violent)
- poverty
- failures of even the nuclear family

The ultimate aim of the thesis is to test six main propositions. The first three relate to the earlier authors: firstly, that they tend to support society’s current values and myths; and that although some may be challenged, the basic structures remain in place; secondly, that they use inherited literary conventions to express their attitudes; and thirdly, that although they
may be read by teenagers, the earlier authors are not intentionally writing for an audience of young-adults. The last three propositions relate to the more recent authors: firstly that from the 1960s they tended to question the values of both contemporary society, and that of the society in which they grew up; secondly, that they tend to use critical realism or fantasy to explore serious issues, rather than relying on traditional literary conventions; and thirdly, that they consciously write within the young-adult generic framework, with a full appreciation of that category.

The ultimate argument of the thesis is that earlier young-adult authors portray families in idealised ways, while later authors have a more realist intention: to reflect the family as they think it actually is.
CHAPTER ONE
THE HISTORICAL ADVENTURE STORY

William Satchell’s The Greenstone Door, published 1914, set 1845-1864.
Mona Tracy’s Rifle and Tomahawk, published 1927, set 1868.

The historical adventure story is perhaps one of the oldest genres of adolescent writing, being defined by an action-centred plot, usually revolving around some period of social crisis and conflict, set at least thirty years before the time of publication. The originators of the genre include Daniel Defoe, Charles Kingsley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mark Twain. The predominantly male authorship was mirrored by a predominantly male readership; the stories were intended and marketed for boys, and to some extent still are. Gilderdale comments: “Any modern book which takes for its subject matter an historical theme inevitably brings to its treatment some of the preoccupations of the writer’s own time, as well as complying with the differing fashions of historical research.”

The historical adventure stories in this sample demonstrate that one such preoccupation was with the role of males as adventure heroes. All three are male-oriented in some way. William Satchell’s The Greenstone Door is a hybrid adult/adolescent novel, dealing with issues relevant to males of all ages; Mona Tracy’s Rifle and Tomahawk begins with double-protagonists, male and female, but soon begins to concentrate on the boy; and Ron Bacon’s Again the Bugles Blow, although written more recently, still explores the story of a boy dealing with a world of male authority figures.

This male-hero focus has implications for the portrayal of family. In the absence of complex family relationships, one finds a substituted interest in ethnic relationships, class distinctions, comradeship, and relations of power within a group, such as hierarchies within armies and tribes. In times of conflict (when most historical adventure stories are set), traditional structures break down, and roles have to be recreated. Children are often pushed into adult positions ahead of their time, and are forced to become not just self-sufficient, but also capable of taking responsibility for others. This constant emphasis on maturity gives a somewhat didactic tone to the genre which would not appeal to younger readers, but
is ideally suited to the adolescent to whom performance under pressure (or heroism) is appealing.

WILLIAM SATCHELL

THE GREENSTONE DOOR

William Satchell was born in England in 1860, worked as a writer and publisher (both unsuccessfully), and emigrated to New Zealand in 1886. After a short, disastrous career as a farmer, he moved to Auckland, and attempted for many years to make a living as a writer. Satchell married Susan Bryers in 1889 and eventually fathered nine children. Parental and marital responsibilities were important to him. Although the family was never desperately impoverished, his bad luck (or mismanagement) regarding financial matters meant that supporting his family was always a struggle. During the worst two years, he actually had to send his wife and children back to the Hokianga to stay with her relatives, which must have been extremely shameful for a gentleman with such high standards. Echoes of an obsession with money and family responsibility appear in all of his novels. He attempted to set his fictional heroes on a more successful course, by having them court wealthy heiresses, who would bring their own money to a marriage, and thus not require the same degree of support from their husbands.

While living in Auckland, he published four novels, none of which were particularly well received at the time, though they have subsequently been rediscovered, republished, and praised by later generations. He wrote during a time when “the colonial phase of New Zealand history had given way to a more settled, pastoral period, but it is the colonial era that marks his work, and to this extent he is the author of historical novels.”

His fourth and best known novel, The Greenstone Door, is now considered a “powerful, if flawed masterpiece”. Probably written for an adult readership, it is also appealing to adolescents, who can identify with the youthful protagonist. The work is discussed twice in the Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, once in Lawrence Jones’ essay on ‘The Novel’, and again in Betty Gilderdale’s chapter on ‘Children’s Literature.’ It is because of The Greenstone Door’s multiple strengths that it is able to fit
into the categories of both adult and junior fiction: "It has the strong story line and action generally necessary for the latter, but it has the introspection of the former." 31

Set in 1845-1864, *The Greenstone Door* tells the story of a ‘Maori-Pakeha’ boy, Cedric Tregarthen, who is born to European aristocracy but brought up within a Maori tribe. Unlike other ‘adoption into the wild’ sort of stories (for example *Tarzan*), Cedric is given a western education by his pakeha foster-father, which enables him to rejoin settler society in Auckland without particularly difficulty. Adaptation to different cultures is the overall theme, and the novel explores it with surprising political correctness, even in today’s obsessive climate. Ironically Satchell’s viewpoint proved to be ahead of its time; cultural tolerance was unfashionable in 1914. Nelson Wattie explains that Maori and Pakeha relations during the New Zealand Wars were “not a fashionable theme.” 32 Kendrick Smithyman elaborates: “[*The Greenstone Door*] came out at the wrong time: it was not the moment to have a compromised Pakeha-Maori character speak out against orthodox patriotism.” 33 Phillip Wilson suggests that “its anti-war theme was disturbing on the eve of war in Europe.” 34

*The Greenstone Door* reveals a preoccupation with family and family substitutes and the values, especially loyalty, that bind them. It explores loyalty across ethnic boundaries, between children and their biological parents, loyalty to tribe, to foster-family, to friends, colleagues and superiors. Much of the tension of the book derives from the conflict between these loyalties; accordingly this chapter focuses on the themes of adoption, Cedric’s maturity, relations between parents and child, and sibling relationships.

**ADOPTION**

The concept of an adopted family occurs in much of Satchell’s work, probably stemming from his alienation from his own family in England, and the creation of a new family in New Zealand. In his first novel, *The Land of the Lost* (1902), he writes about a young man who has disowned his family, journeys to the gum-fields to make his fortune, and is ‘adopted’ by two older men, whom he then attempts (unsuccessfully) to protect. His second book, *The Toll of the Bush* (1905), is the story of two brothers who have been orphaned in New Zealand, who are adopted and protected by various older people. As they mature, the emphasis of the book becomes their attempts to create their own nuclear family, with themselves as the nucleus (through courtship).
Satchell’s writing isolates three forms of Family: Adoptive, Authoritarian and Dependent. Adoptive Family involves true altruism on part of one person, and is a great asset to the recipient. Authoritarian Family, the kind from which Satchell’s heroes separate themselves, is basically worthless. Dependent Family (consisting of wife and children) is the ultimate aim of the protagonist, and is of the most emotional importance. These categories of family are fully realised in *The Greenstone Door*.

The story begins with Cedric’s memories of himself as a toddler, wandering lost in the bush, and describes how he becomes aware of his solitude, “of the need of that mighty and comforting column, the parental leg.” He is encountered by Purcell, who recognises him as the son of recently murdered Mr Tregarthen, thus in need of adoption, and takes responsibility for him immediately: “Without more ado, Purcell picked me up, as a man plucks a leaf by the wayside.” The adoption is not official but is communicated to the reader through symbolic gestures - Purcell gives Cedric his name, and feeds him, at which moment “what memories I have of my father became indissolubly mingled with those of my new protector.”

Purcell is referred to as ‘my protector’ for a short time, before changing to ‘my father’. This natural and easy kind of adoption is idealised - it seems an ultimate act of altruism on Purcell’s part, because he knows nothing of Cedric, owes him or his family no obligation, and being unmarried and unsettled at the beginning of the novel, is not in a good position to raise a child. Taking on the responsibility also puts him in danger, because the Maori tribe Ngatihaua, led by Te Waharoa, has a personal claim on Cedric’s life. One of the warriors claims him as utu - “‘a son for a son,’” as revenge for his own son who was killed by Cedric’s father. Purcell offers the courageous reply, “‘I claim him by a law stronger than your utu, the law of humanity. He who would take his life must first take mine.’”

Adoption of a different kind takes place within the Maori culture. Te Waharoa, motivated by admiration and pity for Purcell, intervenes to save his and Cedric’s life, by covering them with his cloak, rendering them tapu to his tribe. This gesture binds them to the chief in a feudal sense - he becomes a sort of liege-lord, who does not provide for them, but protects them through an extension of his reputation. They are renamed as parts of his body - Purcell is the Thumb of his Right Hand; Cedric is his little finger. So anyone who harms them is metaphorically harming the sacred body of Te Waharoa himself.

Many years later Rangiora (son of the chief Te Huata) becomes friends with Cedric, and offers to adopt him into his household, pointing out that now Te Waharoa is dead,
Cedric is "'a little finger with no body,'" and thus without protection. Cedric, who is at the age where he is convinced of his superiority, turns down Rangiora’s generous proposition. He replies, arrogantly: "'Presently, the Maori will be a part of the household of the Pakeha.'" Rangiora, whose kindness and courage as a character is only matched by Purcell, persists with his friendship. When Rangiora rescues his friend from drowning, the act is actually of more significance to Rangiora than to Cedric. He explains how his instinct as rescuer confirmed his strong feelings: "'In the hour that I found you in the water my eyes were opened, and I saw how deep the plant of friendship had rooted itself in my heart. Had you died then, to me also death had been welcome.'" He persuades Cedric to forget "'that we are of two races... and remember that we are also of one - the race of mankind,'" and swears never to raise his hand against "'you and yours'". The two make the compact of the Tatau Pounamu (Greenstone Door), which when closed, seals the potential of violence between them.

Adoption in Satchell’s view is strongly connected to protection. Purcell as adopter of Cedric is also his protector - this is proved by his actions at the Tekuma Pa and Pahuata, where he risks his own life to save his foster son. Te Waharoa protects the two Pakeha by adopting them. Rangiora, who considers himself Cedric’s spiritual brother, protects him at Pahuata, by fetching a gun, which he hands to Purcell, allowing Purcell to offer his life as barter for Cedric.

Interestingly, the connection between protection and adoption only occurs in one direction. Cedric is protected by people bound to him by love, but he is unsuccessful in every attempt to protect them. He is unable to save Rangiora, his foster-mother, or foster-sister, in the final battle at Orakau, and also fails to arrange a reprieve for Purcell, whom the soldiers prosecute for treason, and execute. He does not get the opportunity to protect Pepepe, who rescues him from her tribe, or Helenora, who tracks him down in the wilderness and nurses him back to health. Perhaps Satchell is making the point that adoption is a form of pure altruism, which does not require reciprocation. Again, this is an idealised view.

Cedric’s loyalties, in fact, are so divided that he is incapable of offering useful help to any of his ‘family’ in the wider sense. So many groups and individuals demand his attention (his foster-family, his tribe, his natural grandfather, Governor Grey, Helenora), that he cannot possibly satisfy all of them. Wattie describes the outbreak of war as a testing of Cedric’s equilibrium: "'Like one of Walter Scott’s historical heroes, he stands between the warring parties, not so much split between them as unifying both in himself.'" Purcell
on the other hand, has no difficulty choosing allegiance: "'My wife is a native woman; my child is the daughter of a native woman. Nature knows no stronger bond than that which binds us to wife and child.'"44

The comparison suggests that Cedric's inability to take sides probably stems from immaturity. Throughout the book his attitude is inconsistent. When he first arrives in Auckland he begins to look down on his Maori upbringing. While the Bromparts make Cedric feel superior in terms of his background, Helenora's influence makes him embarrassed. When she asks whether his name is Purcell, he immediately declares his 'proper' heritage: "'No, Mr. Purcell is not my father. He took me out of the Te Kuma pa, when it was sacked by Te Waharoa.'"45 When he learns that Helenora's mother knew his natural family, he becomes tremendously excited, and explains to the reader: "'I desired not wealth, but ancestors.'" Interestingly, he justifies this with reference to Maori tradition: "'Among the natives... rank counted for everything. To have no knowledge of your forefathers was a state almost inconceivably ignominious; only my white blood saved me from suffering the full effects of my disability.'"46

But later, when Helenora suggests that he go back to England to live with his natural grandfather, he rejects the suggestion, because of affection for his foster-family: "'You see - if it were not for my foster-father I should not even be alive.'"47 He also defends the Maori to Governor Grey, who refers to Te Huata as a "'stubborn fellow'". "'His mana is declining, sir,' I said hastily, unwilling that my tribe should be prejudiced."48

The problem of divided loyalties reaches a climax when Governor Grey orders the invasion of the Waikato. Cedric has accepted membership of his tribe, but cannot reconcile this with membership of his birth family. His double identity - Maori and Pakeha - forms the literal and metaphorical conflict of the book, culminating in rejection from all sides. In Auckland, he is banished from the Brompart family, because his affection towards the Maori does not allow him to tolerate the Bromparts' prejudice. He is alienated from the European war-effort because of his loyalty to his foster family. When he tries to return to them, he is prevented by Te Huata's tribe, who imprison him for eight months, fearing he will influence his foster-father with Pakeha sympathies. Such extreme treatment of the theme of loyalty makes the point that the divided man cannot hold a position of neutrality.

The dénouement of the story removes all the characters to whom Cedric was linked by adoption. The only concession is the return of his childhood sweetheart Helenora, which marks a new beginning for him - the formation of his own family, where he will no longer be a dependent, but a protector himself.
PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

Kendrick Smithyman has commented that “Satchell creates in each of his books figures of the Big Man, who embodies authority, the expression of natural law and natural morality. The figure reaches its most interesting development in Purcell of The greenstone door: Big Man, Old Settler and idealised Pakeha-Maori.” 49

This is a useful way to regard Purcell, because he is not just big physically, morally, and in terms of authority, but also larger-than-life. He is so courageous, and so reasonable, that like other famous fathers (e.g. Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird) he is almost unrealistic. For a father, Cedric could not have done better. The first impression given of Purcell clearly marks him as father potential: “The speaker’s voice was masterful but kindly. He was a middle-aged man, with a pale face like my father’s.” 50

Purcell not only educates Cedric single-handedly, to such an extent that even travelling missionaries are impressed, but he also encourages Cedric to be a free-thinker, which is why they are able to take different views of the land-wars, while respecting each other’s reasons. Purcell’s fate, which is to be executed for treason, despite Cedric’s desperate efforts to attain a reprieve for him, amounts to martyrdom. Satchell’s choice of this end for Purcell ensures that he is remembered in idealised terms, rather than as a flawed character, by Cedric and the reader.

Other father figures include Governor Grey, who is described in superficially flattering terms. However, there are suspicions that his character is not unblemished. In becoming Cedric’s sponsor and advisor, Grey may have intended to use him as a source of inside information, and as an intermediary. There is also the slightest hint of scandal, involving a woman. The portrayal of Grey, with these shadows of imperfection exists as a contrast to Purcell. Grey represents the Big Man who has orchestrated his rise to power, while Purcell’s superiority arises from natural virtue.

Cedric’s natural father appears only at a distance. He is introduced as a corpse. The Maori warriors who killed him bring his wrapped body to the little hut where Purcell and Cedric are waiting. “In this manner my father, with the blood of seven warriors on his dead hands, returned to his home.” 51 Being an ideal fallen hero, a romantic figure in Cedric’s mind, means that he cannot threaten the dominion of other father figures in the book.

In contrast to the father figures, mothers are generally characterised by qualities other than their maternal ones, and often appear as inferiors to their husbands, both intellectually and morally. They are routinely painted as ineffectual or even malicious.
Cedric’s stepmother, Roma, undergoes intense critical scrutiny by Satchell. Cedric admits that his recollections of her are a blend of the “tender and the comical”, mainly because of her extreme subservience, which everybody, even Purcell, finds an embarrassment. Cedric tries to exhibit fondness towards her: “All or nearly all that a child can owe to its mother, I owe to her,” but his real attitude is betrayed by nearly everything else he says. Roma is portrayed as cowardly and stupid. When Purcell is away, the children’s study hours are neglected “for naturally Roma could not in any way be looked upon as a substitute.” The ‘naturally’ appears to be both Cedric and Satchell’s word. When a missionary visits the house, Roma behaves in a pathetic manner, becoming a figure of debasement, “squatting on the ground in safe proximity to the doorway, her face showing a mingling of embarrassment and terror.” When Cedric returns home after being away, he describes in the most patronising terms how he has to force Roma to join the family hug: “Roma, spilling the contents of her dish on the floor, stood aloof, moaning to herself, but I would not have it so. Resolutely, even fiercely, I drew her, dish and all, into the circle of our embraces. Brown or white, she was all the mother my life had known.” The very fact that he feels the need to explain this fact, weakens its believability.

Helenora’s mother, Lady Wylde is an opposite stereotype. Manipulative, narrow-minded and bitter, she slowly infects her daughter with her own prejudices towards the Maori, lower-classes, and the Tregarthens.

Equally manipulative, but in an impressive rather than contemptible way, is Rangiora’s mother, Tuku-Tuku, or the Spider’s Web. She is an extremely powerful character, described as “a woman of much intelligence, quick to see the advantages that must accrue to the tribe by the increase in wealth and standing of its Pakeha, and equally resolute to secure them by every means in her power.” Although supportive of her son’s plans for the future (often against the wishes of her husband), she is more of a political figure than a maternal one.

Satchell’s stereotyping of these women, shows that he does not consider the role of the mother as important as that of the father. In his view, fathers are responsible for the moral and intellectual education of their children, and mature women exist primarily as wives, not mothers.
SIBLING RELATIONS

Perhaps Satchell’s confusion relates to women of all ages, because Puhi-Huia is also a strange character, more of a love-interest than a sibling, who is discussed in romantic terms. Cedric introduces her as “astonishingly obedient”. “Surely never before or since has there been her equal.”\(^57\) When asked by a Maori girl at Te Huata’s pa whether he should like to have her as his wahine one day, Cedric replies, “Alas, how unfortunate!.. I like you greatly... but Puhi-Huia is my singing-bird.”\(^58\) The girl points out reasonably that Puhi-Huia will never be Cedric’s wife because she is his foster-sister, and he acts surprised to hear it. His confused feelings also manifest as jealousy. When they first meet Rangiora, Cedric and Puhi-Huia are playing a game in which they are married (is this common for brothers and sisters?). They are symbolically interrupted by Rangiora, who almost straight away claims he will marry Puhi-Huia. Cedric responds with instant jealousy, “She is the daughter of the Thumb... there is no chief in New Zealand who is of rank sufficient to marry the daughter of Thumb.”\(^59\) This is nonsense because by Maori law, Rangiora’s rank far exceeds Puhi-Huia’s, and in fact causes them substantial problems later when they do try to marry. Significantly, when Cedric finds his own future mate, Helenora, she proves to be jealous of Puhi-Huia.

Interestingly, Frank Acheson’s novel *The Plume of the Arawas*, published in 1930, and clearly influenced by *The Greenstone Door*, chooses to imitate Satchell’s portrayal of a sibling relationship with romantic undertones. Perhaps this aspect is meant to represent responsibility, misguided by youth. Cedric is motivated by a protective instinct - to prevent his foster-sister from making an alliance with the wrong sort of man - and this manifests as jealousy. It is a sign of immaturity that he responds in this way.

MATURITY

One of the strengths of this novel is that it documents the path to adulthood. This is also true of Satchell’s other books, in which the object is always for the heroes to attain full independence, rather than revelling in their childhood. Because *The Greenstone Door* begins with Cedric’s recollections of when he was a toddler, and ends with his development into a man, it is essentially a novel about ‘growing up’, making it more than a simple
‘historical adventure’ story. The lessons Cedric learns, especially about the nature of love, serve to show the course of his maturity.

Cedric’s relationship with Purcell undergoes some changes. He begins to love his foster-father because Purcell protects him and provides for him; this eventually matures into a love grown from respect. Despite their differences, Cedric acknowledges that “the memory of Purcell can still stir me to a passion of love and reverence.” He learns to value his foster-father, not because of obligation, but in terms of simple reciprocated love. When Purcell provides him with money and sends him to Auckland to further his prospects, Cedric asks “Oh, father! Why should you do all this for me?” Purcell replies: “I shall answer it once for all. I love you; that is the why and the wherefore.” There is no mention of duty or sympathy. Cedric tries to explain this to Mrs Wylde, who doesn’t understand. She tries to convince him to make payment of some sort to his foster-family, so he will then be free to cut his ties with them. “Then, if these people have been kind to you, it may be in your power to recompense them. Your grandfather is extremely wealthy...” Cedric replies as if he is embarrassed: “Nothing could recompense them. You see... they love me.”

Cedric and Rangiora’s love for each other is a different sort entirely. They initially become friends because of compatibility - both boys are the same age, with common interests in adventure. This develops into a strong connection based on admiration of the other’s qualities. Cedric loves Rangiora because he deserves love, and vice-versa. The attachment between the two could be seen as symbolic of Brotherhood in a larger sense: the relationship between a Maori boy representing the best qualities of his race, and a Pakeha representing the best of his. Rangiora’s heritage is so impressive as to inspire awe, his tapu being combined by his father (Ariki) and mother (Tapairu), so that his greatness eclipses them.

The Maori attitude towards children is portrayed as conditional on rank. The warrior Paeroa disapproves of Te Waharoa’s adoption of Cedric because of the potential for children with high connections to cause trouble. He warns that “the Little Finge: may grow into the Right Hand of the Chief’s enemies.” While Cedric attains status through adoption, Rangiora acquires his through birth: “He was, then, the son, the first-born son, of Te Huata and his wife Tuku-tuku; a youth of such godlike descent that even his parents suffered extinguishment from his greatness. In his person were united strains of the proudest blood in New Zealand. So exalted, indeed, was his birth, that his very existence became almost a menace to his tribe.”
While there is a degree of predestination in the portrayal of Maori children, Pakeha children are encouraged to reach their potential through education and self-improvement. This includes learning the importance of making choices. While Purcell brings up Cedric to be an independent-thinker, free to choose his own destiny and allegiances, Rangiora’s training as a chief allows him little self-determination.

The last choice which Purcell makes for Cedric is sending him to Auckland, where he learns to look after himself. In hindsight he remembers these years as “that period of life which comes to all save the most unfortunate, when the parental rule has worn away to a thread or is voluntarily relaxed, and youth steps out from the shelter of childhood and gazes with enamoured, anticipatory eyes on the glittering pageant of life.”

Cedric’s attitude towards the Brompart family shows maturity of a different sort. Satchell in many ways wrote this book as a rejection of the values and prejudices of the Pakeha society to which he belonged. Through Cedric we are presented with a model of interracial tolerance and respect. The reality is typified by characters like the Brompart family, with whom Cedric stays in Auckland. This is his first encounter with a European family, and the comparison is not favourable. He expects “to find the white man universally wise and brilliant, whereas on the contrary, I found them ignorant and dull. Even Mr. Brompart... I discovered to be grossly ignorant on quite simple matters.” The manners of the Bromparts are even worse. He refers to the boys as ‘savages’: “I come from a land of savages,” he admits, “but not such savages as they were. The Maori was... a pattern host. To him courtesy and hospitality to the guest was a religion.”

The city is portrayed as a corrupting entity, not just of the Maori, but of love itself. Satchell’s romanticism “can be seen in the fact that love in his fiction can only flourish in a natural setting. In the city, love fails to grow. For instance the unproductive love affair between Cedric and Sarah Brompart in Auckland is a city love.” Cedric and Helenora’s love for each other blooms when they spend time in the country together, like Eve and Geoffrey in *The Toll of the Bush*, and Hugh and Esther in *The Land of the Lost*.

The Brompart boys represent young men who have been corrupted by city living, who gamble, drink and fight. They first exploit Cedric, then snub him, and finally attack him in a cowardly manner, both at the same time. Cedric wins and is expelled from the household. Through this he learns that families like the Bromparts, while supposedly civilised, are in fact more barbarous and vindictive than the Maori, especially Maori who live in a rural or tribal setting; city Maori on the other hand are portrayed as corrupted by association with Europeans.
Through contact with the Wylde family, Cedric learns to value other aspects of pakeha living, and is also inspired to curiosity about his natural family, which until then has taken the form of a myth in Cedric’s mind which is not to be challenged. When Helenora first hints at a scandal within Cedric’s family, he is alarmed by the idea: “A great dread struggled with my curiosity. Was there a stain on the shield of the gallant knight, sleeping so peacefully on the windy hill-top?” Cedric learns that his grandfather disowned his father for marrying the wrong woman, but he manages to justify their actions in sensationalist form: “Even if the conduct of my father and mother be allowed to be dishonourable on high moral counts, it stood absolved in the courts of Love.” Cedric is offered the choice of returning to England to live with his paternal grandfather (where he will no doubt be welcomed, and treated as a gentleman of high status, as befits a Tregarthen), but declines, on the grounds that he loves his foster-family. This proves that he is worthy of the love which Purcell has invested in him.

The final step of Cedric’s maturity involves winning Helenora herself. Satchell typically uses this theme in his novels; he evidently sees the ultimate triumph for any hero is to find and marry a woman, so as to form the potential nucleus for a new family. Unfortunately in this case the love affair threatens the structure of an otherwise brilliant novel, because it is pushed ahead at the expense of other themes, and is also melodramatic (supporting the conclusion that Satchell is not writing as a realist). Cedric loves Helenora for the slightly dishonourable reason that she seems to epitomise everything about the white race for which he has secretly and snobbishly been longing. She is fair and pretty, educated, wealthy, and of high social status. Helenora’s betrayal of Cedric, as revenge for her mother’s betrayal by his father, is clearly inspired by Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. She allows herself to be courted, with the intention of luring Cedric into love and then breaking his heart. Wattie comments: “Satchell does not have the strength to avoid Victorian sentimentalism at this point, a fault which detracts from but does not destroy a very moving plot idea.” The image of the Greenstone Door, originally intended to symbolise love between the Maori and Pakeha, is finally changed to represent the bond between Cedric and Helenora, both privileged pakeha; a convenience which has rightly been criticised. Cedric’s movement from love for his ‘brother’ to romantic love for a woman is intended by Satchell to show maturity, even though it appears contrived.
CONCLUSION

Though he is ahead of his time, and often unfashionable in his attitudes, Satchell’s concept of family is still idealised. Realism - of issues to do with adoption, obligation and love - gives way to a need for excitement, emotional conflict and tragedy, and this affects the portrayal of individual characters and the relationships between them. Satchell attempts to introduce a realistic view of the era, contrasting the selfishness of land-grabbing pakeha families like the Bromparts with the savagery (but honour) of the Maori, but he continually reverts to romanticism. His portrayal of Purcell shows a father-figure of exceptional courage, wisdom and affection, while mothers are generally weak-minded (with the exception of Rangiora’s mother). Cedric’s journey into adulthood, symbolised by his courtship of Helenora, his acceptance of Puhi-Huia’s relationship with Rangiora, rejection of the Bromparts, and final loyalty towards his foster-family ahead of his natural family, shows that the story is a saga of maturation. Satchell was basically a social optimist - he believed in progress and that the strength of human relations, especially in families, could be used to repair any problems, political or otherwise. Wilson comments that in Satchell’s work: “Love is the magical feeling which transforms character and heals the wounds caused by a hostile environment or unfortunate events.” Unfortunately, real life, especially during the traumatic time of the New Zealand land-wars, was not that simple.

MONA TRACY

RIFLE AND TOMAHAWK

Mona Tracy, 1892-1959, stands out from other authors of historical adventure stories, because she is female. She had a strong sense of independence fostered by family circumstances. Born in Adelaide, she moved with her family to Waipu, then to Paeroa, where she was educated along with many Maori children. In 1903 Mona’s father left the family; her mother started work as a journalist, and Mona herself got a job as cadet with the New Zealand Weekly News, at the age of 13. She was one of the first women to train as a reporter for the New Zealand Herald, and worked as general and women’s page editor of the Christchurch Press from 1917 until 1921 when she married. During the Second World
War, she lied about her age in order to join the Women's branch of the Air Force, and was eventually promoted to corporal.72

During her married life she researched history and wrote adult non-fiction, as well as four adolescent novels. Her interests in colonial history, Maori culture and female issues, are fully realised in her novel *Rifle and Tomahawk*, published in 1927. Betty Gilderdale describes it as a “stirring tale” with several overall messages: “that friendship is stronger than politics, that violence leads only to worse violence, and that in any war the real sufferers are the innocent.”73

The plot is centred around the invasion of the East Coast of the North Island, by the renegade Maori leader Te Kooti, and his followers, the Hauhaus. Ron and Isbel Cameron, left at home by their parents to mind their baby brother, are warned of the imminent invasion of Hauhaus, by Ron’s friend Hori Te Whiti. They escape the house just in time, but are then separated. Ron and an older man, Jock, save the life of their neighbour Mrs Johnston, by carrying her across country to find a doctor, while Isbel takes care of her baby brother Hughie, with the help of Hori. After the Cameron’s family’s reunion in a soldiers’ camp, there is a curious intermission, when life returns to normal. Then Isbel is captured, and the action begins anew as Ron, Jock and Hori combine efforts to rescue her.

The first half of the book alternates between Ron and Isbel, allowing them to appear as double-protagonists, each having independent adventures, while searching for each other. The dual structure is very effective in creating tension, because whenever the action becomes particularly intense, the view cuts back to the other character, leaving the reader in considerable suspense.

In *Rifle and Tomahawk* Tracy almost certainly sacrifices realism for dramatic effect, and her portrayal of the family reflects this in several ways. Firstly, the children behave as adults: they cope impossibly well in times of crisis, have highly developed mothering and fathering instincts, make difficult choices, take responsibility for others, and generally mature too quickly. Interracial relationships are also idealised. Tracy shows influences of Satchell’s *The Greenstone Door*, in her use of stereotypes such as the ‘Pioneering Family’, by the inclusion of melodrama, gratuitous horror, and sensationalist subplots.

This section will examine two themes: Maturity (of pioneering children), and Interracial Brotherhood.
Instead of portraying the teenage years as later authors were to do, as a time of internal crisis and lack of confidence, Tracy has her two protagonists, especially Ron, achieve maturity without struggle. Ron, aged 14, is yearning to enter the idealised adult world of responsibility and bravery. The first sign of his keenness to be treated as a man occurs at the beginning when his parents leave: “There is nothing that so carries an appeal to splendid youth as an appreciation of the fact that one is worthy of trust; and the confidence which Ron’s parents were about to place in him was such as to make his blue eyes sparkle with pride.”74 Tracy adds her own comment to this: “Small wonder that, upon this memorable morning which was to witness the departure of his father and mother, Ronald Cameron bore himself as one to whom manhood had already come!”75

Ron’s confidence in his own abilities is not misplaced youthful enthusiasm. Following several episodes of heroism, Ron’s maturity is affirmed by the bushman Jock, with whom he has been travelling, and who treats him as an equal. When they encounter the militia, commanded by Captain Barry, Ron asks to be allowed to join up. Captain Barry, initially reluctant, is convinced by Jock’s testimony: “I put to yon lad a choice from the making of which many an older man would have shrunk.... And the lad looked his duty in the eye and never flinched.”76 Jock’s respect for Ron is understandable, because Ron effectively saved the bushman’s life earlier in the novel.

John Cameron is the only person to have any regrets about Ron’s rapid maturation: “For he saw that his son’s boyhood was over, and that the experiences that he had undergone had thrust manhood on him ahead of his years.”77 But he is also grateful, for Ron becomes an ally to his pioneering father, rather than a dependent. When it is discovered that Isbel has been kidnapped, John Cameron and his wife are both presented as incapable of coping: “This will just about kill your mother, Ron,” John says in “hopeless tones”, adding, “What’s to be done about it?”78 Ron and Jock assume full responsibility for rescuing her.

Tracy herself offers the final perspective on this precocious youth: “Ronald Cameron came back from his campaigning a man in everything but years. The keen air of the mountain-passes had filled him out. He was bronzed, strong as a young lion, and wore an air of quiet self-reliance that promised him a splendid manhood.”79

One of the greatest lessons of maturity is taking responsibility for others. Ron displays this tendency early on. After his parents leave, he feels more unsettled than he had
anticipated, but quickly puts aside his own doubts and concentrates on comforting his sister. The act is repeated by Isbel when she finds Mrs Johnston, and learns that three of the older woman's sons are dead. "The horror of it all made Isbel feel faint. At first she could only hold the woman's hand and cry bitterly. But in a little while she pulled herself together and said: ‘I must get help to you somehow.’" Like her brother, she quickly decides that it is more important to put others' needs ahead of one's own.

Responsibility can also lead to some difficult choices. When Ron and Jock find Mrs Johnston they have to decide whether to abandon the search for Isbel, or attempt to rescue the older woman, who is otherwise doomed. Jock offers Ron the choice, but puts such an angle on it, that Ron is convinced to take the latter option: "'In spite of the black work there has been here, I believe there is a God who keeps the feet of little children on safe paths, when He lets older and wiser folk stray to their destruction.'" Ron forgets that God has not saved Mrs Johnston's young sons, and allows the responsibility to pass to Him to take care of Isbel. Perhaps Tracy meant this to sound like a post hoc justification, because by this time the reader is aware that Isbel can take care of herself.

Isbel and Ron both show signs of parental potential. Ron comforts Mrs Johnston's son, Tom, by putting his arm around the little boy, and letting him cry. Isbel demonstrates her mothering skills on Hughie, "whom she adored with a fierce, and almost jealous devotion.... For him, at any time, would Isbel cheerfully have laid down her life." Actual cheerfulness in making such an extreme sacrifice shows the extent of Isbel's maternal feelings. Pioneering families often encouraged girls to care for their younger siblings, but in this case, Isbel is also encouraged by her awareness that Hughie's real mother is not in a position to give him the support he requires. She fills the gap in a practical and emotional sense, by accepting Hughie's needs as the highest priority. When the children are hiding from the Hauhaus and realise they've left the food bag behind, Isbel accepts the necessity of sending Ron back for it, because: "'We wouldn't mind being hungry, you and I.... But Hughie must have his food - he is only a baby.'"

The portrayal of maturity in the novel is connected with Tracy's conspicuous attempts to glamorise the pioneering spirit. The Camerons are a courageous family, unafraid of living rough or working hard. Their house has no bathroom, so they swim in the creek to get clean. John Cameron "considered that Ron was, in every way, a true son of the pioneers," able to ford flooded rivers, hunt wild pigs and work on the land. Tracy's belief seems to be that the true pioneer is unstoppable; nothing can keep him down:
Ron could not subdue a feeling of elation as they neared his home. He knew the worst - that the house he had loved was gone, that the stock was probably driven off, that the garden was very likely trampled out of recognition. Yet there was something that thrilled him in the thought that they would start all over again, and rebuild their house on the ashes of the old. “After all, this is pioneering,” he thought. “And I’m actually one of the pioneers. I wonder how many boys in this country fifty years hence will be able to say that they’ve fought Maoris and helped build the house they live in? I’m jolly glad I’m alive now, because I’d be missing a lot of fun.”

This is the epitome of boys’ own talk, and is hardly compatible with accounts from survivors of the actual Te Kooti raids on the East Coast. Very few of the families devastated by Hauhau raids were so cheerful - many were unable to face rebuilding, and moved away from the district.

As in *The Greenstone Door*, the superior qualities of the protagonists are tested by exposure to extreme situations, presented as melodrama. The Cameron children escape from the Hauhaus just in time. When Ron and Jock find a doctor to attempt to heal the wounded Mrs Johnston, he delivers his verdict and all the men cheer. “‘Another hour... and I could have done nothing for her. As it is, she will live!’” Mrs Wilson, on whom Tracy modelled Mrs Johnston (who was attacked by Te Kooti’s men, then kept alive by her eight year old son who fed her with eggs) actually died some weeks later from her injuries.

Also stretching credibility is the sensationalist subplot involving Jock and a false accusation, which is never explained properly. At the end of the novel, Jock’s brother Duncan arrives from Scotland, and beseeches Jock to return to Castle MacBean, his ancestral home, which Jock was forced to leave under dubious circumstances. Duncan tells Jock that his “‘name is cleared at last!’”

Such melodrama is probably deliberate, because it is more exciting to a young-adult audience than bland or bleak realism. The Johnston’s house, once a “‘happy, comfortable home’” is now a “‘mass of smouldering ruins.’” Mrs Johnston is found in the shed, “‘horribly wounded. She had been gashed in several places with a tomahawk, and was unable to move.’” Ron and Isbel’s ability to deal with such horrors demonstrates their outstanding courage, as true children of the pioneers.
INTER-RACIAL BROTHERHOOD

Like Satchell, Tracy believed in the possibility of love which resembles brotherhood between children of different races. Very similar to Cedric and Rangiora, Hcri and Ron have an affection for each other born out of childish compatibility, which has developed into a brotherly love, complete with obligations. Hori takes responsibility for the Cameron children, by warning them of Te Kooti’s invasion. He guides Isbel and Hughie to safety and later helps to rescue Isbel from the pa at Ngatapa, showing that he thinks of her as a sister.

When Hori is captured by Ropata, and threatened with death, it is Ron’s turn to take responsibility. Initially unsuccessful in his attempts to plead for Hori’s life, he finally saves him by enlisting the help of another Maori chief, Renata. Ron claims that Hori is related to Karaauria, who is related to Renata. So Renata joins the challenge: “‘Then this youth is not only the dead Karaauria’s kinsman, but he is mine also. You shall not kill my kinsman, Ropata Waha Waha!’”91

Tracy gives strong emphasis to the Maori code of protecting kin. Despite Hori’s betrayal of his tribe in order to help his friends, he too demonstrates loyalty to his family. He explains how he came to be captured by Ropata: “‘I was lying there to draw off the Ngatiporou from the pursuit of my father. He was badly wounded.... I went back to cover up his trail.’”92 Although the code seems glamorous where demonstrated by Hori, Isbel uses it as a kind of legal loophole. When attacked by the Hauhaus, she avoids death by rushing at Te Kapu, and seizing his piu-piu (cloak). “‘It is an old law of the Maoris that he who draws over him the mantle of a chief becomes sacred. Not a Hauhau among that wild and savage band would harm her. Te Kapu owes her protection while ever he remains alive.’”93 Very similar to The Greenstone Door (and probably inspired by it) Isbel is saved by symbolic adoption; instead of being Te Kapu’s enemy, she becomes his responsibility.

The strongest relationship in Rifle and Tomahawk is between Ron and Hori, who are perfect examples of Brotherly Love. When Hori first warns Ron about the threat of invasion, he prefaces it with the question, “‘We have been as brothers, you and I?’”94 The relationship seems clichéd at times, especially when Hori is speaking, because he tends to talk like an epic poem, often referring to himself in third-person and making grand claims about his motivations: “‘The cause of Te Kooti has, perhaps, justice.... But I do not like this slaying of women and children, and have sworn, by the gods of my fathers, and by your God to have no part in it.’”95 At the same time, he admits that he is in a compromised position. He tells Isbel, “‘when this fighting is over you will be spoken of as a heroine,
while Hori te Whiti will be execrated as one who fought on the side of Te Kooti!" But he forbids her to speak of his bravery to anyone else, not wanting to be revealed as a traitor: '"No, Hori te Whiti's life must be with his people.'"96 Presumably by ‘people’ he means his tribe and family.

Hori is made to say some absurdly melodramatic things about his respect for his pakeha friends. He refers to Isbel as:

“the precious Kahurangi, the richest greenstone.... She will never dream, I hope, that she is the star whose white fire leads Hori onward, to brave the desperate doom of an outlaw in order that one day he may stand forth among his own people, and have her know that he did right.”97

Like Rangiora and Cedric from The Greenstone Door, Hori’s sense of loyalty is rather confused. While allied to the Te Kooti cause, he nevertheless betrays the Hauhaus, by saving the Camerons, and also giving Ron inside information about the war effort. His respect for his own people is limited; he especially dislikes characters such as Peka te Makarini, a “‘half-caste - neither one thing nor the other. He is a bad Maori, and bad pakeha.””98 Tracy, whose intention, on the whole, is to avoid racist commentary, betrays a slight prejudice against mixed-blood Maori by this comment. Her attitude is inconsistent, because other Maori in the book behave as mixed characters, even if their bloodlines are pure. Hori refuses to enter a tapu house, in which a warrior once died, but he does suggest that Isbel occupy it, and brings food and milk to the doorstep for her. If he had been properly respecting the tapu of the building, he would not have encouraged Isbel to enter. Other Maori characters have mixed motivations. Ropata may be a ‘friendly Maori’, allied against Te Kooti, but he has his own style of fighting (taking no prisoners), and his own reasons: “‘I fight in the pakeha’s cause, it is true; but I fight also to avenge those of my own race.’”99

Hori’s main motivation in remaining half-true to his tribe, is the desire to “one day be a leader among them, and so bring them into pakeha ways of living.”100 Betty Gilderdale comments, “We would no longer agree... that Hori should bring Maoris into ‘pakeha ways’; most people nowadays want Maoris to preserve their distinctive culture.”101

Ron ends with a speech about Hori, though he does not mention him by name: “‘Some people will say... that the Hauhaus are all bad. My friends, this is not so.... I know that among them there are good men, who only need encouragement to become loyal
subjects of the Queen.\textsuperscript{102} This comment shows that Ron has essentially grown out of brotherly love and become paternalistic towards the Maori; this was quite a popular view in Tracy’s era.

**CONCLUSION**

Compared to modern books dealing with the subject of the Hauhau invasion of the East Coast, Tracy’s novel is optimistic and exciting, containing larger-than-life characters whose courage and ability is never questioned. Tracy’s glamorous portrayal of Ron and Isbel suggests that she believes children are inherently mature, which is why they cope so well in extreme circumstances. There are no internal psychological crises facing the protagonists; they do not exhibit any kind of flaws, physically, intellectually or morally. The parents are presented as weak characters so as to pose no threat to the heroism of the ‘young-adults’, and Jock appears mainly as a foil to Ron, to demonstrate the equality of their characters despite a large age difference. The pioneering lifestyle is idealised, and conflict between Maori and Pakeha is not adequately explained or resolved. Tracy’s portrayal of the pioneering family emphasises loyalty between its members, while reversing the roles of the teenage children and their parents. This is partly indicative of Tracy’s nature (she was a precocious child too), and also a deliberate appeal to an adolescent audience, for whom she was offering role-models in the persons of Ron and Isbel.

---

**RON BACON**

*AGAIN THE BUGLES BLOW*

Ron Bacon was born in 1924 in Melbourne, and moved to Hastings in 1932. After serving in the Air Force during World War Two, he returned to New Zealand and worked as a teacher for many years. It was while teaching he became aware of the “need for indigenous children’s books,” which he proceeded to write himself. “His study of Maori lore and acceptance by Maori led to an extensive output of mainly picture books,”\textsuperscript{103} and one novel, *Again the Bugles Blow*. This was published in 1973 and tells the story of a Maori boy, Rua,
who travels back in time one hundred years and witnesses the battle of Orakau, where he saves the life of his ancestor, Ruarangi.

Gilderdale comments that this book “has moved a long way from the concerns of the earlier historical novels. Their purpose for the most part was to use the New Zealand setting for a swashbuckling adventure.” This one, however, is “a sensitive book in which history is the servant rather than the master.” She continues: “The picture given [of parents] in the modern books is a very different one. For the most part parents are hastened from the scene as soon as possible, and when they are included in the story we find severely practical mothers and often very unsympathetic fathers.” In this novel, Rua’s father is not present at all, and his mother is overworked, insensitive, and unsympathetic. The historical aspect of the novel gives the reader a new perspective on the dysfunction of the modern family, which seems to be a result of failures in the past, on the part of both Pakeha and Maori.

This discussion will focus on two main themes: the disintegration of the home; and issues of alienation from community or family.

**DISINTEGRATION OF HOME**

Bacon makes the most out of the dual time setting to explore the contrast between Maori families of the past and the present, where the family ‘home’ has ceased to be a place of pleasure or security. Rua’s home is “just an old house” overlooking more old houses. The whole neighbourhood is squalid; people who live nearby throw their rubbish into a gully at the back of Rua’s place. To reflect the ultimate state of dispossession in which many Maori live, Rua’s family do not even own their house: “Every Saturday, when Mr O’Brien came for the rent, Rua’s mother would ask him about having it painted, and every Saturday Mr O’Brien would look at the places where the paint was peeling away from the bare grey wood, and he’d say, ‘Yes, it could do with a lick of paint. I’ll have to see about that.’”

Family structure has also disintegrated within the house. Rua’s grandmother, a kuia of dignity and presence, is generally ignored by the family: “No one worried very much about granma; mostly she just sat around the house or out on the front veranda, thinking, or talking to anyone who’d listen, and if no one would listen, she’d talk to herself.” Bacon is suggesting the question: what happened to the Maori code of respecting one’s elders? Rua’s mother certainly has very little regard for granma, and tells Rua that the stories she relates are “nonsense”.

39
Rua however likes to listen to his granma; she is his link to the past in more than one way. She comments on the hurry and rush of the present, and contrasts this with her childhood, in which life was slow, and she collected her own food (tuna and watercress) from the creek. Rua’s parents by contrast live firmly in the present: his mother is seen peeling potatoes, dealing with the needs of the present and future, while his father is away at work. To compensate for this neglect, granma has assumed responsibility for Rua’s education in history. She takes him to the museum to see historical exhibitions. She tells him the stories of their ancestors, including the legend of her grandfather Ruarangi, who fought at the battle of Orakau and was saved by a young boy, who pushed him out of the way of a bullet. During his fall, his pekapeka (greenstone pendant) was broken, and he gave the broken piece to the boy in gratitude, also so that “I shall know you for all time, and for all time, you and I shall be as one.”

Rua’s granma has inherited the original half. The pekapeka is perhaps a metaphor for the Maori people - broken - to symbolise the loss of their land, self-esteem, language, and traditional values (like respecting the elderly). Some of granma’s talk confuses Rua, especially when she claims that Orakau was a decent battle, and it was right for the Maori to fight for their land. “Rua was puzzled. He thought of Mr O’Brien and how his mother put the rent money away ready for Saturdays. ‘But this isn’t our land any more. Not even this house is ours.’"

While Rua is treated with due love and attention by his grandmother, his mother has little respect for him. When he unwisely seeks her advice on the question of finding the broken pekapeka, she immediately misunderstands his thoughtful attitude, and assumes that he has got into trouble at school. When he explains what his grandmother has told him, she begins to laugh. “Oh, Rua, Rua, what a story!” She claims that the broken piece of pekepeka is lying somewhere around the house. In fact she thinks she threw it into the gully along with the other rubbish. This sounds unlikely - it is greenstone after all.

Although Rua belongs to this family, he is separated from them by conflicting loyalties. He wants to believe his grandmother, but to do so would require going against the advice of his mother. His father is not around in any useful capacity, and none of the family seem to have any time for each other, compared to the abundant time granma remembers in her childhood.
Bacon’s portrayal of the way Rua fits into the past demonstrates how destructive the effects of time have been on the identity of New Zealanders. In the 1870s, Rua is neither a colonial or a native - he is alienated from both cultures. Because of his modern education, his speech, his inability to speak Maori, and his manners, he is not accepted as belonging to any group.

Corporal Cooper mistakes Rua for a settler’s son in the darkness, because he speaks English so well. When it is discovered he is Maori, the Captain comments that he is “‘unlike any native I’ve ever seen before’” because of his clothes and speech.111 He is also a “‘pale Maori’”112 by their standards, probably because he has mixed blood. Typically they are only able to consider him as ‘pale Maori’ rather than ‘dark Pakeha’. Rua finds that the fact he is educated is a potential threat to him, because the soldiers might regard him as dangerous if “they thought he was too wise about some things.”113 The only way Rua is advantaged by his modern upbringing is by his politeness, and ability to wash dishes, clean boots and so on, skills which impress the settler family he encounters, and makes him useful as a servant to Lieutenant Anderson. However, his abilities do not bring him respect from the soldiers. He is consistently treated as inferior and often threatened with flogging.

Unfortunately he cannot seek support from the Maori either. At Camp Drury, he watches canoes coming over the harbour from villages across the bay. “Sometimes there were Maori boys in the canoes. They tried to speak to Rua, but when they found that he couldn’t understand what they were saying, they gave up, and would look at him, their faces puzzled, or talk amongst themselves about Rua as if they couldn’t make out what he was.”114 There is actually some hint that he could be in danger from his own race. The Captain teases him by suggesting that if he is left outside then “‘some of those old wild Maori might eat him.’”115

He is even cut off from his own family. When he finally reaches Orakau, where his great-great-grandfather is fighting, he is initially desperately keen to meet him. “It would be dangerous, he knew, but somewhere up there, behind that bank of earth, was his ancestor, Ruarangi, and even if he was never to get back to his own time and his family again, Ruarangi was also his family.”116 But when he finds Ruarangi, he is unable to talk to him, and the two are separated by the continuation of battle.

Ann de Roo’s novel, Jacky Nobody, published in 1983, ten years after Again the Bugles Blow, shows many similarities, especially in the way de Roo creates Jacky as a
character who is “neither Maori nor Pakeha, he was nobody.”

Hone Heke, who is one of Jacky’s relatives, christens him ‘Tiaki Kahore Ingo’ - Jacky No Name, or Jacky Nobody. He acknowledges Jacky as his son - “with such distaste that he had seemed to acknowledge and renounce Jacky in a sentence.”

He tries to be kind to Jacky, but it comes across as being patronising. He calls him “‘the son of the Pakeha’”, and will not allow him to fight with the Maori because his feet are too soft.

Again the Bugles Blow, like the other historical adventures in this chapter, is well-researched. Where it differs is in accuracy of emotions, and strictness of presentation. The New Zealands of both 1873 and 1973 are bleak places, where life is realistically difficult. Characters are well-drawn, complete with flaws and qualities. Gilderdale comments, “Rua emerges as a believable character, and we more easily recognise the past when interpreted through the eyes of a contemporary child.”

Bacon uses Rua as the medium through which the viewer feels sympathy, and acquires greater understanding of historical events.

Rua is surprised by the Maori people he encounters in the past, always “unsmiling”, grim or angry. Outside King Tawhio’s house “half a dozen unhappy Maoris” sat, “their eyes dark under their uncombed mops of hair.”

To some extent, his granma has misled him with exciting tales about battles and courage and fighting for principles. He learns, from exposure to both camps, that war is an ugly, depressing thing. Inside the pa at Orakau, he is “shocked and sorry for the warriors, out of water, so short of ammunition that they had to filch from the dead bodies of soldiers or make bullets of wood, yet still fighting on.”

Earlier, marching inland with the soldiers, he finds that they are not enjoying the war either. A corporal is deeply moved when he sees the Waikato River, which the Maori regard as sacred, because it provides them with food: “It’s given them life, then along comes the General with his river boats, and now their river doesn’t mean life any more. It’s betrayed them. It’s given us the way of fighting them and killing them and taking their land.”

General Cameron is a slightly clichéd character, portrayed as stern and unwavering in his duty. When he suggests starving the Maori into defeat by destroying their farmland at Rangiaowhai, even his own soldiers are distressed, and ask, “What of the women and children?” The question is the same one which concerns Hori in Rifle and Tomahawk. It is unusual to find a Pakeha character objecting to the slaughter of innocents in this genre. General Cameron replies, “While we are not wanting to make war on women and children,
the Waikato natives must be taught a lesson.... Perhaps it might hasten the end of the fighting if they see their children hungry.”

The enthusiasm of the army slackens even more, as they march slowly inland: “now the soldiers seemed to go into each battle with less and less eagerness. It was almost as if they were sorry for the Maori who were being driven from their tribal lands.” They let refugees flee, unmolested, because they are sick of the war. These sympathetic soldiers are very different ones to those portrayed in *The Greenstone Door*, who make war on the Maori at Orakau. *Rifle and Tomahawk* also seems out-of-touch, because of characters like Ron who considers it “a lot of fun” to fight Maoris.

There are a few stereotypes in *Again the Bugles Blow*, such as the army cook, Jem, who is so indoctrinated as to be ridiculous: “‘I know they’re your people, young Rua, but they’re a murdering lot.’” He tries to justify the attitude of the colonials using an argument which is absurd: “‘We don’t steal native land.... We only take it to punish the natives if they won’t sell it to us, but we don’t steal it!’” It is believable that one of Governor Grey’s aides could have made such a cynical statement, as a private joke, but stretches credibility too far when spoken as a serious justification by an army cook.

The ending of the book shows Rua revealing his own indoctrination, but only briefly. He is tempted “to try to speak to [the Maori chiefs], to tell them what he knew, that the New Zealand of a hundred years on would be a country of brown Maori and white Pakeha living as one people. He wanted to tell them that they should stop... but if he spoke they’d know he wasn’t one of them.” The ‘country of brown and white’ does sound like idealism, and Rua quickly realises it. When he returns to the future holding the broken pekapeka, he considers showing it to granma. “What would he say when she asked where he’d found it?” So he throws it away. Is he ashamed of the history of the piece: his ancestor fighting a war he could never have won, the failure of the Maori, the ruthlessness of the pakeha, who now control the country and own his house? History is no longer glamorous. Or was it all his dream, and his grandmother a liar? Either way, Rua is disillusioned and disappointed.

**CONCLUSION**

*Again the Bugles Blow* is clearly the most realistic of the historical novels in the Kotare series, which can probably be attributed to the time in which it was written, 1973. The 1970s mark a change in the conception of juvenile fiction in New Zealand. It was during
this time that authors began to specifically target books at adolescents. Bacon certainly
intends this book to speak to the audience on a personal level; instead of concentrating on
the purpose of entertaining children, he aims to re-educate them on historical events. He
offers a perspective on the past which is bleak and depressing, showing cowardice, cruelty
and prejudice, rather than great concepts of brotherly love, fairness, sacrifice, justified
revenge, glamour of war, and so on, while emphasising the courage of the Maori defenders
of Orakau. Rua’s identity problems - his inability to fit in with either the Maori or Pakeha
of 1963 - suggests wider implications, such as the dislocation of modern Maor: from their
ancestral background, and the unwillingness of the Pakeha to accept them as part of the
‘new’ country. This kind of political commentary would not have been acceptable in older
historical adventure stories.
CHAPTER TWO

THE FAMILY STORY

Esther Glen’s *Six Little New Zealanders*, published 1917, set 1890s.
Esther Glen’s *Uncles Three at Kamahi*, published 1926, set 1890s.
Phillis Garrard’s *Tales Out of School*, published 1932/38, set early 1930s.
Joyce West’s *The Year of the Shining Cuckoo*, published 1961, set 1920s.

The first batch of the Kotare series appeared in 1983, and included the 1917 classic *Six Little New Zealanders* by Esther Glen. In her Editor’s Note, Gilderdale refers to this as “the first New Zealand family story book.”¹²⁹ The concept of a family story is not defined in the note nor in any of Gilderdale’s other work, but she does refer to it in her major study, *A Sea-Change* (1982), especially in the chapter called ‘What Became of the Settlers: Stories with a domestic setting.’ In this discussion she speaks of the genre as recording childhood, rather than conveying information: “The family story is the least self-conscious of all the genres of New Zealand children’s literature. Unlike the novels on Maori, settler, and adventure themes, or even fantasy stories, the mood is not always didactic.”¹³⁰ She adds that interrelationships in the family precipitate events, and that characterisation “plays as important a part as narrative.”¹³¹

In contrast to the historical adventure story, these family stories are not enacted against headlining events, and are far less plot-driven, preferring to concentrate on conflicts of a more personal and private nature. Another major difference is that characters in the historical adventure stories strive constantly for maturity, whereas the family stories tend to be more a celebration of childhood, where there is little impetus to take on adult responsibilities. This trait is obvious in the four books in this sample.

Peacocke and Glen are Gilderdale’s favourite examples of family story writers, who she claims were influenced by other colonial family story writers, such as Louisa M. Alcott, Ethel Turner and L.M. Montgomery. “It is worth remarking that emergent countries seem to show particular strength in ‘family’ novels. Immigrant families are likely to cling together in a new and raw environment.”¹³² Interestingly, the four novels in this sample are set in rural New Zealand, where one might expect the settler mentality to persist longer. While the novels do not involve true ‘pioneering’ (creating a home out of a wilderness), it
must be pointed out that during the 1890s, 1920s and 1930s when these stories are set, many farms and stations were still in the hands of the first-generation of owners, perhaps explaining why the myth of the close-knit settler family is still present, and has not been replaced with the sense of the fractured family which characterises later texts.

While Peacocke fits into the category of a family story writer, often locating her work on the home, and deriving action from internal relationships (for example *Tatters, the Story of a Faithful Comrade*, 1928), the only one of her stories included in the Kotare series, *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane*, is a departure from her earlier style of work. As it is fundamentally an adventure story, about children who go camping away from their parents, it will be discussed in the following chapter ('The Survival Story').

Although her output was low compared to Peacocke’s, Esther Glen’s name became associated with the highest quality of children’s fiction, through the establishment in 1945, of an award in her name, by the New Zealand Library Association.\textsuperscript{133} The two books republished in the Kotare series and discussed here, are archetypal family stories.

From Phillis Garrard’s collection of Hilda stories published between 1929 and 1944, Gilderdale selected ten chapters from two volumes, and recombined them in *Tales Out of School*, for the Kotare series. Superficially, the Hilda stories appear to be ‘school stories’. However, “at a time when it was virtually obligatory for school stories to be set in English private boarding schools,”\textsuperscript{134} Hilda’s setting was a country day-school in the central North Island; this meant that home life played as important a role as the school, in the relationships between Hilda and the other characters.\textsuperscript{135}

According to Gilderdale’s criteria, Joyce West’s *The Year of the Shining Cuckoo* is not a typical family story. Gilderdale states that West’s books with a rural setting, written before the 1970s, “show their characters within a very secure system of values from which they have no need to depart. The tensions of the novels come from external circumstances in everyday life, not from any upheaval in the internal landscape.”\textsuperscript{136} This would imply that the plot is externally driven, rather than generated by internal relationships within the domestic setting. However it can be argued that the closeness of the isolated community, forces the characters into a kind of extended family situation.
ESTHER GLEN

SIX LITTLE NEW ZEALANDERS

Esther Glen (1881-1940) was best known as a children’s author and editor of children’s pages in the Christchurch Sun and Press newspapers. She was the third of twelve children, and played an important role in entertaining and caring for her younger siblings (much like her fictional character Kathie Malcolm). She lived most of her life in Christchurch, and associated with other children’s writers, Edith Howes and Mona Tracy.

Six Little New Zealanders describes a family of six children, ranging in age from 9 to 19, who go to stay with their uncles on a large Canterbury sheep station, while their parents are away in England for a year. There is no major plot line, rather a series of adventures which occupy the children until their parents return.

Gilderdale believes that Six Little New Zealanders (1917) was “inspired by the Australian book Seven Little Australians by Ethel Turner, which was first published in 1894. Just as that book broke away from the moralistic traditions of the period, so Esther Glen clearly intended to portray children as they were, lively, often thoughtless, but usually well-intentioned, examples neither of excellence nor yet of viciousness.” G.B. Ringer agrees: “In direct contrast to the gentle earnestness of Edith Howes and the cloying sweetness of Isabel Maud Peacocke was the brisk tone of Esther Glen’s Six Little New Zealanders.... For the first time, young New Zealanders could read about themselves as they were, not as adults would have them be.”

Glen’s books do not suffer from the didactic fashions of her time - there is little moralising, and her children are not miniature versions of adults, set up as ideals for young readers to aspire to. Nevertheless, all the tensions which the plot introduces are worked out to provide an ideal happy ending, involving reconciliation and forgiveness. Whereas modern books, e.g. by Margaret Mahy, enable happy endings through acceptance of ill-fate, Glen’s happy endings rely on good fortune, and exceptional tolerance from adults. None of her protagonists are forced to learn to accept hardship or tragedy.

There is a complication which affects the analysis of the book, which is that it is written in first person. The narrator is twelve year old Ngaire, middle child in the Malcolm family, which makes it difficult to disentangle childish idealism from Glen’s own preoccupations. However, it is still possibly to identify idealisation through plot (not a construction of Ngaire’s) and characterisation.
This section will focus on three themes: juvenility (involving narrative perspective, taboo subjects, the way in which Glen parodies Victorian preoccupations with the flaws of ‘bad children’, such as gluttony, sloth, disobedience and untidiness in personal appearance, and the celebration of carefree childhood in which rescue is guaranteed, and naughtiness is consequence-free and easily forgiven); maturity (as demonstrated by older siblings taking responsibility for younger, the desire of some characters not to be patronised as children, and the recognition of the basic strength of the family unit); and the uncles as parental surrogates.

**JUVENILITY**

Glen’s close observations and interest in children, enable her to provide an authentic picture of a twelve-year old girl, Ngaire, who is the narrator of the novel. Glen captures the tone right at the beginning, when Ngaire introduces the “cast of characters” that “you are going to meet in the book”\(^\text{139}\), showing a childish tendency to list and summarise people.

In keeping with the juvenile narrative perspective is the idea that children are too young to cope with certain things. When the uncles become concerned that Mr and Mrs Malcolm, travelling back from England on the *Weka*, may have drowned, nobody tells the youngest children: “They thought we were far too young for trouble, I suppose.”\(^\text{140}\)

Ngaire’s understanding of illness is very limited. When describing her mother’s illness, she never offers a name for it, just comments that she hadn’t been “quite well” for a long time, and was getting “thinner and thinner, and frailer and frailer, day by day.”\(^\text{141}\) When Rob returns from his travels, seriously ill with a bad fever, it is never defined. Even Ngaire’s own sickness is unexplained: “I was ill, quite interestingly ill,”\(^\text{142}\) she informs the reader. Later, she asks her mother what was wrong with her, and is told: “‘You wouldn’t understand.’”\(^\text{143}\) It is likely that Glen also thinks children wouldn’t understand, or perhaps she worries that the definition of these illnesses would disturb her readers too much, showing that she is acting as censor as well as writer.

Glen to some extent uses the novel to make fun of the preoccupations of the Victorian era, such as tidiness and cleanliness and good behaviour. Each of the Malcolm children could be said to represent various types of traditional faults. Rob is disobedient, Jan is untidy, Pipi is greedy, Ngaire is thoughtless, and so on. Kathie complains to Jan about her dress: “‘There are one, two, three, four, five buttons missing from your blouse... and raspberry stains all down the front of your skirt.’”\(^\text{144}\) Ngaire worries about this too: “you
knew that the uncles were looking you up and down, and every little bit of you that was the least untidy seemed to shriek for their notice." The ultimate disgrace is Jan and Ngaire's appearance at a luncheon, where they wear completely inappropriate clothes, cannot stop giggling, and eventually escape from the table without offering a proper explanation. Although they are told off later by Uncle John, the scene is included primarily for comic effect, rather than as a dramatic or improving episode.

A great deal of humour in the books comes from a certain enthusiasm on Glen's part to show her characters getting into trouble. None of the naughtiness in the book is malicious; rather it plays on the tendency of children to act without foresight, because they know that they will not be held accountable for anything, as an adult would. Numerous misdemeanours are portrayed as amusing or exciting rather than as regrettable. The Malcolm children begin their visit to the farm by literally pulling Uncle John's chair out from under him. They knock the stop-bank down, Jan destroys Uncle Stephen's book, Rob rides Uncle John's horse without permission and damages its leg, the younger children nearly drown in the creek, steal cigarettes to practise smoking, and set the plantation on fire. Jan and Ngaire disgrace themselves socially, get lost in the countryside and have to stay out all night. The book retains the certainty of rescue and protection throughout. The Malcolm children (and the reader) know that in the long run adults will have to deal with any consequences of thoughtless actions on the part of their dependants. When the younger children set fire to the plantation, it is the grownups who put the fire out and save the farm. Ngaire actually remarks: "It was fun! No, I don't meant that, but it was awfully exciting." The novel is certainly exciting in places, but there is never any sense of real danger.

**MATURITY**

Although *Six Little New Zealanders* delights in the freedom of childhood in a way which historical adventure stories rarely do, there is still a sense of maturity in the background. There are certain codes of behaviour and expectations from the adult world which are dependent on age. For example, when a girl reaches a certain age, she puts her hair up.

More is expected of Kathie because she is older: she has to know how to cook, act as governess to her siblings, keep the younger ones tidy and clean, and so on. When Uncle John asks her if she can cook, she blushes. "Every woman should know how to make bread," Uncle John insists. Kathie, being older, is more responsible too. When Ngaire
and Jan behave abominably at the luncheon, Uncle John blames Kathie: "'Am I to write and inform your mother that you are incapable, that the children are running wild, that you are unworthy of the trust reposed in you?'"148

Even Kathie's fiancé, Dan, harasses her for not being a competent adult. She breaks her engagement with him when he tells her that her scones aren't as good as Mrs McPherson's. Kathie admits later that Dan was right. "'I said they were risier - much risier. They weren't; they were as flat as they could be - flatter than pancakes.'"149

Rob is the other character who, because he is older, suffers under adult expectations. His parents and the uncles want him to be a farmer, but he would rather be a lawyer. He gets surly when questioned along these lines by Uncle John, much to Ngaire's distress, because she feels Rob is letting the family down:

I felt so sorry that I could have cried then and there. Rob was spoiling everything right at the very start. The uncles would think him a spoilt reckless boy who needed lots of suppressing. Perhaps they would keep up the suppressing all through the year.150

Rob pre-empts suppression by running away from home with another boy. Unable to face such adult pressures as having to conform to a certain career, he chooses the option which seems to him more adult - leaving home. Ngaire thinks she understands: "Rob had grown tired of farming; he longed for adventure, and that hateful, hateful Alan McLennan had fired him with a desire to see the world." Again, Ngaire thinks about it more from the uncle's perspective, than Rob's:

What would they think of the boy who ran away from the care and hospitality that had been offered so freely and so willingly. Boys in books ran away because they were unjustly suspected and because their hearts were breaking, but Rob hadn't even a cruel uncle or a harsh parent.151

He returns months later, remorseful, and wanting to be told off by Uncle John, like a little boy: "'I deserve so much more than he can ever give.'"152

Rob is the only child who changes in any way (or grows) through the book. The only change Glen ascribes to the other children is physical: "we had grown strong and straight and brown in the keen, sweet air of the country."153 Ngaire does claim to have "grown up"
suddenly, when she thinks her parents are dead: “Growing up is just a feeling in your heart.”\text{\textsuperscript{154}} But her character does not change significantly - she remains just as thoughtless, insecure, and disobedient in the sequel.

Jan, who is aged 14, is interested in being at least regarded as an adult, even if she does not act like one. She is furious to be informed that she is to have breakfast with the younger children in the nursery: “At home we had, all of us, even Jock and Pipi, taken our meals with mother and Dad, and it was certainly humiliating, to say the least of it, to be banished by the uncles to a room that we had always associated with English story books and rather prim and proper children.”\text{\textsuperscript{155}} She reacts badly to being called “‘kiddie’” by Dan: “Jan, feeling that life at Kamahi was to be nothing but one long succession of insults, drew herself up stiffly.”\text{\textsuperscript{156}} This annoyance spills over into jealousy of Kathie’s elevated position as oldest. Jan says, “‘It doesn’t suit Kathie to be treated grown-up.... She’s getting unbearable,’”\text{\textsuperscript{157}} not realising that being the oldest is not always easy.

There is some genuine maturity represented by the hierarchy of support within the family. Each child cares for and supports their siblings, especially those younger than themselves. Ngaire rescues Jock from drowning; Jan protects the other children from the madness of Tairoa the Maori, and Kathie comforts Ngaire when she is feeling depressed. After Rob leaves, the remaining children cling together even more tightly: “Everyone grew kinder for a little while after Rob had gone. Somehow I think that losing him made us realise how dear we were to each other.”\text{\textsuperscript{158}} Such a loving family is a little sentimentalised, but believable. Similar to Tracy’s portrayal of resourceful and responsible children in \textit{Rifle and Tomahawk}, \textit{Six Little New Zealanders} demonstrates an implicit belief in the concept of a pioneering family - the idea that when parents are absent, children will successfully group together for strength.

\textit{UNCLES AS PARENTAL SURROGATES}

Because the three uncles are the dominant adult figures in the novel, Glen is careful not to divert attention from them by characterising the Malcolms’ actual parents too thoroughly. Ngaire skims over her introduction to them, admitting that she finds it too hard to try and describe them: “Father is just father, and mother is - well, think of everything good and kind and gentle and loving and understanding, and you’ve got mother.” She admits that they haven’t got “big parts” in the book.\text{\textsuperscript{159}} Instead of resenting the absence of her parents, (effectively an abandonment), Ngaire elevates them to perfect status, especially her mother.
On the day of their departure, Ngaire describes how “I can feel mother’s arms about me still, holding me hard, but I can only remember her face - her beautiful, beautiful face - through a mist of tears.”160 Such repetitive sentiments occur sporadically through the book, as Ngaire misses her mother: “We thought of her dear, dear face with the wonderful eyes.”161

In contrast, the uncles are variously resented and loved by the children, who are not quite sure how to relate to them. It is a measure of Glen’s skill as a writer that she is able to encourage the reader to see things from the uncles’ points of view as well; one almost cringes on their behalf, when faced with the escapades of their dependants. All three uncles are bachelors, and although there is a nursery in their house, they have little experience with children. Interestingly, the uncles are the only characters to undergo any emotional maturing throughout the novel, while the children in general remain unaffected. Dan learns how to behave more like an adult, through his courtship of Kathie, and by having to take responsibility for the younger children. Stephen develops a soft-spot for Jan, and sets about trying to reform her. John undergoes the most considerable change - he becomes more tolerant, forgiving, and develops a sense of humour.

This novel has often been praised for its characterisation. While it is true that the uncles are interesting characters, nevertheless Ngaire reacts towards them as if they were stereotypes. She thinks of Uncle John as “big and fierce... but is believed to have a kind heart.”162 Uncle Stephen is ‘The Grey Man’ who once had a tragic love affair, that ended when his fiancée drowned in the river, which Ngaire glamorises in her mind: “He had never loved anyone else; all his life he had lived faithful to the memory of her.”163 Her favourite uncle is John, whom she variously fears and pities: “He seemed tired too, and his voice had an ‘old’ note in it that made me long to throw my arms around him and tell him I loved him and loved him...”164 The book ends with John making a warm, though clichéd reply to Ngaire, when she asks how he managed to put up with them all. He answers: “‘Some of our biggest troubles are also our biggest joys, little Ngaire.’”165

**CONCLUSION**

*Six Little New Zealanders* is the archetypal family story, because although the children are away from home and having adventures, they are under the care of their uncles, who are parental substitutes. The adventures are generally believable, and are localised and largely domestic. Family issues are explored with considerable humour, as the uncles and children...
struggle with their new roles. The story is narrated by Ngaire, but all six of the children get more or less equal attention throughout the book. The real parents (in the background) are highly idealised, though perhaps by Ngaire rather than Glen, and the uncles are the focus of interest by the children and the reader.

There is a hierarchy of maturity and responsibility between the siblings, with each looking after those younger. In relation to the distribution of personality traits between the genders, Glen shows slightly less sexism than contemporary writers such as Isabel Maud Peacocke and Edith Howes. She attempts to escape from the didactic attitude of her time, and generally succeeds. She shows a sense of humour when describing the children’s attempts to be more mature than they are, e.g. Jan and Ngaire’s disastrous social events, Kathie’s continued incompetence. However, she betrays a certain idealism in her outcomes, because although there seem to be temporary threats to life or reputation, the reader is confident of a happy ending.

If Glen has a message, it is to relish youth while you’ve got it, value the fact that others will ultimately take responsibility for you, and enjoy making mischief while you can do so relatively free of consequences.

---

ESTHER GLEN

UNCLES THREE AT KAMAHI

Glen’s sequel was written nine years later, and is set one year after the Malcolms’ initial visit to Kamahi. Gilderdale considers this a better book than Six Little New Zealanders, “which suffered from a rather clichéd ending,” and explains that it “is more concerned with visitors and the family’s reaction to them.”\(^{166}\) Perhaps in this way it is a more ‘young-adult’ book than its predecessor, which was more concerned with the internal mechanics of childhood. In this novel, Gilderdale states that the “harshness of the land provides the drama,” while “the human element supplies the humour.”\(^{167}\) This is arguable, because one of the main dramatic themes in the book, the neglect of Nan Somerset, the subsequent reunion with her brother, and her adoption by the Malcolms, is concerned precisely with the human element.
Gilderdale comments, with reference to this novel, that “one of the advantages of reading books written in the past is precisely that of noting the unconscious values mirrored in them. We may congratulate ourselves that we have improved in some directions, but at the same time realise that in others, perhaps in areas of human relationships and family loyalty, we have regressed.” Uncles Three at Kamahi in contrast to modern young-adult novels does portray the family unit as particularly strong, in terms of loyalty and love, but again, this is not necessarily realistic. However it must be conceded that some of Glen’s themes approach realism in this second book.

Issues of guardianship become more important. One of the new characters is “a strange gold prospector, half poet, half mystic, who travelled with the Bible and Homer always in his pack.” The appearance of an elderly hermit is very common in New Zealand children’s fiction. “Independent and nonconformist,” such a figure is “not usually central to the action but often takes a significant part in the story.” Psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim has suggested that the hermit exists in fairy stories and folk tales as an alternative aspect of the parent: “In respect to excelling the parent, the fairy story frequently uses the device of splitting him into two figures: the parent who thinks little of the child, and another figure - a wise old man... the youngster encounters, who gives him sound advice on how to win out.” Interestingly, the hermit-character appears most commonly in modern young-adult fiction: e.g. Tommy in Lasenby’s The Lake, Winter Carlisle in Mahy’s The Changeover, and Mr Jones in Gee’s Under the Mountain. In this book Nan and Ngaire turn to the hermit after their guardians have let them down. This suggests that Glen’s idealisation of the parent/guardian is beginning to crumble.

This section will be divided into two main themes: juvenility (the carefree portrayal of childhood naughtiness, humour associated with failures of maturity on the part of Kathie and Jan, romanticism on the part of the narrator); and issues of guardianship (as related to Nan Somerset) where Glen finally approaches serious problems of family life.

**JUVENILITY**

As in Six Little New Zealanders Glen derives great humour from childish escapades, often revolving around the children’s attempts to be more grown-up. When Jan and Ngaire arrange an afternoon tea party for Nancy McKenzie, Glen exploits their ineptitude in social graces. Before their visitors arrives, the two practise conversation: “‘The weather has been exceedingly warm,’ said Jan. ‘Exceedingly,’ I replied.” Disastrously they decide to light
the fire, in order to make the room more cosy, forgetting that it is a hot afternoon, and end up baking their guests and ruining the afternoon. Instead of regretting it, they find the episode hilarious.

Even when the children accidentally destroy property, Glen is not tempted to use the episode as a cautionary tale. Ngaire offers to help pay for some of the damage she causes, a perfunctory offer which the uncles reject. She settles for short-lived guilt: “We had meant to be so specially good these holidays, like children in a Sunday-school story, always in our places, always willing, bright, and smiling. And we had blown up the shed first thing.”\textsuperscript{173}

By today’s standards, some of the humour seems irresponsible. Glen shows the children as having a very casual attitude towards guns. Jock borrows Rob’s rifle, without asking. Jan tries to prevent him from using it: “‘I - Jock, put that gun down. You’re pointing it straight at me. No, not that way - you’ll shoot Ngaire. Look out, Pipi!’ There was always excitement when Jock held a gun.”\textsuperscript{174} It seems strange that Ngaire should find Jock’s dangerous handling of a gun “exciting” rather than frightening, and suggests that Glen herself finds the episode amusing.

The scene where they think Jock has shot and killed someone would today be interpreted as black humour. Jock tells them it was Mr McPherson: “This was worse. Mr McPherson was a small, silent man, given to sudden fits of irascibility. I had a feeling that he would strongly object to being shot.”\textsuperscript{175} With morbid humour, Jan describes how she will inform Mrs McPherson of her husband’s death: “‘I’ll do it very gently .... I’ll just say in a pleasant way, “Have you seen Mr McPherson lately, Mrs McPherson?” And if she says, “No,” I’ll say, “And I’m afraid you won’t, ever again.”’”\textsuperscript{176} As it turns out, Jock has shot Uncle Stephen, but not fatally. Jock is let off with a friendly reprimand.

Victorian character failings reappear in this book, and are again treated as a source of humour rather than something to be remedied. The three youngest girls represent categories of Victorian sin. Jan is untidy, Ngaire is thoughtless and Pipi is greedy. Pipi says she likes “‘cream on top of marmalade, and marmalade on top of butter, and butter on top of toast.’”\textsuperscript{177} The uncles, who (similar to Glen) appreciate children as they are, are amused rather than horrified. Pipi also likes cigars. Kathie has a different relationship to food. She has to prove that she can cook, before her father will let her get married. Father “declared that if Kathie could bake a cake, make bread, and mix puddings before the holidays were over he would give his consent, and she could be married at Easter.”\textsuperscript{178} Throughout the rest of the novel, Kathie struggles with her cooking lessons: “She had made shortbread without any butter, scones which looked heavy and sad, and a meat pie without any salt. And once,
really and truly, she roasted a duck with all his insides inside because she said it was such messy work getting them out.” At the picnic, nobody wants to eat Kathie’s pastries: “Even Uncle Dan refused them, and he should have been willing to risk his life in the cause.” Finally she ‘passes’ in poultry, soups, pastry, scones, breads and jams, and despite nearly poisoning everybody by putting oxalic acid in the madeira cake, she is allowed to marry Dan.

Ngaire’s childishness pervades the narration of Uncles Three at Kamahi even more than in Six Little New Zealanders. There are strong elements of romantic and sentimental optimism throughout the whole text. In Ngaire’s happy world, everything is exaggerated for childish effect. At Christmas they have “the biggest and fattest bird you ever saw.” The abundance of food adds to the sense of security and well-being. Gilderdale comments, “The amount of food consumed by the characters will astonish modern calorie-conscious teenagers.” Ngaire acknowledges that her family enjoys food: “Some people - grown-ups, of course - say that the old-fashioned Christmas dinner is out of place in a land where Christmas comes in the height of summer.” But these children thrive on the rich food, and there is no suggestion of eating disorders. Kathie is considered attractive by Ngaire, because she is “soft and round”.

Sometimes Ngaire’s romanticism overlaps with Glen’s. Ngaire pities Denise for being crippled (thinking of her as a heroic figure), and Glen, in keeping with this image, provides a miraculous cure. Romantically, Denise’s legs “come out of their dream” when Ngaire and Nan return from being lost in the mountains. This demonstrates that to some extent Glen too has an idealised view of the world.

GUARDIANSHIP

Perhaps because the Malcolm children are a year older, Glen allows them to see their guardians as less than perfect. When they arrive at the station they find no one is there to meet them, because Father, who has a memory “like a colander or gravy-strainer” has forgotten to write to the uncles informing them of the children’s arrival time. While this is a minor lapse, a major failing is presented in the character of Pat Somerset, who has been neglecting to care for his young sister, Nan. Nan’s difficult family situation can be seen as Glen’s first real exploration of social realism.

One of the main differences between Nan Somerset and the Malcolm children is that she does not chatter - she has never learnt to compete with other siblings for attention: “She
was given to long silences, which surprised us, and silenced us too. I think, perhaps, it was the lonely life she had led."186 Nan’s mother also lived a less than happy life on the isolated station. She “was once four years without seeing another woman.” An element of melodrama creeps in with the explanation for Nan’s orphaned state. Mr Somerset fell off a cliff, and Mrs Somerset, who heard him fall, lay with the body until she died too, presumably from cold.187 Nan, raised by farm retainers, is apparently ‘running wild’, and is restored to ‘normality’ through the power of family love.

Nan tells Ngaire that she likes having them stay with her: “‘We like you - awfully’”, Ngaire answers. “Right at that moment I adopted her as a sister, though I didn’t know it at the time. I didn’t only like her; I loved her.”188 Ngaire’s ‘adoption’ of Nan is formalised by the adult world when Mrs Malcolm offers to care for Nan, at least for a year while she starts school. “‘In a big family... there’s always room for one more,’”189 says Mrs Malcolm graciously. “In Mother Nan found what she had been unconsciously missing all her life. She ran straight into Mother’s heart, and has been there ever since.”190

Nan’s brother, Pat Somerset, who has become a famous entomologist in England, is initially treated with contempt by the uncles, and the Malcolm children, who feel he has neglected his duties. Uncle Stephen begins the criticism: “‘It’s time that brother of hers came home or sent for her. He is her guardian, and she has never seen him.’”191 Uncle John confirms that he thinks “‘the child is being ruined,’” and it is the fault of her brother.192 John’s disapproval of Pat is partly caused by a prejudice towards academics: “‘[Pat] may be clever - famous even - but it would be better for Nan if he were just an ordinary sort of man.... He proposes to dispatch her to a boarding school. As well cage a wild bird.’”193 The children follow their uncles’ example in despising Pat. Jan refers to him as “a beast” because he never comes near Nan. “‘He likes insects better than he does her. I expect he’s rather a creepy-crawly sort of man.’”194 Ngaire imitates her sister’s style of criticism, and talks about Pat as a “‘stick-you-on-the-end-of-a-pin’” sort of man.195 She is furious with him for seemingly minor failures, such as not buying Nan a party-frock for Stephen’s birthday: “‘Her brother should have bought her a party frock. He should - he should! He was up in the mountains collecting insects and butterflies. He would have been better employed looking after his little sister.’”196

Stephen, who always tries to be reasonable, suggests that Pat will come right once the effects of an English environment wear off, and Glen, who perhaps agrees with this, eventually portrays an improvement in Pat. The element of social realism she introduced with this sub-plot is slightly marred by one of her typical happy endings. During Kathie’s
wedding, Ngaire sees Pat watching Nan with a more healthy expression: “I liked the way he looked at Nan - not a bit as if she were an interesting specimen of the Nanibus Bugibus, but just as a little sister whom he would love and cherish and shield.”197 The echo of wedding vows strengthens the impression that Nan and Pat will live happily ever after.

CONCLUSION

Although Uncles Three at Kamahi approaches realism with regards to the family, through the subplot of Nan and her brother, the neglectful guardian, Pat, Glen retains happy endings for all. Family life is again as it should be, (rather than as it often was) - happy, supportive, naughty and consequence-free. Again, humour is derived from serious issues, because this is an easy-go-lucky world where guns do not really kill people. Glen gives the reader permission to find culinary disasters, the destruction of property, and social faux pas entertaining rather than regrettable.

PHILLIS GARRARD

TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

Phillis Garrard was the writing name of Phillis Garrard Rowley. Her birth date is not listed in any catalogues or biographical texts, but it is recorded that she was born in England, and also lived in Canada and Bermuda before settling in New Zealand. She became known for her Hilda books, ‘school stories’ about twelve year old Hilda Isaacs, who goes to a day school in the central North Island (probably based on Taihape, where Garrard lived for a couple of years). The time setting is probably close to the dates of writing: late 1920s and early 1930s.198 The first book, Hilda at School. A New Zealand Story was first published in 1929, followed by The Doings of Hilda, 1932, Hilda’s Adventures, 1938, and Hilda Fifteen, in 1944. An omnibus edition of the first three books was published in 1958. The Kotare version, Tales Out of School, contains Chapters 2, 4, 6 and 7 from The Doings of Hilda, and Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 from Hilda’s Adventures. Gilderdale as series editor has made a good selection, which is cohesive and easily read as one story. There are only a few places where Tales Out of School feels disjointed; for example when Hilda refers to a resolution
she has made, the reader’s comprehension is hindered by the absence of the original (previous) chapter where the resolution was introduced.199

Although Tales Out of School is set in the 1930s, there is almost no sign of the Great Depression. In rural areas such as the central North Island, this would have been particularly obvious, as farming families with high debts were being forced to walk off their properties, and unemployed male workers were sent to labour camps on Government work schemes. That Hilda is oblivious to the social disruption caused by the Depression is probably significant of Garrard’s desire not to dwell on it, rather than Hilda’s insulated existence.

The ‘school story’ as a genre was popular at this time, but not often considered as having literary merit. British commentator Frank Eyre comments that it “was always an artificial type and its decline towards the middle of the century was neither unexpected nor deplored.”200 Gilderdale however values Garrard’s contribution to the genre because her portrayal of school life is so accurate, compared to the home scenes of the ‘Hilda’ books, in which there is “some sentimentality.”201 Hilda’s father, Daddy (Duncan Isaacs) is a “model father; not only is he the fount of all wisdom (he teaches Hilda French and philosophy) but he is also understanding enough to say, after he discovered Hilda’s truancy on a certain occasion, ‘I’ve no objection to your playing truant now and then.’”202 In her first introduction to the ‘Hilda’ books, Phillis Garrard defines this home in ideal terms: “At home too life is happy, for Hilda has a delightful Dad, firm on occasion, but a wonderful companion, and Mrs. Luke, their housekeeper, is a comfortable welcoming person.”203

The most appealing thing about Phillis Garrard’s books is the character of Hilda herself. She is active, free-thinking, often naughty, but with high ideals. In this she is similar to the heroine of Enid Blyton’s The Naughtiest Girl in the School (and its sequels), bad-tempered, spoilt Elizabeth Allen, whose naughtiness often lands her in trouble. Hilda is often repentant about her bad behaviour, but does not cease to repeat it in future. Garrard, like Glen, understands the power of bad behaviour to be appealing to young readers. As she (or the publisher) comments in the introduction to Hilda’s Adventures: “Those who have made friends of Hilda in Hilda at School and The Doings of Hilda will be delighted that, grown a little older, she is just as entertaining, as prone to fits of naughtiness and high resolve as ever.”204

This discussion will be centred around three issues relevant to Garrard’s conception of family: her portrayal of teachers (school being a substitute family situation), parent-child relations (between Hilda and ‘Daddy’, contrasted with Priscilla and her father), and
maturity (the way that Hilda combines influences from home and school in her personal philosophy of self-determination).

TEACHERS

The small country school which Hilda attends is a progressive, mixed one, in which boys and girls are treated equally, except for differences in classes: the boys take woodworking as an extra option, and the girls take cooking, which "they always looked on... as a sort of picnic." Hilda and the other children have ambiguous feelings towards school in general. They occupy themselves mainly by feuding with other classes and antagonising their teacher, rather than with their lessons. Hilda, whose father has attempted to instil in her some respect for education, is slightly more susceptible than the other children to the guilt-raising techniques of her teacher, Ian Macdonald (Mac). At the beginning of term, when Mac gives an introductory speech about the value of education, Hilda is humbled by the idea of generations of people learning and furthering knowledge, so that it can be passed down to her: "And at last the result of all this way flung at her feet, a gift, she thought grandly, to her, Hilda, an insignificant person living in a half-wild country those early predecessors of hers, who gave so royally, hadn't even heard of." Despite good intentions to make use of this gift, she quickly reverts to being more interested in the social undercurrents of school.

This mixed school has an "atmosphere which is very different from that of an English school, but which aims at making its pupils hardy and self-reliant as well as educated." Mac, her daily replacement father-figure is an interesting character - because he is not stereotyped at all, either by Garrard, or by Hilda's imagination. Harried, inconsistent, often unfair at times, Mac is made more believable as a character because of his flaws. He punishes the entire class for discourtesy, including the resident "righteous wriggler-out-of-things", Edith, who does not raise her hand to admit to the crime. He says she can stay behind because her handwriting needs practice. Later, when Alec pulls Edith's hair in class, and she complains, Mac punishes both of them, because he doesn't approve of tell-tales: "'Too old to complain about little hurts like hair-pulls. Your mother might be interested. I'm not.'" This cavalier attitude to crime and punishment lowers him from the idealistic perch which many literary teachers inhabit. Later in the book he punishes Hilda for a crime, though he admits later he knew she was innocent: "That was the trouble with him - you
often didn’t know quite where you had him. He could be easy-going, and he could also come down on you like a ton of bricks.”

Hilda does look up to Mac however, and admires him for “being equally hard” and equally inconsistent to everyone: “‘Mac always treats boys and girls the same. Wouldn’t be fair not to in a school like ours.’” He straps girls and boys alike. She and her class are especially proud of him in public: “Mac was a terror but they took great pride in him on that account.” When he wins a prize for horse-jumping at the local Show Day, “Hilda’s class had another fit of wild enthusiasm. You’d have thought the man belonged to them entirely, instead of really being the headmaster of the whole school.”

**PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS**

While the character of Mac gives a sense of realism to the book, Hilda’s real father, who is supposed to be a counterpoint, is unrealistically fair and good. Duncan is more forgiving than Mac, and doesn’t believe in discipline except under extreme circumstances. When he catches Hilda misbehaving, rather than reprimanding her, he teases her about it, then questions her as to what she will think of her “‘futilities’” and “‘lost youth’” in years to come. While encouraging her to be a free-thinker, he also cautions her to be responsible. When the girls play truant and ride up to the sawmill, Hilda actually phones him beforehand to say what she is planning to do. She explains to the others that it is “‘obedience to parent... Dad’s always given me strict orders to let him know when I’m taking a day off.’” Hilda is far more concerned to be obedient to her father than to Mac, even though Mac is the heavier punisher. She is worried about growing up “‘a disappointment’” to Duncan.

In contrast to Hilda’s Aunt Susan, who believes in a more conventional childhood, with ‘frills’, Duncan thinks that “‘a free-and-easy, rough-and-tumble life is better for youngsters.’” Part of this happy life includes the certainty of a safety net, which is the parental position. When Hilda and her friends get lost in the bush, after playing truant, Daddy comes to rescue them, thus proving the wisdom of an open relationship between father and daughter. He is quite cheerful about having been forced to hunt down his daughter in the bush, not to mention “‘standing off frantic fathers, mothers, schoolmasters, and fussy ladies,’” who presumably don’t see truancy as part of the ‘free and easy’ life. Daddy comments that Mrs Bennett, the woman who lives nearby, “‘regards me as a sad
example of the Spineless Modern Parent, I fear.\textsuperscript{218} This is an ironical remark, because it is exactly what Duncan is, even by today’s standards.

The housekeeper, a woman called Mrs Luke (or Lukey) is also stereotyped. She is a “pleasant and motherly” woman, who provides Hilda with food and advice of a clucky, old-fashioned nature, like: “‘We’ve all our own garden plots to mind, my lamb, so be some grows orchid flowers and some potatoes.’\textsuperscript{219} Or the less obscure: “‘Now, be good, my love. Attend to your books and mind your teacher.’” Hilda likes to be spoken to in this way, because “she was sure it was what Lukey’s mother had said to her, when Lukey perhaps was a plump, grave little country girl with a mane of flaxen hair swinging to her waist.”\textsuperscript{220} Hilda’s own mother died many years earlier, and Lukey is an ideal replacement, motherly but not inclined to discipline.

At the opposite end of the parental spectrum is Priscilla’s father, who interferes far too much in his daughter’s life. While Duncan is a ‘spineless modern parent’, Priscilla’s Papa is an international, obsessive, ‘yuppie’ parent, undoubtedly unusual in the 1930s, but a cliché in the 90s. He compulsively meddles with the identity of his family, for the purpose of improving them all: “‘Papa always has lots of ideas. He tries them out on me mostly, because he says The Young are Plastic Clay - with capital letters. It’s rather fun.’” Papa’s plans for the family include turning them all into “‘citizens of the world, not just of one country, thus preventing wars.’”\textsuperscript{221} He chooses New Zealand as their latest home, despite Mamma’s protests that the Antipodes are full of “‘kangeroos and colonials,’” and tries to remake the family as ‘Hardy Settlers’. He is reported to have said, “‘Priscilla is getting frilly and flabby, and I intend to see if roughing it in the Antipodes will stop it!’”\textsuperscript{222} It is possible that Garrard bases Priscilla’s woes on some of her own experiences, because she travelled widely before settling down in New Zealand. Priscilla, susceptible to parental influence, talks a little like her father, with reference to grand ideals, and passes on Papa’s judgmental comments, with considerable relish. He is apparently shocked to find a golf-course in the small country town, because he “‘thinks Hardy Settlers should only indulge in such gentle sports as the roughest kind of football or climbing simply perpendicular mountains.’”\textsuperscript{223}

Priscilla, who initially finds the game amusing, begins to seriously enjoy “‘playing at being a Settler,’\textsuperscript{224} so much so that when her father suggests moving on to another country she is highly distressed. Hilda’s father solves the problem by engineering a meeting with Priscilla’s father and another local family, who are the perfect examples of successful ‘Hardy Settlers’.
“Papa said the Settler’s wife has seven children all under nine... and when she can’t get a lady-help she looks after them all and does the housework and cooks and makes their clothes and has a lovely flower garden and makes jam and plays the piano beautifully and is a very witty talker and awfully pretty.”

Priscilla’s father assumes that if “New Zealand can produce such a woman, then it must be good for Priscilla too,” and he decides to let the family stay. The whole saga of Priscilla’s father and his obsessions, even though reported via a thirteen year old girl, still seems contrived for humorous effect. The only believable part is Hilda’s reaction. She is concerned that Priscilla courts trouble to impress her father, “But yet it was awfully funny. And Hilda for one flying regrettable second almost wished that Daddy had a little of this intriguing eccentricity, if it would enable her to be as original a person as Priscilla.”

Hilda is actually quite jealous of Priscilla, but realises later what a waste of emotional effort jealousy is, when she realises Lizzie Meakins is jealous of her, for being popular and wealthy, and having an easy-going father. Lizzie offers the extraordinary insult: “You with your fat red horse and your nice clothes - you daddy’s darling!” Hilda realises that she is privileged to have the father she does. She moves from being unconsciously influenced by Duncan, to respecting and understanding his position in her life.

**Maturity**

Hilda is far more intellectually and emotionally independent than Glen’s children, who act selfishly or thoughtlessly, and then retreat into weakness when they get into trouble. Hilda has been trained as an intellectual, however, so she thinks more about her own behaviour and its consequences. By age thirteen, she accepts that she must pay for her misdemeanours. Like Enid Blyton’s Elizabeth, she is almost eager to take responsibility for her own actions; she admits when she is wrong, and receives punishment stoically. She plays truant, having already calculated that she will be punished, and accepted it as a reasonable price. After making a resolution not to give any more false excuses for not doing her homework, she admits honestly to Mac that she didn’t do it because she couldn’t be bothered. Even though she feels guilty about letting Mac down, she is proud of herself for admitting the truth: “There was nothing like will-power. She could make herself do things!
And she had not let down - she thought vaguely - Daddy or Mount Ruapehu or Roger or the Bush, who all seemed in their own ways to take some living up to."

The training in self-determination means that Hilda is insistent to work out the rights and wrongs of any choice she makes. She resists the urge to refer to a higher authority like Mac or her father, and concentrates on justifying her own opinions. She writes in answer to her Aunt Susan's query as to why she does not want to go to a boarding-school:

The reason is because for one thing I'm a Labourite and they always go to the public state schools with the proletariat, only in democratick countries like N.Z. there isn't any proletariat [sic] so almost all the kids go to them, but you know waat I mean. Another reason is boarding-schools are probably mushy on account of there being no boys in them, and another reason is I have more fun here, and another is I don't want to.\[231\]

Although her father and Mac's influence is obvious, Hilda has at least made the effort to understand the issues, and she has certainly convinced herself as to the validity of her argument.

**CONCLUSION**

Hilda as a character is not idealised at all, neither does she idealise in the way that she reacts to others, especially her father and teacher. Mac, the teacher is also well characterised. Realism slips, as in Glen, when Garrard attempts to use situations for humour (such as Priscilla's father) and also where she explores issues of love. 'Daddy' is a Purcell father-figure, who loves his child so strongly, and demonstrates it so unequivocally, that his own character seems blurred by it.

Hilda differs from that of earlier young-adult fictional protagonists in that she is politically committed, despite not yet being able to vote. As a 1930s character, she perhaps represents a new form of the pioneering ideal - the Labourite heroine, as opposed to the egalitarian one. While Garrard parodies Priscilla and her family for trying too hard to be 'Hardy Settlers', Hilda herself is the affirmation of this concept: multi-skilled, brave, independent, tomboyish, self-deterministic, and ultimately sympathetic.
JOYCE WEST

THE YEAR OF THE SHINING CUCKOO

Joyce West (1908-1985) was born in Auckland, and brought up in various country communities where her parents taught in Maori schools. West describes her childhood as a happy time: "We lived far from towns, in a world of bush roads and river crossings; we rode horseback everywhere, and kept a large menagerie.... When I began to write, it was with the wish that I might save a little of the charm and flavour of those times and places for the children of today."

She wrote several romantic murder-mysteries but is best known for children's stories set in rural Northland, often involving horses. Gilderdale resists the temptation to categorise her as a writer of 'horse stories', and points out that West is also capable of depicting "strongly idiosyncratic adult characters". She adds that "West is at her best when she writes of everyday country life, which she obviously knows well." Diane Hebley agrees with this, stating that West draws convincingly on her knowledge of farming and rural communities, her passion for horses and her taste for the comic, the dramatic, the romantic and for protagonists 'orphaned' through divorce, death or travel." She believes that "these engaging qualities reach their height in The Year of the Shining Cuckoo."

Published in 1961, nearly thirty years after Glen and Garrard, The Year of the Shining Cuckoo is set in the 1920s, and tells the story of Johnnie Douglas, who lives with his aunt Garance and grandfather John, on an isolated dairy farm in coastal Northland. Johnnie becomes very attached to a foal which his neighbour, Daryl Steward, offers to sell him for forty pounds. The plot of the novel superficially concerns Johnnie's efforts to raise the money, but is actually concerned with Daryl's efforts to win back the love of Garance, to whom he was once engaged. By the end of the book, several other romantic matches are made, and Johnnie gets his horse. In many ways, the novel is realistic in its portrayals of community, but when dealing with matters of love, West is "an incurable romantic".

This discussion will look at three main themes: parental surrogates (Aunt Garance and Grandfather); marriage of a parent (how this threatens the stability of Johnnie's family); and the sense of community (the way the family relates to their neighbours, especially Maori).
Gilderdale comments that “The characters in [West’s] novels are memorable, and the family relationships show the same cheerful acceptance of foibles that is so noticeable in Esther Glen’s books.” West is perhaps more interested in family dynamics than Glen. It is never explained what has happened to Johnnie’s parents, and why he lives with his aunt and grandfather - this does not seem relevant somehow - West concentrates on giving the impression of stability in the family Johnnie does have.

Aunt Garance, although a distinctive, well-drawn character, is an epitome of domestic excellence. She is almost a romantic figure, rather than a maternal one: beautiful, strong-willed, and a talented cook, household organiser, hostess, and gardener (perhaps an example of the ‘Hardy Settler’s Wife’ from Garrard’s Tales Out of School):

Her storeroom was always stocked up with tins of home-made biscuits and meringues and fruit-cake, the shelves were a picture with their rows of preserved peaches, plums, pears, cherries, quinces and tomatoes, with many-coloured jars of jam, with flashing glasses of clear bright jellies.

Grandfather describes his daughter as “‘House-proud’”, and antagonises her by claiming that “‘No man likes a house-proud woman.’” This is not strictly true - Daryl is impressed with Garance because she is such an icon of domestic success and Johnnie also admires his aunt for her skill.

The close-knit nature of this family is connected with the fact that the members resemble each other because of their upbringing and inherited personality traits. Johnnie talks about Aunt Garance taking after Grandfather, because “she was fiery”. This double fieriness causes numerous arguments within the household. Garance and her father find it hard to agree with each other on principle, because of an inherent unwillingness to accept that the other has superior knowledge.

Johnnie lacks this fiery and belligerent nature; he takes after his mother, who “had been the gentle one”. Grandmother insists that gentleness also goes along with stubbornness: “‘Johnnie’s just like his mother. Beth didn’t make a fuss of things the way you do, but once she’d got an idea she stuck to it like a dog with a bone.’” But Grandfather has influenced Johnnie too, by upbringing rather than genetics. West’s first description of him explains that “Grandfather loved horses as much as he hated motor-cars.
Motor-cars were ruining the world, he said; look at Communists, and divorce, and the way children behaved nowadays. Johnnie, symbolically named after his grandfather, shares his love of horses and distrust of motor-cars. He has also acquired his work ethic. Grandfather tells Johnnie that if he wants the horse he will have to work for it: “Don’t believe in spoon-feeding people.” Johnnie accepts this without argument, and diligently works at money-making schemes for the entire novel, without recourse to adult sympathy.

This type of family dynamic is quite different to that in other books. Garance and Grandfather do not act as perfect mother and father types. Instead of the clear boundaries and hierarchies of Glen and Garrard’s families, this one is more diffuse: the power play which occurs shows complex traits and motivations between family members, and is therefore more realistic.

MARRIAGE OF PARENT

West, who also co-wrote romance novels, exhibits almost unconsciously a strong romantic tone in The Year of the Shining Cuckoo, in which six characters are paired off by the end: Grandfather and Nurse Mercy Fielding; Aunt Garance and Daryl Steward; and Ermyntrude (the housekeeper) and Percy.

Johnnie accepts Ermyntrude’s marriage to Unlucky Percy as a marriage she enters into because of mutual need. When Garance asks why she does not wish to return home, after leaving the circus, Ermyntrude explains that her father has married again: “He wouldn’t need me,” she says. So she finds someone who does need her - Unlucky Percy, whose father was a remittance man, and who is rather hopeless himself. Johnnie appears rather pleased at the match, which benefits both parties. His response to his grandfather’s engagement is not noted, because it occurs on the last page of the novel. What is far more significant to him is Garance’s marriage to their neighbour, Daryl Steward.

Garance herself briefly regrets getting re-engaged to Daryl because of her perception of the ways that Johnnie, her father and the garden need her attention, ahead of her own romantic needs. Daryl replies: “The garden will transplant... so will Johnnie”; however Garance is most worried about her father: “He simply won’t make any plans for the future.... Daryl and I want Johnnie to live with us, but Father wants to keep him.” Grandfather however has his own ‘romantic’ plans to fulfil his double need for a companion and housekeeper.
Johnnie’s reaction to Garance’s marriage is complex and quite realistic, compared with Glen’s portrayal of universal bliss at Kathie’s wedding in *Uncles Three at Kamahi*. Even though she is his aunt rather than a mother, Johnnie resents Daryl’s new ‘ownership’ of Garance. When she is first called by her new name, Mrs Steward, “something happened to me. I felt as if the bottom of the day had fallen out with a thud. It was not that I didn’t like Daryl, or didn’t want him in the family. I could not think of him as a wicked step-uncle, or anything like that. It was just that Aunt Garance no longer belonged to just us and the Inlet Farm.”245 The word ‘belonged’ is significant. This is often how children do feel about close family members.

**SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

In the small farming districts of the far north, community was very important to people, not just for professional reasons (such as neighbourly support), but also as a social hierarchy, where reputation is everything. Aunt Garance, an excellent cook and gardener, has high status in her community; her nearest rival is Mrs Strange. Aunt Garance “was upset for days if Mrs Strange’s dahlias were half an inch larger, or if Mr. Strange’s Best Bloom, Any Variety, was put ahead of hers at the Bar Harbour Flower Show... but it was in the preserved-fruit section at the A. & P. Show each year that Aunt Garance and Mrs. Strange were the deadliest rivals.”246 When Aunt Garance is injured, Mrs Strange threatens to move in, to ‘help’ look after the house. Garance tries to clean the house herself, saying that “‘My reputation is more important than my knee.’“247

A contrast to this ‘proper’ lifestyle is shown by the Maori families in the community, who share a belief in hospitality, but otherwise do not live by such strict rules. Tom Ngatai has “so many children that he couldn’t remember them all.”248 Johnnie and Raine find a missing horse in the Waimapu Pa, and although tempted to report it and claim a reward, decide not to because Luke Reihana has been so hospitable to them: “‘It’s a pity they were so nice to us,’ said Raine with a sigh.” The children justify allowing the crime to go unpunished, because the owner of the horse is reputed to have cheated Luke.249 This kind of social code differs from that of pakeha adults, but Johnnie and Raine instinctively understand it.

West’s tolerance of the Maori system of values is marred by one example of racial stereotyping which recalls Esther Glen: “We liked all our Maori neighbours along the river. They were all very respectable people, with the exception, perhaps, of old Hone Rewiti who
sometimes took queer fits at full moon."

Perhaps old Hone Rewiti is a relative of Tairoa, from *Six Little New Zealanders*, who was also suspected of being prone to mad fits.

**CONCLUSION**

Written in 1961, but set in 1920s, *The Year of the Shining Cuckoo* does represent a bygone age, West’s happy childhood, as a pleasant time reminiscent of *The Darling Buds of May*, but does so in quite a realistic way. She shows that family members have complicated relationships to each other and are not always motivated by pure love. Maori families are shown as different, but they are less stereotyped than in earlier books. Romance is connected to need, as indeed it often is. The happy-ending wedding is made more believable by showing Johnnie’s response - of slight jealousy and concern about his position in Garance’s future. However, while *The Year of the Shining Cuckoo* attempts to be ‘modern’ in its realism, it also affirms the rural pioneer values of the 1920s, such as the work ethic, practical domestic skills, family loyalty and concern combined with independence of females and children.
CHAPTER THREE
THE SURVIVAL STORY

Edith Annie Howes’ *Silver Island*, published 1928, set 1920s.
Isabel Maud Peacocke’s *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane*, published 1932, set 1930s.

This genre is not so clear-cut as the previous two, because the word ‘survival’ is used variably by critics, to describe this sort of work. A more wide-sweeping expression would perhaps be ‘Adventure Story’ but this is too large to cover the three books in this sample. Edith Annie Howes’ *Silver Island* is described by Gilderdale as “the first survival story written by a New Zealander about New Zealand children.”

Like her usage of the term family story she does not offer a definition in any critical works, but survival story can probably be taken to mean a novel in which children are separated from their parents, and have to stay alive using their own intelligence and initiative. Gilderdale uses a different term to refer to Isabel Maud Peacocke’s *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane*: “the first New Zealand boating story,” even though it is to all intents and purposes a story about survival. Because both novels involve children living away from civilisation in the bush or on islands, they could also be called ‘Self-Sufficiency Stories’. In British children’s literature, the genre has been present for half a century. It grew out of the nineteenth century Adventure Story, dominated by ‘giants’ such as George Henty, Robert Ballantyne (especially his novel *The Coral Island*, 1857), and George Manville Fenn. The defining feature of these books was “a sufficiency of moral purpose.” In the twentieth century transformation of this form, moral purpose was replaced by a desire to teach survival skills. One of the first and best known authors is Arthur Ransome, who produced *Swallows and Amazons* in 1931, the forerunner of a long series:

Ransome’s contribution to the twentieth-century children’s story was incalculable. He led the way to a more natural approach; to a realistic and unsentimental characterization; to completely true to life dialogue, and to a new conception of the kind of excitement necessary to keep children reading for pleasure. He has had, of course, a host of imitators. He launched a whole fleet of sailing adventure stories; he
started the immense flood of stories about the summer holidays; he began the fashion for books with plenty of country lore in them.  

From the 1930s onwards it is possible to see Ransome’s influence in the New Zealand books of this type with a few minor changes. In New Zealand examples the fashion of ‘country lore’ which Ransome introduced is reinterpreted as ‘bush-craft’; the summer holidays occur over the Christmas period; and though the sailing story has been imitated, it is without the fine nautical detail for which Ransome was famous.

It cannot be claimed that Peacocke’s *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane* and Howes’ *Silver Island* were influenced by Ransome, since their writing predated 1931. It is in fact remarkable that two New Zealand women wrote successful survival/boating stories at the same time as the international trend-setter, Ransome.

---

**EDITH HOWES**

*SILVER ISLAND*

Edith Annie Howes (1872-1954) was born in London, the third of eight children. The family had a strong interest in nature, and one brother became an entomologist. Her father, an accountant, emigrated to Invercargill in the 1870s. Edith was educated at Kaiapoi and Christchurch schools, and became a pupil-teacher from 1888-1892, then did a year of Teacher Training. Between 1894 and 1899 she held various teaching positions, and settled in Gore where she taught at Gore Public School as the infant mistress. She eventually became headmistress. Her next appointment was at Wellington Girls College, 1917-1919. After retiring from teaching she concentrated on writing for children and caring for her elderly mother. She earned an MBE in 1935, and King George VI’s Coronation Medal in 1937 for children’s writing.

One of her most famous books, *The Cradle Ship*, 1916 was a “landmark attempt to provide children with sex education, which ran to eighteen reprints.” *The Cradle Ship* “conveying the facts of life in a way considered a little excessive by some, was so well founded it was discussed at a medical conference in Paris, and translated into several languages.” Howes also wrote non-fiction for children, as well as a critical report on
New Zealand schools (1919). She disapproved of classroom overcrowding, rote learning and heavy discipline, and made efforts to reform the education system. In 1951 “she struck Frank Sargeson... as both ‘incredibly old’ and ‘incurably famous’.”

Silver Island, first published in 1928 has been described as “an Arthur Ransome type story set on Stewart Island, [which] incorporated real-life adventures of the children of William George Howes, Edith’s favourite brother.” The story involves three children, Enid (12), Jim (11) and Wuffles (9), who, while staying with their uncle and aunt in Stewart Island, decide to go camping on a nearby island without telling anyone. They are motivated by a desire to be free from adults, and also by a greed for treasure. While on the island they collect ‘pearls’, ‘gold’, and ‘silver’, find a cave which once belonged to a hermit, explore limestone caves, and trap native birds for food. After their boat is swept away in a bad storm, leaving them marooned, their uncle appears to rescue them, admitting that he knew all the time where they were.

The three most significant things about this early survival story are: sibling relations; mimicry of parents (how the children imitate the behaviour of their parents); and pioneering children (how they represent model ‘hardy settler’ children)

SIBLING RELATIONS

Howes attempts to show a family which is generally happy, where the children are proud of each other (like Ron and Isbel in Rifle and Tomahawk), supportive of the family unit, and not prone to arguing. Although a 1930s readership might have seen Silver Island as an example of good sibling relations, the modern teenage reader might not be so comfortable, especially with the way Wuffles (as youngest child) is treated, by his siblings.

Before they even leave their uncle and aunt’s house, Wuffle’s inferiority is established. He is put down for trying to add something to the conversation: “‘Cut it out!’ Jim ordered sharply. Wuffles was only nine, and was talking far too much; he must not be allowed to take a lead in the conversation. Wuffles cut it out obediently, for besides being only nine, he was thin and not very robust, and had a wholesome respect for Jim’s superior weight.”

Although all three of the children act quite belligerently towards each other at times, Howes assures us that they aren’t really quarrelling, it “was only their way. They were really the best of friends.”
Friendship does not describe the hierarchy of power which emerges once they have been away for a while. Wuffles is treated as the baby, and duly suppressed by Enid and Jim, who start to think of themselves in the role of mother and father. Wuffles, put down in this way, starts to act even more childishly. When asked to make a fire and boil the billy, he protests, not because he doesn’t want to, but because he “thought it only proper to protest when ordered to do so.” When left alone, he sets a fire under a fuchsia tree, out of laziness, and naturally enough sets fire to the bush. He waits helplessly to be discovered, anticipating the “scathing remarks of Enid and Jim.... Wuffles wished what he had often wished before - that he had been born the eldest instead of the youngest of the family; then he might have made a mess of things in peace and comfort." It may be the prerogative of the eldest to avoid a telling off, but making a mess can hardly be comfortable. Wuffles, being naive, has not properly thought through his envy.

Despite feeling a little sorry for Wuffles, who looks “desolate and dismayed”, Jim “felt that a warning must be uttered and a lasting lesson given. He spoke severely and firmly, and felt remarkably like his father and very grown up.” Enid also enjoys the opportunity to admonish the baby: “‘You have spoilt the beauty of our bay, and you might have burnt all the bush and all our things.’ She too felt deliciously grown up, and very motherly, pointing out his evildoing to Wuffles in this sad and sober way. and without a jeer.”

**MIMICRY OF PARENTS**

Even before the adventure begins, it is clear that these children are strongly influenced by the example of their elders, in their conception of status being linked to age. Enid, at “twelve and a half... felt that as the eldest she must show caution.” Jim also feels superior because of his age - and he and his sister treat Wuffles with according disrespect. Besides imitating their parents’ style of telling off, the children also imitate adult sexism, which they have observed in the behaviour of their mother and father and uncle and aunt. The aunt is an obvious female role-model: “She was always kindness itself, and this morning her fair round face was softer and kinder than ever. She gave them perfectly magnificent lunches.” The uncle is not ‘kindness itself’, but he is highly responsible. The division in personality is repeated by the children on the island. Enid assumes the role of the comforter, and Jim the provider, who traps birds for their tea. Enid also acts more ‘girlishly’. The first thing she wants to do upon arriving at the island is build a “pretty little
houseغا، like Wendy, the archetype female in Peter Pan. Jim prefers a tent, and Wuffles fancies a cave.

There is also quite a difference between the male and female mind, when it comes to planning what they will do when they are wealthy. Enid’s plans include “driving up to the family door in a taxi laden with the most delightful presents for everyone, and the boys’ minds were running on the boats and motor-cars and guns they would buy if they found the silver.” This is not necessarily the children imitating their parents, but rather Howes’ conception of the ‘natural’ (stereotyped) difference between little girls and little boys.

PIONEERING CHILDREN

The main plot thread of the novel involves an insistence on ‘colonial’ self-sufficiency. The Lesters decide to go camping, partly because they are attracted by the idea of getting silver; also because freedom sounds appealing: “To have an island of their own, free from the restraining presence of grown-ups, to hunt and fish and discover as Robinson Crusoe hunted and fished and discovered, to bathe as often as they liked and eat whenever they were hungry.” With the exception of hunting and fishing, the main appeal is for freedom to do as they like, bathe and eat when they want to. But although they discover interesting things on the island, the reader does not get the impression they are having more fun than they could at home. Freedom turns nasty in the end, when their boat is swept away: “Suddenly, with the loss of the boat, the island had become a prison. They were marooned.”

The ‘freedom’ which they enjoy while being on Silver Island turns out to be superficial anyway, because Aunt Kathleen overhears them planning their adventure, and Uncle Jack checks on them every night. Before beginning the charade, Jack consults the children’s father, who condones the adventure, saying: “Let the young explorers remain on their uninhabited island till they are tired of it.” Jack explains that their father “said that it was the best thing that had ever come your way, and it would be the making of you to look for yourselves.” This is a strange contradiction: the adults think it is good for children to believe they are taking responsibility for themselves, while they are in fact being supervised. Howes, perhaps feels that the Lesters are too young to survive on their own, which is why she offers the safety-net.

Even though freedom is what motivates the children, the father is right: being on the island does force them to learn how to take responsibility for themselves, though not for
others. The book begins with the ultimate irresponsibility: running away without telling anyone where they are going. Enid is the only one who stops to consider the effects on their uncle, aunt and parents. She comforts herself with the idea that it will "‘be such a lovely surprise for them when we turn up again.’" Modern fictional children would never be so naively callous. More responsibility is shown once they arrive at the island - they learn to hunt for food, build shelters and entertain themselves. They find Arthur Seymour’s cave and ransack it, collecting biscuits, candles, matches, a candlestick, a zinc bucket, knife and fork, plates, bowl, cup, saucer, little bundle of string, tin of sardines, blankets and books. This is a common feature of the survival story, a tendency to list the essentials of survival in meticulous detail. No other genre is so materially precise about objects. Esther Glen and Isabel Maud Peacocke (both known as family story writers) prefer to make lists of families, in descending order of age, rather than items or food. Jack Lasenby, who has written several survival stories, shares Howes’ love of the list. He may even have been influenced by this book.

The children, while being responsible for themselves, never learn responsibility for others. They don’t respect the memory of Arthur Seymour: they pilfer his cave and steal his treasure (ambergris), which they later sell, making no effort to trace the possible descendants of his sister, to whom he left the treasure. They also kill and eat native birds, including a weka, kaka and wood pigeon, justifying it to themselves:

They had been taught a fine reverence for the beauty and wonder of the native birds, but they felt that hunger might well make their offence forgivable. ‘Never destroy the glory of your own country,’ their mother used to say. ‘It is only stupid people who do that. Our birds are unique.’ But wekas were a nuisance and kakas were very numerous.... So they excused themselves.

Between Wuffles’ fire, and Jim’s trapping of native birds, the Lester children wreak considerable destruction on the island; Howes, although a conservationist, seems to accept this as the prerogative of children (perhaps because it fits with a ‘colonial’ attitude that it is acceptable to exploit the environment for a good cause) and does not vilify her characters. Modern writers would be more tempted to show repercussions of such selfishness.
CONCLUSION

This novel has dated substantially, especially in its use of gender stereotyping and characterisation of the young. The children come across as self-centred, greedy, naive and irresponsible, with the possible exception of Wuffles, who learns to love birds while on the island. Their imitation of adult roles and types of behaviour feels pretentious, especially in the scenes where Jim and Enid reprimand Wuffles. Sibling relations are supposed to be affectionate and supportive - the children being "the best of friends" according to Howes, but this stretches credibility with the modern reader. The Lester children, established as good 'colonial children', full of self-determinism and survival skills, betray their dependence on the adult world (rather than independence) by constantly mimicking patterns of sexism which they have learnt from their parents, and aunt and uncle; therefore Enid fantasises about giving presents to people, and living in a pretty house, while the boys think about guns and cars, and prefer to live in a cave or tent, rather than a 'Wendy house'. Howes repeats sexist stereotypes in the adult characters: the aunt is impossibly kind and tolerant, and the uncle is manly and capable. Their understanding of the whole affair, andcondoning of it, firstly implies that there is no true self-sufficiency in the novel, and secondly means that the children never get a chance to discover the potential results of their selfishness on others.

The novel feels disappointing: freedom turns out to be illusory, and the children’s responsibility only stretches far enough to cover themselves, not their family or environment. Although they do learn to survive on their own, without adult help, the presence of an adult safety-net (which the reader guesses at, even if the characters don’t) makes the story over-comfortable, and less realistically dangerous. However the features which make this novel disappointing to a modern reader would probably not have been so noticeable to Howes’ intended audience. As an affirmation of traditional settler society values, Silver Island would have been quite fashionable in the 1920s. In some ways it can almost be seen as an example of the pioneering philosophy: that freedom and independence must be insisted upon at any cost. This philosophy involves firstly the abandonment of parental authority, then the seeking out and colonisation of a new home, sparing little consideration for native life.
ISABEL MAUD PEACOCKE

THE CRUISE OF THE CRAZY JANE

Isabel Maud Peacocke (1881-1973), as Gilderdale has noted, was “the earliest and one of the most prolific New Zealand writers in [the family story genre].”\textsuperscript{273} She wrote fifty novels in forty years, some of which were published under her married name: Isabel M. Cluett. She was born into a large family, raised in Auckland, and worked variously as a “novelist, playwright, journalist, teacher and broadcaster.”\textsuperscript{274} She never had children of her own, but was involved with them through education. At age sixteen she opened her own school, and later worked for ten years at Dilworth School, a special establishment for children with “disadvantaged home backgrounds”. Peacocke’s interest in education and child-rearing practices is explored in her novels with “varying degrees of sympathy,”\textsuperscript{275} and is “more often than not unsympathetic to private schools,”\textsuperscript{276} and parents. Gilderdale comments: “she must have seen the results of parental mismanagement as well as bereavement. Certainly no other writer in New Zealand juvenile fiction has portrayed so many irresponsible parents, nor so many disputes over guardianship.”\textsuperscript{277} Mothers are particularly flawed characters, portrayed as “socialites if they are rich, strongly independent if they are poor, or nervously neurotic if they have been blessed with artistic gifts.”\textsuperscript{278}

Most of her novels were published in England, and many “sold out in England before reaching New Zealand.” Peacocke is reported to have said: “Wherever they sell them it is all right by me.”\textsuperscript{279} She was interested in entertaining any children, not just New Zealanders. Gilderdale comments: “Above all, she liked children to enjoy themselves, free from fear of being deserted by adults, and from poverty.” The majority of her books concern children who exceed their parents in some way; invariably the stories “put children into a situation where their cleverness showed up some failing in the adult world: cruelty, failure to care, selfishness or snobbery.”\textsuperscript{280} Her boating stories “show ebullient extended families who can easily absorb neighbours’ children when necessary.”\textsuperscript{281}

*The Cruise of the Crazy Jane* is described by Gilderdale as a ‘boating story’; however because it involves children travelling away from parents, living apart from civilisation, and caring for themselves, it can be classed as a ‘survival story’ too. The plot concerns seven children, aged 5 to 14 (Vicky, Marty, and Tori, along with their three cousins, Cathleen, David and Billy Jupp, plus the neighbour’s child, Wee Bee) who go for a sailing holiday. They intend to camp at Secret Cove, but meet a ‘big boy’ (John Erdly) on the beach, who
inveigles them to abandon their camp and sail in pursuit of someone who has stolen his yacht. He is ultimately revealed to be an arrogant boy who has escaped from school; the ‘stealer’ of the yacht is his uncle, who has confiscated it for his own good, and all ends well with John forced to return to school, and the children forgiven by their parents for having abandoned Secret Cove to go on an illicit adventure. There are strong similarities to Glen, in the listing of family members at the beginning, also in the choice of narrator, 12 year old Vicky, who “often descends into the gushing schoolgirlese of the period.” This causes some of the same narrative problems as in Glen, namely: are the “stylistic lapses into sentimentality” Vicky’s lapses as the ‘writer’, or Peacocke’s? This will be determined based on context.

The most interesting theme in *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane* is the difference between authority and responsibility. John Erdly is a natural leader, and thus clashes with Marty who, as oldest, has been designated leader of the children by his father. Authority seems a natural instinct, closely connected to arrogance, sexism and prejudice. Responsibility is connected with guilt. Vicky, who is perhaps the most responsible of the children, has very little authority because she is a younger sibling and a female. This section will discuss the opposing forces of authority and responsibility as present in the theme of sibling relations (including the relations between cousins); and maturity, and suggest why Peacocke defines them as different qualities rather than aspects of the same.

**SIBLING RELATIONS**

As in *Silver Island* the children develop a new family structure as soon as they are away from their parents, with Marty as Daddy, Vicky as Mummy, Cathleen as a sort of irresponsible aunt, David and Billy-Jupp as uncles, and Tori and Wee Bee as babies. This is why John Erdly’s appearance throws them into such confusion. Marty and Vicky alternately look up to him, as an older boy who is like their parents (supplies them with food/controls them), and resent him as usurper of the superior position within the group. To some extent, they make it easy for him to dominate them, because, despite their hierarchy of power, they are not responsible for others. Wee Bee, a rather stereotyped character, “more ‘babyish’ than would normally be expected” seems to be present merely to show up the irresponsibility of others. Her own mother has abandoned her, “always expecting us to take care of her kiddy while she amuses herself” at “golf or tennis or shopping.” Her one attempt at responsibility, asking the Eletts to make sure Wee Bee wears a hat, is
ignored: “You could almost see the freckles coming out on her little button of a nose but she was enjoying herself, so what did it matter.” Skin-cancer was not an issue in the 1930s, but this still sounds like neglect.

Bridget Moloney, the stereotype matron figure, mothers Wee Bee to a frightening extent, perhaps recognising that the other children are incompetent. Even J. Smith worries about the way Wee Bee is treated by the other children. He watches her “keep slipping on rocks and falling into the water,” and decides to carry her. Being a father himself he “‘wasn’t going to have ‘child-murder on his soul.’” Vicky responds to this in the most extraordinary way, commenting that: “It is strange how everyone from Maggsie [the washing woman] down to J. Smith seems to have an idea that we have an idea of murdering or otherwise drowning Wee Bee, but really she is so used to falling in the water and being hauled out again, and she has so few and such thin clothes on, that she would dry almost at once and not catch cold.” This justification is quite disturbing, suggesting that Bee is underdressed, apart from anything else.

Ironically John Erdly is the only child who takes proper responsibility for Wee Bee. He ties her up inside the boat shed so she won’t fall into the water, and also pads the rope with a towel so it won’t feel uncomfortable. As usual his bad behaviour is tempered with good. He arranges food for the other children, even when they oppose his leadership and try to abandon him. Peacocke is perhaps offering the message that John is responsible despite being an authority figure, not because of it. He decides to take responsibility for the party, saying that he “‘wasn’t going to have anything happening to us while we were in his charge.’” Marty replies angrily, “‘Oh, I say! who said you were in charge? Not much! My father and mother put them all in my charge.’” The difference is that Marty wants to be in charge for the sake of it, not because he is really concerned to protect the others.

When they return home Marty is compelled to confess the whole truth to his parents, including the fact that they left the flag flying even though they were not at Secret Cove. The father says to Marty, “‘I’m disappointed. I thought I could trust you to take proper care of your sister and the little ones,’” but he is being devious, because John Erdly has already visited him and explained that Marty is not to blame. Mr Elett eventually admits that he thinks Marty “‘behaved rather well’” despite breaking promises to his mother. This is odd, because the reader is aware that Marty has put his siblings in danger.

Those of the other children who are motivated by feelings of responsibility, prove it by feeling guilty. Cathleen is guilty for losing Tori and Wee Bee in the mist. Vicky feels guilty about “the Union Jack flying at Secret Cove” and their “Mummy looking out so
trustingly” at it. The boys don’t ever feel guilty, except John for a brief moment at the end. The overriding sense is that none of the children are particularly responsible for each other, and they are led in this example by their parents.

MATURITY

Peacocke, although supposedly not class-conscious, possibly has a belief in natural authority, a kind of noblesse oblige which is present (or instilled) in the wealthy or highly educated, and which is often mistaken for maturity. When Tori and Wee Bee turn up with a “strange big boy”, Cathleen is impressed with his good manners and ‘presence’ and assumes he is an Earl. Vicky comments, “it was strange how you felt as if you must obey him,” and although the girls are slightly appalled at his greed (he takes two sausage-rolls when offered one), they have a higher opinion of him than “our boys” because of his politeness. This soon changes. Vicky records that “the Earl became quite a different person as soon as we got on board. Just like Marty and Dad and all the boys or men who come on board a launch he began fussing with the engine and soon he was ordering the boys about.”

His authority has another edge to it, which is apparent in the way he treats the two family retainers, who have been looking after his house at Castle Cliff. He speaks to them crossly, and at one point actually says to Mr Moloney: “don’t pretend to be a bigger fool than you really are, Pat.” Cathleen gets infected with John’s snobbery, and calls Pat Moloney to his face “a-a-mere menial, however worthy.”

John’s sense of leadership does not involve telling all the facts to his inferiors. He offers the children a mixture of lies and truth to explain how his parents died, leaving him the boat, home and business, but in the trust of his uncle, Alan Erdly, who is a “tyrant and an interferer.” The truth about John is revealed in a summary from his headmaster, at the end of the book, beginning with the explanation: “John Erdly was an only child and terribly spoiled like all onlies.” After he was expelled from Wilton boarding school his cousin Alan Erdly “said that he must have private lessons, so he could pass his exams and become a lawyer or a doctor or a Prime Minister or anything he wanted to be” (obvious careers for a boy with natural authority and arrogance). John later escaped from the St Lawrence Medway school, and set off to find the Moonbeam, which had been confiscated by his uncle. After John was recaptured he sulked, and felt “savage and ashamed of being brought back like a naughty child,” and “was ashamed for the boys to see him.” Cathleen
is disappointed with the deflation of the myth, and says that: "John Erdly was just a cheat after all. He said he'd come out of prison as if he had been a real man, and he is really just a silly boy who has run away from school." John has a completely belligerent attitude towards the parental figures in his life, e.g. his cousin and headmaster. Peacocke/Vicky seems confused about this character, whether to respect him for being such a natural leader, or despise him for having such little respect for his own leaders.

Marty as an authority figure is almost as self-centred and prejudiced as John. When asked if he should consult the girls for their opinion, he replies in a superior way: "Oh, the girls have nothing to do with it. I am in charge of this party." Later when the Crazy Jane stalls, Marty is forced to signal the Moonbeam for help, using the excuse: "I wouldn't ask that blighter for help only we have women and children aboard." His sexist attitude seems pompous and ridiculous, because he doesn’t demonstrate this concern for women and children in his actual dealings with them.

According to Heather Murray, Peacocke has a contradictory personal view of sexism. Though "girls may be lively for a while, most Peacocke heroines expect eventually to be rescued by boys and to defer to husbands, once they have been brought to their senses." Cathleen is certainly described in romantic terms, being "the loveliest thing to look at with mops of really corn-coloured locks like you read in the books and dark-blue eyes." Vicky by contrast is a "mop-headed skinny little brownie," (inspired by Ngaire in Six Little New Zealanders). As in Glen’s books, skinny, long-legged girls are made to seem more vulgar, tomboyish and less beautiful than their feminine equivalents (Peacocke’s Cathleen and Glen’s Kathie). Both Cathleen and Vicky are expected to do ‘women’s work’ while on board the boat, like get lunch ready. Cathleen protests a little about it: "Oh bother!... That’s the tragic part about being a woman. She’s man’s slave - his bond-slave and his chattel." but she accepts her inferior position all the same. It is as if being female means she has to be ‘young’ too, while the males are expected to be more mature. The irony is that while the older male children believe themselves to be mature (hence their insistence on being in authority over the other children), true maturity (involving taking responsibility for others) is essentially lacking in their characters.

**CONCLUSION**

The formula of The Cruise of the Crazy Jane is that of children having an adventure away from their parents, but as in Howes they have a secure family background to return home.
to. Movement is geographic only in the novel; the children do not end up particularly older and wiser. The dynamics of the new family unit are flawed: although the children establish a hierarchy between siblings, each member being responsible for those younger than him/herself, the boys are so obsessed with being dominant that they forget to be responsible at all. Thus Peacocke explores an idea that authority and responsibility are two separate qualities: authority representing superficial maturity, and responsibility showing true maturity. John Erdly who exhibits both qualities, is both hero and anti-hero, the boy who defies his family and school, and thus seems more mature/brave, but is ultimately revealed to be arrogant and rather selfish.

The superficial portrayal of family does feel idealised - parents: stern, patronising, but kind; girls obedient and guilty; boys dominant and capable - but behind this is a sense of criticism, apparent in the fact that none of these characters are consistently likeable. It is as if Peacocke wants to create impressive characters, conforming to the patterns, sexism and prejudice of her time, but she cannot help undermining them with her own secret desire for egalitarianism.
CHAPTER FOUR
TRANSITION

The following graph shows the relation between date of setting and date of publication of each of the two samples of New Zealand young adult fiction - Kotare and Recent.

The most recent book which was republished in the Kotare Series was Ron Bacon's *Again the Bugles Blow*, originally published in 1979, dealing with the historical past (of 1863). The next most recent author was Joyce West (1961); all others in this sample predate 1938. There is a marked difference between the novels first published before and after the Second World War. The first thing to note is that there is a large gap in production of children's novels between the 1940s and 1960s, suggesting that the war diverted authors and publishers away from children's literature. When publication resumed, the portrayal of society was less idealised, the writing was less formulaic (in terms of literary conventions and plot), and often made use of realism or fantasy to deal with serious issues which had been mostly ignored by earlier authors. Between the pre-war Kotare books and the recent
sample, the genre of young-adult fiction became more defined. The modern authors also tend to criticise their society (past and present). Bacon and West are on the cusp of this transition.

There is an interesting correlation between the readiness of authors to address contemporary social problems, and the degree of social stress experienced in their society. The Kotare authors who set their books in the 1930s do not mention the Depression. None of the books are set during the First or Second World War. The fact that three of the books deal with the New Zealand wars is probably indicative of a desire for reconciliation (on the part of the pakeha authors) with the troubled past. In contrast, the contemporary sample shows a far more critical view of New Zealand’s history. Gee and Lasenby deliberately select times of crisis to use as settings for their novels - there are four novels set during the Depression, two set during the Second World War, and one during the First World War. In addition, Lasenby sets The Lake in 1951, the time of the prolonged Waterfront Strike (though this is not foregrounded). However, to some extent Lasenby and Gee’s interest in history is unusual; many other New Zealand authors during the last two decades have been more than happy to explore contemporary settings, and one of the best examples is Margaret Mahy. Her young-adult novels, written and set in the 1980s, concentrate on ‘modern’ issues of conflict, such as divorce, desertion, adultery, domestic abuse, society’s irresponsibility towards the old, and violence between adolescents.

Mahy is worth considering in relation to Neil Begg, because she begins her career roughly at the end of his, and she chooses for her subject-matter things which he avoids. Begg’s opinion on troublesome issues (such as incest, domestic abuse, homosexuality, divorce, desertion, adoption and abortion) is that they can usually be prevented. He seeks to eliminate family disorders at the root, and rarely discusses how to deal with them once they have already occurred. For example he thinks that adultery can be prevented by limiting the use of contraceptives, which encourages pre-marital sex, which in turn encourages adulterous behaviour by people within marriage. He fails to offer advice to those families in which adultery has already occurred. Mahy, unlike Begg, is interested in curative rather than preventive medicine, and in some respects she epitomises the new tendency of her society to do this. Lasenby and Gee are also willing to explore the social disorders which Begg avoids, though they do so within their historical settings. Gee’s The Fat Man, compared with Garrard’s Tales Out of School and Peacocke’s The Cruise of the Crazy Jane, all set in 1930s New Zealand, show a considerable difference in the treatment of society at this time.
CHAPTER FIVE

MAURICE GEE

*Under the Mountain*, published 1979, set late 1970s.


*The Fat Man*, published 1994, set mid 1930s.

Maurice Gee is an unusual author, in that he has been highly successful writing for both adults and adolescents. One of the first New Zealand authors to write fiction in the fantasy genre, he is also known for the violence and starkness of his realistic books.

Gee was born in Whakatane in 1931, and spent his childhood in Henderson, then a small town but now a suburb of Auckland. The 'small-town near Auckland' setting occurs in many of his books, under different names. It is Wadesville in *In My Father’s Den*, Loomis in *Going West* and *The Fat Man*, and Kettle Creek in *The Champion*. Other small town settings include Gerriston (Paeroa) in the Plumb Trilogy, and Jessop (Nelson) in *The Fire-Raiser*.

Gee attended Avondale College and the University of Auckland, where he obtained an MA in English in 1954. He was a schoolteacher in Paeroa for two years, then took on casual work (including many librarian positions) while concentrating on his writing. In 1961 he spent a year in England, with the help of a literary fund, during which he published several stories in *Landfall*. In 1962 he produced his first novel, *The Big Season*, which was about rugby, a sport in which Gee himself was highly skilled. Many other adult novels followed, including the masterpiece *Plumb* in 1978. Interestingly, after this critical success, the next thing Gee did was to tackle an entirely new genre: children’s fantasy. He wrote *Under the Mountain* in 1979, *The World Around the Corner* in 1980, *The Halfmen of O* in 1982, *The Priests of Ferris* in 1984, and *Motherstone* in 1985. After this he seemed to tire of fantasy, and produced several realistic young-adult works. *The Fire-Raiser* (1986) was originally written for television, then adapted into a novel, as was *The Champion* (1989). *The Fat Man* won the Aim Children’s Book of the Year in 1994. Gee’s most recent children’s novel is *Orchard Street* (1998). He continues to write adult literature as well, with considerable success. Gee may be classed as a children’s writer, as well as an adult
one, though it is unlikely any of his works would be read by a child under 10. Unlike Margaret Mahy and Jack Lasenby he has never produced books specifically aimed at the very young.

Bill Manhire stresses that “much of Gee’s work is obsessional. Particular locations... exist in his mind as ‘magical territory’.... Certain situations, personalities and images recur in his work.” Wattie also discusses Gee’s use of childhood images such as creek, kitchen, country-school, and describes how they are transformed in his fiction: “Grounded in reality, but reaching out into a greater meaning than bare reality can provide, such images and changes shape the richness of Gee’s fictional world.”

It is possible to trace many of the themes which pepper Gee’s work back to his childhood. He was profoundly influenced by the Henderson Creek, a place of “marvellous and terrible things... there I got my first sight of death”. Creeks and other bodies of water occur in many of his children’s novels, usually as places of disaster, horror and fascination. The fat man captures Colin by the creek; later the fat man drowns his mother in the creek in which he was nearly drowned as a boy. Edgar Marwick deposits the evidence implicating him as the fire-raiser in the same creek in which his sister drowned as a child, where his mother also nearly drowns. Jackson Coop (probably) drowns in the estuary, along with Dawn’s grandmother, in The Champion.

Many personality traits of Gee’s fictional characters can be traced to his recollections of his family. Dominating, serious father-figures, such as Mr Jones in Under the Mountain, “a figure of great dignity and moral strength”, and Freeman Wells in The Halfmen of O, are reminiscent of George Plumb, who is a version of Gee’s grandfather, the Presbyterian minister James Chapple. Other types of fathers, such as Eddie Dye and Frank Collymore in Orchard Street, Laurie and Harry Pots in The Fat Man, and Alf Pascoe in The Champion are easy-going, often good at boxing, good-natured, almost naive, and slightly shady. They are much like Fergus Sole, who is a representation of Gee’s father. Wattie comments that Gee’s “mother’s tales of family history were... important to [his] developing sense of storytelling, providing a sense of social history and its implications for families, couples and individuals.”

Gee comments about his own books for children that they are “adventure stories, falling somewhere between science fiction and fantasy. As is the case with most stories of this kind, they describe a struggle between good and evil, or rather, between characters who may be seen as embodying these things. My concern though is to tell an exciting story, not to point a moral.” There are morals in Gee’s work however, but not imparted in a
didactic manner. He dislikes those who abuse power, especially adults and authority figures: “Almost all his books are about the misuse of power. Among the things he most dislikes are ‘Mad old men who think problems can be solved by dropping bombs.’” Gee encourages readers to abhor racial intolerance, sexism, and any kind of lack of sympathy for others (even for corrupt characters).

Selection of the four novels in this sample has been based on setting and popularity. All fantasy is excluded except for *Under the Mountain*, which is set in Auckland rather than the ‘other world’ of his later fantasies. Three out of his four ‘historical’ novels are included, *Orchard Street* having been omitted because it is not as popular as the others.

---

**UNDER THE MOUNTAIN**

Gee claims to have been first inspired to write a children’s novel by reading Alan Garner’s *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, and duly produced *Under the Mountain* in 1979. He comments: “it’s not really very much like Alan Garner’s book after all,” but one can see the similarities. *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* has a bleak feeling about it. Although it is child’s fable, with young protagonists and a ‘fantastical’ plot, the mood is grim; there is little humour or comfort, and besides having to fear the forces of evil in supernatural form, the children also have to worry about corrupt human beings. A memorable section of the book concerns the children journeying through passages under the earth - a trial of courage - very similar to Gee’s portrayal of Theo and Rachel in the tunnels under the lake. He also uses the motif in *The Priests of Ferris*, when the Birdfolk are forced to travel under the mountains in order to bypass a curse which has bound them to their own land. They are made “as Humble as the Worm” by this journey, just as Rachel and Theo are made to feel small and fragile in *Under the Mountain*, and Colin and Susan are humbled in *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*.

Frank Eyre has suggested that “whereas in Britain the best writing for children tends to be in the field of fantasy, in Australia it is in realism,” and this comment could also be applied to New Zealand, as another colonial country which needs to “explore the land and its people first, before spending time on wilder flights of imagination.”
Gilderdale argues that the slow development of fantasy in this country stems from the roughness of the landscape: “While Lewis Carroll was telling stories to a little girl as they glided down a gentle river through a long-tamed benign countryside, the settlers were busily engaged in hewing a living from a raw and largely infertile land.” She means that the obsession in New Zealand has been survival, for quite some time. Fantasy “needs firm roots, a sense of security before it can grow.”

Despite the external influences, Gee’s first fantasy novel is vividly original and exciting, and marks a new season in adolescent writing in New Zealand. Gee proved that the local landscape could be used for supernatural stories without fear of being parochial. Previously, there was a feeling that fantasy could not be placed in the local environment (except in fiction for much younger children), because the contrast was too harsh between the familiar and the exotic. Under the Mountain, set in a very believable Auckland under which giant slugs are sleeping, is one of the first to recognise the potential of this genre.

The plot takes place over a week or so, with a brief flashback to eight years earlier. Rachel and Theo, eleven year old twins, are the only ones who can work a magic spell which will destroy an alien species, the Wilberforces, whose vast slug bodies are nesting under Auckland, soon to awake and turn the Earth into mud. They are guided in their mission by Mr Jones, who is another alien, the last of an enlightened and civilised race who were the arch-enemies of the Wilberforces. Although a short novel, it feels much longer, almost epic-like, especially to children, because of Gee’s economy of words. Characters are fully realised, detail of environment is deceptively rich, the pace is both exciting and thoughtful, allowing moments of reflection as well as action.

Even though Under the Mountain is fantasy, one feels that Gee has captured something distinctive about the country he lives in. There is a bleakness about his conception of life, which adds rather than detracts from his writing (matching the tone in his adult books). He does not believe in portraying life as rosy and safe, nor forcing happy endings. With regards to the family, Gee shows it as a rather fragile construction. Membership of family is a major issue (often fraught with difficulty for the individual). This discussion will focus on the themes of parental inadequacy (shown by the children’s natural parents, uncle, aunt, and Mr Jones); and sibling relations (the strong bond between Rachel and Theo).
Under the Mountain contains many examples of parental inadequacy, mostly on the part of Mr Jones (as surrogate father), but also by other authority figures such as the police, the uncle and aunt, and even Mr Matheson, the twins’ actual father. The novel begins with Mr Matheson neglecting his children, aged three, who wander into the bush and are lost: “Their father was mending fences. For more than half an hour he did not notice they were gone.” When he does realise, “he had the dreadful feeling that his children were lost forever.” In a sense they are, for Mr Jones as their rescuer, claims them for his own.

The uncle and aunt, while not neglectful, are unimaginative, unsupportive, and oblivious to danger. Aunt Noeline calls Theo and Rachel “‘Twinnies’”, not realising that they dislike the name. She does not believe them when they claim that ‘old Jonesy’ was the one who saved them, saying: “Now children... that was just fantasy.” Uncle Clarry has the dubious profession of making “plastic toys that broke as soon as you looked at them,” and is equally unhelpful when it comes to danger, being unable to smell the stench of “rotten cabbages” associated with the Wilberforces. When the children decide to cross the lake to rescue Mr Jones, they decide not to tell Uncle Clarry because he would think they were mad. After the near fatal events of that night, they are unable to explain anything to Clarry or Noeline, so instead of sympathy, they get told off, marking the final separation from family. When Mr Jones enlists the help of their cousin Ricky, at the end, it proves to be a mistake. Ricky, not a proper ‘Jones’, loses his nerve and is killed. The novel ends with the eruption of Rangitoto and the probable deaths of all who live around the lake, including Clarry and Noeline.

Mr Jones is the most interesting flawed-father character. Many of the images used to describe him, give a sense of parental comfort and support, especially the warmth and food, which are often linked. The light “covered them like a blanket, flowed round and under them, soft and honey-coloured... warmth flowed into the limbs of the sleeping children.” When Jones heals Rachel from the Wilberforces’ cold grip, the warmth is associated with food again: “His hands were transparent, a pale golden colour, like apple-juice.”

Jones greets them at the library by holding their wrists as if taking their pulse: a very tactile, intimate gesture. He is their rescuer, instructor, and definer. He explains them to themselves, and teaches them how to make the most of their potential (e.g. how to talk telepathically).
However, the waitress at the beginning who thinks the old man is hard-hearted when he fails to acknowledge the twins’ recovery, is actually right - he is hard-hearted. He cares for the twins only because of what they can do for him, their gift. He is rather bad-tempered, and sometimes cruel. When Rachel and Theo fail to recognise the stones straight away, Jones immediately and unfairly blames them (a strange attitude for an enlightened alien): “‘It’s no good. They have won. You need to be identical twins.’ He looked at them angrily. ‘Why aren’t you identical?’”329 His anger is frightening when he discovers they let go of their stones, even though he did not properly warn them of the consequences: “He raised his hands. ‘You fool, boy,’ he cried. ‘You fool. You’ve ruined everything.’”330

Mr Jones is far more tolerant of his own mistakes, and he makes many. He promises to guard them from danger “‘every minute,’”331 but fails to be there on both of the most dangerous occasions: when the twins go to the Wilberforces’ house, and when the Wilberforce/policeman comes to theirs. He eventually admits his worst failure: to protect the first twins, Lenart and Johan, whom he loved as a father. He talks about them very reluctantly: “‘They were amazing children. They were so brave and clever and quick - and I grew to love them so much that I became careless. I forgot to watch - to remember I was watched.’”332

At times Mr Jones seems so weak that Theo and Rachel want to support him: “‘They walked home through the dusk with Mr Jones between them. Theo felt he was the old man’s protector rather than the other way round.”333 This feeling does not last long. Theo becomes increasingly resentful. When Mr Jones controls their movements while ascending Rangitoto, both twins initially enjoy not having the responsibility, but Theo, more independent than his sister, grows to hate it: “He had to twist, turn, duck, even crawl, to avoid rustling their leaves. His body felt as if it were doing a dance. He knew that if he did not stop soon he would try to break free.”334 Rachel continues to love Mr Jones to the end, because she is sympathetic to the dying man: “If they failed he would have no reason to live any longer, and if they succeeded then his job was done. He would want the only rest he could know.”335 Rachel, being sensitive, realises that he is like a parent who pushes his children too hard, not for his own benefit but for theirs. He makes mistakes in trying to help them save themselves (passing on the responsibility of the world), but he is basically altruistic.

Throughout the novel Gee continually shows an interest in family membership. Unlike the earlier books (Kotare series) belonging to a family involves more than just personal relationships; it includes domestic routine, and a sense of personal placement.
When the twins go to stay with their uncle and aunt in Auckland, Gee describes Rachel’s homesickness in terms of missing her routine: “At this time of day she was usually in the milking-shed hosing the yard for her father, or in the kitchen setting the table while her mother clattered around at the bench, and though neither was a job she enjoyed she found herself longing for them now.” Later, after dinner with her uncle and aunt (symbolically: replacement parents who feed her), she cheers up, deciding that “all that had been wrong with her was hunger.”336

The battle between the alien species also involves family membership; rather than being racial or inter-species (between aliens), the war is more like a family feud. The Wilberforces are a family: father, mother, three sons and two daughters, and Jones creates a family too. Having lost his partner on the journey across the galaxy, he ‘adopts’ talented children to help him in his mission. Rachel explains to Theo why they can’t get other humans involved (for example the army, who could blow up the slugs with bombs); it is for reasons of feud-etiquette: “It isn’t the army’s war.... It’s the war of the Wilberforces and the Joneses. We’re Joneses now, not Mathesons.”337

Theo initially accepts this but later rebels. He tells Jones that he’s “tired of being shoved around. First the Wilberforces and now the Joneses.” Jones accepts this graciously: “All right, Theo. You’re right of course. It’s your world, not mine. And your battle.”338 By saying this, he effectively releases them from being part of the Jones family. It is one of the few moments he seems to act as a proper parent to them, willing to let them make their own decisions; the fact that this scene occurs towards the end of the novel perhaps demonstrates an attempt by Gee to let Mr Jones depart the novel (and thus be better remembered by the reader) as an altruistic father-character, rather than an unreasonable and over-demanding one.

**SIBLING RELATIONS**

A slight compensation for the parental inadequacy which is ever-present in *Under the Mountain* is the touching relationship between Rachel and her brother, Theo. The twins share a telepathic power which they gave up demonstrating when they were young: “It was part of their ‘twinship’, which they were anxious to drop. They wanted to be themselves,”339 rather than being part of a family unit. It is pointed out by Mr Jones that they are also poles of a personality spectrum: Theo is “‘the practical one’” and Rachel is “‘the dreamer’”.340 Despite this, or perhaps because of it, they are well-matched, equal in
strength and compatibility. Unlike other brother-and-sister protagonists (such as Ron and Isbel in *Rifle and Tomahawk*, and Enid and Jim in *Silver Island*), the rather artificially-sounding emotion of pride in one’s sibling is absent. Rachel and Theo do not stop to consider whether they are proud of each other - their affection is unconsciously natural. Of the two, Theo is more protective of his sister; because she is ‘the dreamer’ she tends to be more emotionally vulnerable. When they are trapped in the Wilberforces’ tunnel, he lets her go first through the jelly, even though he is terrified of remaining there himself. He defends her against the policeman/Wilberforce with the desperation of a mother protecting her young: “He attacked with all his strength, with the ferocity of an animal, with fists, feet, knees, teeth.”341 He even challenges Mr Jones on Rachel’s behalf, refusing to leave her behind at Rangitoto.

**CONCLUSION**

*Under the Mountain* feels like a realist novel. Gee, unlike other writers, never talks down to children, or makes things too comfortable. The ending is grim, with the children asking for shelter (one of the basic human needs) - after everything else has been taken from them. Even in winning, the children lose, because the lake will be destroyed and many people killed. The novel reflects Gee’s dislike of authority figures. There is no glamorisation of the adult world: policemen are unsafe, the army is insufficiently powerful, the uncle and aunt are oblivious, Ricky panics and is killed, even the real father suffers from parental inadequacy at the beginning, and Jones, the strongest authority figure, is seriously flawed. His incompetence leads to the death of Lenart and Johan, and nearly gets Theo and Rachel killed. He pushes the Matheson children too hard, not making allowances for their mistakes. He is brave/loving/protecting, but distant, like a father who will never be an equal.

Membership of families is a strong theme. Rachel and Theo want to be seen as individuals rather than twins. They miss the routine of their old life, rather than their parents, and accept membership of Jones’ family because he has claimed and identified them, rather than because they particularly admire him. Gee credits these children with more wisdom, courage and self-determination than was perhaps fashionable in the 1970’s ageist, patriarchal society. These children are more mature than most eleven year olds. The story appeals because of the tension, not because of humour (as in Glen’s books, for example), or satisfying relationships between characters. The only ones who seem good for
each other are the siblings, Theo and Rachel. Perhaps Gee is making the point that true love comes from equality, not sponsorship. Rachel and Theo, though opposite poles, are more equal with each other than with Mr Jones.

---

**THE FIRE-RAISER**

When Gee adapted *The Fire-Raiser* from the television serial, he thinks that he “kept too closely to the script in the novel.” It is possible to see the restrictions of the original format: not too many characters, brisk pace, most explanation conveyed through dialogue rather than personal reflection - but it still works very well as a novel, and the changes that Gee has made, such as allowing the reader inside the fire-raiser’s head, are successful.

The setting is 1915, in a small town called Jessop (a “finely evoked Nelson”) which is being terrorised by a fire-raiser. Four children: Phil, Irene, Kitty and her brother Noel realise that the culprit is Edgar Marwick, and they set about trying to catch him, and prove his guilt to the authorities. The First World War casts its shadow over the sub-plot, which involves the local German piano teacher, Frau Stauffel, who is the victim of racism. An unpleasant teacher, Mrs Bolton, representing the prejudiced values of the community, is counterbalanced by another teacher, Clippy Hedges who is a “person of courage, compassion and open-mindedness.” Mr Hedges supports the children in their conflict with Marwick, protects Frau Stauffel and eventually marries her, as well as adopting Phil, whose father has abandoned him.

Because Mr Hedges and Mrs Bolton are significant for representing the best and worst of parental values, one theme which will be discussed is the abuse by, respect of, and responsibility shown by teachers. Another important theme is the ‘child within the adult’ or juvenility, exemplified in the character of Edgar Marwick.

**TEACHERS**

Gee’s treatment of teachers suggests that he sees them as representing a microcosm of the world of parents. Some are kind, thoughtful and perceptive, like Clippy Hedges, Paul Prior in *In My Father’s Den*, and the headmaster in *Meg*. Other teachers are deliberately sadistic,
racist and patronising, like Mrs Bolton, Miss Betts in *The Champion*, Mr Edgar in *The Fat Man*, and Mr Gibbons in *Meg*. Gee himself was a teacher for two years, “but found little to enjoy in the profession”. His childhood recollections of teachers also give some clue as to his ambiguous attitude towards them. In his autobiographical essay: ‘Creek and Kitchen’ he describes how his first teacher, Miss Wolf punished him, when she found a bite had been taken out of her apple. The proof of Gee’s guilt was crooked teeth, which she matched between the apple and his mouth. “Did I bite her apple?” Gee asks. “I don’t know. The memory of injustice is so strong I suspect I didn’t.” In Primer One his teacher, Mrs Sutton made him cry because he didn’t have a handkerchief. “I’m not only dirty, she says, I tell lies as well. Then she comforts me. She’s a lady who is kind after being cruel, in a sickly way.” Interestingly, Gee’s fictional female teachers are capable of far more viciousness than the males.

Female teachers have often been portrayed as rather malicious characters in New Zealand literature. In Ruth Park’s novel *Pink Flannel* (1955), Jenny’s teacher, Miss Carroll, is very similar to Mrs Bolton in *The Fire-Raiser*. Like Gee’s fictional children, Jenny learns to pity her teacher, rather than simply resent her. She comments that Miss Carroll “must have disliked us all as impersonally as she disliked the town. We were part of the tedious prison, the endless wet Saturdays and wetter Sundays, the cloddy men smelling of trucks and horses, the diffident, secretive women.”

Mrs Bolton (whom Gee later developed into the character of Miss Betts in *The Champion*), not only delights in torturing students like Phil, but is also racist. When choosing the part of ‘New Zealand’ for the school play, she says: “We need a big strong boy with shoulders back and nice clean teeth. Not you Wipaki, someone white.” The play is put on for the benefit of Mr Jobling, the local member of parliament; his character reflects Gee’s dislike of politicians (which he expands on in *Sole Survivor*, with the portrayal of Duggie Plumb). Jobling is even more unpleasant than Mrs Bolton. He represents patriotism of the ugliest kind, indistinguishable from racism. After the school play, he praises their efforts in the most irresponsible way imaginable:

“These children, our children, they’ve shown us the way. Who doesn’t want to go out and shoot a hun right now? For our glorious Empire? For Mother England? Oh yes! There’s a spirit abroad in our gallant land. Not just in our brave boys who go and fight, and in the mothers who give their sons. In our children.”
This speech, the essence of which is sacrifice, inspires the townspeople, led ironically by Edgar Marwick, to rush off and try to murder Frau Stauffel. Clippy Hedges gets there just in time to save her. The Frau herself, as a teacher, is a purist. She teaches for the sake of developing potential in those who are gifted, which is why she is so distressed when told she cannot teach Irene Chalmers any more. Irene is also furious, because she values her music lessons. She tells her father: “I’d sooner have a new mother than a new teacher!” and threatens to run away and live with Frau Stauffel.350

The children grudgingly respect Mr Hedges too, with a kind of hero-worship because he is capable. Hedges successfully performs artificial resuscitation on Mrs Marwick when she nearly drowns. He also beats Edgar Marwick in a boxing match: “Hedges looked at his fists. He wiped them on his trousers. He blinked, as though waking up. ‘Perhaps that can settle it, Mr Marwick. I hope we can behave like adults now.’” Later he is regretful, when he realises the boys Noel and Phil have seen the fight and are impressed. He says: “‘I’m sorry you boys saw that. It won’t solve anything. It’ll make him worse.’”351

Hedges rather likes children, “unlike many teachers he had known. He wasn’t with his pupils long before a sense of expectation filled him, a sense of happy futures.”352 He especially likes Phil Millar, whom he senses has a need for a father-figure.353 Mr Millar, an alcoholic, has essentially abandoned his son, and is working somewhere else. Hedges quickly sets himself up as “loco parentis for this boy.”354 He shouts Phil and Noel bottles of ‘fizz’, and offers to teach Phil the secret of a stew which is his speciality: “He knew Phil did not get many treats.”355 Eventually Hedges offers to adopt him. Phil discovers that he doesn’t entirely mind the idea. He looks at the building where he has been living and doesn’t regret leaving it behind: “He had not been unhappy there, or happy either, but it had been his, and now he had to live with other people. The Wixes. Clippy Hedges probably. If he got spliced that meant the Frau, the piano teacher. At least she looked as if she knew how to cook.”356

**JUVENILITY**

The battle of the book is not really the Town versus the Fire-Raiser but the children versus Edgar Marwick. The children have an interest in Marwick, and are prepared to tackle him on his own terms and in his own territory because in some ways they recognise Marwick as one of their own: a child, who is within their jurisdiction to investigate and harass.
The Fire-Raiser chooses the town to bear his rage, because it represents authority, a society of adults he will never be able to be a member of. The town is the working social system: individuals complementing each other, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, while Marwick is still isolated, locked in the cupboard. He is incensed by the mayor, the “little pink and white plump man with fat hands and a fat little voice” because “he stood for the town.” Burning Chalmers’ barn is the next best thing to killing him, which is like destroying the town. Later his rage turns to the children who are interfering with his business, and also remind him of his stunted youth. His final target is the school, which is representative of childhood going through maturity, learning and socialisation. Marwick has missed out on that too, hence his jealousy.

Along with perspective narrative from the children, we also get some from Marwick himself. He has become stuck as a child by being frozen in that moment when he was locked in the wardrobe by his mother, for failing to watch over his little sister (who drowned in the river). His relationship to his mother is one of hatred and an affection born of subservience. Mrs Marwick is his opposite, in some ways. She cannot bear the light; Edgar on the other hand has been driven mad by the dark that she imposed on him: “He crossed the room and seized the curtains. ‘No! No light!’ she cried in a terrible voice.” This small act of rebellion is as far as he can go. In this he is unlike the fat man who has grown out of subservience and now has the personal strength to murder his mother. Edgar is too reliant on her:

He curled his lip, and opened the door a few inches. The music swelled and he pushed the door open further and looked in. His mother sat in her chair with her stick on her knees. Her head was tilted, cheek on hand, and tears dripped from her chin on to her bodice. He had a moment of pity for her, pity and love, and pushed it away like the music.

Mrs Marwick knows that her son is the fire-raiser, and though she protects him from the police, she doesn’t acknowledge his illness as her fault. Her evil is more calculating.

Flatly, angrily, she said, “You should have watched her.” He did not hear. “But I beat you. I lit fires. In here. In my head....” He banged his head with his fists. “I burned the churches. I burned the banks. I burned the whole town.” He thrust his face at her. “And now I’m grown up I really do it.”
"You’re not grown up. Forty-five and still a boy." She watched him, the hulking man who had never grown into a man.\textsuperscript{360}

At the same time as being a child, Marwick has an adult’s body capable of accomplishing things, which makes him a dangerous and terrifying opponent. He can kill: “Irene was used to managing adults, but knew that here was one she would never control. It was like being shown that beyond grownups was another group of beings, magical and powerful and not to be approached.”\textsuperscript{361} This feeling is reiterated by Noel: “He heard Edgar Marwick stepping softly, and then a hissing sound that froze his blood - the sound of fork prongs sliding in hay. Everything was changed. Adults were brutal, and the game had turned to death.”\textsuperscript{362}

The way the children finally defeat him is by breaking his mind (the only option left), by frightening him with the skeleton. Having lacked the advantages of being a child in their more enlightened age, he doesn’t realise that the skeleton is simply a science-prop. Perhaps he thinks that it is his dead sister come back to haunt him. Having spent his whole life “deranged by guilt”\textsuperscript{363} and tortured by his mother, he is finally broken by fear.

\textit{CONCLUSION}

Again, this is a humourless book which refuses to glamorise the world or make it safe. There are few stereotypes: the fire-raiser is carefully and uniquely drawn, teachers are either kind/tolerant or cruel/racist, but are still individuals. The children are not particularly good friends, but they learn to unite for a common goal. As children, they have the potential to outwit other children, which gives them the upper-hand over Marwick, who has been stunted by his parent into being permanently immature. Gee likes to offer power to the young in this way. Unlike other authors who show children succeeding in a venture by imitating adults, these characters are capable of being heroes by virtue of their youth.

\textit{THE CHAMPION}

\textit{The Champion} was another story which Gee wrote as a television serial then adapted as a novel. Set in 1943, in the small town Kettle Creek, it tells the story of Jackson Coop, a
black American soldier who comes to stay with Rex Pascoe and his family. Two other children from Rex's class - Dawn Stewart (a Maori girl) and Leo Yukich (a Dalmation) - become friends with Jack, even though he is eight years older, but "Rex, conditioned by the popular boy's magazine The Champion whose unreal heroes know no fear and preach white supremacy, still cannot come to terms with Jack's fear of war". The Champion was an English boys' weekly "filled with war and detective and football stories" which Gee used to read himself as a boy. Initially deeply disappointed with his American, Rex begins, reluctantly, to like Jackson. When Jack escapes from the bus which is to take him away, Dawn, Leo and Rex attempt unsuccessfully to protect him from discovery.

Four of the main themes are: parent-child relations (which involves Rex and Dawn's opinion of their families); teachers; sibling relations; and maturity (how children learn how to take responsibility for others).

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

To begin with, Rex does not have a very complimentary opinion of his family. He describes his "poetry-writing mum, who never stopped hoping, who never stopped trying to make other people happy, and gabby tricky Dad, my crooked dad." The "gabby tricky Dad" is a type which occurs frequently in Gee, as discussed before. Alf Pascoe is very like Laurie Potter in The Fat Man, who isn't afraid to play war-games and make-believe with his son. Gee's father may have been an influence: he remembers "wrestling with Dad on the kitchen floor." Rex's mother, Bernice Pascoe is similar to Meg, and also therefore to Gee's mother, Lyndahl: "Her poetry made Mum special, in her eyes. In everything else she was happy to be plain Bernice Pascoe. But in poetry she rose to her special place." The description Rex gives of his household immediately lists his parents' faults: "Mum was often late with the washing," "Dad wasn't any good with lawnmower and spade."

Alf dabbles in minor sorts of crime like selling black-market sugar, and book-making, which makes Rex ashamed. When Alf drives into town with stolen sugar, Rex actually feels sick: "Dad was being crooked again. He was being careless as well." Alf tries to implicate others in his trouble. He uses Rex as a runner: "He gave me a wink. 'Eyes front when you pass the cop-shop.' It was one of those times when I didn't like my father very much." Rex sums up his feelings: "At home he amused me, most of the time, but outside in the world I was more often ashamed of him." But in contrast to his 'one-adjective' friend - Shady George - Alf is many things. As well as crooked he is "happy, eager, keen,
cunning, enthusiastic, generous, acquisitive, open, honest, devious; he was full of contradictions."372 George probably is too, but Rex does not see them, because he knows George in only one context. His dad he knows as father, husband, barber, host. Alf Pascoe also has his good points: "Everybody had forgotten Dad. But it never does to overlook him. He might have been fat and comical but in certain situations Dad was proficient."373

Rex is ashamed of his grandmother too, riding through town on her motorbike, with her "pink and blue floral print dress flapping on her thighs - and of course I looked the other way, though just as I loved Mum and Dad I loved my grandma."374 Grandmother, who sunbathes naked, and is brave and eccentric and kind, is "the nearest I ever saw to Rockfist Rogan.... How she embarrassed me and how I loved her."375 Rex’s appreciation of his grandmother is justified, whereas Dawn’s admiration for her mother is not. Dawn who has worshipped her from afar, despite the fact that she essentially abandoned her daughter, is disappointed when Rose visits her in Kettle Creek. She seems false and childish, flirting with the man she has brought with her, and showing little genuine affection to her daughter. Dawn “could not understand how [her mother’s] cheeks had grown so pink and her lips so red and her hair so curly. She did not seem like a mother at all.”376 Gee is not trying to suggest that in the 1940s being a mother meant being dowdy, but rather that mothers were generally more mature in their behaviour than Rose is.

Mrs Stewart is another of Gee’s less-than pleasant characters who are made pitiable in the end, rather than contemptible: “‘It wasn’t the work that broke her,’” Rex’s grandmother tells him. “‘The work was hard and it melted her down from a plump happy lady to the sinewy person I knew, that man/woman creature in the gumboots and tartan shirt.’” Instead it was her daughter “‘Rose that broke her.’”377 Rose fell in love with a Maori, got pregnant, left the farm, and returned only to ask her mother to care for her baby daughter. Mrs Stewart’s own justifications for her unhappiness concern an instinctive ‘they’ who have been making her life unbearable: “‘They ruined my husband in their war. They left me on a farm that’ll hardly grow gorse, with a mortgage the size of Mount Cook round my neck. Twenty years - and Rose - and you [Dawn].’”378

Although corrupt, Mrs Stewart has been corrupted by circumstance and is not naturally malicious. When she claims: “‘I’ve been your mother,’” Dawn doesn’t deny it.379 She begins to feel sorry for her grandma when she sees her struggling with the farm accounts. After Mrs Stewart destroys the photograph of herself as a young girl, smiling, she seems to collapse and become child-like and vulnerable, as Herbert Muskie does at the end of The Fat Man. She turns to Dawn for help: “‘Oh Dawn, help me... we’ve got to get out of
this place.” Unfortunately, it is too late for her. In a climactic ending, she drowns, and although never redeemed by any great acts of heroism or regret, the reader is still made to feel sorry for her.

TEACHERS

If Rex is changed in a positive direction by his traumatic experiences, others characters have been corrupted many years earlier by theirs. Miss Betts, an abhorrently racist teacher is a more developed version of Mrs Bolton in The Fire-Raiser. She hates Leo because he is a “‘squarehouse’” - a Dalmatian, not “‘one of our boys’”. She dislikes Dawn for being half-Maori, and “had a game of tapping on her desk as she went by, then tapping Dawn’s skull and listening as though the sounds were identical.” Rex, speaking as an adult narrator looking back, comments: “I think she was unhappy, that may have made her cruel.” He does not offer any hint as to the source of her unhappiness, but one is reminded of a scene in Meg, where a teacher is cruel. Meg is punished at school for not saluting the flag, which she does in support of her pacifist father. An angry teacher, Mr Gibbons, drags her by the ear to the principal’s office. The headmaster is not given a name, just his title, but he is a kind of Clippy Hedges character, accepting children’s vulnerability with sympathy, and explaining things to them truthfully. He tells Meg about Mr Gibbons: “‘We have to make allowances for Mr Gibbons .... He was badly gassed. He’s very sick.’” In a similar way Gee encourages the reader to feel sorry for Miss Betts, who is cruel for the reason that she is unhappy.

SIBLING-RELATIONS

Jackson, who is a guest in the Pascoe household, becomes a sort of brother to Rex, who first resents, then admires him. Gee has an interest in hero-worship, which he explores in relation to Rex, Jackson, and Leo. The point of the book could be: why do people like each other? This is similar to The Greenstone Door, in which an unspoken question is: why do people love each other? Rex asks the question explicitly: “I was confused. I could not work out how I’d come to like Jack so much. What were the steps?” Do people like each other because they have to, because they’re family, or a guest in our household, or because we share things in common, or because they can do things we can’t, or because they are kind or polite, or because they love us? Rex loves his family because they love him. He likes Leo
because Leo can climb the flagpole. Dawn likes Jack because they share things in common (like being black, and having to deal with racism). They first become friends when Jack compliments her on her colour, likening her to Lena Horne (a Jazz singer). The grandparents like Jack because he is polite. Bernice Pascoe likes him because he is her guest. She is also the only one who seems aware that Jack is only twenty. At the end, she asks Rex to "give him my love." 

Rex begins to like Jack when he forgets to have a fictional hero to compare him against. Jack mentions that he knows how to box. Rex, as an adult commentator remarks: "A pity he said that. I was starting to see a real Jack but now, in a flash, put an unreal one in his place." The unreal one is replaced when Rex realises that Jack is capable of being beaten, at the boxing match, and also by the army who hunts him down when he goes absent without leave. Rex and the other three children decide to help him: "I think we all felt the same towards him - protective, and yet somehow protected by him. Equal to him, accepted, yet innocent and simple and silly alongside Jack and all the things he knew." 

**Maturity**

Rex is a character with a strong sense of responsibility, which at the start of the novel, he directs towards the war effort. He wrongly connects this to a sense of his own maturity, not realising that he undermines himself by being so inflexible. Frustrated by his chaotic family, he makes a point of standing apart from them in various ways:

I was the only one who sat at the table every morning, the only one who put his spoon straight. I made a little island of order in the middle of it all but I wasn’t obsessive about it. It was just that a war was on and I was the only one who seemed to know. A war meant pulling yourself together, trying to win. All I could manage in that way, in our family, was having breakfast properly, things like that.

However, after meeting Jack, he realises that responsibility is wasted on the war effort, which is faceless and inhuman. Leo bullies him to accept his obligation to help Jack, using the reasoning: "He likes us, we’re his friends. So we should help him." I made no answer. Could not think of one. Friendship seemed like something I must swallow." He finally admits to himself that he does feel friendship towards Jack, and cannot disregard it. After this, he learns to take responsibility for other people too. When he and Leo taunt Mrs
Stewart in the darkness and make her mentally unbalanced, he acknowledges it is his fault: “Mrs Stewart had too many troubles and was close to her breaking point. We upset her very badly that night and we have to take our share of blame for the things that happened after that.”

Partly Rex learns these lessons from other people. Dawn, being unhappy at home, tries to take responsibility for herself, by making a new home on the launch which bears her mother’s name, with a photo of her mother inside. Almost immediately after meeting Jack, Dawn “got it into her head that her job was to protect him.” Jack takes responsibility for Alf, and saves him from being caught with black-market sugar. He offers for a reason his sense of obligation: “I couldn’t let your daddy get caught. He’s been good to me”, but the real reason is his natural kindness. At the same time he is worried about those who take responsibility for him, and doesn’t want to get them into trouble, especially Rex. He is reassured, surprisingly, by Bernice Pascoe, who says: “It’s doing Rex good.” She approves of her son risking himself for Jack.

The novel begins with the question: “Who was the most important person you’ve ever known?” and offers the answer: Jackson Coop, because he changed Rex the most. Making someone into themselves (which Rex credits his family with) is different from changing them. Change is harder, because it involves negation of some existing trait, not creation out of a blank slab. This is the essence of true maturity. Unlike the other children, Rex does change; he transforms his opinions. At the beginning he is racist, refers to Dawn as “‘only a Maori anyway’” (which infuriates Leo, who is often on the receiving end of racism), but eventually Rex’s racism, and even his war fantasies become infected with Jack’s face. Later when George says: “the darkies are noted for long legs,” Rex looks at him “with hatred”. Rex learns tolerance from Jack and also from his mother. She explains why she selected Jack to come and stay with them: “‘Because I thought no-one else would’”, indicating that she knew he was black, and picked him because of it, not despite it. Rex, influenced by his mother’s example, also learns to respect people because of their differences. He comes to appreciate Jack, not out of compatibility (the two are very different), but because he sees Jack as exemplifying certain qualities which he himself would like to possess.
CONCLUSION

*The Champion* raises many interesting issues about human relations, including the question of how people begin to like each other, what it means to be friends, who deserves admiration, and whether the corrupt deserve pity. The greatest strength of *The Champion* is in the characterisation, which is unique and profoundly realistic. Rex’s father is shady but likeable. Mum is a failed poet. Grandma rides motorbikes and sunbathes naked. Rex, as the protagonist is not immediately likeable, brave or tolerant. He begins as an immature, racist character, and changes into a hero grudgingly, unlike so many of the older books, in which heroism is intrinsic. Gee’s characters have to struggle for it.

---

**THE FAT MAN**

Gee published *The Fat Man* in 1994, which was five years after *The Champion*. In between, he wrote several adult books, which could explain why this one is so adult in tone. The fat man himself, Herbert Muskie, is the most concentrated figure of evil in a human that Gee has produced since the psychopathic Andrew Prior in *In My Father’s Den*. Manhire suggests that Andrew “is not a figure we should find surprising. He is a particularly grotesque exemplar of forces which are loose in New Zealand society and fixed deep in the puritan psyche.” And to some extent this can be said about Herbert Muskie too. There is a hint that Muskie’s mother damaged him, the way that Andrew Prior’s did in *In My Father’s Den*, and Mrs Marwick did to Edgar in *The Fire-Raiser*. Mrs Muskie may not be a puritan, but her son has grown up with some puritan tendencies, like Andrew. He has an obsession with cleanliness, and with the way women are supposed to behave. These, combined with selfishness, anger, and a desire for revenge, makes Muskie a contrary and dangerous character.

The fat man is also a kind of Jimmy Jaspers from *The Halfmen of O*: Jimmy gone wrong, or Jimmy unredeemed. The opening scene where Nick meets and is menaced by Jimmy is very similar to Colin’s first encounter with Muskie. Gilderdale considers Jimmy Jaspers is a “wonderful creation, shrewd, inventive, the epitome of the New Zealand ‘do-it-yourselfer’, a graduate as an axeman as well as a petty criminal.” Gee originally intended
to kill off Jimmy Jaspers at the end of the first book, but his daughter asked him not to: “So he rewrote the episode and saved him. He adds, ‘It was a wise, not to say humane, decision. I don’t think I would have had a trilogy without him.’” Muskie, who is ingenious like Jimmy, with an unrefined intelligence, lacks the magical influence of Shy to set him straight. Nevertheless, he exits the book more as a victim than a villain.

Like The Fire-Raiser, this novel concerns the revenge of an individual against members of a small town. Herbert Muskie returns to his home town of Loomis, determined to punish everyone who ever wronged him. He plans his revenge against his mother, and also against the Potter family: Laurie, the “‘tough guy’” who bullied him at school, and Maisie “‘the pretty girl’” who used to laugh at him. To begin with, he captures and threatens their son, Colin Potter, who is small and weak. Eventually Colin learns that he is the only one who understands the fat man properly, therefore he is the only chance of saving his parents. His maturing process, from frightened boy to hero, is believable and compelling. There are many aspects of love in the novel, mostly between Colin and his parents, but also between the fat man and his mother, even though it is corrupted love. The main theme is power, something Gee has always been interested in. This section will examine four aspects of The Fat Man: parent-child relations (and how they relate to loyalty and protection); poverty (of families, and how realistic this was, in terms of the Depression setting); domestic abuse (involving a discussion of power and its sources); and maturity (of Colin).

PARENT CHILD RELATIONS

Maisie is less than light-hearted; she has moments of kindness but soon reverts to being depressed. Colin “wished she wouldn’t change all the time, be nice for a minute or two and then get nasty. It was as though she was afraid of letting him see that she loved him.”

Colin’s sensitivity partly comes from his mother. She senses that there is something wrong with Muskie and tries to ban Laurie from having him in the house. Colin wants to agree with her, but he is too frightened to speak. After Laurie loses ten shillings arm-wrestling with Muskie he seems demoralised, smaller. He admits to Colin that he did bully Muskie at school. Here, Colin starts to become a protector in earnest, to the extent that he takes his father’s hand. “Laurie, who would normally have thought it was sissy, held it and did not seem to mind.”
Colin’s affection towards his parents soon transforms into protective love. When he realises how ruthless the fat man really is, he forgets about the threat to his own life and concentrates on distracting Muskie from his father. Muskie is not so inhuman that he cannot admire Colin’s loyalty; he even claims: “I wish I had a young fellow like you.” In a strange way, Muskie becomes fond of Colin, perhaps because with Colin he can be himself, whereas with everybody else he has to act.

**POVERTY**

The setting of *The Fat Man* matches the tone of the novel. Loomis (based on Gee’s Henderson), in the years of the Depression was a miserable place. Everybody is suffering equally, even the fat man’s family: “The Muskies had been an important family once, but nobody was important now, not in Loomis. Most people were broke and most of the men were on relief.” There is a great deal of description about food and the lack of it. Gee describes the horrible food lavishly - reminiscent of *Plumb*. The Potters eat mince stew, bread pudding, crusts, sago, compared with the lavish food of the old days when his father had a job: roasts, gravy, kumara, pudding, custard trifle. Characterisation relates to food: Herbert Muskie is fat. Colin Potter is “a hungry boy... a skinny boy.”

There are some stereotypes in relation to this poverty: Laurie Potter and his father are both easy-going optimists. Harry paints his house, in readiness for when “the good times come back”. Maisie Potter, “like her mother-in-law... did not believe good times would ever come back.” However, the characters show other traits too, which make them individual.

Like the grandparents in *The Champion*, whom Rex loves, and who are always generous with attention and food (their garden fertile and bountiful), Colin’s grandparents are also associated with food, symbol of a better way of living. At home, food is sparse. Maisie rebukes Laurie for wasting tomato sauce (using it as fake blood, to entertain Colin). She claims: “We can’t afford that.” Laurie replies: “Sure we can, if it makes us laugh.”
DOMESTIC ABUSE

The aspect of realism for which Gee was most criticised, with regard to this book, is the violence, especially towards women. Herbert Muskie is exceptionally vicious to the women in his life.

Muskie and his mother have a relationship which resembles love, but it is horribly twisted. When he first returns home, he is disgusted by the mess his mother’s property is in, and says heartlessly: “‘There shouldn’t be old people. They should lie down and die.’” He recalls bitterly how his parents would hit him but not his sisters. In a disgusting act of revenge, he breaks into her house and steals her sovereigns. Mrs Muskie, unaware of this, continues to love her son. Every day she waits at the station for the train to come through, possibly for her daughters to visit, but maybe for her son to come home. Muskie plays on this by turning up at the station to greet her, putting on “the wonderful son” act which impresses the entire town. Eventually the loss of the sovereigns plays on the old woman’s mind, and she searches for them despairingly; the fat man takes to locking her in her bedroom to stop her from wandering. Muskie’s sisters actually try to rescue Mrs Muskie, knowing she is in danger: “Someone must have told Olive and Dora. They made another visit and tried to smuggle Mrs Muskie with them to the train, but the fat man came home and chased them away.”

When he finally murders his mother, Colin and Verna are the only ones who know. They understand that he is capable of such an act because “‘she couldn’t save him... when he was a boy,’” from the bullying, or near drowning. At the same time he loves her. He acts mad with grief when the body is found. Colin and Verna realises that in some way, the grief is real. Verna reports seeing the fat man crying in his mother’s bedroom afterwards, even sucking his thumb: “Colin was terrified, knowing that Muskie would have killed Verna if he knew she had seen.” Verna says: “‘I suppose she was the only one who ever loved him.’”

Muskie forces his wife Bette to play a song in ghastly ironic remembrance of his mother: “‘Together we sat, she and I, more like two old sweethearts than mother and son.’” The fat man’s cruelty lies in a multitude of small tortures like this, not just in large acts of evil like murder, wife-beating and burglary.

Muskie treats Bette appallingly; besides the domestic violence, some of his behaviour is even more disturbing, because it is intermingled with humour: “He picked up [Bette’s] hand and pretended to bite it, but kissed it instead, then laid it down.” Verna tells Colin
how Muskie "'puts his hands like he's going to squeeze [Bette] all the time, and then he stops.... He holds her face and turns it like it's something that comes off'."413 He is rough to Verna too, pouncing on her, and grabbing her wrist. "'Cuddling me daughter, that's all,'" is his excuse. Verna claims that she is not his daughter. He answers: "'You are if I say so,'"414 meaning that he thinks he has the right to treat his family as badly as he wants. The pattern of abuse, which begin with small tortures, like cutting Verna's hair off, escalates into something more serious, and culminates in Muskie murdering his mother. It is understandable why some critics have deemed this book unsuitable for children. It is worth pointing out however, that many children have a fascination with horror of various kinds, and none of the violence in *The Fat Man* is gratuitous. Gee uses every instance of violence for important effect: to show characterisation, to give a sense of true threat, and to make the resolution to the book more satisfying, showing the ability of a boy to conquer and even pity a violent man.

One of the messages of the novel is perhaps that there is no simple right and wrong; everything exists in shades. The fat man is both bullier and bullied. Gee was not religious, but he was influenced by his grandfather (on whom Plumb was based): "'Because of him, because of his career [as a Presbyterian minister], I believed for a long while that one can be sure of Right and Wrong and find a Way.'"415 Speaking in the past tense suggests that Gee no longer believes this, and *The Fat Man* certainly does not offer clear cut boundaries between good and evil or right and wrong.

The fat man, rather than being purely evil, is a real person, with some good qualities. He is proficient in the water, and takes care in his personal appearance: "'Whatever his other faults, Herbert Muskie was clean.'"416 Muskie tries to be almost parent-like to Colin at times, reminding him to clean his fingernails, brush his teeth, look after tools, and so on.

This novel contains a very interesting exploration of power - where does it come from? Often people use their weaknesses as strengths: Muskie was bullied by Laurie Potter and his friends, and uses his bitterness as food for revenge. His fat becomes power because he is strong with it; heavy and overwhelming. He is more powerful than Colin because he is older, larger and more vicious. Muskie boasts of men he has killed by fighting dirty, so to speak, for example, the man he wrapped in chains and dropped through the ice. He pretends kindness as a form of control too. He goes driving with the grandfather, makes him laugh; he gives work to Laurie, and food to the family. He "'had Colin's father and grandpa eating out of his hand,'" which makes Colin feels "'cold and small'."417 He finally beats Maisie too, gets her eating out of his hand literally by giving her oranges. Colin thinks of Muskie as
having ‘got’ his father and grandfather. “And Bette and Verna had got his mother. She was trying to fight Herbert Muskie by being kind to them.” Thus, Colin’s mother uses cynicism, intelligence and kindness as power.

There is power in groups too: the Rice gang beat Colin and Verna because they have numbers. When the Rice gang get Colin, they hold him before hitting him in the face: “There was no chance of straight left, right cross. His father had forgotten how things were.” Laurie’s skill as a boxer is useless against someone who is prepared to fight dirty. Perhaps because he was always a clean fighter Laurie cannot understand that real power comes from fighting dirty. Colin initially tries to follow his father’s example, but does not feel the slightest bit comforted by it: “He knew he would never feel brave again. All his father’s talk of standing up to people and punching clean was nonsense when someone was bigger and faster than you.”

It is interesting to match this idea with Gee’s descriptions of his own childhood. His father was a carpenter and boxer, and Gee recalls his father going “next door to punch our neighbour for chopping our pine tree down.” Later, Gee fights with Ernie Lisk, the boy next door, who nearly suffocates him in an underground hut, by lighting a fire over the air-hole: “I try fighting Ernie, straight left, right cross, the way Dad has taught me, but he’s fourteen and his fists break through my guard.... The world has gone lopsided. I was right and Ernie Lisk wrong so I should have won. Isn’t that the rule of life my mother teaches, and with Dad’s straight left backing it up?”

In contrast to Colin’s hesitant attempts to discover power, Verna has it naturally, through desperation. She has nothing left to lose, and fights like a cornered animal. Again, it is a case of using weaknesses as strengths. Colin sees Verna’s head as “the shape of a glass bowl”. He thinks she is fragile. When she fights back against the girls who torment her, she is a different version of glass: “He had never seen anything like the sharpness on her face when she spat at Nancy. Suddenly she had seemed made of broken glass. Now he could not turn away from her, even though the Rice gang would get him.” Her fragility combined with fierceness appeals to him. His growing affection for Verna, as well as his love for his family, is what gives Colin power to defend himself and his friends against violence.

In contrast to the fat man’s cruelty is his wife’s gentleness. Bette claims that she never hits Verna, her daughter: “‘Well, maybe just a wee tap if she’s gone right over the edge. But love is what children need. Love and understanding.’” She makes no attempt to save herself from the fat man’s viciousness, but finally acts heroically when her daughter
is threatened. Muskie “had forgotten Bette. He thought that she was useless. But now Bette was driven by her love for Verna, and perhaps her love for her dead husband too. People were starting to act against Herbert Muskie at last.”

Perhaps Gee’s point is that true courage/heroism comes from not being fearful for oneself, but in the defence of others. Love is what motivates people to bravery. Colin rushes right into danger to save Verna, when she is kidnapped: “Poor Colin. A seven-stone boy, a quite, gentle boy, cannot fight an eighteen-stone man with murder on his mind.” Laurie, who spends most of the book being dejected and demoralised, tries to be heroic to save his son.

**MATURITY**

At the beginning of the novel Colin is not purely good. He first appears in a bad light, before improving throughout the book. He is a greedy, sneaky boy, almost mean. The first act he performs is stealing a bar of chocolate. Colin is so frightened at first that he continually cries. Muskie, half annoyed, half amused, comments that he would have made a good “‘fat boy’” too.

Colin’s encounter with the fat man initially makes him weaker, because he is so frightened, but gradually his attitude strengthened; he begins to value his family in a conscious way, and examine how they act. It is explicitly mentioned that Colin “loved his grandpa, with his skinny throat and hairy ears and knotted hands.” It is fairly uncommon for any adolescent books to describe love so openly, which makes it significant.

The first sign of Colin’s real strength is when he gladly eats the fat man’s food, without being sick. He begins to shadow his mother, realising she is more of a target than Laurie: “He could not protect his father but thought he might save her.”

In the end it is Colin who saves himself and his family. Like the children in *The Fire-Raiser*, who take on Edgar Marwick as their personal responsibility because they understand him, Colin and Muskie too are equal. They are both victims of bullies. They both got the strap at school, by the same teacher, Mr Edgar, and remember the same catchphrases. Colin is not the product of his parents: he is an individual who creates his own personality, develops his own insights, strengths and compassion. To a certain extent he is superior to his parents because he has been forced by circumstance (like Theo and Rachel) to learn bravery. In an adult way, Colin becomes more sensitive than his parents to the danger which threatens them. He distrusts the present of Laurie’s boxing cups, knowing
that “the fat man was being cruel”\textsuperscript{430} not kind, and to accept the gift would put the Potters in his obligation.

Colin snaps when Muskie cuts Verna’s hair for the second time. He resolves to fight back, because “he saw Herbert Muskie’s madness clearer than the others.”\textsuperscript{431} He tells his parents everything, even referring to Muskie by name: “A strange thing - Colin called him Herbert Muskie from this time, as though they had moved closer and the fat man had a name.”\textsuperscript{432}

Towards the end, Muskie reverts to being a child again, and Colin takes charge of him, actually helping him to escape. At the end, when he cuts the rope to the flying fox which sends Muskie to his death, it is done with remorse. The last line: “Verna is the only one who knows why Colin ran with the fat man in the end, and cut the rope,”\textsuperscript{433} refers to the fact that Colin was taking responsibility for him. He wasn’t frightened anymore, nor full of hate, but he was starting to see the fat man as victim as well as villain. It is also a kind of family responsibility he takes, for Laurie bullying Muskie as a child. So he warns Muskie the flying fox will break, tries to save him, and lets him die in the end because it is almost what Muskie wants.

\textit{CONCLUSION}

\textit{The Fat Man} is one of Gee’s most successful novels to date (it won the Aim Junior Fiction Award and the Aim Children’s Book of the Year, in 1994). Recently, realism and the courage to tackle difficult issues which face children are seen as assets in adolescent fiction, not as liabilities. Paula Boock’s book \textit{Dare, Truth or Promise}, which is the first New Zealand book to describe a lesbian adolescent love affair, would probably not even have been accepted for publication in any decade before the 1990s. \textit{The Fat Man}, showing the unpleasantness of life during the Depression is similar in tone to an arch-realist adult book like David Ballantyne’s \textit{The Cunninghams},\textsuperscript{434} but would never have been so grim had it been written for children during that era. \textit{Tales Out of School} and \textit{The Cruise of the Crazy Jane}, written and set in the 1930s are significantly more ‘pleasant’ books.

Gee’s novel is compelling to 1990s children however. They seem to value the opportunity to read something that sounds true, rather than idealised for their benefit. Colin, who has to grow into being a hero (like Rex, Kitty, Noel, Phil, Irene, Rachel and Theo) is more sympathetic to a child reader, who is more easily able to empathise with such a character. Gee tells children facts that they subconsciously agree with, such as: fighting
dirty is more likely to win than fighting clean; parents cannot always protect you; and even brave children can be victimised, by adults and at school. At the same time he offers children a power that is all their own, not to be gained by imitating adults, but by accepting the strengths and limitations that come with being a child.

---

**CONCLUSION TO GEE**

Gilderdale comments that in young-adult fiction from the later 1950s, there was a “new seriousness of purpose” apparent. She describes this as partly a reflection of “the high-minded aims behind the educational and other government-sponsored initiatives that had begun in the 1940s,” but adds that a new drawback was the tendency of writers to “project adult preoccupations and anxieties into the fictional world of the book”. Gee is a good example of this - a children’s writer famous or perhaps notorious for the lack of sentimentalism in his books.

From the beginning he was considered a realist: “the *Press* commented on the “almost cruel accuracy” of its version of a New Zealand township. *The Southland Times* went further: ‘Gee must have decided he would outmodernize the modernists in vulgarity’.”435 Even after the five young-adult novels which were plainly fantasy-based, rather than realistic, he was still criticised for being too severe in his portrayals of people and events. *The Fat Man* was controversial because of Herbert Muskie: a figure of incredible cruelty. Muskie is horrifying because he is a believable human character, rather than a fictional embodiment of Tolkienesque evil. Wattie comments that Gee often “confronts the mental constriction of local puritanism, and the backlash shows that it is not just a fictitious construct.”436 There is remarkably little difference between his adult and young-adult books: themes common to both include: “tension between family members, the failure of community leaders to grow up, violence as a normal element of social life, social constraint and inner freedom and the moral courage of individuals who oppose powerful taboos.”437 Gilderdale comments that *The Fire-Raiser* and *The Champion* in particular, are “closer to Maurice Gee’s adult books. They are what television producers calls ‘kidult’ - an unflattering term that really means they will have universal appeal.”438
There are two main points which can be made about Gee’s work in comparison with earlier young-adult fiction from the Kotare series. Firstly, his work exemplifies the move to greater realism - a trend which Gilderdale identifies as having begun in the late 1950s. Part of this realism involves showing greater complexity in character (always a strong point of Gee’s); and careful handling of social setting (retaining the interest of the reader, without sacrificing historical accuracy). All of Gee’s recent young-adult novels have historical settings: *The Fire-Raiser* is set in 1915 during the First World War, *The Fat Man* in the mid-1930s during the Great Depression, *The Champion* in 1943 during the Second World War, and *Orchard Street* in 1951 during the turbulent times of the Waterfront dispute. The backgrounds, though realistic, do not intrude on the themes of each text. This is a skill which Gee has developed to high art: “the historical novel grounded firmly in the present”. All concern personal issues rather than conflicts generated by political issues or the environment. Even Gee’s fantasy is centred around the impact on the individual and how essential it is to develop good human relations for success against alien foes.

The second point about Gee is his increasing emphasis on the moral maturation of the young protagonists, which is connected to his brand of realism. While his children are not idealised smaller versions of adults, in the pioneering tradition exemplified by writers like Mona Tracy, Gee still insists on letting them fight their own battles. His protagonists are presented with opportunities to face evil, and by doing so gain moral courage, plus an adult understanding of ethical dilemmas.
CHAPTER SIX
MARGARET MAHY


Margaret Mahy was born in 1936 in Whakatane. After finishing school there, she spent six months working as a nurse’s aide, then attended Auckland University College from 1952 to 1954. She graduated with a BA from Canterbury University College, studied at New Zealand Library School in Wellington from 1956 to 1958, gaining a Diploma in Librarianship in 1958, worked in the Petone Public Library for several years, and moved to Governor’s Bay in Banks Peninsula in 1965. In 1967 she worked for the School Library Service in Christchurch, and was appointed Children’s Librarian at the Canterbury Public Library in 1967. Her breakthrough as a writer occurred in 1968 when A Lion in the Meadow was published. During 1975 she was granted a New Zealand Literary Fund grant, and she began full-time work as a writer in 1980.440

Over the past two decades Mahy has won numerous honours, including the Goodman Fielder Wattie Award for Junior Fiction; the Young Observer Fiction Prize; the Italian Premier Grafico Award; the Dutch Silver Pencil Award; the British Library Association’s Carnegie Medal (twice); and the Esther Glen Medal (five times). She is internationally famous as a children’s writer, and locally famous as the most successful writer New Zealand has produced (at least in terms of books sold).

Mahy’s own accounts of her childhood describe a happy family life, in contrast to a slightly more unhappy time at school, where ironically she was considered not very bright, and treated disparagingly by certain teachers. Her mind and imagination were stimulated by the books she read at home. She grew up “in the company of the finest imaginative literature,” which she did not abandon during her further education: “Her imagination expanded with the reading of older and newer great works from those of George Macdonald to ‘other worlds’ of the fantasists, of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.”441 However, one significant way in which her fantasy differs from that of the traditional fantasists is her
refusal to paint characters as either black or white, or to describe conflict between absolute evil and virtue. She does not see the world in a religious sense, like Tolkien, Lewis, and to some extent Gee.

Mahy was not immediately successful as a children’s writer, because, as Gilderdale explains, the “landscape of her mind was different from the daily landscape around her” at a time when local publishing companies were looking for books with a New Zealand flavour. Mahy “had been reared on English stories and German folk-tales. She wanted to write about witches, clowns, lions and pirates - all the ingredients of books she had enjoyed. She did not want to write about kiwis in the bush at night or historical stories about Maoris or settlers.” Gilderdale is obviously thinking of the Kotare Series when she makes this statement: “Kiwis in the bush at night” is a memorable image from Edith Howes’ Silver Island, and historical stories about Maoris and settlers were written by Mona Tracy and Ron Bacon.

Though Gilderdale is concerned to help preserve the heritage of typically New Zealand books, she has a deep respect for Mahy, possibly centred on the latter’s ability to entertain children. Mahy’s success began when publishers realised that her books are eminently sellable, despite or maybe even because of their European flavour. Mahy’s popularity can perhaps be judged by the fact that many New Zealand librarians, teachers and parents who deal with children on a daily basis (and are therefore aware of what appeals to children), continue to buy Mahy’s books.

Mahy herself is an astute commentator on her work. She talks about the discontinuity in children’s books between the public’s desire for “children’s books to be free from instruction, so that children are able to be entertained without being secretly lectured” while also wanting “stories that will give positive messages according to the perceptions of the time.” Many of Mahy’s books are politically correct by the standards of 1990s moral fictions such as Shortland Street, but this is coincidental, because her main intention is to entertain children: “Certain key ideas are evident in the corpus of Margaret Mahy’s writing. There is joyousness, optimism and laughter.” In her public lectures she shows a preoccupation “with two topics - the relationship between the ‘truth’ of the imagination and factual truth; and her failure to depict New Zealand in her earlier work.” These two issues meet in her young-adult fiction. The Changeover (published in 1984) was Mahy’s first attempt to set a story in New Zealand, and in the end it was somewhat of a compromise; she set it in a city “an environment which has many universal qualities rather than local ones.” Her previous novel, The Haunting (1982), is set in a sea-side town
which resembles Lyttelton but may equally be a town in America or Britain. The Catalogue of the Universe (1985), Memory (1987), and The Other Side of Silence (1996), are set in a city which feels similar to Christchurch. The Tricksters (1986) is recognisably located on Banks Peninsula, as is Dangerous Spaces (1991) and Underrunners (1992).

Mahy is a good example of many of the things Gilderdale describes in a general sense, such as the tendency for dissolution of categories. Over time the “older, seemingly clear-cut boundaries between genres like the adventure story, the family story, and fantasy have begun to break down.” And nowhere is it more obvious than with Mahy, who combines these genres in each of her books. Gilderdale continues:

The adventure story has developed a much stronger focus on individual character and group relationships, alongside its traditional dependence on plot. The family story has developed a vastly broader canvas, with considerable emphasis on conflict and its resolution, including densely-grained studies of individual (often isolated and lonely) children, relationships in single-parent families, specialised relationships between members of families, and (in stories by Maori authors especially) the extended family relationship of the whanau.447

The four books used in this sample are Mahy’s most popular young-adult books, for which she won prizes (with the exception of The Haunting, which is aimed at slightly younger children). The Changeover and The Tricksters are typical of her supernatural fictions (or fantasy), while also being family stories, about conflict and resolution. They both have elements of the ‘adventure story’ too; The Changeover particularly has a quest format, with the protagonist striving alone (away from her family) to gain sufficient power to conquer an enemy. The Catalogue of the Universe and Memory are also quest stories, written about teenage protagonists who are privately searching for the meaning of their life. All four books revolve around the failures of family, and the stresses of the new age in which parents are more often than not divorced or separated, adultery and betrayal are commonplace, there is considerable jealousy between siblings, and poverty always hovers in the background. It is one of the unpleasant truths about the 1980s (in which all of Mahy’s novels are set), that many families do live near the poverty-line, and she is keen to explore issues associated with this, such as the constant feelings of vulnerability, the fear of change (or any emergency which might stretch the budget), and the unsympathetic attitude of those better off.
THE CHANGEOVER

*The Changeover* is one of Mahy’s personal favourites, for the reason that she thinks this book has best captured her belief in the power of the imagination to heal and empower the young. Tom Fitzgibbon describes *The Changeover* as a “study of loss”: loss of the father, loss of the full attention of the mother, nearly fatal loss of a brother, loss of the farm to the city, and loss of childhood. “There are many strands in the story - Kate’s predicament as a mother with few resources; Laura’s fight against evil, her sense of bereavement in the loss of her father, her growth into adolescence; Sorry’s deprivation of love, his unhappy personal history and his slow attainment of humanity.”

The plot is supernatural, concerning Laura’s battle with an “old and careful demon”, Carmody Braque, who has put his mark on her younger brother Jacko, and is draining his life force. Laura seeks help from a boy from her school, Sorry Carlisle, whom she has correctly identified as a witch. His mother and grandmother, also witches, suggest that Laura undergo a changeover to become a witch herself, in order to destroy Carmody Braque on her own. This quest, combined with Laura’s attraction to Sorry, her feelings of desertion by her father, and vulnerability where her mother is concerned, combine to form an exciting book rich in external and internal conflict. Walls comments: “Laura’s powers suggest the creative imagination, while those of the demon seem to project her fears, her insecurity which springs from the separation of her parents and her mother’s preoccupation with a new partner.”

This discussion will focus on six main themes: desertion (by Laura’s father); remarriage of the parent (Kate’s need to be more than a mother, her interest in Chris Holly); poverty (Laura’s poor but happy family; contrasted with the Carlisles, a wealthy, non-affectionate family); abuse (the dangers of life, which children face, such as external violence: rape and murder, domestic abuse); and maturity (symbolised by the changeover itself).
Neil Begg describes the mother as the “most important factor in the life of the young infant”, but goes on to explain how the “father’s influence grows” until “he becomes the most important link with the outside world and the main interpreter of matters beyond the immediate horizon of the family. A father provides an example for his child to follow.”

There is only one reference in Begg’s books to single parent families, in which the father is missing; Begg’s solution to this is that the putative father should support the child financially.

The reality is that many fathers do not, and Mahy tends to portray fathers who are lax in this respect. Stephen in *The Changeover* often “‘puts off paying maintenance. Mum’s lawyer has to chase after him every so often.’” However he does help pay the hospital bills when Jacko is sick. Roland Chase in *The Catalogue of the Universe* is the model of a selfish and negligent father, who not only allows Angela and Dido to live in considerable poverty, but denies them any form of love, and refuses even to acknowledge Angela as his daughter.

What is worse than absence of financial support is the emotional effect that the desertion of a father can have on a family. *The Changeover* is set a year or so after Laura’s father has left, and the household has an appearance of calm and happiness. The mother, Kate, talks openly and reasonably about the failure of her marriage; she tells Laura that Stephen is happier with his new wife, Julia, than he ever was with her, and jokes that the marriage came “‘to grief because your father vacuumed the carpet as if he were St Peter being crucified upside down.’” She admits that she “‘didn’t really want another baby, you know. I only had Jacko because I thought your father might leave - he was already having an affair with Julia then.’” But in general Kate doesn’t bear a grudge; she has recovered to the extent that she is interested in beginning another relationship. Mahy criticises this ideal response to divorce (tongue-in-cheek), by having Laura complain to her mother: “‘You sound all reasonable, like a children’s book on divorce.’”

Laura’s own response is much more realistic. Her father’s desertion has affected her in unconscious ways which she cannot fully identify. She panics when Kate suggests that they should contact Stephen because Jacko is ill: “To her dismay, Laura felt herself going rigid with a pain so old that it seemed unfair she should still suffer from it. She thought she was over mourning her vanished father and was furious to find she still suffered.”

Her
next shock is to see Stephen with his new wife, Julia, who is pregnant. Laura thinks this is “creepy when Jacko’s so sick. It’s as if he was being replaced even before he’s gone.”

After the changeover when Laura becomes a witch, in touch with her deepest feelings, and aware of her own power to heal herself, her attitude changes considerably. She finds herself liking Julia, despite knowing that Julia “had had a small fantasy in which Jacko died and that her own baby was a boy, making her more important than ever to Stephen because she was the mother of his son.” She accepts this as a sign of Julia’s insecurity, and pities rather than despises her for it. She also learns to be more cautious than she used to be with her father, “for she did not want to love him as much as she had once loved him, and his expression seemed to be inviting the old love back. She hugged Kate first.”

Finally she realises in a conscious sense that she has forgiven her father for leaving: “It no longer seemed to matter that he had loved someone else more than he had loved her or loved Kate, and in a way she felt, that, like Jacko, she had begun to recover from a secret illness no one had ever completely recognised or been able to cure.”

REMARriage OF THE PARENT

Begg believes that: “In marriage there must be a transition from a world centred on oneself to a new life centred on one’s family,” and presumably this is true for the solo-mother as well: that she must centre her world on her family. Begg suggests that it is essential for the mother to stay home when the family is young, unless money is very tight. When the children are teenagers, “it matters far less if the mother goes to work to supplement the family income”, but it “is still wise for her to be home before the children return from school.” By these terms Kate is not an appropriate sort of mother at all. She works full-time, even though her son Jacko is three, and is certainly not at home when Laura returns from school. Laura is in fact required to pick up Jacko herself, and bring him home, because her mother often works late. Kate also believes that she is entitled to be a human being, with needs and desires of her own, rather than someone who is centred on being a mother. She is glamorous (“graceful and pretty” even when pushing a car), and sometimes selfish in her pursuit of personal happiness. In some ways she is more real than Mahy’s next fictional mother, Dido May in *The Catalogue of the Universe*, who is living on memories, and is consequently rather shadowy. Kate is almost too showy and there is a hint that Laura disapproves of her. When Kate pays more than she can afford to get her hair
done before a date, Laura is infuriated, thinking that Kate “looked less like a mother in real life, and more like a mother on television.” Later, Laura learns to admire her mother’s glamour. When Kate is at her most exhausted, resigned to Jacko’s death, Laura thinks she “looked more wonderful than she herself could ever look, worn down and yet somehow noble, and Laura, who had often envied Kate her prettiness, yearned for something of this nobility.”

Laura learns to pity her mother, as well as to be proud of her. Kate goes into shock when Jacko wakes up from his coma, because hope floods into her like blood into a “numbed leg”. Laura “put her arms around Kate as if she was the protecting one.” When Kate wears her “old, blue dressing-gown that had once been so pretty,” Laura remembers her father’s reaction to it, “seeing her father notice Kate... and embrace her and stroke her fair hair while Laura watched, impressed with the feeling of a grown-up mystery.” From her position of hindsight she realises that this was only a small moment of appreciation between her parents, in a stream of arguments which would eventually tear them apart. The old dressing gown is a symbol of something which Kate lost when she lost her husband. Until then, Laura’s focus had been on her own loss.

The love affair between Chris Holly and Kate appears to be a sub-plot to the novel, but it is actually integral, because it mirrors the love affair between Laura and Sorry which leads to (and is part of) her changeover; also because Chris is another kind of threat to Laura which she has to gain courage to face. Laura first encounters him at the bookshop where Kate works, symbolically a place where she behaves differently to the way she does at home: “At work Kate was always nervous about being motherly, as if it had suddenly become a little illegal to be openly fond of her children.” When Chris appears at their home that night, he asks Laura if she minds him staying for dinner: “‘No!’ said Laura, but she minded dreadfully.” Laura preferred it when Kate was not dating, and was “content to spend her time” with her children. Laura is also resentful because she recognises the signs that Chris was trying “to be particularly nice to her, not because he was interested in her, but because he was interested in Kate.” Chris and Kate quickly retreat “into an adult world where [Laura] could not quite follow them yet.” She fights back in a childish way, by trying to use Jacko’s illness as an inducement for Kate to feel guilty about going out: “Laura pushed him forward, disconcerted to detect a certain triumph in her voice, pleased to use Jacko’s despair as a move in a complicated private game where the rules were barely understood.”
When Kate decides to stay home after all, Laura realises that Chris Holly is close to being driven away: “He put the glass down and stood up with the look of a man who must be on his way. He had goodbye and goodluck! written all over him.” Oddly, Laura feels the compulsion to defend her mother. She tells Chris: “‘She can’t help it, you know. She’s stuck with us. She can’t do anything about it. We’re not books that you can put down, even in an exciting place, and then pick up again just when you want to.’”⁴⁷² She even finds herself confiding her fears in him, admitting that she feels “’spooky about Kate going out with a stray man.’”⁴⁷³ However, her gradual feelings of warmth towards Chris are subdued when she realises that he is prepared to be part of the family, for better or worse, because she feels that her position in Kate’s life is being usurped. When Laura discovers Chris Holly is at the hospital with Kate and Jacko, she is hurt and angry: “‘Why is he there and not me?’”⁴⁷⁴ Later, she is far more distressed to learn that her mother has spent the night with Chris, feeling that it is disrespectful to Jacko. Sorry tries to defend Kate: “‘Your mother thought she might feel more cheerful if she spent the night with Chris. Well, why not? I’m in favour of anything that makes people feel better about bad times.’”⁴⁷⁵ Laura doesn’t understand, but she attempts to cool her temper, and discuss it reasonably with her mother. Kate explains: “‘It wasn’t that I didn’t care about Jacko... it was because I care so much. I felt so dreadful. I needed some sort of consolation and escape.’”⁴⁷⁶ Laura feels that she ought to fill this role, but Kate explains that while Laura is a consolation, she cannot provide an escape. Kate needed an escape from motherhood, an escape from being herself, with no strings attached; hence her attraction to a fellow adult not tied to her by love or commitment.

POVERTY

Begg remarks that some of the happiest homes “have been poor in the eyes of the world. Some of the wealthiest have been impersonal and unhappy.”⁴⁷⁷ The Changeover contains two perfect examples of these types: Laura’s family, the Chants, and Sorry’s family, the Carlisles. The Chants are defined right at the beginning by Jacko’s picture which Laura sees on the mantelpiece. It is a “happy, family drawing, for that was all he could draw,”⁴⁷⁸ of Kate, Laura and Jacko. The latter two have a very special relationship, which is partly cemented by their poverty, also by the absence of their father, and Kate’s busy working life. Laura sometimes feels that “Jacko was not her brother but in some way her own baby, a baby she would have one day, both born and unborn at the same time.”⁴⁷⁹ She is often
affected by “an attack of love” for him, which she suppresses until it “dissolved into her blood again”. Sometimes she finds him too difficult for her limited abilities as a mother. When he first gets ill, he becomes like a baby again, wanting to be carried and cuddled: “Laura’s eyes prickled with love, but it was of limited use, for he was too heavy to carry easily.... At last, in a moment of helpless frustration with the sheer difficulty of moving things around in the world, she gave him a small, sharp slap. He did not cry but simply bent his head against her.”\textsuperscript{480} It is understandable that she goes to such lengths to save him; having accepted him as her personal responsibility, she is naturally protective. Laura undergoes the changeover to save Jacko. Then she calls him back, luring him, like his mother, promising him Ruggie, warmth, food, stories, “all the strong, happy routines of everyday life.”\textsuperscript{481} Sorry explains Laura’s reactions to her: “‘You’re part of a true family you have to love.’”\textsuperscript{482}

Kate is also naturally loving. She admits that being married at eighteen was foolish, but describes it as “‘My worst mistake and my two best people.’”\textsuperscript{483} Getting pregnant with Jacko for the purpose of saving her marriage was another mistake which turned out to be right. Kate comments that the wonderful thing is that “‘given half a chance, babies are certain that the world wouldn’t function without them. They know they’re marvellous.’”\textsuperscript{484}

The poverty caused by Laura and Jacko costing “‘a lot to run’”, Stephen’s laxity in paying maintenance and Kate’s low-paying job, means that the family is vulnerable to emergencies, which gives them all a slightly conservative nature, being wary of any change that could affect their budget. When Jacko first starts to get ill, Kate denies it: “‘None of us can afford to be anything but healthy.’”\textsuperscript{485} Later she isn’t so hard-hearted, and even offers to sell the house to pay for Jacko’s hospital bills. Yet the family have a strange pride, despite their poverty. Kate insists on going all the way into town to buy new pajamas for Jacko before he goes into hospital, even though the hospital will probably provide him with some: “‘Isn’t it mad to think of such a thing, but everything he’s got is either too small or in the wash. I don’t want him looking neglected.’”\textsuperscript{486} Kate is not ashamed of poverty; rather she is proud of her family, and does not want ignorant outsiders assuming that they are not well cared for.

The Carlisles are a different sort of family entirely: aloof, aristocratic, wealthy. When Laura sees their hallway, decorated with flowers, bowls, vases and chests, she realises that this is unfamiliar territory:
All these objects spoke of people with a different sort of time in their lives from that available to Kate and Laura. No wild searching in the morning for missing shoes, no racing down the path, or pushing a car into life so that school and work could be reached at the appropriate time. These people had time to make potpourri and arrange flowers. They might be better organised than Kate - Laura was fair enough to acknowledge this - but she realised, too, that this hall spoke of the advantages that money could confer, and one of these was time.487

Some people are disparaging of this way of life. Chris Holly disapproves of Sorry flaunting his wealth, and says critically: "'I thought the other day that the cost of his haircut alone would keep a family of refugees in food for a week.'"488 Laura on the other hand is not jealous of Sorry for his advantages; rather she pity's him, and this first manifests as an insult: "'At least I live a real life in a real house, Sorry Carlisle, not shut away behind a high hedge in a sort of museum - a museum of spare time.'"489 Afterwards she regrets this statement, realising she has insulted his mother and grandmother too. They are not offended, and treat her with respect, though little warmth. Sorry is not treated with warmth either. Miaryam admits her lack of love for Sorry, but does not see it as a failing on her part. He senses their wariness towards him, and describes his mother looking at him like "'a dangerous pet on the end of a piece of rotten string.'"490 All the Carlisles are peculiarly sensitive to their situation with regard to each other. When Winter, the grandmother, orders Sorry to escort Laura to her chair, she is astonished: "'such courtly manners were part of an alarming foreign ritual.'" Winter explains that civility makes her comfortable: "'We are a fond family rather than a loving one, so consideration is doubly important. We can't afford to abandon it as loving families may choose to do out of confidence in themselves.'"491 This is a profound statement and although it is unlikely to ever be openly expressed it feels believable as a comment on how such aristocratic families operate.

**ABUSE**

*The Changeover* has a feeling of danger throughout, which threatens characters from many angles. Laura has an awareness of external violence: the Gardendale subdivision in which she lives is not a safe place to roam at night:
Two months previously an elderly woman had been robbed and murdered, tied up with wire in front of her own television set, and only ten days later a plair, lumpy girl from the seventh form, Jacynth Close, had been beaten and raped in the trees that bordered the Gardendale Reserve.492

Laura, horrified by such brutality, realises that she herself “could be chosen”. It is just a case of her path intersecting “with that of an appropriate savage at an appropriate time.”493

There is also a strong component of internal violence in the novel, which Sorry has been the main recipient of. Miryam explains how she gave Sorry up for adoption because “I am not a motherly woman and, when I thought of my son, I felt quite trapped.”494 The foster home they found was “a story-book home... a wonderful motherly mother, all the cake tins filled with home baking, kind father, such a dependable man, and four brothers... the sort of family that goes to church on Sunday morning, and then off for a picnic in the family car on Sunday afternoon.”495 Predictably, the foster home proved too good to be true, and Miryam came home to find “a shattered boy” sitting in her courtyard, “in a dreadful condition, filthy, dirty, exhausted, injured, quite unable to speak. He couldn’t even tell me his name.”496 Sorry’s version of this is an horrific tale of domestic violence and emotional abuse. He believes his foster-family fell apart basically because “I could go through the looking-glass and the others couldn’t.” His father lost his job, and began worrying about getting old: “He had to blame someone and he chose to blame me.... It’s not a skill, blaming other people. It’s an instinct. He got very frightening over it.”497 The problem was complicated by the fact that Miryam paid the foster-family to care for Sorry: “more than it cost to keep me - something over for their trouble - and by the time things got really bad they had absolutely come to depend on getting paid.” Sorry doesn’t draw the connection, but the reader suspects that the financial agreement itself may have been partially to blame for corrupting the family, because it turned Sorry into a job instead of a son, making him seem “sinister in every way to Tim.”498

The cycle of abuse worsened when the foster-father, Tim, became an alcoholic: “He’d get terribly drunk about - oh, say once a month - then he’d spend the next three weeks repenting, and we all had to repent along with him.”499 Finally he attacked Sorry violently: “I mean he was a really b-big man and he b-beat me up. When I was little he used to play a fighting game called ‘Bears’ with me. This was a game of ‘Bears’ for grown-ups, I suppose.”500 Afterwards Tim locked Sorry in a cupboard, to prevent people at school
seeing how badly beaten he was, and also to get rid "of the devil in me". Sorry escaped and returned to his natural mother.

The repercussions of such a breakdown in the father-son relationship are naturally serious for all involved: "Poor old Tim" ends up "doing cane work or whatever, in occupational therapy in some nuthouse." Sorry undergoes a kind of "sealing off" which disengages his feelings, and causes Miryam and Winter to fear that he will "lose his humanity" and become an evil witch. At the beginning of their relationship, Sorry upsets Laura by not seeming to have proper feelings. He has a strange reaction to Jacko’s sickness: "He behaved as if something had gone wrong with a car, not a brother." But slowly, her influence changes him, so that he learns compassion for others. He admits that he misses his foster-mother, and explains to Laura that this is the reason why he reads romance novels, because his foster-mother used to buy them at the supermarket; it is his way of keeping in touch with her. He even attempts to justify his foster-father, claiming:

"Tim managed really well in a certain setting, but being out of work put one part of his mind into a state of constant despair - even panic, and who can live with that? I think being violent with me was one way he tried to make sense of it."

Despite the supernatural element of this story - Sorry’s alienation from his foster-family for being ‘able to go through the looking-glass’ when they couldn’t - it feels like a realistic portrayal of domestic violence, enhanced by fear, jealousy and alcohol.

MATURITY

There are other more personal dangers of life, and these are condensed in the idea of the changeover which is symbolic of many other changes: the changeover from child to adult, from dependant to caregiver, and from naïve to self-aware. Laura, being fourteen, has already begun the changeover from child to adult, and recognises the danger involved in change: "She was not altogether easy with the new, and in some ways blatantly female, body that had recently opened out of her earlier childish one, but was obliged to accept its advantages and drawbacks, as well as all the obligations of caution that came with it." When she asks if the changeover is a bad change, Winter replies: "It can be, if people use it badly - but the same can be said of all human changes."
The chapter describing the changeover ceremony itself can be read on several different levels. During Laura’s journey through ‘changeover country’, she is restricted by vines, which she is forced to cut, whereupon they bleed her own blood onto her. This is perhaps symbolic of the cutting of threads to her parents, who once nourished her, as well as menstrual bleeding associated with puberty. After a long and painful struggle she finds herself overlooking a landscape which contains a skeletal forest: the magical part of the brain which “‘by some accident, grows green in Miryam, Sorenson and me.”507 Laura directs a channel of water towards the skeletal forest to fertilise it, grow it into something living and active. By doing so she has symbolically learned to nourish herself, bringing to life “some sleeping part” of her mind. Laura is remaking herself as something new: “She was no longer formed simply from warring Stephen and Kate, but, through the power of charged imagination, her own and other people’s, had made herself into a new kind of creature.”508

The power she gains through the changeover is the final danger, because it tempts her into cruelty. After having gained control of Carmody Braque she considers punishing him savagely, being “infinitely revenged on someone who had invited her vengeance.”509 Sorry is alarmed by her attitude, because it reminds him of his own tendency towards lack of humanity, which he is trying to overcome. He warns Laura that it is possible to “‘invite cruelty in’” by acting on an urge to “‘get cruelty out of your system’”. Laura thinks of a friend of Kate’s, who had “recently had a new baby and had given her older child a big, floppy doll with instructions that, if ever he felt jealous of the new baby, he was to punish the doll which could not feel.” Laura is horrified to see the child beating the doll, “less... out of jealousy for the new baby, than because he had been given a chance to be infinitely cruel to something infinitely yielding.”510 She realises that to torture Carmody Braque is dangerous for her personally, because it is giving in to a desire for revenge, which has partly been inspired by other people who have hurt her, notably Stephen and Kate. She manages to put forgiveness ahead of cruelty, which in Mahy’s opinion is the greatest prize of Laura’s quest.

CONCLUSION

The Changeover works extraordinarily well as a novel crossing several genres: supernatural thriller, teenage romance, family story, and quest saga - plot threads which it combines into an effective whole. While being explicitly scathing of romantic stereotypes, it also achieves
a sentimental tone. Laura's family, chaotic, poor, but loving, provides a realistic contrast to the Carlisles, who appear to have more advantages but are rather more dysfunctional. Their wealth causes trouble for Sorry (because it corrupts his foster-family), and their inability to love him causes him to feel rejected, and to be in danger of losing his own compassion for other people. The horrors of domestic abuse are set in the background of a dangerous city (where people are arbitrarily raped and murdered), while the tangible threats which Laura faces during her changeover are symbolic versions of her other fears. The desertion of her father, the usurpation of her mother by Chris Holly, and the possession of Jacko by Carmody Braque are all dangers which Laura finally conquers by forgiveness.

---

**THE CATALOGUE OF THE UNIVERSE**

*The Catalogue of the Universe* was written one year after *The Changeover*, and is quite similar in concept: being the story of sixteen-year-old Angela, who lives with her mother Dido, in a poor but happy home. Angela challenges her identity and background (by trying to contact her father), and during the course of the disappointment which follows, forms a romantic attachment to her school-friend Tycho, which brings her some comfort. Where this novel differs from *The Changeover* is in characterisation. The three main figures: Angela, Tycho and Dido, are different in personality to Laura, Sorry and Kate. Although *The Catalogue of the Universe* is a mixture of genres, including romance, this novel is more scathing about romantic ideals than its predecessor, and reveals a more philosophical perspective on life. Fitzgibbon comments: “This young adult novel carries its truth and learning lightly. The dialogue is intelligent and ironically funny.” He draws attention to the saying of Democritus which Tycho has pinned to his wall, reading: ‘Cheerfulness is the goal of life.’” Like any great comedy this is a happy story with the tears brought by life not too far away.”

Angela and Tycho are double-protagonists. Angela’s quest to meet her father seems to provide the main plot thread, but Tycho is important in his own right. His quest is not just to capture Angela, but also a struggle to find a satisfactory place in his family, which is dominated by other, more demanding individuals. Sibling rivalry, which becomes a common theme in Mahy’s later young adult novels, has its beginning here, shown by
Tycho’s competitiveness with his brother Richard and sister Africa. Interestingly, the reader is caused to feel jealousy on Tycho’s behalf, but he himself does not act in a jealous manner. It is as if the main objector to favouritism within families is Mahy herself, not her portrayed victim. The Potters are one of the few ‘nuclear families’ which Mahy portrays, yet their household is rife with conflict and bitterness. This is a startling reversal of the usual attitude writers have towards the nuclear family, which tends to show it as a more stable environment than the broken home.

This section will focus on three main themes: the strains of the nuclear family (how it does not necessarily function better than the ‘broken home’, and the problems of sibling rivalry between Tycho, Africa and Richard); poverty (of Angela’s household, and the way she compensates, by romanticising life); and rejection (by a parent, and the grief which it causes).

**STRAINS OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY**

Angela claims to feel illegitimate by comparison to Tycho and his family. She likens it to “‘living at a poor address - it marks you off.’”\(^\text{512}\) She adds that: “‘For ages I didn’t much worry about not having a father. Lots of people are missing one parent or the other and I was just one of the broken-home gang,’”\(^\text{513}\) but admits to having become obsessed with finding her father. In some ways she is envious of Tycho’s symmetrical home, with a brother and sister, topped by mother and father. At the same she is aware of the most obvious problem which afflicts the Potters, that of favouritism. She tells her mother that the Potters are all obsessed with their eldest daughter, Africa: “‘It’s just as if they’ve got one real child, and Tyke and Richard are only near misses.’”\(^\text{514}\) This is not merely Angela’s opinion. Remarkably, Mahy shows us inside Mr Potter’s mind, and states that “Africa was his favourite child.”\(^\text{515}\) Tycho suffers this favouritism, but his brother Richard is verbosely and dramatically disgruntled about it, at every possible opportunity. By making such a fuss, he too overshadows Tycho. Mrs Potter, unlike her husband, does not have favourites. When Mrs Potter sees that Tycho’s hands are bandaged, she is “distressed because he was hurt,” and “ashamed because she hadn’t noticed it sooner.”\(^\text{516}\) Tycho thinks his mother is more like a bird: “Whichever chick makes the loudest noise - that’s the one she feeds.”\(^\text{517}\) Tycho is also observant enough to realise that his mother does not like Angela, even though she “had a great deal in common with Africa, but perhaps there was a certain relief for his mother in being able to dislike Africa’s qualities in someone who was not a daughter.”\(^\text{518}\)
There is a great deal of anger in this family, and constant arguing over control and responsibility. Mr Potter, who is prohibited from using a car because he has epilepsy, criticises Richard's driving: "Mr Potter, unable to drive himself, hated not being in some sort of control of the family car." He criticises Richard's driving: "Mr Potter, unable to drive himself, hated not being in some sort of control of the family car." His epilepsy affects all the members of the family, in various negative ways. Mrs Potter and Richard are both concerned about him and troubled by their own reaction. Tycho is affected "in a curious way which none of his family had ever completely acknowledged." Africa feels guilty because as a child she had been "so deeply ashamed of him... that he had never recovered from the shock of her childish resentment." However, she remains his favourite child.

Richard is free with opinions on his family. He thinks his parents should be free from having to deal with Africa or anybody else's problems. He thinks of parenthood as like a contract which can be completed: "They've brought up their family and they should be allowed to get on to the next bit." He also believes they stayed together out of loyalty rather than love. He delights in describing horrific family occasions, like Africa's first-year wedding anniversary, where: "Hudson's mum upsets ours, and then ours upset his, and Hudson and Africa nagged each other all evening... and oh well, just your run-of-the-mill wedding anniversary, I suppose. A proper family get-together." This reminds the Potters of a "nice family vacation" at Queenstown, when Tycho wouldn't take his nose out of a book, and Africa, Mr Potter and Richard did nothing but fight. Richard is delighted when Africa's marriage breaks up, because "she's fallen in love with some academic who lectures in that university extension course that's supposed to prevent young married women from turning into mindless cabbages." Richard thinks Hudson will get custody of Hamish, sparking a war of the grandmothers.

All this family aggression is apparent to Mrs Potter, who reacts to it in a strange way. She feels that it is a personal insult to her, because as a mother she is giving her "whole life to trying to make other people happy, and then they go chasing off after unhappiness." By this she means Africa, and also Tycho, who is chasing the unobtainable Angela. But Mrs Potter is not one-dimensional about her role. She doesn't just want her children to be safe and happy, she wants them also to have an interesting life, and she has symbolised this by giving each child an unusual middle name. Mrs Potter lives dangerously by smoking cigarettes, and is basically "ambitious for great family happiness," against all the odds. She may object to her children chasing unhappiness, but is prepared to support them in it, because she accepts that there is more to life than being content.
Mahy has a tendency to romanticise poverty: "Life was full of disadvantages for Angela. Apart from having no accountable father, she lived in a home with an outside lavatory, and drove in a car that rattled and backfired." In some ways, Mahy implies, poverty makes life more fun. Angela’s house is an amalgam: two Ministry of Works cottages placed side by side, with a "lean-to bathroom tacked on to the end" and a veranda holding it all together. "All the same, though it made a home it did not make a house." The lavatory is separate, down a path, and Angela refuses to let her boyfriend Robin see it: "It was not that Angela was ashamed of her funny home, but rather that she loved it and wanted to protect it from being patronised."

This life is rather too fairy-tale-like to be true. Dido brings Angela up to believe in a myth which they create together, albeit unconsciously, until it reaches the point where Angela’s philosophy of life and whole conception of her own identity, is ruled by romance. Angela suffers from similar problems of memory to Jonny, in Memory. She has been so affected by stories that her memory has been altered, so she is no longer sure what is true: "For many years... she had believed she could remember her father, but Dido said such memory was impossible for her father had never seen her, even when she was a baby. All she really knew was what she had been told, and somehow or other she had turned the stories into a sort of memory of someone red-headed as she was, a taller, broader version of herself in men’s clothes."

Although she is sixteen, Angela is still keen to hear the romantic story about how her father and mother "‘loved each other madly’" but were forced to stop seeing each other, because he was already married. Angela thinks that Roland has "‘at least three’" other children: "‘I mean that was the point of the whole great, noble sacrifice.’" Actually he has none. As she summarises: "‘He owed it to his family to stay and look after them... But you couldn’t bear to let it end like that, so you had me.’" She repeats the story endlessly to Tycho: "‘Dido and Roland had to part, but they planned to be united for ever in their baby. Nothing would ever take them apart again. They would be married in every cell in me - biology and mystery.’"

Being a love-child soon ceases to be enough. Angela wants to believe in the romantic possibility that her parents could get back together, but Dido won’t allow it: "‘I wouldn’t know what to say to your father by now,’" and besides "‘he’s too fond of his first family to
run any risks"'. Angela becomes obsessed with the idea of contacting him herself, hoping wistfully "I might turn out to be the daughter he’s always longed for." She thinks he will want to see her because he has paid money for her all these years: "He ought to have a chance to get some return on his investment." By the time she has resolved to visit him in his office, her fantasy has grown out of proportion. She imagines being driven home in a wonderful car, Roland Chase stepping forward to take Dido in his arms. "They would never be parted again. Angela laughed aloud, but this romantic idea did not melt away altogether under her determined ridicule. It was stubborn to its core, and refused to budge."

Tycho, who is far more cynical tries to dissuade Angela from her foolhardiness. He decides, from the evidence he has heard (which is from Angela herself), that Roland is "a bit of a creep". Initially Angela defends her father, using the myth. She thinks he has been supporting her financially: "Dido says he’s let us have what he could afford without setting his own family back.... It can’t have been much because we’ve always been poor." Even saying this, Angela thinks uncomfortably of Roland’s "great white whale of a house and the huge lawn" which she has seen from a distance. She tries again to justify herself to Tycho, claiming that she just wants Roland to say her name. "You don’t just want that, he argued. 'At first you just wanted to see him, then you just wanted him to see you, now you just want him to speak to you. Probably you’ll end up by just wanting him to leave his family and marry Dido, and start doing what fathers do - forbidding you to go out with the wrong sort of boys and all that stuff.'

After her predictably ghastly encounter with Roland Chase, and his mother, after whom she was named, Angela feels that the world is changed: "She was quite different from what she had imagined herself to be, not the child of love but the child of betrayal and deception, and even her name was no longer her own, but belonged to the whippet with the red nails who had had it first." The sudden proof that all her romantic ideas were fiction is shocking to Angela, who initially blames Dido, thinking that as she misjudged her father, so she has failed to understand her mother. She discharges her anguish at Dido, using the old cliché: "I don’t want any parents. I don’t want ever to have been born." She rushes off, determined to degrade herself in some way, and decides to have sex with a stranger who picks her up in a bar. But she finds herself unable to rid herself of romance so quickly, and abandons the man. She explains to Tycho: "It worked, even though it was all lies, I mean the idea of love and everything. I wasn’t a child of love, but I might just as well have been. I couldn’t bear to do without it in the end."
The end of the novel finds Angela accepting that reality can be romantic in its own terms, and she manages to fall in love with Tycho, who proves himself to be far more appealing than he gives himself credit for. Dido goes a small way towards trying to repair the damage caused by ""feeding [Angela] up on that sickly story for years and years."" She explains that she only lied to protect Angela, because the nurses at the maternity hospital and the social-worker told her ""how important it was for a child to have two loving parents, and how bad it is for them to feel rejected."" Like the various facts which are kept from children in Lasenby’s books, secrets are always destructive in the long run. Mahy also has a horror of the secret, which she explores further in The Tricksters, where the secret of Harry’s father’s adultery causes more grief and bitterness than the adultery itself.

To some extent, Angela’s tendency to romanticise life is echoed by Mahy herself. Almost all of her work, for children as well as young-adults, shows signs of romanticism. Like Gee, who has the same love of internal symmetry, Mahy introduces various poetic rules, such as if a fortune teller makes a prophecy then it will come true. Names have special significance, as in Gee. Christobel from The Tricksters was a famous suffragist, Sorry in The Changeover is forced to name himself every time he speaks apologetically. In this novel names are more than usually apt. Angela means messenger, and when she asks what message she brought, is always told ""You were the message,"" meaning that though she was not born to symbolise love, she is capable of representing love on her own terms. Tycho, like his namesake, Tycho Brahe, is a shy intellectual with a passion for astronomy. The mythological Dido was betrayed by her lover, as Angela’s mother was betrayed by Roland Chase. The name Dido appears in another Mahy story, ‘Gloves and Gardens’, from The Chewing Gum Rescue and Other Stories, is about a girl with green fingers, called Dido Digby. The uniqueness of this name suggests the double use cannot be coincidental, so perhaps Mahy means to draw a link between the two characters. They are similar in personality-type. Ten year old Dido is “tall and thin and pale and shy like a plant grown in the shadows but determined to get to the sunlight somehow.” She has an adventurous mother, who “‘wants things to happen quickly all the time, but I like them to happen slowly. Sometimes I even like them to stand still so that I can look at them properly.’” Angela’s mother Dido is homeloving and gentle too. She claims to have “‘grown to love solitude more than almost anything,’” and is most happy to be left in peace up the top of Dry Creek Road, to read books, cut the grass, and make bread.
The nastiest reality of *The Catalogue of the Universe*, far nastier than backfiring cars, chemical toilets, and even lies, is rejection by a parent. In many ways it is worse than the desertion which Laura suffers in *The Changeover*, because she is at least assured of her father’s love, even if he does not live with her. Angela’s father feels no love, respect or obligation towards Angela or Dido, even though they have done nothing to deserve his indifference. Dido is able to bear rejection on her own part, but balks at letting Angela feel rejected, which is her rationale for creating the great romantic myth.

Dido used to tell a story called *The Great Chase*, starring Angela Roland, and from this Angela works out that her father is called Roland Chase. Tycho asks why Dido would offer such an elaborate hint; Angela replies that it is because Dido likes word-games - “she’d play a game automatically without working it out properly.”547 If this is true, then the fact that Roland has infiltrated Dido’s unconscious mind demonstrates the deep hurt he has inflicted on her. Angela, who does not realise she too has been rejected, has had no reason to suppress her interest in Roland. To begin with, her obsession is almost sexual, the story of his procreation of her being inseparably intermixed with notions of romantic love. She first catches his attention by wearing tiny shorts and flashing her legs at him, and describes the early encounters with him across cafes and streets as “‘romantic.’”548 When she finally confronts him in his office, she is alarmed not to get a greater reaction. She feels like the Little Mermaid: “she had no voice and must make him love her with her beautiful body, her graceful walk and lovely eyes.”549

Inevitably the meeting is disappointing. Roland is revealed as cruel, insensitive, pathetic, and severely in denial. He refers to Angela as “‘Dido May’s child’”, thereby not acknowledging her as his daughter. Angela “found it chilling to be referred to as ‘Dido May’s child,’ as if Dido had to be distinguished from many other Didos by her surname.”550 He adds insult to injury by hinting that Dido was promiscuous: “‘We’re talking about a mere possibility. After all I’m not the only red-headed man in the world, and from what I seem to remember, your mother did have wide circle of acquaintances.’”551 Slowly the truth begins to emerge, that Roland did not make a great sacrifice in giving Dido up for his other family, because there was no other family. He has no children, and was only married briefly, five years before, and has never given Dido money. Angela’s memory begins to reset itself. She recalls their poverty, and “Dido crying in the night - not crying for love, but for lack of it.” Roland, seeing Angela’s pain tries to justify his desertion in a kinder way:
"'I wouldn’t have been an asset, you know.'" The arrival of Roland’s mother complicates the situation, because she was involved in the initial rejection, having manipulated Roland away from Dido, and given her money to have an abortion. She reacts with shock when she realises who Angela is, but the shock quickly turns to desire. She is fascinated to meet her granddaughter, who is a younger, prettier version of herself, and instantly tries to protect her from Roland, who has become angry and cruel again, seeing the effect Angela is having on his mother:

Something terrible was happening to her, something deep inside her had started to bleed so that she thought she could actually feel the blood come up into her mouth, thick as syrup and sour-tasting. For a second she wondered if her heart had actually broken, not because she had lost a father, but because at the same time she was also losing the mother she was used to. Dido had never been loved, and never made any noble sacrifice for love, and she herself was just another accidental person who might even have been aborted if abortions had been legally obtainable in the past. 553

Such a sharp revelation of truth can indeed feel like a heart breaking. Angela learns in the space of seconds that her father is unworthy (and does not want her), her mother is a liar, and she herself is not what she thought she was. The three most important figures in her universe have turned out to be romantic projections. She is not the only one suffering during this encounter, however. The grandmother begins to cry when she finds out that Angela has been named after her. Roland is dismayed, while the grandmother’s expression changes between surprise and “something like delight”. The tears are perhaps inspired by guilt; there is also a hint that Roland has been torturing his mother for a long time. Because she “wept so easily, Angela understood she had had years of practice.” 554 Roland has already proved that in some ways he has rejected his mother too, having earlier asked his secretary to “‘invent some urgent business for me about five minutes after she gets here.’” 555

Although the novel offers no resolution concerning the ghastly Roland, the grandmother, even if not able to take responsibility for the past, at least appears to be genuinely interested in Angela, and keen to pursue a relationship with her. Angela at first rejects her, as revenge against the Chase family, then decides that revenge will not gain her anything. As Dido points out: "'You might have missed out on a father, but you seem to have nailed a granny!'" 556 It is typical of Mahy to make a joke out of her happy ending.
CONCLUSION

Like *The Changeover*, this novel combines several plot threads to form a coherent story of the different ways adolescents search for their identity. Tycho, intellectual, unconfident, learns that the only way to keep his emotional health intact within a dysfunctional nuclear family is by not competing. He resists the urge to be jealous of the attention his sister Africa gets, and tolerates the belligerence of his brother. Without conforming to his mother’s wishes that he stop pursuing unhappiness (embodied by Angela), he is nonetheless careful with his heart, and only gives it to her after she has invited him. Angela tries to define her world in a romantic way, following the example of her mother, plus the films and books she indulges in, namely *Gone With the Wind*, and *The Sheik*. Her quest for personal identity eventually requires asking for judgement from her father, Roland. She is bitterly disappointed by his rejection (past and present), but her ego is ultimately strong enough to cope. She has been loved so thoroughly by Dido and by Tycho that her romantic ideals are easily given up in favour of a reality which has the potential for just as much happiness.

---

THE TRICKSTERS

*The Tricksters*, published in 1986, took over a year to write, the longest Mahy has spent on any novel. She personally considers it to be “a moral story because compassion and forgiveness triumph over betrayal,” but in some ways it is greater than just a morality story. It is a long and complex novel, with a sense of uneasiness throughout, mainly caused by the lack of self-confidence of the protagonist, 16 year old Harry, the middle daughter in a family of five children. Similar to Tycho’s family in *The Catalogue of the Universe*, the Hamiltons are barely held together, because of conflicting personality types and jostling for power. Christobel, the eldest daughter (an expanded version of Angela), is beautiful, outspoken, often selfish, and cannot bear to be anything less than the centre of attention. The only power Harry has over her sister is that she knows a secret which is still hidden from Christobel, that their father Jack has had an adulterous affair with Christobel’s friend
Emma, and is the father of her baby. This secret, being unspoken for so long has polluted the entire family, especially Harry, whose respect for her father has diminished. The mother, Naomi, having resisted the urge to leave Jack, is faced with the responsibility for admitting the secret to her children (especially Christobel), a task she determines to put off until after Christmas. The novel begins just before Christmas, with the Hamiltons, and Emma staying at their holiday house in Carnival’s Hide. Harry, withdrawn and miserable, accidentally conjures up the ghost of Teddy Carnival, the original resident of the house, who had been murdered by his father. Teddy’s ghost becomes three characters, whom Mahy calls ‘tricksters’: Ovid is the head, Felix the heart and Hadfield the instinct (for violence more than anything else). Felix and Harry begin a love-affair, which infuriates Ovid, who decides to destroy the Hamilton family. The tricksters are thwarted by the strength of Naomi, and the unexpected heroism of Christobel.

The following section will discuss four themes: adultery (the effect on Naomi and Jack, and on their family), sibling relations (between members of the Hamilton family, and also the three tricksters); envy; and the power of forgiveness (to heal family trauma).

**ADULTERY**

Begg talks about three types of love within marriage: Eros (desire for the other), Venus (the “pleasurable act of union”) and Philia (covering the range of comradeship). Begg claims that a happy marriage, and indeed happy life requires a good balance of the three: “A harmonious sexual relationship strengthens and revivifies the marriage bond, and every effort, including, if necessary, consultation with a doctor, should be made to perfect this aspect of marriage.” Begg hastens to add however that “Venus is not the be-all and end-all of marriage, as some philosophies have asked us to believe. Philia, with all the warmth and friendliness which gives lasting comradeship, is of great importance, too.”

*The Tricksters* is as much a study of Harry’s troubled adolescence, as of marital problems between her parents. Jack has violated the “marriage bond” which Begg describes, by having an affair with another woman, his ‘not quite a daughter’ Emma. Luckily his marriage also consists of Eros and Philia (he and Naomi are good companions, and still desire each other); these factors are strong enough to ultimately hold them together. Their mistake is in forestalling the announcement of Jack’s adultery and Naomi’s forgiveness, which thus creates an unwholesome secret in the family.
Like Lasenby, Mahy regards secrets as the one of the worst of all family problems, because what is not acknowledged cannot be dealt with by those affected. Harry, who has overheard Jack and Naomi arguing, knows of Jack’s adultery, and although she thinks she is doing the right thing in not revealing it, she gets a nasty sort of pride over being ahead of Christobel: “It filled her with uneasy triumph, for simply knowing it made her powerful after years and years of being nothing but a middle one, someone over whom older and younger members of the family could cheerfully seesaw.” At the same time she is aware that the secret is poisoning the family. She “wanted everyone kind and affectionate, not passionate and tormenting - everything open, no maggotty secrets and silence.” She looks forward to Christmas as a reminder of the happy past: “Somewhere, waiting to be found again in the approaching season, was an old, innocent self, sexless as a tennis racquet, living in a time before Jack and Naomi wept at each other late at night.”

The most sinister aspect of the secret is its potential to be used for blackmail. The tricksters see it as their greatest weapon against the Hamiltons, and make constant references to it. When Emma says, “I think family life’s wonderful,” Ovid replies sneeringly, “You certainly must. You’ve gone further than most to get it for your very own.” Naomi, tired of the three mysterious brothers, tries to evict them from the household, at which point Hadfield threatens her with a hint of the secret; he offers to give her a “present of Christmas silence all gift-wrapped,” in exchange for letting them stay.

Jack begins to get edgy, with fear. He gets a “peculiarly savage note in his voice” when talking to Robert, who has been getting closer to Emma and Tibby (his daughter). Jack says later in private: “I’d say our burnt biscuits were coming home to roost,” meaning that his inadequacies as father and husband are starting to cause serious repercussions. Naomi realises the secret will come out, but wants to keep it until after Christmas: “Besides, I believe - I’ve always believed - there is something healing in sharing the season.”

The background to the Hamiltons’ crisis is the history of the Carnivals, also infected with secrets. Anthony describes it as “a fairytale - a real fairytale - peopled with monsters, as well as fairy godmothers.” The truth about Teddy Carnival is that “Edward hit him with the spade and killed him.” In some way Edward was driven to this, because Teddy had grown into a “tormented and tormenting young man, from all accounts.” Teddy’s surviving sister Minerva is reported to have said that “Teddy forced our father to kill him, although my father loved him best and meant well. That was Teddy’s triumph.” The violent aspect of Teddy is personified in Hadfield, while the manipulative side manifests as
Ovid. These two brothers are weakened by Harry’s attention to Felix (the heart) and take their revenge by forcing her into a confrontation with Christobel, which causes her to expose the secret. She realises instantly that she has done what Ovid wanted, she knew also “that she had always wanted to be the one to tell Christobel this secret, and now it was told.”

Although she is responsible for causing an eruption of grief and anger in Christobel, Harry does not regret what she has done. Neither does she mourn the loss of Felix, who along with the other tricksters disappears after the secret is discharged (when their goal is complete): “The Carnivals had come and gone, leaving no clear evidence of their passage except the alterations in the family they left behind them.” Harry realises that “though Ovid had helped the metamorphoses along, he hadn’t caused them. The changes had been there, planted in their family life, ready to occur in the right season.”

After the initial crisis, things unexpectedly begin to improve. Jack has a certain relief in being revealed as the villain. When his youngest daughter Serena calls him ‘Jack’ he laughs “unhappily” and says: “Call me Daddy... I’ve played Jack with you all for long enough.” Unfairly he hugs everyone except Harry, saying to her: “I do wish you hadn’t done it’”, but he also acknowledges that he and Naomi might never have admitted the adultery.

Later, Naomi and Harry have a proper, honest conversation for the first time in ages. Naomi explains that Jack and Emma “really fell in love... I didn’t know what to do.” She describes how Emma always had a crush on Jack, which they used to make jokes about: “We both thought she’d grow out of it, but neither of us ever imagined Jack would grow into it.” Naomi acknowledges her own fault in the affair: “I tried to take everything over... first I wanted to adopt Tibby, and then I tried to have another baby myself. We all got so terribly unhappy that all feelings changed under pressure, like metamorphic rock.” The use of the word ‘metamorphic’ reminds the reader of Ovid’s metamorphosis, the seeds which were already planted in the family, which he encouraged to grow. Luckily, the Hamiltons have the possibility of a third metamorphosis, caused by Naomi and Christobel’s forgiveness of their betrayers, which is enough to save them.

SIBLING RELATIONS

One of Mahy’s common obsessions is the fact that children tend to occupy different spaces within a family, as if there are only a certain number of personality-types available, and
once these are used up by older children, the younger have to make do with the remnants. The psychology behind this is that siblings unconsciously fear resembling each other too much, because this might mean that they do not occupy an individual position in their parents’ affections. In Helen Cresswell’s novel *Ordinary Jack*, Jack Bagthorpe decides that since his siblings have already demonstrated talent in particular fields, there is no point in competing with them. As Cresswell writes on the dust-jacket: “It’s hard to be ordinary when the rest of your family is brilliant. Jack is used to his elder brother and sister being good at just about everything, but when even little Rosie beats him at swimming, it’s too much.”

In *The Tricksters*, Harry feels that she is the ordinary one, and her escape is in writing. She feels that her true life “was lived in the moments when the tip of her pen met the white paper. After all, in family life all the best possibilities (beauty, cleverness and the power to go out and have adventures) had been taken over before she was born and were being used up by others.” Harry knows that she can “not move up - only out.”

Mahy’s interest in family positions is beautifully explored in her short story ‘The Travelling Boy and the Stay-At-Home Bird’, from the collection *The Chewing Gum Rescue and Other Stories*. This is about an adventurous boy, Sam, who lives with his nervous Great Aunt Angela. She buys him a pet (a sort of bird) called Norton to keep him company. Sam renames Norton ‘Fernando Eagle’, and tries to “‘un-tame him. I’ll teach him to fight and fly and to be free, and when he does fly away at last - well, it will be almost as good as flying away myself. It will be a kind of promise to me that some day I’ll be free too.’” His attempts at un-taming the pet are utterly unsuccessful; the reasons for this are explained by the pet-shop man: “‘Fernando Eagle never existed... Believe me, you were the eagle of your Great Aunt’s house. There was no eagle space left for a bird to fit into. But there was a Norton space... a grey bread-and-jam-trundler-pushing space and he fitted in there exactly.’”

The spaces are even more obvious in *The Tricksters*. Christobel has filled the “‘beautiful, powerful’” space, leaving Harry the “‘mysterious, silent’” space. The youngest child, Serena, who is “round and romantic” looks up to both of her sisters equally, which surprises Harry, especially when she learns that Serena actually liked her romantic book, which the rest of the family derides. Harry’s little brother Benny fills the dubious position of being the sick child of the family. Besides having asthma, he is “little and thin” with “clever-looking glasses.” Harry, who is very self-absorbed cannot find much respect for her siblings:
She was sick of feeling closed in by people above and people below, of being good old Harry, not wonderful Ariadne, for that was her real name. She was sick of being gratefully carelessly praised for docility when she wanted to have a turn at being the difficult, brilliant one instead.... Being the middle one of the family suddenly seemed like an illness she had suffered from all her life, which might finally kill her if things did not change.\footnote{583}

In contrast to Harry’s worry about herself, is Naomi’s misplaced confidence in her middle daughter: “Thank god for one reliable member of the family, Naomi thought, for Charlie always sailed away, and Christobel needed everything before she felt secure, and Serena suffered from love and art, and Benny got asthma and bronchitis. Harry’s sciences were sometimes worrying, but at least silence demanded nothing.”\footnote{584}

Silence is an interesting quality in children. Mahy’s most recent young-adult novel, *The Other Side of Silence* is the story of a girl called Hero, who is an ‘elective mute’ (choosing not to speak at all). The implication is that Hero’s parents have caused this fault in her by being over-fond of her high-achieving older sister Ginevra. When Ginevra was born, the mother “cuddled her little daughter... looked into her eyes and told her how marvellous being alive was, how marvellous *she* was, just being herself.” Hero admits that her mother “did this for all of us, including me, only not as often as she had done for Ginevra because she had grown so much busier by the time I was born, and her time had to be shared.”\footnote{585} In a disturbing flashback, Hero remembers when she was five, and her mother said to someone behind her back that her oldest daughter was the “‘word child... but Hero’s the quiet one.’” She finds her mother looking at her “as if my quietness were something mysterious, something to be really proud of. It could be that that was the exact moment in which I began to be proud of quietness too.”\footnote{586} Hero cannot hope to excel her older sister in any verbal sense, so she chooses not to compete at all. Harry has also retreated into silence and shyness as a way of not competing with Christobel, who dominates every other category: “Beauty was not enough for Christobel. She wanted to be noticed in every way.”\footnote{587} Harry doesn’t want to be noticed at all.

It is difficult to know whether Mahy intends the reader to like Christobel or not, because she is so unpleasant to the protagonist, whom the reader identifies with. She greets Harry by being shockingly judgmental: “‘Grow your fringe out, get contact lenses, and you’ll begin to pass as a human girl instead of something from outer-space.’”\footnote{588} As if this
isn't enough, she begins to insult her about her weight, demanding to know if Harry has been dieting: "'People can be as understanding as they like about puppyfat; it's not a thing you want to see a lot of. Puppyfat!... You were more like a mature St Bernard. We could have hung a barrel of rum around your neck and hired you out for mountain rescues.'"\(^{589}\)

Christobel is a common personality type in Mahy's work, especially in her stories for younger children, in which the Christobel-type appears as a glamorous, fierce, successful career woman, like a teacher or detective. She also makes an appearance in Mahy's adolescent fiction, as a self-centred, bullying, egotistic young woman, unsympathetic to those weaker than herself and frank to a degree of rudeness. She appears as Africa and Angela from *The Catalogue of the Universe*, and to some degree Janine Dart and Hinerangi Hotene (Samantha Benedicta) from *Memory*.

**ENVY**

A more dangerous aspect of sibling relations, besides the distribution of personalities within the families, is envy. Harry does not simply avoid competing with Christobel - she is also jealous of her, for taking her superiority for granted. Christobel manages to offend everyone, not just Harry, but she also suffers from envy. She is nasty to her friend Emma, even before she understands how Emma has betrayed her with Jack, because she is jealous. She accuses her of having "'always followed after me, picking up what I'd finished with, and now you're taking over Robert.'" Emma hangs her head, "'but not out of shame. She was trying to keep her temper.'"\(^{590}\) Even Ovid, who begins a kind of affair with Christobel, describes her in negative terms, as "'temperamental and abusive'".\(^{591}\)

The final straw for Harry is when she catches Christobel reading her story aloud "in the arch voice of a proper person trying to tell a dirty story and not getting it quite right'.\(^{592}\) Christobel, who in this moment is unconsciously acting as the pawn of Ovid and Hadfield, says cheerfully: "'You've arrived just in time to hear the end of a remarkably dreadful book, written by someone who's devoted their life to good works and square dancing at the Y.M.C.A. and is secretly longing to be raped by a winged stallion.'"\(^{593}\) When Harry admits it is hers, Jack tries to speak, looking "horribly shocked", but "Christobel spoke over him. She had been enjoying reading and making people laugh, and, though she was often prepared to acknowledge guilt, she could not bear to have it forced on her. 'God, how could you write such stuff!' she cried angrily.'\(^{594}\) The situation forces Harry into a rage which is the culmination of years of sibling rivalry. Mahy portrays her hatred in a believable way.
Harry remembers all her old grievances, collected into one huge avalanche of bitterness and jealousy which overwhelms her common sense:

She became both Pandora and the box of troubles, remembering her birthday parties when Christobel just couldn’t help seeming like the true birthday girl, remembering days when Christobel had forced her into spending her saved-up money on things Christobel wanted and she didn’t.... She thought of the time when it had suddenly seemed to her that Naomi’s attention had jumped straight from Christobel to Benny with his bronchitis and occasional attacks of asthma. It wasn’t that Jack or Naomi loved her less, but love was sometimes limited in what it could do, and it could not quite make things fair in a family where some people not only wanted but needed so much more than others. Now Harry wanted to scream at them and pour out all this old, sad, forgotten rubbish.595

She chooses to punish her sister in a way which resembles her own feelings of inferiority. By informing her of Emma and Jack’s affair, she causes Christobel to feel as if she has been usurped. Hours later, after tears and tantrums, Harry hears her in the kitchen, crying with jealousy towards Emma: “She’s taken over everything I ever had. I’ve got nothing left. It’s all Emma’s now.”596 Mahy is quick to explain that Christobel is not in love with her father, but it is just that: “I utterly hate the idea that Emma knows something about Jack that I don’t. She knows him as a man, and I know him as a father.”597

Christobel and Harry make up unsatisfactorily, with Christobel saying: “I could have been nicer about your silly book... but I hate apologising.”598 Harry accepts this gracefully, admits that her story was rotten, and they hug in front of the Christmas tree. Beyond this point, they both attempt to give up envy, rather than acting upon it. Harry even relaxes sufficiently to admit to herself that she “liked Christobel”.

In contrast to this, Emma, who is effectively a daughter of the Hamilton household, epitomises someone who is almost completely motivated by envy. Emma’s parents are divorced and she “had adopted first Christobel and then her family, so very firmly that the Hamiltons had found themselves adopting her back, and, until Tibby was born, she shared many Christmases with them.”599 Emma is scarcely sympathetic in the novel, but doesn’t quite reach the status of a villain. Her envy is mainly for Naomi and Christobel (who have Jack), but she is also envious for simple family warmth. After the birth of her daughter she “has become unexpectedly independent,”600 and supplements a Domestic Purposes Benefit
with part-time cleaning. She is determined to offer Tibby home comforts such as "cocoa, cheese on toast, family gossip and a happy kitchen," (all the facets of family which the Hamiltons already possess) and presumably a father, which is why she allows Robert to get attached to her. Emma represents strength as well as envy, because has managed to keep and provide for her daughter, on her own. She explains to Anthony how Naomi tried to adopt Tibby - "properly adopt her. And it might have been giving her the best chance if I'd said yes, but I just couldn't. I couldn't!" She has also learnt to stand up to Christobel, who has often dominated her in the past. Christobel wanted Emma to "have had an abortion or got Tibby adopted, and when I didn't she got browned off with me, and it was all messy."

The Carnival brothers themselves explore a facet of sibling rivalry, because, like the Halfmen in Gee's The Halfmen of O, they are incomplete people, defined by only one characteristic. Ovid, the head, has little ability to feel compassionate, because that is the domain of his brother Felix. Hadfield, who represents instinct, cannot feel or think. He just responds to situations with lust or aggression, whichever will cause the most trouble. The three 'browsers' suffered similar conflicts for power during their actual life in one body, complicated by their relationship to their father. Felix admits "we quarrelled most dreadfully" with him, mainly because Ovid "wanted to create the universe" and so did Edward: "Well, there's only room for one universe-creator in a single family." Edward reacted badly to the different aspects of his son's personality. He "couldn't stand it" when Felix showed himself, though he encouraged Ovid, and "countenanced" Hadfield. Felix admits: "I think in the end we all wanted to have revenge on him, Ovid and Hadfield most passionately, for it's my job to make allowances and show compassion and inform them, but, with me so weak, they could scarcely support their own existences. I mean we lived without joy." Mahy uses the tricksters as a shadow to the Hamilton's troubles. If there is a message behind her portrayal of sibling rivalry, it is that whole families and 'the self' work best when they overlap. Too much division between personalities does not prevent competition, but rather causes more jealousy and conflict.

FORGIVENESS

Mahy often treats forgiveness as a force for good (especially within families) which can conquer the harshest traumas. At the end of the novel it is Christobel, influenced by her
mother, who struggles to forgive her father and friend. To properly understand Christobel’s behaviour, one has to examine Mahy’s portrayal of Naomi as a woman with hidden strengths and qualities. In contrast to her handsome (but weak) husband, Naomi is a surprising match. She “was actually a year older than Jack and a little taller, with pleasant freckles, a beaky nose, an uproarious laugh and a lopsided smile, as if one half of it were sadder than the other.” Harry, “a family listener and watcher, knew her parents loved each other, wept when they argued and sometimes embraced in the shadows like threatened lovers. Over recent years it had been Jack who feared to lose Naomi, not the other way round.”

Naomi is superficially concerned with appearances, which is why she keeps trying to bake, instead of buying biscuits: “‘I feel guilty doing that... You know, Mother goes out to work, family life breaks down.’” She is extraordinarily kind to Emma, when she and Tibby come to stay, saying: “‘Emma dear!... Look we’ve missed you lately, and it’ll be a treat to have a baby in the family.’” In the past she has also shown kindness to Emma, for which she has not been rewarded. But she continues to be kind, because it is in her nature.

Ultimately, Christobel proves to be the strongest character, using the strength which she has drawn from her mother. She tells Harry: “‘whenever I feel doubtful about myself, it really comforts me to think about Jack and Naomi - boxing along, being good on my behalf. They’re been such terrific parents. They’ve stayed together and they’re really fond of each other.’” She feels that their “‘long love affair... sits like a great monument in my life, something I’ve got to do as well as - or better than.’”

Harry is unconsciously aware of the strength of her family, before they prove it. Ovid threatens her for corrupting Felix, promising that he will destroy her family: “‘and I’ll use you to do it.’” Harry has a strange feeling of confidence. She “felt certain that there was much more to her family than Ovid understood. If she had chosen to teeter along a strand of silk high in the air and over risky ground, she was sustained by many things - by the way Jack and Naomi held together, in spite of midnight arguments and differences of opinion” (the same thing which empowers Christobel) and even by silly things like Tibby holding the cat upside down, but the cat not striking.

During the cathartic scene where the secret is revealed, Naomi struggles to preserve the situation. She “put her arms around Christobel, just as if she would turn herself into a place Christobel could hide in” and insists: “‘It isn’t the end of the world!’” She concentrates fully on Christobel, trying to convince her that “‘it isn’t so bad. None of us thought we would get through it as well as we have.... We may even - if we learn to
understand, that is - we may even be made richer - our lives may become better, in ways we could never guess at."

Mahy comments on her novel: “In the end it is the older sister Christobel who manages the heroic act,” by inviting Emma to have New Year with them, after knowing that Emma and Jack have betrayed her. “She is genuinely determined to force happy endings out of disaster and brave enough to begin to do so.” Mahy points out that forgiveness is something which the ego rebels against: “Her friend Emma has after all betrayed her by usurping Christobel’s own father, and indeed assuming knowledge of him that is forbidden to Christobel herself.” By persisting in forgiveness, against the ego, Christobel triumphs.

CONCLUSION

Fitzgibbon writes that by the end of the novel Harry “accepts and loves the completely different personalities who make up her own family, and her own now assured status.” While it is true that Harry is not short on love for her younger siblings and her mother, there is little evidence of love for Christobel, or for Jack; it is also highly debatable whether she becomes more assured of having status in her family at all. At the beginning of the novel her only escape from unhappiness is by writing, and by the end even this is denied to her. Her story is discovered and ridiculed by her family; afterwards she burns it. The real heroes are Naomi and Christobel. Because Harry is not accorded a positive role in the novel, her only resolution is the discharging of the secret; consequently the experience for the reader who identifies with her is hardly satisfying.

Gilderdale responds in a similar way: “Until recently Mahy consistently portrayed family warmth in her fiction particularly between mothers and daughters, but in The Tricksters (1986) relationships are more complex and disturbing.” In many ways this is a more adult novel than the previous two, in which betrayal was a background issue to the present lives of the protagonists. In The Tricksters betrayal is ever-present.

The numerous, uniquely drawn characters, with conflicting personalities and roles, combine to form an extremely complex novel, which defies general summary. It is a detailed study of the danger of keeping secrets, the pain caused by betrayal (by father, friend and husband), the issue of sibling rivalry, and how children in large families relate to being superseded by their siblings. Parallels can be drawn to other authors who have explored this problem, and to Mahy’s other work, which shows a recurring fascination with
the concept of family placement. Usurpation occurs right through this novel, which is the link between sibling rivalry and betrayal. Harry usurps Felix from his brothers. Christobel usurps Harry’s desire for attention. Emma usurps Christobel’s father, and ex-boyfriend Robert. If there is a message to this text, it is that strength arises from forgiveness of one’s usurpers.

---

MEMORY

Mahy wrote *Memory* in 1987, continuing her year-by-year production of young adult fiction. This novel is the first to show a male character as the main protagonist (Tycho in *The Catalogue of the Universe* had to share the attention with Angela). Jonny Dart is a disturbed but likeable young man who suffers from a confused guilt about the death of his sister, Janine, many years earlier, which his memory has corrupted. Increasingly unsure whether he was in some way responsible (and also feeling that his parents think he should have been the one to fall off the cliff), he leaves home in search of the only witness to Janine’s death, her friend Bonny Benedicta. After engaging in typically delinquent behaviour (drinking and getting into a fight), he encounters an old woman roaming the streets at night, and accompanies her home, half curious, half simply needing a place to stay. The old woman, Sophie, who suffers from senile dementia, affects Jonny in peculiar way. He is frustrated by her chaotic way of living, disgusted by the squalor of her household, and anxious to escape so he can get back on with his life, but finds himself unable to leave her. Slowly, he begins to settle into the strange situation and through “the course of voluntarily looking after Sophie” he “finds redemption from his guilt and fear.”

*Memory* is a more simple story, with fewer characters than the previous three novels, but the emotional impact is no less intense. Here, location is important; the city is almost like a character itself. Sophie’s industrial, slightly disreputable neighbourhood, Colville, welcomes Jonny in, threatens him, then refuses to let him leave. In *The Changeover*, the Carlisles fear the approach of the city, and go to extreme measures to protect themselves from it. *Memory* shows the city fully-grown, crammed with inhabitants, yet strangely empty, anonymous. Jonny lives next to Bonny for some time before realising who she is.
Gilderdale comments that recent junior fiction (by which she means the 1980s) shows an “increasing cultural diversity of contemporary life.” Bonny Benedicta is the ultimate example of a racially diverse character: being a mixture of Chinese, Indian and Maori. She struggles with issues of cultural identity. Her sister, Samantha, is half Maori, half Pakeha, and has fully embraced her Maori heritage by changing her name and becoming a notorious radical activist for Maori rights. Bonny, while sympathetic to her sister’s cause, has no firm allegiances of her own.

Gilderdale also comments that recent junior fiction “reveals changes in family structures and in gender roles,” and this is also reflected in Jonny. Traditionally, if any young person was going to take on the role of caregiver for an aged person, it would be a female. Here the roles are reversed: Jonny is the kind-hearted nurturer, while Bonny is the oblivious workaholic, totally focused on her academic career.

This section will examine four issues: parental inadequacy (Jonny’s parents’ failure to protect or understand him); favouritism (of Janine, and Samantha); the community as a wider family (and its failure to protect Sophie); and maturity (how caring for Sophie repairs Jonny’s split personality - half needy, half responsible - caused by his confusion of memory, and guilt over Janine’s death).

**PARENTAL INADEQUACY**

Jonny’s background as a child protégé who tap-danced in a television commercial with his sister immediately casts suspicion on the parents as potential exploiters of their children. As it is with Sorry’s foster-family in *The Changeover*, money is important to the Dart family. Mrs Dart is apparently “thrilled... with the money”. At the same time, both parents fail to recognise that Jonny’s fame is dangerous to him, and they make no effort to protect him from bullies at school: “For nearly a year Jonny had really believed that Nev was planning to cut his throat, and was just waiting for the right, lonely occasion. At home he did not dare suggest that tap-dancing in a television advertisement was bringing him close to death.” Janine is the only one who tried to stand up for Jonny, though with little success. The parents are utterly unsympathetic by contrast, and cliché-ridden. The father states: “‘You’ll never be a man unless you learn to fight your own battles,’” and sounds “not so much scornful as hurt, rather as if Jonny had broken a serious promise.” Jonny doesn’t doubt that his father loves him, “though it was a confused sort of love which forbade him to protect Jonny in case Jonny never learned to take care of himself.”
Jonny feels that he is rebelling against his family by leaving home; he is doing “what his father had declared he could never do”\textsuperscript{620} that is: managing on his own. This gives him a sense of pride, which has been missing in his attitude for some time. He imagines his parents finding out what he has been up to: “Of course his father would be bewildered and not entirely pleased to see him now, sitting in such peculiar company. He had wanted the sort of son who would run away to sea or build a business empire rather than one who fried sausages for old ladies.”\textsuperscript{621}

During his stay with Sophie, Jonny unconsciously imitates the patterns of his background. He uses the same expressions as his father, quotes him when he wants to ruffle Sophie in a good-humoured way (“‘My dad says a man gives half his food away to get the other half cooked,’”\textsuperscript{622}) and even uses the same expressions of affection, such as telling Sophie to “‘skin the rabbit’” (get undressed) before she gets in the bath. During these moments, Jonny “felt an unexpected warmth for his father. Though his confused concern often expressed itself in criticism and anger these days, he had been kind and reassuring when Jonny was small. It was little children he liked, not large, bewildered sons.”\textsuperscript{623} This is almost identical to the attitude of Sorry’s foster-mother in \textit{The Changeover}: “she loved babies, not grown-up, shaving men.”\textsuperscript{624} It is a common tendency of adolescent fiction to explore how the growing child feels alienated from his or her parents, but to focus on the reverse - how parents are disconcerted by their teenage children - is relatively uncommon. True to Mahy’s style, she likes to examine conflict from every point of view.

\textit{FAVOURITISM}

The greatest part of Jonny’s alienation from his parents is caused by favouritism. He is certain that they resent him for being alive when Janine is dead, even going so far as to admit this to the social worker. He explains that when his sister “‘fell over the cliffs at the Seacliff Reserve... deep down, everyone thought the wrong one had gone over. Dad too. He couldn’t help it.’”\textsuperscript{625} Extraordinarily, Mahy offers factual evidence for Jonny’s belief. One of Jonny’s friends once told him: “‘Everyone reckons if one of you two had to go over it was a pity it wasn’t you.’” Mahy adds, “It was no news to Jonny. He had begun believing this while Janine was still spinning in the air.”\textsuperscript{626} His feelings of inferiority are complicated by a guilt complex, which is caused by Bonny trying to protect him, after Janine’s death. He cannot understand why she needed to protect him, and assumes that somehow he must have been to blame. He thinks he can almost remember pushing her, though of course he
didn’t, and he runs away from home, “hoping to hold off attacks of memory”, as well as find Bonny and ask her for the truth as she remembers it.

Bonny also suffers from feelings of inadequacy compared with her sister, Samantha, otherwise known as Hinerangi Hotene, the “beautiful activist” who threw “an explosive device at the Minister of Maori Affairs.” Bonny is half jealous of her sister, and half supportive of her. She tells Jonny how Samantha changed her name to Hinerangi Hotene after tracing her natural mother. The changing of her name is symbolic of not wanting to belong to the Benedicta family any more: “She’s got no time for all that middle-class pakeha academic scene,” Bonny explains, suggesting that Samantha resents her parents (both middle-class pakeha doctors). Hinerangi is a “self-taught Maori”.

The Benedictas are strange characters, sort of new-age ‘do-gooders’ who according to Mahy’s description have “deliberately adopted children who could never be taken as their own”. This brings out the prejudice in others. Jonny’s mother refers to Bonny having “mixed blood” and “could never quite understand why the Benedictas should adopt children who so obviously did not belong to them.” There is a reason however. Bonny explains: “her parents who, being idealistic as well as childless, had chosen two daughters whose adoption prospects weren’t good.” Bonny is part Maori, Chinese, Indian; Samantha is pakeha/Maori, and used to have a hare-lip: “We were the next best thing to rejects. But that was the very thing that made us lucky because, as it turned out, that was just what the doctors ordered.”

Ironically, the Benedictas are just as guilty of favouritism as Jonny’s family, if the definition of favouritism involves not loving children naturally. The Benedictas do not love their children for their own personal strengths and weaknesses, but rather what they can be trained to achieve - this can hardly be called natural. Bonny, sensitive to her parents’ designs but sympathetic to them, comments:

“I suppose all parents want their children to match up with their own ideas… I know the doctors really love Samantha and me, but they get a special thrill out of us when we prove something - prove that anyone, no matter how hopeless - can be redeemed through love and a good education.”

The Benedictas, though superficially a successful family, fail to be worthy of respect because of their unnaturalness: they combine an instinct to do-good, with political correctness of the worst kind. A telling example is that they approve of Bonny looking after
Sophie, not because this is a good thing, but because caring for a kuia is ""a very Maori thing.""635

COMMUNITY AS A WIDER FAMILY

Gilderdale describes one trend in 1980's junior fiction: the ""growing awareness of the power of technology and of New Zealand's vulnerability in a world threatened by global catastrophe and ecological disaster.""636 Memory's setting is recognisable as just about any city in New Zealand, especially ones which are flat and comparatively featureless, such as Christchurch, Palmerston North or Hamilton. Without dwelling on pollution, Mahy manages to give an impression of sterility. There are no trees in Colville, and no gardens. Instead Jonny wanders through endless concrete parking lots, traffic lights, car-wrecker's yards complete with ""old cars, agonized and partly dismembered"",637 ancient, abandoned-looking houses with ""cellars and foundations to the water-mains and sewers which flow under any city"".638

Even more important to her portrayal of the city as a living entity, is the idea of community. Begg maintains that a close connection to extended family and community cannot be overrated, especially in cities: ""City dwellers are at a disadvantage as they are not supported by the order and stability of the older rural community.... In the cities neighbours take on a new importance.""639 He quotes Lewis Mumford (American social and political philosopher), from his book The City in History:

What we call morality began in the mores, the life-conserving customs of the village. When these primary bonds dissolve, when the intimate watchful community ceases to be a watchful, identifiable, deeply concerned group, then the 'We' becomes a buzzing swarm of 'I's', and secondary ties and allegiances become too feeble to halt the disintegration of the urban community.640

What is so disturbing in this story is that the community is totally oblivious to people in need, like Sophie; even kind characters like Bonny are unaware of the needs of others. Jonny is a maverick, in that he both cares about vulnerable people, and attempts to help them. Aware that the job is too big for him alone, he contacts the Aged Citizen's Council, but the social worker he talks to is next to useless. He agrees that Sophie needs full-time care, but is unable to arrange a place in a 'rest home' for her, because they are all full. The
failure of neighbours to notice each other is resolved when Jonny finds Bonny living next door. Mahy describes rewriting Chapter 12 (which describes their first meeting) seven times,641 showing how important it was for her to get it right. Jonny, despite being a delinquent, has such strong good qualities, that his example shames Bonny into being more helpful to Sophie herself.

Sophie was based on Mahy’s Aunt Francie, who had senile dementia.642 Mahy was also involved in geriatric nursing before she trained as a librarian, and this experience made her acutely sensitive to the needs of the old. Significantly, both Sophie and Jonny mistake each other for family, on their first meeting. She thinks he is her cousin Alva, and continually says: “It’s lovely to have you here. There’s no one quite like one of your own.”643 Although Jonny and Sophie are not related, they are united by loneliness in an uncaring community, and therefore consider each other as family.

**MATURITY**

Jonny is an interesting character - a young man besieged by conflicting emotions which limit his ability to act as a mature person. He is aware of the limitation, realising, before he even finds Bonny, that “part of his own past had been recorded falsely. Though memories were often regarded as careful files in a catalogue, Jonny now believed they could just as easily be wild stories, always in the process of being revised, updated, or having different endings written on to them.”644 The split in his memory mirrors a split in his personality, caused by his problems at home, and his guilt about Janine’s death. One of his aspects is “a good-hearted boy who had once been a scout and wanted to see an old lady safely home.”645 The other is a character he refers to as the “wolf-man”, which comes out when faced with other threatening people or situations. He admits as much to Bonny when she asks what happened to the “‘neat, little, kind boy’” she’d been remembering. He answers: “‘That dear little boy didn’t make it... Poor little chap - he split open one day, and I came out. I’d been growing inside him all the time - like in a horror film.’”646 He eventually learns being part wolf-man has its advantages. He intimidates Spike, who has been ripping off Sophie, and also stands up to Nev Fowler, his old enemy at school: “He thought how strange it was that you could learn, from being frightened over and over again yourself, how to be frightening to other people.”647

His attitude towards Sophie initially displays his immaturity. His first reaction to her is that of “childish horror”. After thinking he was the only displaced person in the empty
city, “Incredibly, the stone desert had disgorged another inhabitant.” He is relieved not to recognise her, having worried that “A hundred years might have gone by while he slept on the traffic island and now perhaps he was about to meet his mother or even one of the twins, screwed up by time.” Soon afterwards, he takes a parental attitude towards her, speaking to her with “the very accents of his mother”, and performing intimate tasks for her, such as giving her a bath. Like a good parent, he wants to buy bread, eggs, and fruit in the supermarket, rather than the cakes and biscuits of which Sophie is so fond.

Gilderdale comments that “kind adults in Margaret Mahy books are splendid providers of food”, like her “Aunt Francie”, who once sent her a birthday feast through the post. Sophie, who is based on Aunt Francie, is a sort of reversed provider of food, twisted by her senile dementia. Sophie’s house doesn’t have any food in it, besides mouldy biscuits: “The ancient patterning common to kitchens and middens had finally broken down in Sophie’s house. It was the sort of place you might arrive at when everything else broke down - a place at the end of everything else.” It is her lack of food which is finally the cause of Jonny’s staying, reluctantly: “He had found he couldn’t walk away and leave Sophie with nothing to eat except mouldy biscuits.”

Though the novel has a somewhat unrealistic ‘happy’ ending, with Jonny deciding to stay with Sophie for at least a year, and care for her, Mahy doesn’t try to hide the unpleasantness of old-age or dementia: the disgusting things like smell, and bed-wetting, and nakedness. Jonny encounters Sophie one night, crawling along the floor, cressed only in her “pot-hat and unravelling singlet.... One mere glance at Sophie’s bare bottom and he was outraged. I don’t have to put up with this, he thought angrily, as if Sophie had played a malicious trick on him.” Jonny and the reader, both shocked by the scene, quickly realise this isn’t as bad as it seems. Before long, Sophie’s nakedness does not offend him any more; he even jokes with her about things to do with sex, half flirting. One night he wakes to find Sophie, naked, crying over him, and referring to him as Alva, whom she once loved. It nearly makes Jonny’s cry: “It wasn’t just out of sympathy for Sophie, though he did feel a confused pity for her. It was more from shock, the shock of coming on an injured animal and thinking you should do something to spare it pain.” Mahy is reminding the reader that the old can love passionately too. They were once young like us.

Jonny, who initially resents being forced by his better nature to care for Sophie, begins to take pleasure from it, like one does in caring for a child: “He brushed and combed her hair, parting it in the middle and curling it down around her ears as well as he could. Washed and brushed, free from food stains, she was indeed a dear old lady. Jonny was
surprised how being cared for changed her." The message of the novel is that it is not just the cared-for who are benefited by the act of caring, but the carer themselves.

CONCLUSION

Memory is darkly poetic in tone, sometimes humorous, but basically realistic in subject-matter, without becoming too maudlin. Mahy shows that disturbed adolescents can find ways of coping with problems, such as those caused by their families preferring another child (like the Darts), or treating them with a Pygmalion attitude (like the Benedictas). Bonny and Samantha are chosen for adoption because they are "rejects"; their parents value them not for personal reasons, but because their success reflects well on the Doctors Benedicta, as super-parents. Jonny's family also demonstrate flaws: they are not willing to protect him from bullies, they do not reassure him that he is not equally-loved as Janine, and they fail to see or acknowledge the guilt and confusion which he suffers from. Guilt, fear, and lack of self-confidence are ultimately repaired by Jonny himself. His split-personality (aggressive and kind) enables him to stand up to his oppressors, and also to care for Sophie. By being able to use his weaknesses as strengths, he saves himself from delinquency, and finds a psychological resolution to a problem which could not ever have been conquered physically.

CONCLUSION TO MAHY

All of Mahy's young-adult books are concerned with the relationship between imaginary and factual truth, and the power of the imagination to transform. They "describe young people in trouble," for various reasons, either "mourning the loss of a father or of both parents, coming to terms with betrayal by a parent", or documenting "the transformation from childhood to adolescence... the search for the truth of one's beginnings." The inner conflict is set within the "easily recognisable world of family life, small families, large extended families, single-parent families, all with lively, memorable people." Kathryn Walls comments that by the mid 1970s:
Mahy had begun to write about what she has called "the sort of experience that really could happen".... Similarly, some of the adolescent novels... are based in what Mahy has called "consensus reality", where nothing technically impossible happens. But even the realistic novels have fairy-tale analogies.

Walls likens Tycho from *The Catalogue of the Universe* to a "frog prince figure", Sophie from *Memory* is a "good fairy". Mahy’s novels, though generally as optimistic as those for younger children, focus more on the grief that is caused by various social problems, such as "marital infidelity, parental abandonment, jealousy, self-deception, lies, mental illness and brain damage, and death." Walls adds: "The novels have happy endings, however, and inspire faith in the capacity of the young to overcome quite serious difficulties."

Mahy’s work can be said to show a new form of realism, rather different from the sort Gee uses. Their portrayal of villains is a notable example. Gee’s supernatural villains, such as the Grimbles in *The World Around the Corner*, and the Wilberforces in *Under the Mountain*, are purely malicious, with no redeeming qualities. The Halfmen in *The Halfmen of O* are dangerous because their humanity is missing: the half that is left is the evil side, the implication being that evil is a tangible entity which can measurably affect people. Mahy’s villains in her fantasy (with the exception of Carmody Braque in *The Changeover*), invariably turn out to be rather nice characters, who just need the love of a good woman or a proper career, or some motivation counselling, in order to be redeemed. Monsters, pirates, dragons, witches, robbers and so on, are all able to be rehabilitated in the end. The only consistently unlikeable characters are schoolteachers. This generosity towards villains is a trademark of Mahy’s work for children, and to some extent her young-adult fiction.

However, where Mahy stands out as a realist is in her willingness to explore truly difficult family problems, such as the sort Neil Begg and his followers prefer not to even talk about, such as divorce, desertion, sibling rivalry, duty to the old and infirm. Mahy’s protagonists suffer from self-doubt and regret, making them believable to a reader who is seeking a character to empathise with. Happy endings are usually (and realistically) achieved on a psychological level, rather than a physical one. Maturity also occurs as a psychological change, being earned through much toil and suffering - protagonists triumph by learning to accept and care for the weak, and by forgiving those who have wronged them.
LASENBY was born in 1931 in Waharoa, New Zealand. He attended the University of Auckland from 1950 to 1952 “but left in dissatisfaction” to go deer-culling in the Ureweras. He returned to Auckland in 1962, and worked as a teacher for many years. From 1969 he helped edit the School Journal; he lectured at Wellington Teachers’ College from 1975, and resigned in 1987 to write full-time.


Lasenby has received various honours for writing (showing him to be as highly regarded as Maurice Gee and Margaret Mahy), including the Esther Glen Medal in 1989, the Sargeson Fellowship in 1991, a Victoria University of Wellington writing fellowship in 1993, and the Dunedin College of Education writing fellowship in 1995.

A talented performer as well as writer, Lasenby brings an added dimension to his work when reading it aloud. During his years as a deer-culler (when he told stories to his companions), and teacher, he came to value the importance of the spoken word. Many of
his stories, especially the Uncle Trev books, which are yarn-stories, feel as if they are meant to be read aloud.

There is a strong sense of intertextuality in Lasenby’s work, which can be attributed to his love of books. He recalls reading everything he could find, as a boy, because “There weren’t many books around when I was young.... We got books for Christmas and for Sunday school prizes. I loved books, and there were never enough of them.” Among the books he did read were some of the finest works of juvenile fiction, such as Huckleberry Finn, and Anne of Green Gables. The latter appears in The Mangrove Summer, along with Westward Ho! as the books which his characters enjoy. The Lake, Lasenby’s 1987 survival-story, contains a book relative to survival, Plants of New Zealand, by Laing and Blackwell. The Seddon Street gang are influenced by movies rather than books. Lasenby still loves reading, from which he gets inspiration for his work. He admits: “I steal ideas from other people, especially from children in the schools I visit, and I twist them round and make them into lies in my stories. So, I’m a professional thief and a liar.”

Ironically, although Lasenby is admired for his lies, he is notorious for his honesty. Thoroughly opposed to political-correctness, his books have the freshness of genuine opinion, and he does not shirk writing about unpleasant issues such as violence, death and sexual abuse. Millar comments: “He often writes of heartland New Zealand: small towns, farms, and the bush frame narratives that are ‘observant, erudite, witty, often caustic, scathingly anti-bullshit, [and] alert to fit the fable to the moral (and vice versa)’.”

The five books in this sample have been selected because they have the ‘heartland New Zealand setting’, and are directly aimed at adolescent readers, unlike the humorous books, which could be equally enjoyed by under-ten-year-olds. The Conjuror, Because We Were Travellers and Taur, though young-adult books with a New Zealand setting, are post-apocalyptic, so are not suitable to this study, which is concerned with the portrayal of present or past New Zealand society. The Lake is set from 1952 to 1955, in the central North Island. The Mangrove Summer is set on the east coast of the Coromandel, soon after the beginning of the Second World War, 1941, when there was considerable fear of a Japanese invasion. Dead Man’s Head and The Battle of Pook Island are set in a small town called Waharua (similar to Lasenby’s home town of Waharoa) in the North Island, during the Depression of the 1930s. The Waterfall describes the gang’s adventures on Denny’s uncle’s farm, in bush-land nearby, during the polio epidemic. Like Maurice Gee, Lasenby prefers to write about interesting times in history, such as the Second World War and the
Depression. Perhaps also, his own childhood in the 1930s and 1940s means that this particular era is fresh in his mind.

---

**THE LAKE**

Millar comments that: "Lasenby’s first novel is characteristic of much of his writing: childhood is not idealised (pain is real and lessons are hard) but adventure abounds and the end is self-sufficiency and individual empowerment." Possibly influenced by Edith Howes, Lasenby’s first novel shows a preoccupation with survival as well as adventure.

Fitzgibbon describes it as “a novel for the intermediate child and the young adult”, and praises Lasenby for his ability to fill the environment with meaning. As the city is a character in Mahy, so the bush has a personality in *The Lake*.

No other New Zealand children’s author has the same first-hand experience of the bush in this country, or the same love of it. In *The Lake*, Ruth’s only hope is escape through the bush to the lake that was the setting for sailing and camping in happier days with the family.

The landscape contains “its own terrors” as well, such as dangerous rivers, “but none worse than the evil of the destroyer who hunts Ruth down.” As well as dangers, there are unexpected allies: the deer cullers “who are always thoughtful of those in need, and an exile of another kind [Tommy] who uses the place as a refuge from an unsympathetic world. It is he who saves Ruth.”

Although the New Zealand bush landscape and the lifestyle of those who occupy it, have not changed substantially since the 1950s (bushmen still make tea in a billy, use condensed milk, and carry matches, candles and a knife), the social conditions of towns are distinctively different. Lasenby could not easily have reproduced the plot structure of *The Lake* in a novel set in the 1980s. The sexual abuse which Lisa experiences is noted by Ruth’s teacher, Mr Kennedy, and by the headmaster, Mr Sanderson, but both men, although concerned, cannot help. No formal structure for reporting such abuse to a state agency existed, until the 1980s. In the 1950s, sexual abuse, especially incestuous, was hardly
acknowledged, and the only warnings that children received were about ‘stranger-danger’. Teachers were not trained how to deal with the more intimate problems of their pupils. When Ruth’s stepfather begins to sexually abuse her, she tries to tell Mr Kennedy, but is interrupted. He is half aware that something is wrong, but is preoccupied with his own family problems (a pregnant wife who is making life difficult for him). Ruth, with nobody to turn to, runs away from home, and spends the rest of the novel trying to survive completely on her own.

The novel has four main themes: parental inadequacy (exemplified by Ruth’s mother, emotionally disconnected from her children, who condones the sexual abuse of her daughter by her husband); abuse (the existence of predators in all areas of life, including Ruth’s stepfather Harry, the man in the car who offers her a lift, and Bill Fry’s son, who hunts her around the lake); parental substitutes (the role of men in Ruth’s life - her teacher, father and mentor, and how they are both opposite and similar to predators themselves); and maturity (Ruth’s survival instinct, her desire to protect herself and her sister Emma, which is connected with physical and mental maturity).

PARENTAL INADEQUACY

At the very beginning of The Lake the narrator, Ruth, summarises her situation, and the whole adventure which follows the breakdown of her family: “My father loved me, and so did Emma, from the day she was born, and I loved them, and that was enough; but things change, they go wrong, and I learned not to trust anybody.” After her father dies, the only family Ruth and Emma have left is their mother, who is blatantly untrustworthy. She comments: “It’s funny about families and what they’re supposed to be like. Families fight and hate each other, but try to hide it, and there are worse things they cover up. I suppose they have to, but often it’s not fair.” The most disturbing aspect of the situation is that Ruth’s mother is aware of what Harry is doing, but she chooses not to intervene. The only explanation Ruth can come up with for such neglect, is that her mother does not love her: “I knew my mother wanted a pretty, little daughter, one with curls, a doll she could dress up. That wasn’t me, and it wasn’t my little sister Emma. I don’t know why my mother didn’t love me.”

The novel raises the question why Ruth’s father, Jim Green (who was by all accounts a loving and considerate man), married such a heartless woman in the first place. The
reader is prompted to consider why Jim loved his wife, when she was incapable of loving her children? Ruth offers a few reasons to pity her mother, such as that she “was jealous of Dad for the time he lived in the bush”, she did not like camping herself, and she “hated the bush” though she put up with it for Jim’s sake. We find out by the end of the novel that Jim kept a few secrets from his wife, which she may have been unconsciously aware of, adding to her bitterness. However, she is obviously distraught by Jim’s death, and this marks the beginning of her serious neglect of her children.

After the accident, she does not bother to explain to Ruth or Emma that their father is dead, and nobody else does either. Ruth is isolated in confusion and misery: “people were too busy looking after Mum, and Emma needed me all the time.” Like Denny in *The Battle of Pook Island*, Ruth suffers far more serious grief from the absence of a proper explanation, than from the understanding of death. Not sure whether her father is dead or alive, she starts to fantasise seeing him. When she tries to tell her mother that she thinks she saw her father on a bus, she gets no reaction. Later, she ends up crying on her teacher’s lap, like a little girl: “I told him about Dad and how I didn’t think he was dead.” Mr Kennedy takes the responsibility of visiting Ruth’s mother, who tries to show a little more interest in Ruth afterwards, but quickly relapses: “Her attention wasn’t there and she didn’t really listen to me. From then on, though, I talked to Mr Kennedy a lot more.” The mother’s conspiracy of silence is everywhere. She doesn’t even tell Ruth that she’s planning to remarry. Ruth overhears Emma telling her teddy-bear about it.

Ruth doesn’t mind her mother marrying Harry; in fact she is pleased because Emma needed a new father and “he was good with her” and her mother “looked prettier and laughed a lot more”. After the birth of her son David, the mother becomes detached again: “She didn’t talk much to us, at times.” This marks the beginning of Harry’s unwelcome attentions to Ruth (perhaps caused by his wife being detached with him too). Much later Ruth wonders “again why Mum hadn’t stopped Harry. She had changed, after having David. Maybe she was too busy with him, to look after me.” Even though she is only twelve, Ruth decides that she cannot expect help from her mother or her teachers or friends, so she makes up her mind to run away in the family boat. When her mother finds out she is furious, and says, hypocritically: “Those creeks are away down the coast!.... Did you ever think what might happen to a girl on her own in a place like that?” The comment is ironic, because home is an even more dangerous place for Ruth.

Once she has escaped, she hardly thinks of her mother, except when she gets in trouble crossing a river, and feels that she had “escaped something”. Later she looks back at
the river, thinking of her mother, and shouts: “I beat you!” Why does she think of her mother at this point? Because her mother was scared of the bush (and also felt threatened by rivers), or because her mother was dangerous like the river? As she learns to survive in the bush, Ruth’s attitude softens a little, and she does include her mother in her missing of the old ways of life: “I cried for Dad, and Mum, and, especially, for Emma.”

The end of the novel shows a return to resentment of the mother. After Tommy dies, Ruth has a very disturbing dream, similar to those she had after her father had died. In the dream Tommy kills a deer, and bleeds it into the lake:

I looked and where blood from the deer’s throat swirled dark in the already dark water, an eel rose and drank, as the deer died. It rose to the surface, lifted its head, and its old face, bloated and huge, looked into mine. Its ancient eyes drew me down. It was evil, I knew. I pushed myself back from the bank where I’d knelt down to its level, stood, and wept with disgust and terror…. I wanted to say to Tommy that I had looked into my mother’s eyes.

This is an extraordinary and powerful image. The mother, who never actively causes harm to Ruth, is likened to the most evil and predatory creature of all. Her fault lies in contemptible selfishness and neglect of those she is most obliged to love and protect. Like the eel, she feeds on the life of others, without offering anything in return.

**ABUSE**

While the mother is an unrealised predator (recognised by comparisons to the river and the eel), other predators are far more obvious. To begin with Ruth notices the effects of predators on her classmates. Nick, who suffers some kind of personal problems at home, responds by acting “camouflaged”. Lisa, who is being sexually abused and beaten by her father, is a pretty girl, but she tries to make herself “nondescript”, by slouching, and doing nothing with her hair. Children who are being abused cope with problems in a certain way. When the class’s imaginary tribe comes under threat, Nick proposes closing down the cave and vanishing: “That was Nick’s own idea, vanishing.” Lisa, who has also been victimised, agrees: “If we vanish, they won’t notice us, and if they don’t notice us, they can’t hurt us.”
Ruth and the other girls avoid Lisa, call her “‘Smelly’” and gossip among themselves about her problems. But eventually they become concerned, and make the effort to talk to Mr Kennedy. Ruth shows an adult narrative perspective by commenting: “It’s easier to talk about these things now, but it was hard then.... We didn’t know how to say it, even to [Mr Kennedy] but he caught on.”682 Mr Kennedy thanks the girls for talking to them, and explains that he and Mr Sanderson have been trying to do something about Lisa but “‘it’s difficult’”. He suggest that something they could do is to try and make Lisa happier at school. They oblige, and one day Ruth realises that “we’d been scared of Lisa, as if what her father was doing to her was infectious, as if we were afraid of catching it.”683

When Harry starts to make advances towards Ruth, grabbing her, touching her when she’s asleep, her behaviour changes too, and she begins to resemble Lisa in her attempts to be “nondescript”. She becomes “careful what I said, even of the way I stood. I tried to stop anything happening. I didn’t want anything to be my fault.”684 This is a common victim response, to blame oneself for somehow inviting the attention.

Harry is not naturally a malicious character, but he becomes a serious predator to Ruth. She has many threatening dreams involving Harry, and these get confused with memories of her father. In a recurring dream Harry is with her on her old boat, and she strikes at him with the boom, knocking him into the water where he drowns. In one dream he turns into her father, once in the water, and he drowns, causing Ruth to wake up in tears, feeling guilty.

Ruth finally runs away without advance planning. In a cruel irony, the first ride she gets is with a Harry-type of character, a fellow molester. Like Harry, the man in the car isn’t evil or deranged, but simply someone who takes unfair advantage of a situation. Ruth escapes from him easily, then almost pities him, as he calls after her into the bush. His voice “had a lonely sound”.685

The worst predator in the novel is the “dark man” who actively hunts Ruth once she gets to the lake. He is an insanely violent, terrifying character, who follows Ruth around the lake, destroying camp-sites as he goes. He ruins Ruth’s hut, and several of Bill Fry’s camps, breaks objects, wastes food, and slashes meat with frightening savagery. He eventually catches Ruth and tries to rape and murder her, but she is saved by Tommy, who shoots him. Later Tommy explains that he was Bill Fry’s son. This fact makes Ruth feel it is even more awful that he smashed up Bill’s camping ground. Tommy offers a possible reason for his anger: “‘Bill left the boy’s mother, when she had the baby. He came up here for work and never went back. Maybe that’s why the boy never forgave him.’” Tommy
adds: "‘He always had something wrong with him, that one…. Maybe he reckoned Bill shouldn’t be helping you, when he hadn’t ever done much for him.’" 686 The dark man’s slashing of the deer (wastage of good meat) could be a metaphor for his grievances. His father Bill Fry wasted love on Ruth but not on him.

Ruth, who understands only too well that she is not the only victim in the world, pities the dark man: “I sat and thought. The man had hunted me and nearly killed Sniff. He might have killed me. But he was looking for his father, like me somehow, and I felt sorry for him.” 687 She burns all his clothes later, and drops his body into the lake, but she does keep and use his boat - symbolic of somehow forgiving him.

**PARENTAL SUBSTITUTES**

Ruth’s teachers and headmasters are fairly positive characters, almost surrogate-fathers. Mr Sanderson allows her to change into Mr Kennedy’s class when she says she would be happier there: “Mr Sanderson really thought we should be happy, and he tried to do something about it.” 688 What higher praise could there be? Mr Kennedy is also kind to Ruth and tries to take the children seriously: “Pam reckoned we were lucky having him.” 689 At the same time he is not so perfect as to seem inhuman. He sometimes “had a bad day and shouted at us.” 690 Obviously a believer in the importance of learning life-skills, Mr Kennedy offers his class an education on all levels, about facts of nature and facts of life: “‘We can survive some terrible things…. We’re adaptable.’” 691 Ultimately, Mr Kennedy is unable to help Ruth deal with her problem because he gets distracted by his new baby, and she cannot find the right time to talk to him.

After Harry’s abuse, in his position as new father, Ruth decides that it is safer not to trust anybody, and she thinks she might have continued in this belief forever, “but for somebody who loved me because he’d loved my father. He was an old man, and, when he’d taught me how to live, he died, the last lesson our fathers have to teach us.” 692 This is Tommy White, a hermit character, who saves Ruth from Bill Fry’s son, and whom she lives with in the tree that once belonged to her father. Before he dies, Tommy admits to Ruth that during his life he was also guilty of abuse of his own daughter. He leads into this explanation by telling Ruth the legend of the separation of Ranginui and Papatuanuku. Their children couldn’t grow up because they were caught in the darkness between their parents, until Tane, the tree god, suggested they push them apart: “‘We can stay with our mother, but we’ll still be able to see our father. We can grow in the light!’” 693 The second
part of the legend concerns Hine-titama, Tane's daughter, whom he creates out of clay reddened with his mother's blood. He has children with his daughter, but when she finds out the true (incestuous) nature of their relationship she departs for the Land of the Dead, leaving Tane and their children behind. She becomes Hine-nui-te-po, in James K. Baxter's words: the "eater of life", in Lasenby's: "the great woman of the night". Hine-nui-te-po is another victim.

Tommy finally tells the story of his daughter, also called Ruth, whom he had an incestuous relationship with. Like Hine-nui-te-po she metaphorically ran away to the Land of the Dead (she had an abortion, and died from blood poisoning). Ruth's name cannot be coincidental, so perhaps Lasenby means to suggest that Jim Green named his daughter after Tommy's Ruth. Tommy doesn't miss the significance of her name either: "Then you came, Ruth... as if I'd been forgiven, as if my daughter had come back and forgiven me." He persuades Ruth to go back and rescue her sister, "because Emma might be in trouble too." Ruth, who has been encouraged to feel emotions again, after her long isolation, is "filled with love for Tommy. I wanted to make him well, to keep him there, in the tree... I know what he had done was terrible, but I wanted to forgive him, for his daughter." Tommy says, before dying: "I'll sleep now. You've been a good daughter for this old fellow, Ruth," and reiterates his warning about Emma. When he dies, Ruth cries, "for Tommy and for his daughter, and I cried for myself". She buries him, covers his face with a blanket before shovelling dirt in, and says: "It is your mother, Papa, who is covering you."

The point made in Chapter Two, about the presence of a hermit in young-adult fiction, and psychoanalytic implication, relates well to the character of Tommy in The Lake. Tommy, like many hermits, is wise and generous. In exile for the sins of his own life, he redeems himself by helping to repair Ruth's broken heart.

**Maturity**

Ruth begins her journey to the lake with nothing, not even a jacket. Lasenby breaks things down into the essentials of survival, like Edith Howes in Silver Island. To begin with Ruth needs food, water, and warmth; then matches and a knife. She keeps repeating her full name, trying to restate her identity (it is also the name of her father). She thinks of her father a great deal and remembers his advice to her, such as to look at the trees one by one, rather than all together. She talks to herself, repeats the maxim of leaving a house with
matches, a candle and tea on the mantelpiece, and mentally totals up items as she acquires them, methodically, with a bushman’s interest. A different aspect of survival is mental comfort, which she gains later. Ruth does not know she is lonely until the little dog joins her. When she meets Tommy, she realises she has been missing human company too.

Ruth doesn’t just have a strong survival instinct for herself, but also for her sister. She accepts her role as Emma’s guardian after her father dies (when Emma is five, and Ruth is ten). She comforts Emma like a mother would, lets her sleep in her bed at night, cuddles her when they are at school together, and misses her when she is in the bush: “I hadn’t let myself think much of her for weeks. Each day, I’d just let myself think of her a little, and then stop it.” She thinks of how Emma would “be at school now, in standard two. She’d be eight, this year. I wondered if she took herself to school, and if she thought of me. I tried to send my thought over the bush to her, to tell her I loved her, and that I missed her.”

Ruth dreams of Emma, near to the end of the novel, and decides to return: “Nobody was going to stop me now. I was going home to confront Harry and my mother. I was going to ask her why she didn’t love me, why she didn’t look after me… I was fifteen, able to look after myself. I was going home to look after Emma too.”

**CONCLUSION**

_The Lake_ is an optimistic novel, despite the amount of abuse that occurs from various predators such as Harry, the man in the car and Bill Fry’s son. In some respect even the positive male characters have let their families or dependants down. Mr Kennedy distances himself from his class because of a new baby, when Ruth needs him the most; Tommy has an incestuous relationship with his own daughter; Bill Fry neglects his son. Jim Green dies without leaving adequate safeguards for the care of his daughters, from a wife he must have realised was emotionally inadequate. Interestingly, the most disturbing predator is Ruth’s mother, who is symbolised first by a dangerous river, then an eel, showing that Ruth struggles with the understanding that her mother was an abuser too. Lasenby is perhaps suggesting that she is more evil than the various predators in the novel, because she is so unnatural: she does not love her children or wish to protect them from an abuser whom she invited into their household.

But as Millar maintains, the novel ends positively, with Ruth’s personal empowerment. Her survival instinct helps her to firstly leave the dangers of her home, then
cope in the bush for over two years. Finally it guides her back home, as a more mature character, able to be the protector of her sister as well as of herself.

---

THE MANGROVE SUMMER

This novel was published the year after The Lake, and was set ten years earlier, in 1941, just after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. It begins in a small country town in the Waikato. George’s family learn that the father has been captured, and is a prisoner of war, which inspires the eldest sister Jill to decide that the whole family is in danger, and that she will have to take responsibility for them. The mother is also concerned about the possibility that New Zealand could be invaded by the Japanese, so she takes Jill, George and Jimmy to the family bach, on the east coast of the Coromandel. They stay there with their cousins, Ann, Graham and Derek, and their Aunty Iris. Jill soon decides that the bay is too unsafe for them to stay in, so she persuades all the children to accompany her up the river, where they set up camp among the mangroves. Initially, camping away from the adults is fun, but Jill becomes increasingly bossy and power-hungry, until all the children are unhappy, especially Jimmy, who becomes seriously disturbed. The degeneration of their new society, complete with tragic end (Jimmy’s death, due to the incompetence of the other children) resembles William Golding’s Lord of the Flies, as well as George Orwell’s Animal Farm.

Lasenby was born in 1931, the same year as Maurice Gee, so both would have been at a crucial age (eight years old) when the Second World War began. Both writers have chosen to set books during this period, perhaps indicative of the profound impact that war had on them as children and teenagers. Gee’s The Champion uses the background of war to explore social issues such as racism and jingoism in the community, a preoccupation which also appears in his adult books. Lasenby is more interested in how the disruption and insecurity of war affects the individual, hence The Mangrove Summer concentrates almost entirely on the attitudes of the children, and how they relate to each other. War is a secondary issue, not a primary motivator. The narrator George admits at the beginning that Jill uses the “Japs” as the “perfect excuse” to take control of her siblings, and Ann reaffirms this later.
This novel is generally accepted by critics as realistic in its portrayal of the fears of the era. Fitzgibbon offers this summary:

Tragedy befalls the children who run away to a remote place among the tidal creeks and the mangroves. This is no romantic adventure. War is seen for the horror that it is. Its mark is seen on the face of the wounded airman; its senselessness is seen in New Zealand soldiers still sailing to Europe while at home there is fear of imminent invasion; its cruelty is seen in the treatment of those who hate war.\textsuperscript{703}

Though war is a major theme, it is not relevant to the portrayal of family, so this discussion will focus on more personal issues. First parental inadequacy (the weaknesses of adults, perceived and actual) will be examined; then mimicry of parental authority (by Jill, and to a smaller extent by George and Ann); and finally the ultimate failure of the camp, because of the inherent juvenility of all involved.

\textit{PARENTAL INADEQUACY}

None of the adult characters in \textit{The Mangrove Summer} are particularly impressive or likeable. George’s father is only seen at a distance, described as an easygoing, happy-go-lucky man, who was unemployed, and often provided food for his family by going into the bush and shooting or trapping animals. “Everybody liked Dad. He wasn’t like other kids’ fathers.” When war is declared, he joins up immediately, seeing it as a chance to redeem himself socially. His wife accuses him of being drunk, but he has made the decision consciously, and replies: “The army’s going to make a man of me!”\textsuperscript{704} His behaviour is viewed as irresponsible by other men, who think that as a father, he has an obligation to stay home and care for his family. When he goes missing, they are all concerned, except Jill, who “stuck the photo of him in uniform over the mantelpiece, but the lemon-squeezer army hat made him look different.”\textsuperscript{705} George’s mother is not a particularly strong or reliable character either. She does make the effort to relocate herself and her children to the Bay, where they might be more safe from a possible invasion, but then she fails to reassure them of their safety. Feeling vulnerable, they strike out on their own. She also fails to rescue the dog Brown, who escapes on their way to the Bay (symbolic of her inability to predict or prevent the escape of her children). George doesn’t really respect any of the
members of his family: “Mum always listened to Jill because she was the eldest. It wasn’t fair. If Mum hit me Jill always used it as an excuse to join in. I hated them all.”

Aunty Iris is a stronger character, but only in terms of selfishness and prejudice. She fights with George’s mother about conscientious objectors, calls Mrs Wheeler and her family “‘conchies’” and refuses to let the children eat the food which Mrs Wheeler has given them. Ann is reduced to tears by this snide behaviour, because Mrs Wheeler had been her mother’s best friend. Aunty Iris is perhaps Jill’s role model, for she too is judgmental, vindictive and cruel. Aunt Iris also influences Jill with her self-pitying attitude, trying to incite guilt in others for a selfish purpose. On Christmas morning she tries to shame the children into bringing her a cup of tea in bed, claiming: “‘Nobody thinks of me at Christmas... Nobody loves me’”.

Uncle Paul is a difficult guardian, in that he doesn’t know how to bring up his daughter without a wife to help him, and is bad tempered with his sons. According to Ann, a neighbour at home is “‘always telling Dad how he should bring up a daughter’”. George reflects: “Uncle Paul always said it’d be easier to have three boys, and he tried to get Ann to wear the same clothes and to do the same things as Graham and Derek. She said she didn’t mind.” But secretly Ann wants to be respected as a female, not as an honorary male. She would rather be like Anne Shirley from Anne of Green Gables, who is both tomboyish and feminine. Uncle Paul is also “‘hard on’” Graham: “‘Mum said it wasn’t easy for a man, bringing up children, so she said we had to understand Uncle Paul when he lost his temper.’”

Contrasted with the actual weaknesses of adults, are perceived weaknesses. The children, encouraged by Jill, become convinced that a Japanese invasion is imminent and the adults will not be able to protect them. The Mounted Rifles (local militia) do not seem serious about the threat: the children catch them “pig hunting and boozing”, and there aren’t enough of them to provide sufficient protection for the Bay community. George explains: “When I think about it now, I realise until then we had been playing with the idea that the Japs were coming. But from that moment when Jill said she had counted the Mounted Rifles... we were convinced by Jill that they were coming, and that nobody could do anything about it.” All of the children believe that “we needn’t expect much help from the adults. We had to find somewhere to hide.” Jill writes a note for her mother before they leave: “It said we were going to hide from the Japanese, that we were scared the grownups weren’t going to look after us, so we were going to look after ourselves and come back when it was all safe. She made us all sign the note.” This is significant
because it shows that all of the children, at least at the beginning of the adventure, accept the inadequacy of adults, and are willing to place themselves in Jill’s hands.

**MIMICRY OF PARENTAL AUTHORITY**

Jill is a fascinating character, quite unique in the history of young-adult literature, because it is uncommon to portray a child in such a negative role. She is almost as terrifying as Herbert Muskie from Gee’s *The Fat Man*, or Carmody Braque from Mahy’s *The Changeover*. In some ways she is more dangerous still, because she essentially has an adult’s obsession with power, but a child’s lack of common sense in how to use power. She is established as a dangerous bully at the beginning of the novel, when she learns that her father is a prisoner of war. She attacks her little brother Jimmy, because he starts crying in unison with his mother:

“You should be happy!” She swung on Jimmy... “Dad’s alive!” Jill shouted at him, but he cried all the more.... Jill thought it unpatriotic to cry. “Our father’s alive, and you cry,” she said. “That’s just what Adolf Hitler wants.”

The mother tries to protect Jimmy from Jill, telling her to leave him alone, explaining that “he’s too little to understand” some things, but Jill does not respect her mother’s authority. George reports: “Jill didn’t like being told [what to do]. She wanted to do the right thing always, but never seemed able to please Mum. I understood that and it didn’t annoy me. Jimmy was Mum’s favourite, and nothing was going to alter that.” George almost pities his sister: “It was as if being a Girl Guide, never telling a lie, and all the rest of it wasn’t enough, and Jill couldn’t understand it. She’d keep on trying, and Mum would keep on being the same.” He believes in hindsight that Jill’s attitude changed for the worse the day that her father was taken away to war. Jill didn’t cry when her train pulled away, “and she saluted as Dad disappeared. Jill never cried at anything then. Poor Jill. Anyway, I realise now that’s when she must have decided she couldn’t trust Mum any longer, that it was a good chance for her to take over the family and look after us until Dad came home.” This sounds like altruistic motives, but the reader soon becomes convinced that it is just an excuse for Jill to exert her power over those smaller or weaker than herself. She tries to convince the other children - George, Jimmy, Ann, Graham and Derek, of the danger of invasion, and the need for them to put themselves entirely in her hands: “If the
Japs come,' said Jill, ‘we’re finished. I’ve been listening to the news, and it’s all bad.’ She sounded pleased.”718 She demonstrates cunning in protecting her power-base, by trying to separate the children from the adult world. When Ann wants to reveal the map they found of the bay (which they suspect has been drawn by a spy in league with the Japanese) to George’s mother and Aunty Iris, Jill “swung on her so suddenly that Ann stepped back against me... Jill hissed ‘Don’t you dare!’”719 She knows that her mother’s involvement will only weaken her authority.

George understands that running away with Jill is a bad idea but he is still frightened of the Japanese, and by examples of war-related horror, like his cousin Rod, who has just returned, badly burned, from the war, after being shot down in a plane. Ann shows more insight: “‘Don’t forget... Jill wants to be boss. That’s why she wants us to hide away on our own. She’ll be able to order us around as much as she likes.’”720 And this is the line which the reader is encouraged to take as well. Jill is not really concerned to help protect the lives of her siblings and cousins; she is simply addicted to authority.

**JUVENILITY**

Initially the children find the camp fun, like the characters in Edith Howes’ Silver Island, because of the freedom it allows them - they can eat, sleep, swim whenever they choose. In Silver Island, Enid takes on the role of mother, Jim as father, and Wuffles as baby - in The Mangrove Summer a similar division occurs, but it excludes Jill, who has no mothering instinct. Ann takes on the role of mother instead, protecting Jimmy and Derek, soothing them when upset, and letting Jimmy eat raw dough out of the bowl, the way his mother used to: “Suddenly I noticed I was missing Mum too. Ann was still holding Jimmy. ‘Not you too’, she said.”721 There is a Peter-Pan syndrome at work here: the idea that a group of children on their own requires a mother figure as a necessity to their emotional well-being. In Barrie’s Peter Pan, Captain Hook is jealous of the Lost Boys, and tries to force Wendy to be his mother, proving that grown men need comforting too. In the stage version of Peter Pan, Hook is traditionally played by the same actor who plays Mr Darling, so the symbolic message is that some men see their wives and daughters as potential mothers. If this is an Oedipal complex, then Jill represents the opposite: an Electra complex. She resents her mother while trying to imitate her father. She hardly ever responds to the others with sympathy, and picks on Jimmy in particular, making him work too hard, and punishing him cruelly: “When Jimmy didn’t clean [the punt] properly, once, Jill wouldn’t let him have any
The withdrawal of food is the ultimate punishment for a growing boy. When Jimmy starts wetting his bed, and crying in the night, she growls at him, tells him he could stop it if he wanted to, and hits him, which is a stereotyped bad-father response.

Ann and George start going to lengths to protect Jimmy, aware that the situation is getting out of hand. But Jimmy’s misery persists, and he begins to show signs of serious disturbance: “Every day or two, we’d come in and find him crying under his blanket, and he wet himself every night.” Jimmy and Derek, who are both too young to cope with Jill’s abuse, begin to play a game called “‘Talking to the baby’” at a nearby graveyard. “‘They take it in turns to be the baby,’” and complain about their problems, especially after Jill has been cruel to them.

Eventually all the children find the situation unpleasant. Jill makes them work harder and harder, even though they don’t need to: “Jill said we needed plenty to do, or we’d be at each other’s throats. She sounded like Mum being grumpy, more and more.” George explains: “It had been fun, a lot of it, running away up the Mangrove River, but now it was hard work. We weren’t allowed to swim most of the time and even going to the orchard became just another job on Jill’s list.” As in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, the emphasis on work ruins the excitement of self-government. In *Animal Farm*, the animals soon realise that life is actually worse than it was before, despite their so-called freedom: “Throughout that year the animals worked even harder than they had worked in the previous year…. There were times when it seemed to the animals that they worked longer hours and fed no better than they had done in Jones’s day.”

There are strong hints of William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* too, in the way that the new society breaks down into cruelty, and ends tragically with the death of the weakest member. When Jimmy’s body is found, and the children return to the Bay, Jill joins the others in crying “for Jimmy” and tells her mother that it was her fault. “Mum just cried and said Jill had meant well. Somehow, it seemed everybody’s fault Jimmy had died, and it was strange, Jill wasn’t the boss any longer, just one of us again.”

George’s main grief in leaving the Bay is that he feels “the family was broken up”, meaning he won’t see his cousins again. The only positive aspect of the ending is that the family is reunited with Brown, the family dog, who went missing at the beginning of the novel. Brown keeps whining in the car on the way home. George notices that his mother is crying again. She tells him: “‘It’s all right... He’s looking for Jimmy. He’ll get used to it.’” Perhaps unrealistically, the mother seems to accept Jimmy’s death as naturally as she accepted leaving Brown behind, earlier.
Lasenby has moved on from *The Lake*, where adults are potential abusers of children. Here children are capable of being equally corrupt. Jill, a child, effectively causes the death of her brother, through her striving for power, her bossiness, intolerance and cruelty. Jill behaves as if she were an adult, when she lacks an adult’s common-sense and ability to feel compassion for those weaker than herself. *The Mangrove Summer* could easily have been discussed in Chapter Three, The Survival Story, because like *Silver Island*, and *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane*, it involves children learning to survive on their own, and forming new structures within their camp. Peacocke’s division between authority and responsibility is mirrored in this novel, because Jill desires authority, but does not understand the concept of responsibility: a dangerous combination.

However, *The Mangrove Summer* is a much more grim novel than its predecessors, because of its focus on the weakness of adults (which always makes a reader feel insecure), the horrors of war, the corruption of children, and the ever-present and realistic possibility for an adventure to end in tragedy.

---

**DEAD MAN’S HEAD**

This is the first novel in the popular ‘Seddon Street Gang’ trilogy, which, despite being set during the 1930s Depression, are in a lighter vein than the previous two works. The Seddon Street Gang: Denny, Polly, Pete, Joe, and Bob, “inhabit childhood’s mildly anarchic world (adults hover peripherally) yet their experiences teach belief in oneself and the value of friendship.” Dead Man’s Head has no general plot structure; it is more a collection of vignettes, isolated adventures in the children’s lives, many of which resemble Lasenby’s memories of his own childhood. The setting is Waharua, a fictional representation of the town Waharoa where Lasenby was brought up. He recalls: “We played in the dairy factory until the men chased us out, then we played on the railway lines until the station master chased us; we stole apples and plums and were chased again. We spent our lives running away.” Lasenby’s delight in his memories of getting into trouble is reflected in this
novel, and even more so in the third, *The Battle of Pook Island*, where many adults envy the children their exciting lives. There is no feeling of forced maturity in Lasenby’s work, contrasted with earlier novels like Mona Tracy’s *Rifle and Tomahawk* in which the impetus is for children protagonists to grow up as quickly as possible. Lasenby’s attitude in this trilogy is more like Esther Glen’s, that childhood should be celebrated, because on the whole it allows freedom from responsibility.

As in Lasenby’s earlier books, there is a darker theme in the background to his celebration of childhood, which involves unfairness, on the part of parents, teachers, policemen, and the other adults in the community. The Depression was a time of prejudice, especially towards Maori, but also towards children, and this is shown in the case of Polly (half-Maori), who lives with her widowed pakeha father, and “runs wild” with the boys from the Seddon Street Gang. Polly is the subject of much speculation and disapproval among the town’s adults; the unfairness of this is slightly compensated by Polly’s exceptionally nice father, who loves and respects her. The other children are treated more typically by their parents, frequently not believed or listened to, and often beaten. These small unfairnesses are gathered into one monstrous example at the end, where Denny’s father has an accident and is taken to hospital. Denny’s aunt, Joyce, arrives to care for him while his parents are away, but she has no experience with children, cannot deal with the situation at all, and treats Denny appallingly.

Accordingly, the main themes which will be discussed are: parent-child relations; parental substitutes (such as Denny’s Aunty Joyce); community authority figures (parents, teachers, neighbours - how they relate to the children, and how the children see them); and sibling relations (in this case between the members of the gang).

**PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS**

Polly’s father, Mr Kennedy, similar to his namesake in *The Lake*, is extremely likeable; he is a sort of Atticus Finch character (from *To Kill a Mockingbird*): understanding, wise, generous, sympathetic. Polly is not averse to lying to adults - she tells Mrs Price that Denny is sick after eating acorns, when they have in fact been smoking swagger’s tobacco, but she never lies to her father. She tells him the truth about cigarettes, confesses to locking Old Whistler, the station manager, in his own goods shed, and Mr Kennedy just laughs. His conviction is that “Polly’s got no mother to tell her things so she’s got to learn how to look after herself,” so he never reprimands her, obviously believing that children learn best
by making their own mistakes. This method works well: Mr Kennedy has the best relationship with his daughter, out of all the Waharua parents: “Polly always told him the truth”.733

Denny and Polly often compare parents, both exaggerating the extremes - Denny because he likes to complain, and Polly because she is secretly proud of her father:

“He has to get up, light the fire, and bring me a cup of tea in bed. Then he’s got to warm my clothes on the rack, and I get dressed in front of the stove with its doors open while he gets my breakfast and feeds the chooks.”734

By contrast Denny has to “‘wash in cold water, and brush my hair, and make the toast.’” The other boys have similar experiences to Denny. Polly’s explanation: “‘that’s because you’ve got mothers to put up with!’”735 Significantly, Polly’s attitude towards mothers changes during The Waterfall, when she begins to be curious about her own mother, and how she resembles her.

Not every character is defined by their parent or vice versa. Polly’s arch-enemy, Catherine Campbell, has a nice father, who hides the gang from capture at the factory, because he feels he has something in common with them, sharing their love for machinery. Polly says that she feels sorry “‘for him having a daughter like Catherine.’”736 In The Battle of Pook Island, we find Catherine has her own troubles, involving her fundamentally religious mother.

While Mr Kennedy is an almost idealised father, the Prices are decidedly more average. Denny’s father is a fairly kind man, who lets swaggers sleep on their porch, even though his wife thinks they will be “‘murdered in our beds,’”737 but he is also strict, in contrast to his wife. When he forbids his son to go to the movies, Denny gives in easily, and Lasenby comments: “Denny would have tried whining harder if it had been his mother.”738 Like Denny, the other boys accept beatings and various unfairnesses from their fathers, while trying half-heartedly to manipulate their mothers. This was a common attitude of New Zealand boys during the 1930s.

**PARENTAL SUBSTITUTES**

At the end of Dead Man’s Head Denny’s father is hurt in an accident; he goes into hospital, and his wife moves to Hamilton to be near him. Consequently Aunty Joyce arrives to “look
after" her brother’s children. She never bothers to explain to Denny what happened to his father, and doesn’t show him any kind of sympathy. Instead, like an adult version of Jill from *The Mangrove Summer*, she concentrates on bullying Denny. After days of beatings and continuous verbal abuse, he finally cracks, and locks himself in the back shed to get away from her: “Suddenly it was all too much. He thought his father dead. His mother had gone. He didn’t want another hiding. ‘Go home, you old hag!’ he screamed.” Aunty Joyce tries to starve him out, but Polly feeds him in the night, and eventually she resorts to trickery. She pretends that his mother is ringing with news about his father, and promises not to hit him if he comes out. “It’ll be costing your mother a fortune.... It’s a toll call,” she adds, trying to make him feel guilty about his mother wasting money. When he does emerge she beats him savagely, with a stick. The language is frighteningly explicit.

“You lied,” he said, and she seemed to go mad and hit him with her fists. “You lied.” He couldn’t feel her hitting him any more. His mouth was bleeding, he could taste blood, and a voice somewhere kept saying, “You lied”. When she slumped into a chair and cried, he fumbled his way to his bed.

An aunt being abusive to a small boy whose father has been badly injured, is shocking. The reader gets the feeling Denny is lucky she didn’t kill him, seeing as she was so uncontrollably angry. Uncle Ted rescues Denny, having probably been summoned by Mr Kennedy. He refuses to take sides in the dispute; in fact he orders Denny to be polite and say goodbye to Aunty Joyce before he leaves. With dreadful irony, Denny says “Goodbye Aunty Joyce... thank you for looking after me.” This seems unfair too, on Uncle Ted’s part. As protector of his nephew, he should have reprimanded his sister for her abominable behaviour, rather than forcing Denny to thank her for something she has clearly failed to do, that is to look after him.

On a similar note, Polly is made to apologise to Aunty Joyce for hitting her in the backside with acorns. Polly admits she “wasn’t sorry... not really, but Dad told me she’s just no good with kids. He reckons she probably means well but she’s got no idea. She’s got no children of her own.” Perhaps Aunty Joyce is resentful of her brother’s being married with children. But she does get on well with Betty, who is her informer. Does she prefer girls, or is she simply united by meanness to Betty?
The Seddon Street gang treat their neighbours with less respect than their parents, knowing that they will not be punished by other adults. The worst that can happen is that their crimes will be reported back home; then they will get punished by their fathers. Because of this relative lack of fear, they behave quite badly to other adults. They refer to Denny’s neighbour, Mr Clark as “‘the murderer’” because he is strange and sullen. When he kills himself, they are all shocked, unable to believe that an adult would do such a thing, and guilty about having thought so badly of him. Polly’s father is forced to explain: “‘Mr Clark was a victim of the Great War.... Lots of men went mad with the shelling and their mates being blown to bits beside them. They shot them for being cowards, the poor devils, and all the time they were just sick, driven out of their minds.’” After Mr Clark’s suicide, the gang cease to refer to him as “‘the murderer’” and feel rather sorry for him.

The teacher, Mr Walsh, is like Mr Kennedy from The Lake: responsible and understanding. He also believes that it is important to treat children like responsible beings, capable of looking after each other, so he asks Polly to keep an eye on Denny and not let him blow himself up. This is similar to Mr Kennedy’s advice to Ruth about Lisa in The Lake - encouraging children to take responsibility for their peers.

Waharua is full of prejudice of various kinds. At the beginning, the gang see Mrs Welsh “refereeing a game of footy, National versus Labour, between the farm kids whose parents voted National and the kids whose fathers worked in the factory and wanted Labour to get in and fix the Depression.” In this small town, social categories are important - children are divided by the political beliefs of their parents, and also by their race.

Racism is prevalent in the town. Mr Nudd calls Polly a “‘half-caste bitch’”. Aunty Joyce calls her something similar, causing Polly to back away “big eyes staring”. Aunty Joyce tries to prohibit Denny from seeing Polly, and says disapprovingly: “‘You mean the Maoris have moved into Seddon Street.’”

The Kennedy’s neighbour Mrs Packman thinks Polly is “‘running wild with the boys’” because her father is not disciplining her well enough. Mrs Packman says confidently: “‘That Polly Kennedy, she’ll go to the bad... What can you expect? Her mother had more than a touch of the tar brush, and the girl will end up going back to the mat, I’ll be bound.’”

Mrs Pedlar, the Sunday School teacher is also concerned about Polly “‘running wild’” and tries to discuss the matter with Mr Kennedy, who tells her to “‘mind her own bloody
Mrs Pedlar responds by demonstrating a metaphor to her Sunday School pupils. She ties “a knot in a young sapling growing behind the hall” and says: “If you’re crooked when you’re young, you’ll grow up as twisted as this tree’s going to be!” She almost certainly means this as a message to Polly, who is unmoved. Polly gets her own back on Mrs Pedlar by informing the Sunday School that her father thinks war is wrong. Although Mrs Pedlar tries to convince the children that this attitude is “wicked”, they are all infected with Polly’s anti-patriotic sentiment, and none of them sing the hymn.

The gang’s parents (with the exception of Mr Kennedy) treat their children reasonably on the whole, but sometimes unfairly. They are liberal beaters, preferring to punish first and ask questions later. When the gang is falsely accused of smashing some cups, “Denny, and Pete, and Joe got hidings. Bob’s mother gave him a licking with her switch, and he got a hiding from his father as well... Polly was questioned by Mr Kennedy, but he didn’t hit her.” Polly claims smugly: “Dad’s never even smacked me.... Well, he did once, but I cried, and he nearly cried, too.”

Denny is jealous of Polly not being beaten, and sees it as an example of sexism: “Betty never gets hidings either... It’s not fair being a boy. You get hidings all the time.” Ironically, hidings don’t seem to have much effect on preventing Denny’s bad behaviour. Mr Kennedy “reckons thrashing Denny just makes him all the more determined.”

The gang thinks Mrs Pedlar is to blame for telling the police that they smashed the cups. They are outraged, because although they accept being punished for things they have done, it is outrageously unfair to be falsely accused. One is reminded of the example in J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan, where Peter reaches out a hand to help Captain Hook, and Hook bites him. Peter is stunned, helpless with the unfairness of it. Barrie comments: “Every child is affected thus the first time he is treated unfairly. All he thinks he has a right to when he comes to you to be yours is fairness. After you have been unfair to him he will love you again, but will never afterwards be quite the same boy.” Lasenby seems to be promoting a similar theory, that unfairness is far worse for children than for adults - it affects them more deeply.

Many adults during this era did not consider children as having the same rights to fairness or justice, and Mr Kennedy is the only one who opposes the attitude. He actually argues with the policeman who investigates the cup-smashing, informing him: “If Polly says they didn’t break any cups, they didn’t.” Constable Heath replies: “You can’t take a child’s word against a grown-up’s.... The other parents are all giving their kids a good thrashing. They’ve got to learn.” Mr Kennedy protests: “Kids have a right to a fair business.”
hearing, like anyone else,’” and is offered in reply the absurd reasoning: “Isn’t it better to kick a kid’s behind now, rather than have them go wrong?” Constable Heath thinks that even if they turn out not to be guilty, then there’s no harm done: “Look at me! I had more thrashings than feeds as a kid.”758 And of course he is the best example of someone who doesn’t have a proper sense of justice.

SIBLING RELATIONS

Following the example of Jill in The Mangrove Summer, children can also be guilty of unfairness. Denny’s sister Betty is a tell-tale who delights in getting him into trouble. Consequently Denny resents his sister, and enjoys scaring her with bad behaviour or by trying to blow things up. He enjoys giving her a fright, because it “served her right. She always told on him.”759 When Denny is being kept home to clean up, he tries to sneak away, “but Betty called his mother, and he had to clean out the back shed as well.”760 Interestingly, their mother doesn’t approve of Betty’s penchant for telling-tales, and reprimands her for it, much as Hilda’s teacher Mac does to Edith in Tales Out of School, which was also set in the same period. Evidently ‘dobbing in’ was not as popular in the 1930s as it is today (when members of society are encouraged to ‘dob in’ their neighbours for misdemeanours such as benefit fraud). When Denny tells his mother about teasing Old Whistler, she advises him not to tell his father, and realising that Betty might blab, says: “I know what you were thinking. You just keep that tongue of yours still, my girl.”761 When Betty suggests that Denny “should get a good hiding”, her mother replies: “You watch out you don’t get one yourself, my lady.”762

In contrast to Denny’s less than affectionate relationship to his sister, is his membership of the gang, which is a kind of alternative sibling group. The children band together out of choice, for strength and comfort, in opposition to the unfairness of the world. They are picked on individually, because they are children (without power), but united they can get their own back. They bombard Mr Nudd with acorns, for insulting Polly. They bombard the Pedlars’ house with acorns during the night, in revenge for Mrs Pedlar’s lying to the police about their smashing of the cups. They collectively evade the pervert in the swimming pool. Polly is particularly supportive of Denny: at the end of the novel she gives him her best shanghai, plus his bantam chicken, knowing with unconscious wisdom that it will be good for him to have something to love, some creature to treat like his own child while he recovers from the abuse by his aunt.
CONCLUSION

Dead Man's Head works well as a vignette of New Zealand town-life in the 1930s, contrasting the pleasure of being young, active and troublesome, with the seriousness of an often unjust adult world, where punishment is arbitrary, pain is real, and most people are prejudiced in one way or another. Besides the too-good-to-be-true Mr Kennedy, parents are neither particularly good or bad, and children relate to them casually. Uncle Ted, a contradictory character who is developed further in The Waterfall, is both protective of children and ambivalent about abuse. Other adults, even authority figures such as policemen and Sunday School teachers, are hardly admirable. They attempt to occupy a high moral position, but are actually just as racist, and ageist as all the other members of the community. The gang make fun of their neighbour, Mr Clark, only to discover that he is also vulnerable, when he commits suicide.

There is no particular plot thread, except for Denny's father's accident (and subsequent death), and Polly's friendship with her father, which runs throughout the trilogy. There is also no message to the story and no role models for decency or maturity among the children. The gang are likeable but very child-like, indulging in petty misbehaviour and revenge. This offers the reader a refreshing opportunity to appreciate immaturity on its own terms.

---

THE WATERFALL

In the second novel in the Seddon Street series, the gang are sent out of town during the infantile paralysis (or polio) epidemic, and stay with Denny's Uncle Ted on his farm. This novel has a stronger plot, which involves a couple of mysterious swaggers, a valley behind the waterfall, and sheep rustling. The gang discover that Uncle Ted and his neighbours have formed a conspiracy to steal from Old Man Wilson, who is everybody's enemy, and give the stolen goods to the swaggers, who want to set up a farm in the secret valley. After some debate on the nature of justice, the children decide that it is right to support Uncle Ted, so they help protect his conspiracy from the police.
This discussion will focus on three themes: parental substitutes (Uncle Ted, as both sinister and benevolent figure); and maturity (Polly’s developing interest in her mother, sense of personal heritage; and the gang’s conception of personal justice).

**PARENTAL SUBSTITUTES**

The Seddon Street gang are all fairly pleased to be sent away from home (and school), and only Denny has a sense of unease, because his father is still in hospital, and his house is deserted; he is the only one not to have anyone to wave goodbye to, as opposed to Polly, who gets an exciting farewell from her father: “‘Dad said it’s going to be fun without me to boss him round,’” she tells the others. “‘But he’ll miss me. He doesn’t like being on his own.’”763 Being confident in the security of her home, Polly is better able to enjoy her adventure than Denny, who isn’t even sure whether he will have a home or parents to return to. He puts some of his emotional well-being in the hands of Uncle Ted, who becomes like a surrogate father for the time being. Unfortunately Ted, who does not have children of his own, seems unaware of his importance to his nephew. Denny is disappointed when Uncle Ted leaves food at the campsite, but doesn’t wait around to see them. Denny tells Polly: “‘It’s sort of as if he didn’t want us’”,764 and claims to have wanted to hear news of his father, but it more likely he is simply missing a male figure in his life.

Uncle Ted’s conspiracy with the swaggers, which he is forced to keep secret (because it is illegal), causes the gang some confusion, because they want to admire and trust him, but cannot reconcile trust with his sinister behaviour. He lies to the children almost immediately, pretending he does not know the swaggers that they meet on the road. Bob and Polly see through the deceit far quicker than Denny, who is more naturally trusting, especially of his uncle. “Denny saw Polly nod. Bob was usually right about grown-ups. He could think like them.”765 When the children get close to figuring out the truth, Uncle Ted doesn’t deny it, and says dangerously: “‘Them that asks no questions... isn’t told a lie.’”766

Denny keeps thinking about his father, and remembering that Uncle Ted was his only ally with regard to his father’s accident and the subsequent events: “‘Until Uncle Ted explained about his accident and what the hospital was doing, Denny had believed his father was dying. The grown-ups seemed to be keeping it a secret from him.’”767 Ted’s underlying honesty eventually forces him to confide the whole conspiracy to the children, and Denny, who initially wishes his father was there to tell him what to think, quickly makes his own decision that he will keep his uncle’s secret. Ted makes the whole gang
drink swagger's whisky, symbolic of their entering the conspiracy as well as being more adult (drinking alcohol), and they all promise not to tell.

Ted is ultimately a positive role-model for the children: reliable and wise. His farmhouse has a homely feel to it, even though he is a bachelor. They come home in the dark to what Polly calls "the friendly house": Tip the dog barks to greet them, "soft light from a kerosene lamp fell through the kitchen window", "A fire was snapping and chuckling to itself in the chimney", and there is the smell of roast meat and gravy. Lasenby has included all the basic elements of survival which appeal to children: light, warmth, shelter, food.

Ted proves to be a responsible guardian as well. Before he lets them go camping in the bush, he requires them to ring their parents and individually ask permission. He even makes them clean up before using the telephone, claiming: "Mothers can tell how you look by the sound of your voice over the telephone." Denny is influenced by Uncle Ted. He becomes quite serious about learning to cook and clean, wanting to grow into a man who can look after himself. He explains: "Uncle Ted says, if a man can't cook for himself, darn his own socks, and iron his own shirts, he's only got himself to blame if some woman gets her hooks into him and makes him marry her." All the children look up to Ted, referring to him as 'Uncle Ted' even though he's not their uncle, and frequently quoting things he has said. After he teaches them how to kill a sheep, they discuss the rights and wrongs of it: "Uncle Ted reckoned it's okay killing something if you're going to eat it,": says Denny. Bob counters: "He didn't say it makes it right.... He said it makes it easier." Uncle Ted is thus revealed to be a philosophical man, who probably shares Lasenby's personal abhorrence for wasting meat (shown by his shocking portrayal of the dark man in The Lake, slashing up a perfectly good deer carcass). Polly continues to quote the sayings of Uncle Ted right into the third book of the trilogy. She tells the others: "Uncle Ted says if you're going to kill something, do it quick and do it clean." "MATURITY"

A sub-plot to The Waterfall is Polly's curiosity about her dead mother, perhaps sparked by being away from her father for the first time. Ted's neighbour, Mrs Tuner tells Polly that she resembles her mother: "You've got her mouth and her chin." Polly is pleased to hear this; she also starts to accept herself as a Maori more easily, almost to the extent of
forgetting she is part Pakeha too. Mrs Tuner, who is also part Maori (only she looks more pakeha), warns Polly to stay away from Old Man Wilson, who is prejudiced towards both Maoris and women, especially young ones. There is some hint of him being a sexual predator, of the kind Ruth encounters in *The Lake*, but this being a more light-hearted novel, the consequences of Mrs Tuner’s hint are not encountered. Polly successfully avoids Old Man Wilson.

Polly’s friendship with Denny resembles the closeness of Hannah and Johnny in Lasenby’s other young-adult novel, *The Conjuror*, which was published two years earlier. Hannah, who is a Maori girl in a futuristic New Zealand where white-skinned males are discriminated against, becomes close friends with the pakeha boy Johnny. Polly’s affection for Denny, and her protectiveness of him, which she proves when they are lost in the bush together, and again in *The Battle of Pook Island*, show that she is a similar character to Hannah, who saves Johnny’s life in *The Conjuror*. Interracial relationships are mentioned again when Polly tells the others a story about a boy who falls asleep in a classroom and dreams continuously until he is woken by a girl in a mirror. It is the story of Polly’s parents. Her father “‘was the boy who slept in school, and her mother was the girl in the mirror, the girl in the desk beside him.”

While Polly is maturing, in that she is taking more of an interest in her identity and how she resembles her parents and ancestors, the rest of the gang are exploring issues to do with loyalty and justice, triggered by Uncle Ted’s attitude towards Old Man Wilson, whom he likens to the ginger tomeat who had been hanging around the chickens: “At least [the tomeat] doesn’t pretend. He’s a bit like Old Satan [the bull]. That scoundrel gets more cunning every day, but he never pretends to be anything but an old dragon.” Ted maintains that the most unpleasant thing about Old Man Wilson is that people like him “‘pretend to be honest, but they’re twice as dangerous as any old bull or tiger.” Old Man Wilson’s crime is that he “‘stayed home and made a fortune out of the war.” This explanation is repeated by several characters, showing that hatred of people who made money out of the First World War was widespread during the 1930s. Old Man Wilson “lent money to the returned soldiers on farms and waited for them to go broke. When they couldn’t pay him back, he foreclosed their mortgages, took the farms off them.” It is common feature of New Zealand literature in general that characters like Old Man Wilson do not deserve sympathy, when they get ripped-off in turn. There are strong similarities in *The Year of the Shining Cuckoo*, where Raine and Johnny decide not to turn in Luke Reihana for stealing Mr Coleman’s horse because Mr Coleman allegedly exploited Luke in a previous situation.
Old Man Wilson is also despised simply for being unpleasant. Polly’s father dislikes him for being prejudiced against his late wife. Polly reports: “‘Dad says lots of rich people are really criminals, only they know how to use the law. Dad says they’re worse than some people who actually break the law.’”778 Polly uses her father’s example to come to an intriguing moral conclusion of her own: “‘We don’t like eels, so it’s all right to kill them. Making huts in Old Man Wilson’s maize and firing acorns on his roof, that’s okay because we hate him. But it’d be wrong to do it to Uncle Ted.’”779

The children are delighted when Old Man Wilson, looking for his lost sheep on Uncle Ted’s property, is chased by the bull and stranded up a tree. Only Denny isn’t convinced, and he thinks to himself “that he was sorry for Old Man Wilson”.780 He says: “‘It’s just it’s all wrong... I wish Dad was here. He’d know what to do.’”781 However, like Polly, he forms his own conclusions under pressure, and personally decides that he should defend his uncle to the policeman. When the trip-gate is found washed down the river, indicating the conspiracy, Denny instinctively responds; he tells the policeman that it was his raft: “He didn’t think. He just stepped forward. ‘It’s ours,’ he heard himself call.”782

Uncle Ted summarises Denny’s own attitude, when he explains everything. He admits he broke the law, and like Polly’s father claims: “‘But you can’t always get justice by sticking to the law. It’s got to be interpreted... We helped our old mates. That’s justice. And what we did to Old Man Wilson, that’s justice too.’”783

**CONCLUSION**

*The Waterfall* extends an interest in principles of fairness which Lasenby introduces in *Dead Man’s Head*. Here the issue is natural justice, which is often against rather than with the law, and involves loyalty to friends, and united opposition to enemies. While Polly discovers an interest in her heritage as a Maori, caused by being away from her father, Denny discovers that he is bereft of family. His father is ill, his mother away, and Uncle Ted preoccupied with his conspiracy, leaving Denny alone, with only the companionship of his friends to guide and comfort him. It is a movement towards maturity that Denny makes when he defends his uncle against the policeman and Old Man Wilson - the first decision he makes on his own. Although not quite a hero, Ted is nevertheless respectable: admirable for his values, and likeable for his eccentricities.
THE BATTLE OF POOK ISLAND

The third novel in the Seddon Street gang trilogy is both more serious and more humorous than the first two. At the beginning the tone is like the end of Dead Man’s Head: bleak and depressing. Denny’s father dies, but because nobody thinks to explain it to him, he remains bemused, unable to begin the grieving process. The other children, especially Polly, alarmed at his disturbed behaviour, attempt to help him; he is finally rescued again by Uncle Ted, who turns up suddenly, and explains that his father is dead. Then the novel changes theme entirely, and tells the exciting story of the fort which the gang make on an island, and their ingenious attempts to recapture it once it has been taken over by a rival gang.

Two themes warrant discussion: death (the effects of bereavement on children and adults, but especially the consequences of not explaining things to children properly); and juvenility (the Seddon Street gang’s ability to enjoy their childhood to its fullest potential; and jealousy by various adults, and Catherine Campbell).

DEATH

Denny’s father’s death is not a secret in that it is deliberately kept, but rather secret by negligent omission, but the results are the same on children. Mahy demonstrates a hatred of the secret (shown in The Tricksters, and The Catalogue of the Universe), which proves that the secret is often more dangerous than the unpleasant truth it hides. In The Lake, Ruth suffers excessively after her father’s death, because her mother never explains that he has died. Ruth, like Denny, half believes he is still alive and may come back one day.

An influential writer of stories about the New Zealand family, Ruth Park, uses this theme too, in her novel Pink Flannel, published in 1955. When Jenny’s Aunt Ailie elopes with Donald Hana, Aunt Francie tells Jenny that “Aunt Ailie’s just gone on a holiday.” Jenny the adult narrator comments:

This was one of the cruellest fictions of my childhood. Some children, even, whose parents had died were told that they had gone on a holiday, and those were left wondering for years why they didn’t come back. I suppose the kind and misguided
relatives thought that ‘the kiddies’ would forget’. But they don’t, and the mystery is worse than the fact.\textsuperscript{784}

Jenny doesn’t mourn the absence of Ailie properly. She never even cries, because she doesn’t understand: “There was only a deep dumb grieving, the first real sorrow of my life.”

A “deep dumb grieving” is a perfect expression for what Denny suffers, after he returns from Uncle Ted’s farm, and finds his house “cold and strange” with the blinds drawn and no one to meet him. At his Aunty Florence and Uncle Dugald’s place, he finds everyone serious and grim, and assumes that he has done something wrong. Everyone else is crying, but Denny is too frightened to ask why. Other people tell him: “‘You’ve got to be a man and look after your mother and sister now.’”\textsuperscript{785} He keeps hearing people say: “‘The funeral’s on Monday,’” but “nobody thought to ask if he understood.”\textsuperscript{786} He does not cry, and nobody seeks to comfort him.

Instead of receiving sympathy from his family, he is either ignored or treated meanly. Adults seem to enjoy hurting Denny, especially when he puts himself out of their reach. His cousin Jane “found him asleep behind the bags of flour and sugar in the storeroom and gave him a good poke with the broom.... Denny woke and felt the misery begin again.”\textsuperscript{787} The problem is that the misery is not clean; it is not grief. Denny thinks of it as guilt, for something he has done wrong, which nobody will explain: “It would have been all right if Uncle Ted was there. He’d tell him what was wrong. Or he’d tell him off properly if he was angry.”\textsuperscript{788} He misses his friends too, but they have been turned away by Jane.

This situation is obviously unhealthy, and offers the suggestion that the pakeha method of dealing with death is not a good one. Lasenby summarises:

His mother was too withdrawn in her own misery, and nobody else thought to explain to him what had happened, how his father had died.... His father’s body had been taken from Waikato Hospital to the church by the undertaker. Nobody thought of letting Denny and Betty see their father. People didn’t do that. The bodies were always seen at tangis, but that was Maoris. Through a blur of days that always seemed cold, Denny believed his father was still alive, that some day he would come back.\textsuperscript{789}
Gilderdale comments that novels “of the late 1970s which have children as their central characters indicate that the pakeha has much to learn from the Maori way of life. These stories show that... the extended family is more supportive than the tightly-knit ‘nuclear’ one, and that Maori attitudes towards age, death, and mourning are sympathetic and desirable.” The reader cannot help but think that if Denny had seen his father in the coffin, during the funeral, there would have been no possible confusion left to him.

Instead, Denny requires a rescuer, who again is played by Uncle Ted. He appears abruptly, and explains everything. Ted tells him that his father has died, and is “‘buried in that grave down the cemetery. He’s never coming back, Denny.’” This proves to be what Denny needed; he cries, but begins to feel better. Ted also explains why nobody else told him the truth, because they all forgot. As with Aunty Joyce, Ted declines to take sides against the family for their lack of thoughtfulness.

The effect of death on adults in the book is different from the effect on children. Adults are shown to be equally vulnerable, but deal with death by sealing it up, into themselves, not expressing it or asking for comfort from their friends or family. Dugald regrets the absence of his brother Ted, “here one minute and gone the next”, and finds making arrangements for the funeral so depressing that he starts getting into the whisky. When the gang go up to see Uncle Dugald, they find him drunk and uncommunicative. “‘He misses Denny’s father,’” says Polly. “‘Dad says they were good friends.’” After Denny wets himself at school, he is taken home by Polly, who tells Mrs Price what happened. Mrs Price just cries, unable to cope with her own grief, let alone someone else’s. Polly makes her a cup of tea, and she slowly pulls herself together enough to find Denny another pair of shorts.

The effect of death on Denny himself, after he understands it, is subtle and interesting. He begins to tell outrageous stories to the others, which he claims his father told him (and cannot therefore be challenged): “‘My father wouldn’t have told me if it wasn’t true,’” Denny says, as justification for his first tall-story, “and he believed it himself ever after.” Later he tells more lies about his father, claiming that he made a special rice pudding just for Denny, “‘with skin about three inches thick and hardly any rice.’” None of the gang object to this: “They were used now to Denny’s stories about his father.” The rice-pudding reference reminds us of Polly’s father, who really does make rice puddings specially for his daughter. Denny wants his father to have loved him the way Mr Kennedy loves Polly, so he adjusts his memory to suit. He also becomes more assertive. When Mrs Cadwallader goes berserk, Denny understands perfectly - it probably reminds him of Aunty
Joyce: “‘She must have gone mad.... Grown-ups are like that.’” 796 He’s given up thinking of them as mature or rational.

The whole gang is curious about death, and its effect. Pete asks: “‘I wonder what it’s like not having a father?’” while looking at Polly “whose mother was dead”. 797 The answer is that those who have always been without a father or mother can’t imagine what it’s like to have one, or vice versa.

Denny’s various reactions trigger Polly into thinking about her mother, and questioning her father about death. She tells him that Denny has changed: “‘He used to be the one who was always getting into trouble. Now he’s scared in case things go wrong.’” Mr Kennedy answers: “‘It’s his father dying... He’s got to learn all over again that things will work out. Like you had to, when you were little.’” 798 She asks more questions about her mother, like why they moved to Waharua, and Mr Kennedy tells her that: “‘your mother wanted to get away from home. She said she wanted to get away from everyone knowing everything she did... she came from a big Maori family. Sometimes they live in each other’s pocket. Too close for your mother anyway.’” 799 Polly asks if her mother was a savage. Mr Kennedy says: “‘Of course not. Your mother was well-educated. You don’t have to be a Maori to be a savage. There’s plenty of white people I’d call savage.’” 800

Polly, more than the others, feels a responsibility for Denny because she feels as if they are in the same position, having both lost a parent. When she sees Denny walking to the cemetery in the night, she breaks her father’s rule of not going out alone, and follows him. “‘Denny needs me,’” she says aloud, intending to explain it to her father, even though he is not there. After a frightening search through the cemetery, she finds Denny, lying “face-down on a mound of earth and dead flowers. She called his name, knelt, put her arms around him, and cried. It had all been too much. Her mother’s grave was just over the next row. Polly was scared and tired, but she had found Denny.” 802 The scars of her mother’s death are obviously hidden deep in Polly, and her instinctive kindness to another in need is touching.

**JUVENILITY**

Lasenby tends to segregate his humorous books from his serious young-adult novels, but in this one he introduces a comic element by writing about juvenility, similar to Esther Glen’s use of it in her Kamahi books. The Seddon Street gang, rather than being miniature adults, often behave rather-childishly, and they are envied for this freedom. Many of the adults in
Waharua would like to be kids again, especially Mr Creed, Mr Cadwallader and Mr Harris. Other adults, under the guise of revenge, try to join in the juvenility, by playing along with them. Old Whistler, the gang’s ancient enemy from *Dead Man’s Head*, goes to considerable (and very immature) lengths to beat them at their own game. By lowering himself to that level, he is playing too, and he half enjoys it. The building of the mangonel (a type of catapult) brings out childish excitement in Bob Harris’s father (who helps him build it), and Mr Cadwallader, who designs it, and is desperate to have a chance at firing it. Mr Creed doesn’t know about the mangonel; he simply envies the children their natural exuberance: “Mr Creed sighed. He’d like to be wriggling through the plantation with the Seddon Street Gang.”

When he watches “the gang cut across his mad cow’s paddock and disappear into the ditch, he tells his wife mournfully: “‘They’re having fun.’” She asks him why he doesn’t grow up. He replies: “‘I wish I could grow down... Those kids have more fun than anyone else in Waharoa.’”

Jealousy is fresher in children than in adults, where it is also used for humorous effect. Catherine Campbell is jealous of Polly Kennedy, for having no mother and being allowed to “run wild” and play exciting games: “She’d like to be going down to the lake and paddling out to the island. It wasn’t fair, the way boys could do things. Polly Kennedy was allowed, but that was because she didn’t have a mother.” Catherine Campbell’s mother is very strict on her: “Mrs Campbell was a stern Presbyterian which was why Catherine went to the Dippers’ Sunday school. Her mother thought everything in the Bible was true, and she made Catherine learn bits off by heart to make her better.” But Catherine secretly regrets her lack of freedom. She “looked down at her polished black shoes and neat white socks. She wished she was running barefoot too,” with the Seddon Street gang. Because of Catherine’s lack of power, as a female with a suspicious mother, she is forced to use the horrendous boys Itchy Hickey and Scratchy Slattery to carry out her plans. After they capture Pook Island from the Seddon Street gang, Catherine soon realises that she hasn’t won after all, because Itchy and Scratchy take over the island for themselves. The final battle, which is almost cathartic for the entire trilogy, shows the evil-doers getting what they deserve. It is followed by a time of sober reflection. Both Pook Island itself, and the anger of all the children, whipped into feud, is washed away by the rain, and life continues as normal.
CONCLUSION

*The Battle of Pook Island* is an excellent conclusion to the themes and sub-plots which are raised in the first two books. Without tying up every loose thread (life does not work this way), Lasenby instead offers links to the earlier books, which are satisfying in reminding the reader how the novels are connected, while allowing the feeling that life goes on afterwards, and there will be new adventures for the Seddon Street gang in the future.

Unfairness, and issues to do with justice, which were raised in *Dead Man's Head* and *The Waterfall*, turn into a concentrated study in *The Battle of Pook Island*. Lasenby focuses on the negative effects of secrets on children - an unfairness of the worst kind. The effects of death are explored openly and frankly. Lasenby shows how different people react - adults retreat into personal grief, children tend to share their feelings with each other. Polly uses her own sense of bereavement as a cause of sympathy for Denny, because she knows how he feels. Finally, there is an adventure, the battle of Pook Island, which Lasenby describes with compelling enthusiasm. As in *Dead Man's Head*, it is satisfying to see children behaving like children, taking delight from the petty pleasures in life, such as revenge.

---

CONCLUSION TO LASENBY

Lasenby, like Gee, doesn’t believe in hiding the truth from children, no matter how unpleasant it might be. The subject-matter of his novel *The Lake* is sexual abuse (incest), which is controversial material for young-adult fiction even in the 1990s. *The Mangrove Summer* begins more pleasantly, as an adventure/boating story along the lines of Edith Howes’ *Silver Island*, or Isabel Maud Peacocke’s *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane*, but quickly becomes frightening, as the children’s camp disintegrates into a *Lord of the Flies* type nightmare.

All three books in the Seddon Street gang trilogy are set in small-town New Zealand, during the Depression of the 1930s. Unlike Gee’s *The Fat Man*, which is more of a social commentary - showing the Depression as a monstrous entity, overshadowing everything, Lasenby chooses to focus on the smaller griefs, delights and mischiefs of a group of
children, realistically oblivious to the political conditions of their world. Like the two books set in the 1930s from the Kotare series: Phyllis Garrard’s *Tales Out of School*, and Isabel Maud Peacocke’s *The Cruise of the Crazy Jane*, life is basically optimistic. Even if parents, teachers and other adults cannot be trusted, friends can. The main difference is in content, and tone. Lasenby does not patronise or preach, the way Garrard and Peacocke often do.

Unlike Mahy, Lasenby is not so interested in psychological conflict; instead his work is action-filled, involving geographical movement, and real acts of violence. While Gee’s work also shows considerable violence towards children, his prose style (often rather poetic, and showing elements of aesthetic design possibly stemming from the connection with television) means that the reader is constantly reassured of the fantasy of the story. Lasenby’s work is different - his historical novels show a truthfulness about the hard conditions of life, the poverty, the hunger, beatings, and betrayals, which is not softened by elaborate prose, and consequently sometimes painful to read. In some respect this makes him the most realist of all the authors described in this thesis.
CONCLUSION

The twenty-two books examined in this thesis cover 82 years of New Zealand young-adult fiction, from 1914 to 1996. This is a short time-span in comparison to other countries where there is a tradition of children's literature which dates back centuries. However, as Ruth Park comments: "One of the most marvellous things about New Zealand is the fact that you have only to knock on the door, and there you are in the past. Events have moved so fast that there is a curious sense of historical foreshortening." Therefore, 82 years is significant in New Zealand terms.

As might be expected from a historical survey of this type, there are characteristics in common over the entire range which are worth noting. Their persistence can probably be attributed to a strong New Zealand colonial tradition which continues to this day, as well as a substrate of Victorian heritage. The appearance of parental substitutes (like the teacher, the uncle, the old neighbour) is common to New Zealand young-adult fiction from any period. The extended family (especially aunts/uncles and grandparents) occurs frequently. Fathers are almost never given the same balance of attention that mothers are, and children are often shown as being responsible for looking after their younger siblings. All of these taken together reflect the fragmentation of the family in daily working life - the father working beyond the home, and the mother struggling with multiple tasks, without adult assistance.

Nevertheless the works polarise with respect to certain key issues which can be generalised here. Certain features are common to the early texts (especially those by Esther Glen, Mona Tracy, Isabel Maud Peacocke, Edith Howes, Phillis Garrard and Joyce West), which are missing from the recent ones. Family-life is generally more secure, except in the case of orphans, where the natural family is replaced by an adopted family (as in Satchell), which provides the necessary security. Many of the novels contain the formula of 'child becoming an adult', in which the impetus of the plot involves the growth of the protagonist into adulthood. Families are more strict in structure - females are usually dominated by their male family members (brothers, uncles and fathers). Discipline is taken more seriously as a concept - children have a responsibility to be well-behaved and dutiful to their families. Many of the early children's novels unconsciously betray the British origins of their genre -
there is a Victorian preoccupation with stereotypes: the greedy child, the child who talks too much, the dirty child who doesn’t keep its clothes clean, and so on.

Likewise, there are features common to the recent texts, which are rarely found in earlier ones. Gee, Mahy and Lasenby show families living less comfortably, in general. Class distinctions have faded away and been replaced with problems associated with poverty, and the stigma of the broken home. Issues of divorce and desertion appear, along with violence, child-abuse and incest. Families tend to be smaller in size, so focus of action, characterisation and theme are more concentrated. Maori characters become more prevalent, allowing the theme of Maori dislocation from past and tribe (as in Ron Bacon’s *Again the Bugles Blow*). The portrayal of female characters has changed, mirroring the real change in the role of New Zealand women over the century. There is a conflict of interest in what society expects of the modern woman - as a consequence their characters seem more preoccupied with the struggle of daily living, over-committed to family and work. Recent novels also show the traditional structure of the family undergoing radical shifts - the parents are no longer the protectors and authority figures, existing chiefly as mentors to the child-protagonists, but as characters in their own right, with personalities (and weaknesses). It is more common to read about children taking responsibility for their parents, rather than the other way round. Fantasy is more often used, but surprisingly not at the expense of realism. Gee and Mahy use fantasy not as escapism, but in order to explore more thoroughly the problems of ‘real life’.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this study is that several of the novels ostensibly deal with the same periods in New Zealand history, but because they were written at different times, take a totally different approach. Maurice Gee is famous for his development of “the historical novel grounded firmly in the present”. Three of his novels used here deal with times in which New Zealand was under great stress - one was set in the Depression and the other two in each of the World Wars. Lasenby also chooses historical settings. He wrote about the Second World War in *The Mangrove Summer*; and the 1930s Depression in the Seddon Street trilogy. In contrast, Kotare writers who produced their works during these times, ignored the troubles completely. This difference can possibly be attributed to their unwillingness to address real social concerns.

Mahy can be considered a realist in that she is prepared to tackle the problems of her era, which were avoided by other social commentators such as Neil Begg. Though she plays down personal violence, the reader is still conscious of the larger dangers of life, both physical and psychological. Gee is much more inclined to use violence for dramatic effect.
Although its context indicates that it is not gratuitous, the reader sometimes gets the feeling that his realism is slightly contrived. Lasenby’s work can be seen as realism in its simplest form, in which there is little sense of the dramatic at all. His portrayal of life in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s resembles strongly the view offered by autobiographies covering those periods, such as by Janet Frame and Kevin Ireland.

Ireland is a particularly useful example. In his autobiographical memoir, Under the Bridge & Over the Moon, he describes his real-life experiences in many of the settings which are used by Gee, Lasenby and the Kotare authors. Born in 1933, he is two years younger than Gee and Lasenby and three years older than Mahy - they can be considered children of the Depression. Ireland’s recollections of the Second World War are both humorous and disturbing: “As a nine year old, in 1942, I lived through one of the oddest experiences in our nation’s history - an experience that adults now seem to have great difficulty referring to with truth and clarity. 1942 was the Year of the Japanese...” Ireland remarks that: “People were off their heads with fear, though you’d be hard put nowadays to find anyone to admit it, or even think deeply about it.” Clearly, Lasenby and Gee share this memory of mass panic, which is so well reflected in The Mangrove Summer and The Champion.

Ireland also talks about rural hardship during these decades, describing “illiterate glum and brutalised children who rode six kilometres from their remote farm to school, then all the way back again in the afternoon,” whom he went to school with. He goes on to explain that:

These children were the victims of a rural destitution that many New Zealanders did not know existed, for it was a destitution that resulted not just from a lack of capital, poor land, hopeless methods and low-quality stock - though all of these were factors - but from a whole poverty-stricken culture of casual cruelty, pinchgut misery and wilful neglect. It was a poverty of the spirit as well as of the pocket.

Ireland’s memories have little in common with Phillis Garrard’s rural idylls (the ‘Hilda’ stories) which cover the same period. The illiterate glum and brutalised children are entirely absent, and the riding of horses to school is seen as a delightful bonus of country-living, to be envied by all city-dwellers. Hilda encounters only one girl her own age who is from a less privileged background - the surly Lizzie Meakins, whose father is a victim of his own mismanagement rather than the poverty-stricken culture to which Ireland refers.
Ireland believes that there has been a general amnesia regarding many of the hardships of New Zealand life. Not only were people unwilling to accept them at the time, but they “seem to have disremembered them” in their later years. Ireland describes writing an essay for a book edited by Michael King, in which he tried to “invite people to look at the way we really were, not through the rose tints of nostalgia, but in plain fact.” This caused some controversy among readers who accused Ireland of “trying to spoil the happiness of people’s memories”.812 Ireland remarks:

The main point I made in the essay was that I grew up in a country which was conditioned by a code of deliberate, systematic and bloody-minded violence, and that this violence was visited with depraved enthusiasm on the children…. Civilised and gentle people preferred not to notice - and who would now blame them?813

He describes how there “were three main places where a boy could observe the regular violence that was the insidious and dominant feature of life in the 1940s and 50s.”814 The first was on the streets, where many brawls could be witnessed after six o’clock closing, often between drunks, and sometimes between soldiers. “The second was at school, where hardly a day went by without some poor miscreant being flogged,” as well as the “vicious ritualised bullying” that occurred in the classroom and playground. This closely resembles Gee’s portrayal of school as a dangerous and unjust environment, as in The Fat Man. Ireland’s third place where violence could be witnessed was in the New Zealand home:

...where punishments were severe and premeditated, and carried out entirely without preliminary fair hearings. My brother and I thought our father was a hard man, and we got knocked around at times, but he was an angel compared to some of the dads who came home after work to be greeted straight off by the complaints and accusations laid against the children by their mothers.

I know, because I used to deliver the Auckland Star on an evening paper-round, and I would sometimes arrive home ill and trembling, with the sounds of the terrible beatings being inflicted on the young of Takapuna still ringing in my head.815

In the case of Gee and Lasenby in particular, their accurate portrayal of New Zealand domestic violence, runs against Ireland’s point about public amnesia. Not only are they
acting as critics and consciences of society but they are addressing a generation who did not live through this particular era, ensuring that the truth as they recall it is passed on.

It was noted in the Introduction that the earlier literature in this sample was not labelled as ‘young-adult’ fiction until the 1960s, when this term came into popular use. This is not simply a case of a change in terminology, but indicative of a radical rethinking about what constitutes adulthood, and what lies between childhood and the age of majority. The Second World War stimulated a recognition that eighteen year old males could fight as men, yet they were still denied the right to vote and drink in a public bar. Progressively legal adulthood was redefined and teenagers were accorded more rights, such as enfranchisement (the right to vote at age 18), passed in 1974 in New Zealand. The lowering of the age of adult privilege placed a spotlight on the intervening years, and made it difficult to categorise it as a simple extension of childhood. Thus the notion of the young-adult evolved, along with the perception that they should not be shielded from the realities of life.

From the 1960s onwards many authors responded to this redefinition by creating works specifically aimed at the teenage reader, which may account for some of the changes (especially involving realism) which this thesis identifies. And the category of young-adult fiction continues to develop. Margaret Mahy comments:

Over the last few years it seems to me that the ‘young adult’, seen in the 1980s as someone aged about fifteen or sixteen is now seen as someone aged thirteen or fourteen. One of the reasons for this is that the good teenage reader is reading adult books anyway, so many publishers are tending to redefine what they mean by the category. Certainly some successful books appear on both ‘young adult’ and ‘adult’ shelves, which seems to me a good way of coping with the difficulty.816

This development parallels contemporary debates over a further lowering of the drinking age, the age of consent, and the age at which young offenders can be tried and imprisoned as adults. It should be emphasised at this point that realism is not the only genre offered to young-adult readers; there is a great quantity of escapist literature also available, but it is mostly international. New Zealand young-adult fiction of the last few decades has been predominantly realist.

In conclusion, the six main propositions outlined in the Introduction have been found to be well supported by the texts in this study.
1. Earlier writers do tend to conform to their society's publicly expressed values, and to reinforce its ideals, including those which are mythical (as in the notion of egalitarianism). They affirm the structures of parental and social authority. The pioneer past is glorified, practicality and responsibility are of paramount importance, and puritan patterns of behaviour are repeated through the generations. Authors such as Glen may sometimes derive humour at the expense of pompous authority or deal humorously with children's naughtiness, but the basic structures of respectable society are at least implicitly upheld.

2. Earlier writers use conventions inherited from English children's literature to express these attitudes. These include character stereotypes such as the naughty child, the friendly uncle, the matronly housekeeper, and the eccentric old man. The plot is invariably manipulated to provide a happy ending (often at the expense of the major theme, as in the case of *The Greenstone Door*). Certain subjects such as sex, alcoholism and violence are avoided in keeping with society's taboos.

3. Earlier writers work within a generic framework in which there is no 'young adult' fiction, but rather an assumption that readers will move from older children's fiction (family stories, survival stories, and so on) directly to such 'classics' as Dickens and Scott. Satchell's *The Greenstone Door* took on the role of a New Zealand classic in this sense.

4. The recent writers (post-1960s) tend to question the values and myths, not only of their contemporary society, but also of the society in which they grew up. Therefore, their view of the 1930s and 1940s is startlingly different from that of writers of children's literature of that time. Gee and Lasenby's historical novels deal explicitly with 'forbidden' issues, and frequently question parental roles and competence. They expose the hypocrisy rife in small town and suburban communities, and show the powerlessness of even the most well-meaning members, to protect the innocent from abuse.

5. Recent writers modify the earlier (British-derived) literary conventions and styles, almost as a reaction against the "cloying sweetness" of authors like Isabel Maud Peacocke. They often employ a critical realism similar to that used by writers of adult fiction such as Sargeson and Ballantyne. Even when writing within the fantasy genre, these authors
continue to portray the complex relationships of real life, while exploring significant universal themes such as love, betrayal and war.

6. Recent writers operate within a different generic framework, in which young adult fiction is an accepted category. Redefinition of young-adulthood in contemporary society is closely linked to the emphasis on realism (as opposed to nostalgia), in young-adult fiction.
PRIMARY TEXTS


SECONDARY FICTION


**CRITICAL OR BIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS**


Mahy, Margaret. 1991. *Surprising Moments, The Inaugural Margaret Mahy Award*. 201


ENDNOTES

1 Begg, 1972: 9
2 Begg, 1972: 19
3 Begg, 1972: 19
4 Begg, 1972: 19
5 Begg, 1992
6 Begg, 1972: 180
7 Jones, personal communication
8 Carpenter, 1984: 518
9 Carpenter, 1984: 518
10 Carpenter, 1984: 518
11 Carpenter, 1984: 518
12 Eyre, 1971: 35
13 Eyre, 1971: 30-1
14 Eyre, 1971: 31
15 Gilderdale, 1982: 7
16 Gilderdale, 1982: 7
17 Scott McLeod, in Marquis, in Landfall, 1991: 330
19 Marquis, in Landfall, 1991: 333
20 Gilderdale, 1991a: 452-3
21 Jones, 1991: 134
22 Publisher, in Tracy, 1983: 189
23 Gilderdale, in Fitzgibbon, 1993: 71
25 Gilderdale, in West, 1985: 156
26 Gilderdale, 1982: 62
27 Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 476
28 Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 218
29 Jones, 1991: 134
30 Gilderdale, 1991a: 452
31 Gilderdale, 1982: 22
32 Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 477
33 Smithyman, 1996: 460
34 Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 477
35 Satchell, 1914: 1
36 Satchell, 1914: 4
37 Satchell, 1914: 28
38 Satchell, 1914: 15
39 Satchell, 1914: 18
40 Satchell, 1914: 51
41 Satchell, 1914: 51
42 Satchell, 1914: 71
43 Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 218
44 Satchell, 1914: 358
45 Satchell, 1914: 135
46 Satchell, 1914: 161
47 Satchell, 1914: 186
48 Satchell, 1914: 173
49 Smithyman, 1996: 461
50 Satchell, 1914: 4
51 Satchell, 1914: 26
52 Satchell, 1914: 37

203
112 Bacon, 1973: 29
113 Bacon, 1973: 32
114 Bacon, 1973: 44
115 Bacon, 1973: 70
116 Bacon, 1973: 91
117 de Roo, 1983: 36
118 de Roo, 1983: 17
119 de Roo, 1983: 52
120 Gilderdale, 1982: 31
121 Bacon, 1973: 69
122 Bacon, 1973: 99
123 Bacon, 1973: 66
124 Bacon, 1973: 72
125 Bacon, 1973: 77
126 Bacon, 1973: 39
127 Bacon, 1973: 101-102
128 Bacon, 1973: 105
129 Gilderdale, in Glen, 1983: 200
130 Gilderdale, 1982: 72
131 Gilderdale, 1982: 72
132 Gilderdale, 1982: 3
134 Marsden, in Robinson, 1998: 196
135 Gilderdale, in Garrard, 1984: 177
136 Gilderdale, 1982: 102
137 Gilderdale, 1982: 84-85
138 Ringer, 1980: 35
139 Glen, 1917: 7
140 Glen, 1917: 176
141 Glen, 1917: 9
142 Glen, 1917: 190
143 Glen, 1917: 197
144 Glen, 1917: 73
145 Glen, 1917: 19
146 Glen, 1917: 84
147 Glen, 1917: 20
148 Glen, 1917: 115
149 Glen, 1917: 168
150 Glen, 1917: 21
151 Glen, 1917: 124-125
152 Glen, 1917: 188
153 Glen, 1917: 172
154 Glen, 1917: 179
155 Glen, 1917: 27
156 Glen, 1917: 29
157 Glen, 1917: 34
158 Glen, 1917: 132
159 Glen, 1917: 9
160 Glen, 1917: 12
161 Glen, 1917: 171
162 Glen, 1917: 8
163 Glen, 1917: 165
164 Glen, 1917: 130
165 Glen, 1917: 199
166 Gilderdale, 1982: 85
167 Gilderdale, in Glen, 1985: 157
168 Gilderdale, in Glen, 1985: 158
169 Gilderdale, 1982: 86
170 Gilderdale, 1982: 8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garrard</td>
<td>1984: 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrard</td>
<td>1984: 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West, cited by Gilderdale in West</td>
<td>1985: 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale, in West</td>
<td>1985: 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebley, in Robinson</td>
<td>1998: 582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 100-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 97-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 67-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 106-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1961: 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale, in Howes</td>
<td>1983: 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale, in Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyre</td>
<td>1971: 89; Darton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyre</td>
<td>1971: 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunlop, in Macdonald et al.</td>
<td>1991: 311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray, in Robinson</td>
<td>1998: 246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunlop, in Macdonald et al.</td>
<td>1991: 311-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 31-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howes</td>
<td>1983: 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray, in Robinson</td>
<td>1998: 434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 80-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray, in Robinson</td>
<td>1998: 434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray, in Robinson</td>
<td>1998: 434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale</td>
<td>1982: 82-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale, in Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilderdale, in Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 121-122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacocke</td>
<td>1984: 35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peacocke, 1984: 142
Peacocke, 1984: 94
Peacocke, 1984: 48
Peacocke, 1984: 25
Peacocke, 1984: 43
Peacocke, 1984: 28
Peacocke, 1984: 33
Peacocke, 1984: 31
Peacocke, 1984: 55
Peacocke, 1984: 80
Peacocke, 1984: 63
Peacocke, 1984: 128
Peacocke, 1984: 128
Peacocke, 1984: 128-29
Peacocke, 1984: 131
Peacocke, 1984: 107
Peacocke, 1984: 27
Peacocke, 1984: 116
Murray, in Robinson, 1998: 434
Peacocke, 1984: 8
Peacocke, 1984: 25
Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 198
Manhire, 1956: 67
Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 199
Gee, quoted by Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 197
Fitzgibbon, 1993: 68
Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 197
Gee, in Fitzgibbon, 1993: 68
Gee, in Gilderdale, 1991b: 77
Gee, in Commire, 1987: 77
Garnett, 1974
Gee, 1984: 153
Eyre, 1971: 166
Gilderdale, 1982: 3
Gee, 1979: 9
Gee, 1979: 32
Gee, 1979: 8
Gee, 1979: 37
Gee, 1979: 11
Gee, 1979: 112
Gee, 1979: 49-50
Gee, 1979: 123
Gee, 1979: 97
Gee, 1979: 47-48
Gee, 1979: 97
Gee, 1979: 133
Gee, 1979: 131-32
Gee, 1979: 18
Gee, 1979: 98
Gee, 1979: 140
Gee, 1979: 33
Gee, 1979: 43
Gee, 1979: 108
Gee, in Gilderdale, 1991b: 79
Fitzgibbon, 1993: 68
Fitzgibbon, 1993: 68
Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 198
Gee, in Gilkins, 1998: 88
Park, 1955: 98
Mahy, 1985: 111
Mahy, 1985: 109
Mahy, 1985: 3
Mahy, 1985: 39
Mahy, 1985: 40
Mahy, 1985: 2-3
Mahy, 1985: 60
Mahy, 1985: 8
Mahy, 1985: 62
Mahy, 1985: 10
Mahy, 1985: 66
Mahy, 1985: 82
Mahy, 1985: 79
Mahy, 1985: 65
Mahy, 1985: 61
Mahy, 1985: 82
Mahy, 1985: 96
Mahy, 1985: 97
Mahy, 1985: 129
Mahy, 1985: 127
Mahy, 1982: 98
Mahy, 1982: 177
Mahy, 1985: 58
Mahy, 1985: 64
Mahy, 1985: 87
Mahy, 1985: 87
Mahy, 1985: 88
Mahy, 1985: 91
Mahy, 1985: 93
Mahy, 1985: 95
Mahy, 1985: 86
Mahy, 1985: 173
Gilderdale, 1987: 65
Mahy, 1991: 22
Begg, 1972: 17
Mahy, 1986: 16
Mahy, 1986: 88
Mahy, 1986: 93
Mahy, 1986: 167
Mahy, 1986: 132
Mahy, 1986: 171
Mahy, 1986: 215
Mahy, 1986: 215
Mahy, 1986: 212
Mahy, 1986: 213
Mahy, 1986: 230
Mahy, 1986: 235
Mahy, 1986: 241
Mahy, 1986: 237
Mahy, 1986: 239
Mahy, 1986: 252
Mahy, 1986: 253
Cresswell, 1977: inside front dustjacket
Mahy, 1986: 14
Mahy, 1982: 88
Mahy, 1982: 94
Mahy, 1986: 194
Mahy, 1986: 5
Mahy, 1986: 22
Mahy, 1986: 103
Mahy, 1995: 58-9
Mahy, 1995: 69
Mahy, 1986: 35-6
Mahy, 1986: 36
Mahy, 1986: 37
Mahy, 1986: 160
Mahy, 1986: 167
Mahy, 1986: 225
Mahy, 1986: 227
Mahy, 1986: 228
Mahy, 1986: 229
Mahy, 1986: 234-5
Mahy, 1986: 258
Mahy, 1986: 245
Mahy, 1986: 39
Mahy, 1986: 39
Mahy, 1986: 162
Mahy, 1986: 75-6
Mahy, 1986: 86-7
Mahy, 1986: 222-3
Mahy, 1986: 29
Mahy, 1986: 42
Mahy, 1986: 38
Mahy, 1986: 139
Mahy, 1986: 184
Mahy, 1986: 177
Mahy, 1986: 231-2
Mahy, 1991: 22-3
Fitzgibbon, 1993: 114
Gilderdale, 1991a: 479
Fitzgibbon, 1993: 115
Gilderdale, 1991a: 490
Gilderdale, 1991a: 490
Mahy, 1987: 33
Mahy, 1987: 84
Mahy, 1987: 160
Mahy, 1987: 160
Mahy, 1987: 187
Mahy, 1987: 101
Mahy, 1984: 206
Mahy, 1987: 175
Mahy, 1987: 21
Mahy, 1987: 2
Mahy, 1987: 149-50
Mahy, 1987: 149
Mahy, 1987: 156
Mahy, 1987: 16
Mahy, 1987: 25
Mahy, 1987: 191
Mahy, 1987: 199-200
Mahy, 1987: 232
Gilderdale, 1991a: 490
Mahy, 1987: 34
Mahy, 1987: 35
Begg, 1972: 22
Mumford, quoted in Begg, 1972: 22
Mahy, 1996: 26
Gilderdale, 1987: 10
Lasenby, 1994: 20
Lasenby, 1994: 105
Lasenby, 1995: 12
Lasenby, 1995: 89
Lasenby, 1995: 25
Lasenby, 1995: 141
Lasenby, 1995: 31
Lasenby, 1995: 30
Lasenby, 1995: 66
Lasenby, 1995: 136
Lasenby, 1995: 76
Lasenby, 1996: 69
Lasenby, 1995: 122
Lasenby, 1992
Lasenby, 1995: 159
Lasenby, 1995: 50
Lasenby, 1995: 180
Lasenby, 1995: 143
Lasenby, 1995: 78
Lasenby, 1995: 176
Lasenby, 1995: 143
Lasenby, 1995: 178
Lasenby, 1995: 185
Park, 1955: 164
Lasenby, 1996: 19
Lasenby, 1996: 20
Lasenby, 1996: 24
Lasenby, 1996: 29
Lasenby, 1996: 37
Gilderdale, 1982: 47
Lasenby, 1996: 42
Lasenby, 1996: 23
Lasenby, 1996: 27
Lasenby, 1996: 50
Lasenby, 1996: 113
Lasenby, 1996: 142
Lasenby, 1996: 21
Lasenby, 1996: 126
Lasenby, 1996: 75
Lasenby, 1996: 90
Lasenby, 1996: 40
Lasenby, 1996: 40
Lasenby, 1996: 65
Lasenby, 1996: 85
Lasenby, 1996: 123
Lasenby, 1996: 165
Park, 1955: 5
Wattie, in Robinson, 1998: 199
Ireland, 1998: 73
Ireland, 1998: 75
Ireland, 1998: 85-86
Ireland, 1998: 116
Ireland, 1998: 116
Ireland, 1998: 117
Ireland, 1998: 118-9
Mahy, 1997: personal communication.