

## **From national to global: Writing and translating the Aotearoa New Zealand short story**

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### **Abstract**

In today's global literary marketplace, the short story from Aotearoa New Zealand reaches out to international and national reading publics thanks to the flourishing local literary scene which has boosted the genre's status and reach, and the global orientation of many writers. This article compares 20<sup>th</sup>-century short stories with contemporary developments in the genre that present a global, diasporic imaginary rather than a national imaginary. It refers to the translation into Spanish of stories anthologised in *Un país de cuento: Veinte relatos de Nueva Zelanda* (A Fairy Tale Land: Twenty Stories from New Zealand), that represent the country's early cultural nationalism by stressing location and identity. In recent writing, these preoccupations reappear as expansions and reworkings that overflow this earlier canon through an exploration of different spaces; these deterritorialise the national, and refocus the local, creating the impression of cultural fragmentation.

**Key Words:** globalization; national/diasporic imaginary; Aotearoa New Zealand short story; deterritorialization; home and belonging; Spanish translation

### **“Some other country”: Reimagining Aotearoa New Zealand**

A persistent strand of the “unsettled” white settler subjectivity of Aotearoa New Zealand has been the experience of belonging as provisional, temporary and marked by dark, disturbing forces. It is a reminder that the colonial preoccupations of settler invader societies emerge out of exile, imperfect location and settlement. Underpinning this uncertainty about place and identity has been the nation's traditional geographical isolation, insularity and narrow societal structures that in the past led to an inward-looking orientation and some literary ghettoisation. The lack of “a fixed and stable cultural framework” (Hanson 1985, 12, cited in Wevers 1998, 245), explains the high value attributed to the short story in New Zealand, where it was more favoured than in similar countries even after the novel began to dominate in the late 1950s. In this article I suggest that the story's transition into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with an orientation towards a global cultural economy, international readerships and multicultural diversification,

can be read in relation to these earlier manifestations of uncertain habitation, as a further iteration of an unsettled belonging and part of a wider pattern of cultural change.

The pressures of a restrictive Puritan morality in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century New Zealand society emerged in the short fiction of the 1930s in the realist mode of Frank Sargeson's stories and his representations of a young man or boy with "an orally impoverished, repetitive and non-figurative idiom" (Wevers, 1998, 270) who remains defined by his surroundings. By mid-century, however, the male narrator of Dan Davin's story "The Quiet One" ([1945] 2008) wishes for "some other country" where "people would see what I really was instead of what I'd always been" (86). The yearning for an ideal self might be seen in terms of Slavoj Žižek's (1989) theory of the imaginary as "identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves with the image representing what we would like to be" (105). The link between citizen and nation comprises a national imaginary in Žižek's theorising but as this article will show, this apparently collective and unified representation of nationhood varies, according to which images, social groups and voices are privileged at any particular time:

Significantly, Davin's phrase was used by Marion McLeod and Bill Manhire ([1984] 2008) as the title of their short story anthology *Some Other Country*, in deliberate contrast to titles that rely on the nationalistic label New Zealand. This is emblematic of the desire for alternative spatial representations of New Zealand in recent decades by novelists, poets and film-makers who have responded to the nation's insularity, remoteness, and stunning landscapes by imagining it as "some other country", most famously as Middle Earth in Peter Jackson's cinematic version of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Using the lens of European literary genres such as popular fantasy, science fiction or the Gothic, local writers have also been emboldened by mind travel to move beyond national boundaries, sometimes to enter a utopian parallel universe. Other literary representations of overseas locations due to OE (Overseas Experience) – travel, tourism, emigration, or foreign war – have inspired reconsiderations of home and homeland. In Witi Ihimaera's (1972) fictions such as his story "In Search of Emerald City", new imaginings are catalysed by relocation in Australia, an alternative home to many Māori; in Carl Nixon's (2006) story, "The Battle of Crete" (33–49), and Lauren Keenan's (2017), "In the Shadow of Monte Cassino" (71), it is the return to key battle-sites of the New Zealand Division and the Māori Battalion in World War II. Such reimaginings of the country, or discoveries of what lies beyond – an "elsewhere conceived as a homeland different from that of the present" (Quayson, 2013, 153) – come with revisions of the local and a reconfiguration of spatiality under globalisation, as the editors of a recent book of essays point out (Horrocks and Lacey 2016, 10).

This article addresses the way that globalization and hypermobility of information, culture and populations are shaping an alternative paradigm to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century national one in a range of short fictions. As with other print genres and electronic media, they are beginning to challenge and redefine questions about nationhood and national belonging, for long rooted in landscape and place. These new contexts informed the selection process of 20<sup>th</sup>-century canonical stories for the first ever translation of New Zealand short fiction into Spanish in an anthology, coedited by myself and Paloma Fresno Calleja: *Un País de Cuento: Veinte relatos de Nueva Zelanda* (A Fairy Tale Land/ A Country of Tales: Twenty Short Stories from New Zealand). In opting for a conservative overview of New Zealand fiction as shaped by gender, race and class, we recognised that under the impetus of globalisation, a very different image of nationhood was emerging, one more idealised and less recognisably “New Zealand” than in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; this had to be balanced against our more traditional approach.

Like the contemporary New Zealand novel, many recent stories that draw on global localities and spatialities follow the trend of deterritorialising the nation state through erasure of the national signifier or effacement of the local referent (Evans 2007, 183). Disengagement from questions of “New Zealandness” was perceived as early as 1984, associated with increased urbanization and greater stylistic variation (Sturm 1998, 768, citing Wevers 1984). Today, with nationhood no longer the principal focus of imaginative creativity, questions of national identity and belonging are being perceived as an almost irrelevant backstory instead of the urgent quest that marked the stories of Frank Sargeson and motivated poet Allen Curnow’s early work. Patrick Evans (2007), for example, has argued that the commodification of New Zealand literature for the global marketplace involves a “dematerialising process by transcending region” (183), that is, the “loss of connection between an individual writing sensibility and a meaningfully localised world” (Mercer 2017, 236). John Newton (2017) has developed this critical position in lamenting that the concept of New Zealand literature and all that this implies has begun to disappear. Drawing on the terminology of Raymond Williams, Newton identifies a break in the “structure of feeling” (12) concerning national belonging, an “interruption” that is symptomized by the indifference of contemporary artists and writers to their national literary legacy. Such presentist, ahistorical millennial writers for whom “New Zealand literature is barely on their radar”, Newton writes,

seem to think horizontally; they align themselves with admired international contemporaries [ ... and] their immediate peers [ ... ]. Their relationship to other writing, past and present, is mediated less by formal criticism than by social media, the blogosphere, and the pedagogy of creative writing schools. They are conscious too of different markets, institutions and rewards. (11)

Dougal McNeill (2017, 433) also notes that in today's more globally inflected climate the short story is no longer a medium through which to articulate perceptions of national consciousness but rather attitudes that represent disaffiliation and discontinuity from preoccupations with national belonging. But despite the change of orientation found in references to international popular culture, exotic landscapes, cosmopolitan settings/cityscapes, social media and digital platforms, the short story, in Witi Ihimaera's (2009) view is still valued as "our most pervasive and enduring art form" (9).

These arguments can be refocused in relation to contemporary global and national contexts. Disengagement from legacy and national heritage also points to New Zealand's evolution into a multicultural society: the shift by artists and writers away from Pākehā angst about belonging and identity to embrace alternative cultural positions that demand more cross-cultural readings in relation to global youth culture, electronic media, transnational travel, Pacific and Asian migration. New Zealand writing has also responded to the increased circulation of literary forms and genres across national borders. The international reception of Elizabeth Knox's (1998) novel, *The Vintner's Luck*, set entirely in France in 1808, with translation into many languages and a film version directed by Niki Caro in 2009, was considered a break through (Wilson 2004, 123; Evans 2007, 180). Although this transnational dimension that makes it harder to see any work as a direct product of the national or local is more visible in the novel and drama, the short story shares in this trend.<sup>1</sup>

From another perspective, although "disappearing" national brands, signifiers, or tags of recent New Zealand fiction may be perceived as another form of the suggestiveness and inconclusiveness that mark the genre, such "deterritorialising" moves sidestep and redefine, rather than completely eviscerate, the ways place is marked in relation to habitation. Such is the continued intrication of nation with location that representations of placelessness can be read as yet another idea of place and so a different type of engagement with nationality: Booker prize-winning author Eleanor Catton defends this concept, saying of her first novel *The Rehearsal* that it is "a total exponent of that idea [placeless literature] – and in another way not at all" (quoted in Mercer 2017, 236). In the "placeless" stories of Tracey Slaughter

(2016), for example, is a recognisable psychological landscape (working class, fringe, semi-rural, naive) with rare citation of local taxonomies like *toi toi* and *tiki* to indicate a particular setting, and in Anna Taylor's (2009) stories, *Relief*, about the edginess in human relations, landmarks like the lake, the valley, and the suburban dwelling appear without local names or labels, and in an unsettling reversal of here and there, visitors from named locations overseas arrive at these anonymous settings, as if peering in from outside.

This generational shift in which national paradigms are interpenetrated by globally-configured perspectives and transcultural layerings that demand new reading practices, may be manifested in various forms of the glocal, embodiments of the tension between global homogenisation and local heterogenization. It appears in the "global Australian outlook" (219), that Peter Stummer (2017) identifies in the interlinked short story collections of Australian Vietnamese migrant writer, Nam Le, and the Australian writer, John Murray, although only one story in each is distinctively "Australian" and overseas locations are prioritised in both. The global dimension, Stummer finds, appears in the authors' shared fascination with the electronic media, in particular the cell phone, and in the use of universalist discourses: Murray draws on the terminology of medical humanities for his narratives, while Nam Le uses internet sites from google to construct a mind-set that playfully questions ideas of authenticity.

But even these limited local/global interfaces confirm that versions of national identification and preoccupation persist, an orientation still in evidence in the contemporary New Zealand story: "placelessness" is only one aspect of a globalised consciousness, and marks a well-established internationalising strategy that is evident, for example, in Katherine Mansfield's early 20<sup>th</sup>-century stories. Māori writing, by contrast, shows a rebalancing of the home /overseas binary through the activity of memory, as in Anahera Gildea's (2017) story where Karangahape Rd ("K'road") reminds the protagonist of Itaewon, Korea (18) or in Kelly Joseph's (2019) "Dust", set in Anatolia, Turkey and the Waikato (97–106). A more subjective emotional optic redefines location: for example, homesickness is "not just a longing for a place" but "yearning for people and a time that have passed" (Joseph 2003, 147). In Breton Dukes's (2011, 2014) Pākehā stories, by contrast, locations highlight a mode of enquiry as New Zealand place names become associated with the urgent pressures of a world from which the hero is beginning to break away. Placelessness, therefore, occupies one point on the local-global spectrum as the umbilical ties between place and belonging unravel under the impact of globalization and the individual's relationship to place is reconfigured in multiple ways.

## **Translation and national story telling: *Un País de Cuento: Veinte relatos de Nueva Zelanda***

Despite the genre's seminal importance in the national literary tradition, New Zealand short stories have not been well served by translation: novels are usually favoured. Of the limited examples that can be given here, Katherine Mansfield's stories are a perennial favourite, testifying to their status as world literature, although stories by Janet Frame and Patricia Grace are also popular. In Germany, in 2012 when New Zealand was Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, Keri Hulme's collection *Stonefish* (2004), and Māori myths and legends edited by Witi Ihimaera were translated, but there was only one anthology, McLeod and Manhire's *Some Other Country*, and this will not be reprinted.<sup>2</sup> The arts council, Creative New Zealand, has recently awarded grants for translations of A.A. Reed's *Maori Legends* into Spanish and Macedonian, and Janet Frame's collections, *The Lagoon and other stories* (1951) and *Snowman, Snowman: Fables and Fantasies* (1963) into Czech (<https://publisher.org.nz.grants/>). Translations into French are plentiful as the Zealand French Embassy website shows (<https://nz.ambafrance.org/Litterature-neo-zelandaise>). In particular, Jean Anderson has translated, with Anne Magnan-Park, Patricia Grace's volume *Electric City* (2006), and with Nadine Ribault, Frame's *The Lagoon* (2005), as well as individual stories by Owen Marshall, Fiona Kidman, Grace, Frame, Frank Sargeson, and John Pule, for the journal *Brèves* (2006, 2007, 2010) and the review *Europe* (2006), while Alice Tawhai's (2005) first story collection, *Festival of Miracles*, was translated by Mirelle Vignoi in 2006. As is to be expected, translations follow publishing success: Maurice Shadbolt's 1959 debut collection, *The New Zealanders*, was translated into both Italian (in 1962) and German (in 1965) shortly after its publication in London.<sup>3</sup>

The pioneering anthology, *Un País de Cuento*, was broadly conceived along national lines in order to provide easy access for new readers from Spain and Spanish-speaking countries, where short stories are not generally popular and fewer collections are translated from other languages than in the French and German contexts, to the literature of a nation that is relatively unknown (Fresno-Calleja 2015, 57). We utilised a cover image that evokes the Kiwi silver fern, and a title instantly recognisable to readers with little knowledge of Aotearoa New Zealand but aware of its commercial identity through *Lord of the Ring's* imagery or touristic or sporting branding. The Spanish expression "Un País de Cuento" is a pun that on one hand evokes the idea of New Zealand as "fairy land" with a fantastic, never-

never landscape, but on the other literally defines a “country of tales” emphasising the importance of story-telling to its national culture. Our selection included frequently anthologised, mainly 20<sup>th</sup>-century canonical stories, balanced by the revisionary or alternative perspectives of contemporary writers, such as Albert Wendt and Sue Orr.

Like most national anthologies, *Un País de Cuento* is organised chronologically.<sup>4</sup> It opens with Katherine Mansfield’s ([1912] 2006) “The Woman at the Store”, followed by Frank Sargeson’s (2010) “A Great Day”, a story that exemplifies Sargeson’s laconic conversational style reproducing the local vernacular and sounds of speech for which his work was celebrated nationally. Sargeson’s voice reflects the limited cultural nationalism of the 1930s when Aotearoa New Zealand was a puritanical, monocultural and monolingual society; his narrow coterie, the circle of the magazine *Phoenix*, longing to find “a home in thought” (cited in Wevers 1998, 245) defined itself in reaction to the perceived philistinism of much of New Zealand society. With limited dissemination and circulation of literary texts then, minimal opportunities for overseas publication, a narrowly defined readership, and no “great New Zealand novel”, Sargeson was able to monopolise the mainstream for several decades. But over time this approach became caught in an impasse; by articulating the very attitudes it criticised it produced “a curiously elitist anti-elitism, a criticism of the mass in mass society” (McNeill 2017, 423); flattened versions of Sargeson’s realism emerged in the work of his successors, sometimes known as “the sons of Sargeson”, such as O.E. Middleton, Dan Davin, and John Reece Cole.

In representing significant developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the stories selected for the anthology therefore reflect a national narrative that delineates expansiveness, a curve towards greater inclusiveness of plural ethnic and gendered voices that earlier lacked representation: from women writers in the 1950s, and in the 1970s and 1980s, to Māori writing in English, and that of Pacific, mainly Samoan, immigrants by the 1990s. Janet Frame ([1951] 1961) is represented with her eponymous story from her debut collection *The Lagoon*. Her arrival introduced an alternative, female experience and point of view to the social realist dimensions of the male literary tradition, marking the beginnings of a counter-canon (McNeill 2017, 422). Of note is Frame’s distinctive aesthetic based on interiorisation of voice, point of view, and impressionist subjectivity. “The Lagoon” shows multiple voices, generations and ethnicities filtered through the consciousness of the female narrator who lives by the lagoon, adjacent to the nearby pā where the Māori sing and play the guitar, and who hints at the mixed-race marriage of her Māori great grandmother. A metafictional dimension appears in the narrator’s enquiry into story-making and suggestion that orally-transmitted

stories often conceal or distort truths, making fact inextricable from fiction. The lagoon is metaphorically a site that is shifting, layered, and allusive, concealing truths or half-truths in its silt. Frame implies that telling stories is a process of selection involving concealment and covering up of untold or buried stories, or from another perspective, the other voices, narratives styles and types of story rendered invisible in the early phases of cultural nationalism.

Frame's inquiry into the fictionality of fiction marks the beginning of a shift away from a provincial world view and alternative genres to realism developed and new springs of experience were tapped, as in the experimental stories of Maurice Duggan, with glimpses of interracial relations, stories of miscegenation, and ill-fated romance. National representations were also expanded in the social realism of Maurice Shadbolt's *The New Zealanders*. Shadbolt's images mark out racial difference and tension, rural and metropolitan settings, departures and returns: the homecomings of displaced youthful characters living in London are presented through irony and ambiguity. Yet these stories about travel and expatriation, by contrast to contemporary ones, retain the nation as the undisputed frame of reference. "The People Before", selected for *Un País de Cuento* from Shadbolt's 1963 collection *Summer Fires and Winter Country*, engages with the divisive national history of colonial land appropriations and cultural suppression that for long inhibited the development of a Māori voice, and anticipates Māori writing about land loss by Apirana Taylor and Bruce Stewart in the 1980s, and land repossession, as satirised by Patricia Grace (1994) in "Ngāti Kangaru" (25–44).

The emergence of Māori writing in English counts as the most significant shift in the national narrative. Beginning with the publications of the journal *Te Ao Hou* from 1956 to 1972, the movement developed through major social transformations in the Māori world during the 1950s in urbanisation and education. The silence was first broken with stories by J.C. Sturm in about 1966, and then, reflecting the growing convergence of the narrative of Māori history with the mainstream Pākehā one, in the work of seminal writers of the 1970s: Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace. Ihimaera's (1972) "A Game of Cards", selected for *Un País de Cuento*, gives iconic expression to a key experience of a culture emerging from fragmentation and marginalisation to acquire a distinctive presence – through a young man's homecoming to the whanau – while Grace's 1974 story "Between Earth and Sky" affirms the centrality of giving birth and female agency in her aim "to tell people who we are". Māori writing at that time was strongly grounded in its own cultural specificities, to indicate its difference from Pākehā culture. The writing of Keri Hulme reflects in literary terms the new



departure inaugurated by the politics of race relations by the mid-1970s: her linguistically heteroglossic writing and engagement with cultural oppositions is represented by the 1976 story “Hooks and Feelers” which anticipates the modernist-indigenous synthesis of her iconic novel *the bone people* that imagines in its hybridised narrative structure the newly emerging bicultural nation.

At the same time Pākehā experimentation and individualism began representing new categories and social types that could bridge the gulf in genre, gender and voice that existed in the years between Sargeson and Frame (there were no women writers of note during the 1930s to 1940s apart from Robin Hyde). By the 1960s and 1970s the Sargesonian legacy had begun to diversify and extend: the masculine-dominated tradition of social realism persisted on the one hand, with stories by Maurice Gee, Vincent O’Sullivan, and Owen Marshall, and the interior landscape of the female condition features in writing by Fiona Kidman, Shonagh Koea, and Joy Cowley on the other. There is a move into new territory: the small town, provincial life, its protocols and betrayals, and crises arising from old age, death, and issues of sexuality. This period is dominated by the “free story” (Wevers 1998, 290), that is, the idiom of recognisable types by which a cultural group is identified and the individual’s relationship to the social circle is explored. Several stories dwell on problematic, sexually constrained relationships: In *Un País de Cuento* these include Owen Marshall’s semi-Gothic narrative, “Mumsie and Zipp” and Vincent O’Sullivan’s “Dandy Edison to Lunch”, about a confrontation between middle-class professionals and an elderly ex-neighbour; and Maurice Gee’s “A Glorious Morning Comrade”, in which an elderly male protagonist is dominated by female family members, finds momentary release but soon recapitulates to their superior power. Stories by women were selected to showcase writing that focuses on the domestic: female roles, families and identities (Fiona Kidman’s “Hats” and Shonagh Koea’s “Meat”); on language and its power to betray friendships and social relationships (Barbara Anderson’s “Discontinuous Lives”); and experimentation with magic realism (Fiona Farrell’s “A Story about Skinny Louie”). The stylistic, thematic variation and ethnic diversification of this era culminate in a snapshot of a diverse society by 2000: Pasifika culture as represented by Albert Wendt’s story, “Robocop in Long Bay” (2002) ; and a female point of view by Sue Orr’s (2008) “Velocity” in a redeployment of Sargesonian tropes: mateship, heterosexual awkwardness, limits of speaking defining the limits of trust. These concluding stories also imply a conversation between the two eras that bookend the collection: the colonial past and the revisionary, multicultural present.

As a volume aiming to introduce New Zealand stories to Spanish readerships, *Un País de Cuento* represents an attempt at a balance between genders, north and south, different periods and genres. The narrow criteria for selecting 20 stories meant inevitable exclusions, notably, stories with a more international inflection: European migrant writing from between the wars such as by Renato Omato, Amelia Batistich, Greville Texidor, and Yvonne du Fresne; and postmodern writing associated with Russell Haley's 1984 collection *Real Illusions*. Space restrictions mean we omitted gay and lesbian work of writers like Peter Wells, Ngahuia Teawekotuku and Cathy Dunsford that first appeared in the 1980s; Gen X writing of the 1990s associated with Emily Perkins's 1996 break-through volume, *Not her Real Name*; writing about neoliberalism and the newly emerging wealthy elites of the 2000s by Charlotte Grimshaw and Paula Morris; and recent diasporic fiction by writers like Morris, Sarah Quigley, Stephanie Johnson, and Kirsty Gunn. We also had to overlook experimentation in other genres such as travel writing, ghost stories, and romance fiction.

Despite, or because of, this limited choice, *Un País de Cuento* also yields unexpected synchronicities of theme, orientation, and setting, attributable to the attempt to articulate the pressures of a particular habitation. These may be described as a Pacific island location, pioneering, outback society, race relations, Puritanism, sexuality and gender, family pathologies, colonisation and the loss of Polynesian cultural heritage. The pattern of recurrent preoccupations and echoes between different groups as writers produce thematic variations, artistic innovation and narrative solutions to problems, overlaps and clashes with the chronological narrative of progress, widening representation and plural voices, of which the globally inflected story is one end point. The early colonial stories, set in the outback or on the outskirts of settlement, represented as sites of lawlessness, illegitimacy and inauthenticity, invoke the mixture of "rites of passage and myths of loss" that dominate New Zealand literature (McLeod and Manhire [1984] 2008, ix). Familiar categories of ethnicity and gender are misleading or destabilised as heteronormative values associated with social development and moral authority bend under the pressures of outback living, leading to "sexual crimes", and sexual hostility, jealousy and abuse culminate in murder. An abject woman's vengeance due to sexual violation and brutality is at the heart of Mansfield's story of savagery, "The Woman at the Store", as, writing to the prescriptions of the avant-garde journal *Rhythm*, she introduces versions of our "outcast selves" (Goodyear 1911, 3). Pent-up sexual anger and masculine jealousy spell out the vindictive behaviour of Sargeson's narrator in "A Great Day" who leaves his mate to drown in the incoming tide, and the vengeful murder in "The Lagoon" also points to a buried story of sexual, interracial aggression. Together they

demonstrate the fatal irruption of explosive human forces to which the rawness of the environment is an objective correlative: the murky depths of the lagoon concealing yet hinting at human traces with “an underwater moon, dim and secret” (Frame, 1961, 7); the wildness of the seas “getting bigger and bigger” in Sargeson’s story (2010, 82); the narrator’s view of “the savage spirit of the country [that] walked abroad and sneered at what it saw” in “Woman at the Store” ([1912] 2012, 271): all these tales of suspicion, jealousy, and fatality question or malign the institution of marriage as perverse and problematic.

A similar pattern of sudden death triggered by murderous intent, with an expose of any attempts at a cover-up, can be traced in the work of later writers that register familiar pathologies of displacement or sexual repression, transposed into different social settings: Owen Marshall’s “Mumsie and Zipp”, Davin’s “The Quiet One”, Vincent O’Sullivan’s “Dandy Edison for Lunch”. In the earlier, much anthologised stories, however, it can be correlated to a crisis in Pākehā habitation that might be approximated to the brutality of colonialism itself, its abrupt break with the past, and the driving “compulsions of greed, expansion, rape and appropriation” (Greenblatt 2010, 2, cited by Quayson 2013, 140). The clustering of tropes of sexual abuse, dysfunction, and gender deformation, illustrate the barbaric side of early occupation. As Stephen Greenblatt comments in comparing the “chronicle of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts” to “a story of inevitable progress from traceable origins”, it is these “disruptive forces that principally shape the history and diffusion of identity and language, and not a rooted sense of cultural legitimacy” (2, cited by Quayson 2013, 140). When read against idealisations of Aotearoa New Zealand as a fairy land or magic world as implied by the anthology’s branding, however, this dark underside to local habitation represents another contradiction. It suggests that the social pressures out of which the culture developed (colonialism, Puritanism, isolation, war) early on produced a more savage and explosive national self-awareness, at odds with the sublime landscape and connotations of harmony and romance.

### **Inside/outside the nation: Globalisation and (un) belonging**

*Un País de Cuento* is uneasily situated between national frameworks and global market forces. Published by a respected academic publisher, Zaragoza University Press, and aimed at the education sector with a print run of only 500 copies and winning a prize for Fresno-Calleja’s translation, it has remained a specialised book in trade terms.<sup>5</sup> Our aim to introduce writers who would not otherwise reach Spanish readers, reinforced a conservative view of

Aotearoa New Zealand short fiction, even to the use of a well-known icon as a cover image. Paradoxically, however, the volume is a product of the global market, for the initiative was financially supported by the Spanish-based Santander bank which promotes translation as part of its philanthropic agenda to facilitate transnational exchange. Although this kind of global cultural production favours a distance from national branding, the anthology's images, designed to appeal to the target, Spanish educational sector, drew on a recognisable national iconography and stories.

These contradictions might also be traced to the mixed neoliberal, nationalistic ideology by which Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural production was commodified to serve the global economy around the new millennium. This was the initiative of Helen Clark's Labour Government from 1999–2008, when the Prime Minister took on the portfolio of arts, culture and heritage. The translation of literature was prioritised by Creative New Zealand as a strategy for promoting the country's culture overseas, and a translation grant scheme was introduced in 2011. Various initiatives for boosting local literary endeavour appeared: new prizes such as the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement (2003), the Berlin Fellowship (2000), the New Zealand Poet Laureate (1997), and international annual Writers and Readers Festivals in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, as well as other centres, were supported.

The local modes of production and dissemination of short stories also reflect this official reorientation within the creative sphere, with increased numbers of practitioners, especially contemporary Māori writers, and multicultural expansion due to Pacific Island and Asian migration: mainstream journals like *Landfall*, *takahe* and *Sport* as well as *The New Zealand Listener*, for long major publishing outlets, have been replaced or complemented by smaller, local ones; a new outlet, Huia publishers, dedicated to the publication of new fiction in Te Reo Māori and English, while Radio New Zealand National continues to play a major role in broadcasting local fiction (Morris 2009, 13).<sup>6</sup> National literary competitions such as the *Sunday Star Times*, the Sargeson Prize short-story competition (at the University of Waikato, initiated in 2019 by the writer Catherine Chidgey), the Ngāa Kupu Ora Māori Book Award for Fiction, the Pikihuia Awards for short fiction, the Pacific Section of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, the *takahe* Short Story Competition, and the Acorn Foundation Fiction Prize, have proliferated, as have residencies for writers in universities and writing centres.<sup>7</sup> Short story anthologies have also diversified, and their numbers increased. The classic introductory anthology, *Some Other Country*, published in 1984, was followed by Vincent O'Sullivan's *The Oxford Book of New Zealand Short Stories* (1992), with a more

extensive chronology, while Paula Morris (2009) updated the *Penguin Book of Contemporary New Zealand Short Stories*, focusing on the decade 1999–2008. There are specialised anthologies that foreground the best work of the writing schools, the earliest of which are Emily Perkins’s (1999) *The Picnic Virgin*, and Emma Neale’s (2002) *Creative Juices*). Other anthologies mark the upsurge in Māori and Pasifika culture: *Stories on the Four Winds: Nga Hau e Wha* (Bargh and Bargh 2016), celebrates 25 years of publishing Māori writing by Huia Press, while Witi Ihimaera and Tina Makereti’s (2017) collection, *Black Marks on the White Page*, is an Oceanic assemblage of stories from Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii, Australia and Aotearoa and of work from contemporary artists, photographers and performers like Rosanna Raymond, Lisa Reihana and Fiona Pardington. The editors’ comment, that some of the most subversive, “beautiful and shocking work arises when we write about sex and sexuality” and that such works “contain experiences of violent sanction” (Ihimaera and Makereti, 11) – seems as far removed as possible from the harsh colonial Puritan morality.

*Black Marks on the White Page*’s focus on an indigenous Oceanic world view acknowledges Aotearoa’s multiple Pacific intersections, and begins to mark out indigenous commonalities. It also builds on the globalised models of fiction associated with the Creative Writing workshops of universities and higher educational institutes. Of greatest influence on New Zealand writing over several decades has been Bill Manhire’s Creative Writing MA at Victoria University of Wellington, known since 2000 as the International Institute of Modern Letters. Teachers include distinguished fiction writers: Damien Wilkins, Emily Perkins, Fiona Kidman, and John Cranna. There is also the MA in Creative Writing at the University of Auckland, previously run by Witi Ihimaera and Albert Wendt, and now by Paula Morris and Pasifika poet, Selina Tusitala Marsh, and the publishing programmes at Whitireia where writers like Tim Jones and Anna Taylor teach the short story.

Although creative writing programmes that have given rise to the professionally crafted short story have been criticised for producing formulaic stories with a “standardised aesthetic” and “corporate literary style” (McGurl 2009, 26), and for being designed for exportability and commodified for marketing purposes (Evans 2007, 179-183; Morris 2017, 13), the workshop story is also a product of contemporary cultural hypermobility, interconnectivity and global readerships.<sup>8</sup> Mark McGurl (2009) points out that such pedagogies mediate and buffer “the writer’s relationship to the culture industry and the market culture” in their role of producing the nation’s literary culture (15). Furthermore, he argues, systematization of writing through workshoped fiction programmes, can contribute to the production of variety (x). The new types of American story McGurl sees as inspired by

globalization have been mapped onto New Zealand contemporary fiction by Dougal McNeill: high cultural pluralism, for example – the fusion of elite literary modes with representations of “cultural differences and the ethnic voice” (McGurl 2009, 32, cited by McNeill 2017, 434) – appear in modified form in visually striking representation of ethnicity as difference in Tina Makereti’s cross-cultural representations of indigeneity in “Frau Amsel’s Cupboard” (Makereti 2016), and the plural identities and dreams of the fabular birdwoman in her “Black Milk” (Makereti 2017), and Alice Tawhai’s stories in her collections, *Luminous* (Tawhai 2007) and *Dark Jelly* (Tawhai 2011) in an individualistic twist, use primary colour notations to represent mental disturbance. Most pervasive is the type that recalls the story’s working-class origins in Sargeson and Frame, the story of “lower-middle class modernism” that is “preoccupied [ ... ] with economic and other forms of insecurity and cultural anomie” (McGurl 2009, 32, cited by McNeill 2017, 434). Labour, with its monotonous routines and repetitive cycle of need and consumption, recurs in stories about poverty and consumerism, or the gig economy that marks the precarious society. The legacy of stories about the middle class and professional world by Vincent O’Sullivan and Barbara Anderson, and of the urban elites and inequalities of neoliberalism in Charlotte Grimshaw’s (2007) *Opportunity* that corresponded to a high point in the 2000s, appears in the way IT and social media transform work and leisure relations: Twitter, Facebook, Iphone and blogs. The impact of IT contract employment on the workplace is the subject of Pip Adams’s (2010) “Mary’s Job”; the connectivities enabled by Gmail exchanges and sharing of browser history dominate Craig Cliff’s (2010) “Orbital Resonances”; while Nic Lowe’s (2017) “Facebook Redux” describes a dystopian post-Facebook vision of an AI-created “new woman” (283–294).

Stories about the new media and the workplace also show a cross-border transnationalism and new structures of feeling and place that lead to speculations about the meaning of home. Such writing reflects the “diasporic imaginary” (Quayson 2017, 146–147), that indexes the transnational mobility of those who travel or relocate overseas, and the types of estrangement or disconnection caused by dislocation, distance and divided loyalties. Locations take on different resonances when associated with alternative forms of belonging. In Craig Cliff’s story “Manawatu”, the protagonist recently returned from Australia asks, “Is Melbourne home or is this home?” (Cliff 2010, 19), while in Cliff’s “Parisian Blue” a traveller narrator “out of work and of no fixed address” has “found a middle ground between travelling and home, a word which had become synonymous with settling down” (2010, 59). Julian Novitz’s (2004) story, “Stories from the End of my Generation”, shows comic displacement when a recently returned protagonist is addressed as though belonging to the

northern hemisphere and has to say, “I am home” (29). By contrast, in Māori stories the “return” remains a potent theme and home “comprises a nexus of geography, social, relational, emotional and cultural factors” (John 2019, 36); homeland yearning dominates Kelly Joseph’s (2003) “Transient”, when the protagonist discovers in a waka huia displayed in an overseas museum an image her own displacement (149); in Aroha Benson’s (2015) “The Power of Water”, about a returned soldier, home is associated with the “essence of turangawaewae” (10); while the protagonist of Arihia Latham-Coates’s “Fly Away Home” (2007) finds “a sense of home” in London in the arms of Tama, but has to return to Aotearoa to find out who she really is (61–69). These explorations of ties and attachments depend more on the model of national belonging associated with postcolonial writing than on the multiple trajectories and interconnectivities of diasporic writing.

By contrast to these travelling and returning writers, established authors like Sarah Quigley, Stephanie Johnson, and Kirsty Gunn, located permanently or semi-permanently overseas, write globally oriented fictions with European locations and characters alongside New Zealand-referenced ones. Like other overseas writers, experiences of displacement find new grounding in affiliative networks, and interconnections with other diasporic communities. Sites of “co-ethnic identification” (Quayson 2013, 147) linked by the internet and social media networks locate them in their expanded horizons, while home dissolves into increasingly smaller shards of recognition. The first volume of UK-based writer, Sam Reese (2019), *Come the Tide*, offers the sense of places and journeys recalled in memory and is dedicated to the matariki, the constellation that will guide him home (n.p). In Pacific writing such as Cassandra Barnett’s (2019) “Tunnelling”, the star map exists alongside other image clusters such as the “kokowai, our stars and waka”, and the “worldwide Papatuanuku”, specially invoked for those living away from the whare tupuna (9, 12); it images the loose constellation of peoples of Oceania that in *Black Marks on the White Page* is represented as the “new navigator’s chart” by which to “remember our kinship in the wider Pacific” (Ihimaera and Makareti 2017, 10).

The contemporary, globally-oriented story draws on alternative genres in exploiting the porous, unstable borders between different geographies and worlds; Jo Randerson’s (2012) parable-like stories cross between a supernatural netherworld and the everyday, finding new perspectives to redraw the divisions between absolutes such as right and wrong, equality and inequality. Tim Jones (2009) moves the gaze upward as outer space becomes a distant alternative habitat, invoking the Alien movie format. “The New Neighbours”, about

aliens who come to live next door, culminates in the fantasy of inhabiting a different galaxy: “We swing our telescope towards the patch of sky, dark and almost empty, where we know our son now lives, studying, learning” (68–69). The visitation of previously occluded, unexplored or unthinkable spaces includes a reiteration of scenes and secrets of sexual violation and brutality. This ur-theme of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century story, hinted at in Marshall’s “Mumsie and Zipp” and Sargeson’s and Mansfield’s fatal encounters, is now brought into the open in stories about incest such as Patricia Grace’s “Flower Girls” (1994, 17–24), or Alice Tawhai’s “Dark Jelly” (2011, 89–94). The crises caused by dysfunctional relationships and ill-fated disasters, once impressionistically tied to images of landscape, now comes with awareness of the social implication as individual violation is glimpsed as part of a wider social pattern. In Tracey Slaughter’s (2016) collection *Deleted Scenes for Lovers*, a story about rape, “Consent”, there’s a questioning of social practices surrounding the trauma, overriding a victim subjectivity: the gap between official rhetoric and the subjective experience emerges in the narrator’s comment that “it seems to me that when they made up that idea [consent], they left spaces for way too much pain, too much pressure” (115).

## **Conclusion**

The historically-oriented anthology *Un País de Cuento* like earlier national anthologies, represents New Zealand writing as a recognisable brand, marked by an awareness of national locations and boundaries. Remove this, and as Evans (2007), Newton (2018), and O’Neill (2017) indicate, a sense of cultural fragmentation results – which is further reinforced by digital publishing and electronic modes of dissemination. Yet as this overview of recent writing suggests, there’s room for a different volume than ours, one that would feature stories by younger writers – educated, travelling, attuned to multicultural Māori-Pasifika energies – that would embrace the diversity of global/ national intersections. There’s also room to celebrate how stories from Aotearoa New Zealand circulate as world literature, receiving the wider exposure that eluded the early practitioners: gaining overseas publication and distribution, garnering national and international prizes (Tina Makereti, Charlotte Grimshaw, Sarah Quigley, Eleanor Catton, Catherine Chidgey), profiled in international literary festivals. Such an anthology, in representing the genre’s momentum, would recalibrate further the restlessness that dominated national concerns about place in the exploration of new locales and point to the global rewiring of consciousness that is happening everywhere today. In becoming global, contemporary writing reconfigures the local with the universal, engaging with the everyday in an awareness of the spaces between.



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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Evans (2007) identifies several turn of the millennium novels that lack the New Zealand referent, featuring either non New Zealand characters or foreign settings (182), while Fresno-Calleja (2015, 59) mentions Elizabeth Knox, Kirsty Gunn, Eleanor Catton, and Kate di Goldi as writers whose works are either set outside New Zealand or can be marketed without emphasising the country of origin. on the global orientation of the New Zealand drama company Indian Ink see James Wenley's article in this volume, xx - xx

<sup>2</sup> See Dieter Riemenschneider's article in this issue, pp. xx to xx

<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Jean Anderson and Philip Temple, Shadbolt's biographer, for providing this information.

<sup>4</sup> The 20 stories are by Katherine Mansfield, Roderick Finlayson, Frank Sargeson, Dan Davin, Janet Frame, Maurice Shadbolt, Maurice Duggan, Joy Cowley, Witi Ihimaera, Maurice Gee, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme, Vincent O'Sullivan, Fiona Kidman, Shonagh Koea, Owen Marshall, Barbara Anderson, Fiona Farrell and Sue Orr

<sup>5</sup> The anthology was published as part of a series, Colección Literatura by the University of Zaragoza Press (<http://puz.unizar.es/coleccion/53/54-Literature.html>); the prize was awarded by AEDEAN, the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies.

<sup>6</sup> For example, *JAAM* (Just Another Art Movement), *Glottis*, *Bravado* (Bay of Plenty), *Byline* (Tauranga Writers), the e-zine *Turbine/Kaphoau* (International Institute of Modern Letters), *Mayhem* (University of Waikato).

<sup>7</sup> Also the Dan Davin Writing Competition (Invercargill) and the Katherine Mansfield Birthplace Society's story competition for schoolchildren. Residencies are offered, e.g. by the Michael King Writers Centre, the Frank Sargeson Trust and the Kapiti Māori Writer in Residence.

<sup>8</sup> For example, half of the 34 stories selected for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Some Other Country* were written in the last 30 years (McLeod and Manhire 2008, xi); at a conservative estimate, over 50 volumes of stories – some by established writers like Vincent O'Sullivan, Karl Stead, Keri Hulme, Fiona Kidman -- but most by new and emerging writers, have been published since 2000.